

FORT NECESSITY
NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE

Pennsylvania

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

HAROLD L. ICKES, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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FORT NECESSITY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE

PENNSYLVANIA

Fort Necessity, where George Washington was engaged in his first major battle as a soldier, was established as a National Battlefield Site by Act of Congress in 1931. This site consists of two acres in a marshy tract known as the Great Meadows, a treeless area varying from 100 to 300 yards in width and almost a mile in length. It is located 11 miles east of Uniontown, Pa., and 49 miles west of Cumberland, Md. The surrounding Great Meadows and adjoining forested hills are a Pennsylvania State Recreational Park. The most interesting feature of the battlefield site is a stockade reproduced by popular subscription in commemoration of the Fort Necessity of the French and Indian War. In 1933 administration of the historic spot was transferred to the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The fort lies 300 yards south of U. S. Route 40, the Old National Pike which extended from Cumberland, Md., to Wheeling, W. Va., and over which thousands of pioneers migrated to the Ohio Valley. In the early part of the nineteenth century it was the principal artery of travel between the eastern seaboard and the Ohio Valley.

Nearby many traces of the Braddock Road still remain, and can be seen from Fort Necessity. The road passed the fort just outside the stockade. Just north of the monument at Braddock Park and in Jumonville Glen sections of the rough stone roadway have been cleared.

BATTLE OF FORT NECESSITY

Rival claims between the French and English to the trans-Allegheny territory approached a climax about 1750. French claims in this region were based on the early explorations of La Salle and later those of Celoron and his officers, Contrecoeur, Coulon de Villiers, and Joncaire-Chabert. The English asserted that these lands were included in grants given under royal charters to the Virginia Company in 1609. Lawrence and Augustine Washington, brothers of George Washington, had participated in 1748 in the organization of the Ohio Company which was granted extensive acreage in the upper Ohio Valley. The Ohio Company established headquarters at Will's Creek, now Cumberland, Md., and started to open an

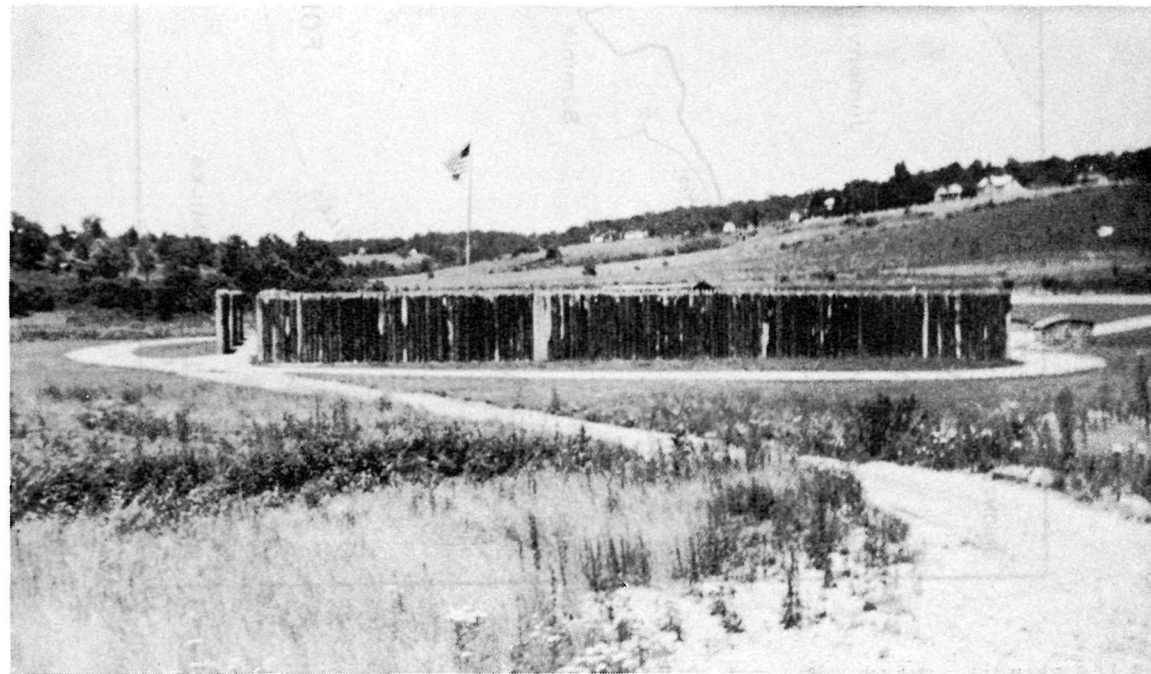
80-mile wagon road to the Youghiogheny River, the trail for which was blazed by Nemacolin, a friendly Delaware Indian.

Meantime, the French advanced from Niagara, driving out English traders. Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia, in 1753, sent an expedition to warn the French to withdraw. He selected his adjutant for the Southern District of Virginia, George Washington, to head the expedition. Washington, then only 21 years old, made the journey in mid-winter of 1753-54, but the mission failed. Dinwiddie then sent a small force to build a fort at the forks of the Ohio River, now Pittsburgh, but the French drove off the Virginians and built Fort Duquesne on the site.

Early in April 1754, a small regiment of Virginians under Colonel Joshua Fry, with Washington, then a Lieutenant Colonel, second in command, proceeded westward toward the Monongahela. While Fry remained at Will's Creek where he died May 31, Washington pushed on with a few companions over the Nemacolin trail. On May 24 he arrived at Great Meadows. Hearing rumors of a French advance he began the erection of an entrenched camp called Fort Necessity.

On the night of May 27 Washington was informed by Tenacharison, the Half-King, a Senaca chief, who had been his guide on his earlier warning mission to the French, that the French were near and were spying on them. Washington set out with 40 men. With Half-King leading the way, they came

Fort Necessity Stockade



upon the French shortly after dawn, in a rocky glen that sheltered the French from a heavy rain. In a 15 minute skirmish, Captain Coulon de Jumonville, the French commander, and nine of his soldiers were killed, another was wounded, one escaped, and 21 were made prisoners. Washington's loss was one killed and two wounded. The escaped man reached Fort Duquesne and the French at once set out in force under Coulon de Villiers to attack Washington.

Fort Necessity was hurriedly completed, and on June 10 reinforcements reached Washington, increasing his force to 293 officers and men from Virginia and an independent company of 100 men from South Carolina under Captain James Mackay. Nine swivel guns and supplies also arrived. Washington started an advance at Redstone, now Brownsville, on the Monongahela River, and commenced construction of a road over Laurel Hill. When 3 miles beyond the scene of his skirmish with de Jumonville, he learned that a large force of French and Indians was approaching. He retired to Fort Necessity.

Shortly before noon on July 3, Washington was attacked by a numerically superior French force in addition to Indians. The battle, fought in a downpour of rain, lasted until after sunset. The Virginians were drawn up inside the stockade, while the South Carolinians fought in trenches outside the fort. At 8 p.m. after heavy losses had been sustained on both sides, the French asked for a parley. Washington at first refused to confer with them, but accepted their third request. Articles of capitulation were then signed, allowing the colonial forces to withdraw with honors of war and retain their arms and baggage, but providing for the surrender of their artillery. Washington and his troops marched out on the morning of July 4 and returned to Will's Creek and to the Virginia Tidewater. The French destroyed the fort and returned to Fort Duquesne.

BRADDOCK'S CAMPAIGN

Following the failure of the Great Meadows campaign of 1754, England decided to send a large force against the French. On September 24, 1754, the Duke of Cumberland appointed Major General Edward Braddock as Captain General of all British soldiers in the American colonies.

On March 15, 1755, Braddock and his army of British and colonial troops left Alexandria, Va., and pushed forward at once to Will's Creek, which he renamed Fort Cumberland. For his march against Fort Duquesne, Braddock ordered a road, 12 feet wide, constructed through the wilderness. The road followed Washington's route from Will's Creek to a point beyond Fort Necessity, then wound over the mountains to a point just below Connellsville, Pa., then to Jacob's Creek, and westward to the Monongahela River at Crooked Run, and into what is now McKeesport, Pa. At Crooked Run, Braddock, mortally wounded, suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the French and their Indian allies.

ADJACENT HISTORICAL AREAS

The Fort Necessity Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, have preserved two spots of historical importance located near Fort Necessity Battlefield Site.

Braddock Park: General Edward Braddock, commanding the English and American troops in the campaign against the French in 1755, was mortally wounded in the Battle of Monongahela, and died during the retreat of his defeated army. His body was buried in the middle of Braddock Trail. Remains said to be those of General Braddock were discovered by workmen in 1804 and later removed to the site of the present monument, located just north of U. S. Route 40 a short distance west of Fort Necessity in an area known as Braddock Park.

Jumonville's Grave and Glen: This area, the scene of the first skirmish in the French and Indian War, is about 5 miles northwest of Braddock's Grave. It is reached by an improved road extending 3 miles north from U. S. Route 40. The area of 33 acres remains a wilderness solitude.

STATE PARK AND MUSEUM

In 1769, Washington bought the Great Meadows tract of 234½ acres surrounding the site of Fort Necessity and held the land until his death. It was retained under private ownership until 1931, when, with some additional land, it was acquired by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The present area of 311 acres is a State Recreational Park.

Mount Washington Tavern: This is now the State Museum, and is located on the Old National Pike, (U. S. Route 40) a short distance from Fort Necessity. Built in 1818, it was one of the numerous stage houses on the old highway. It contains an interesting collection of colonial documents, relics of the Fort Necessity campaign, and military equipment.

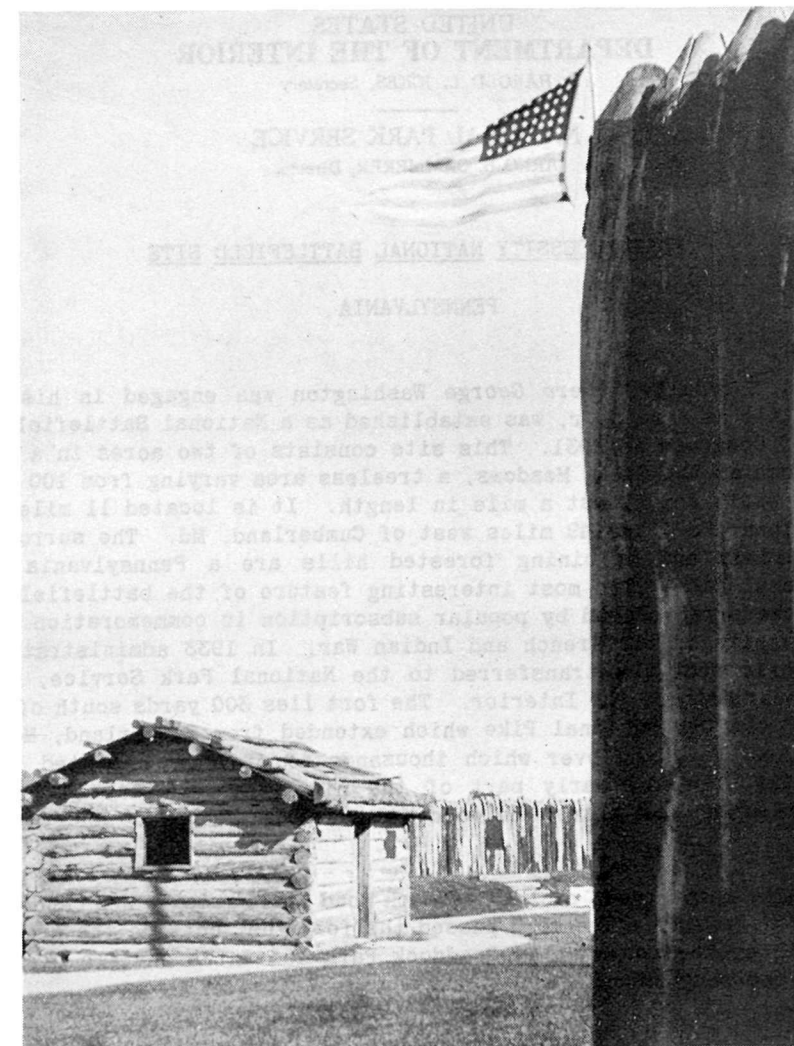
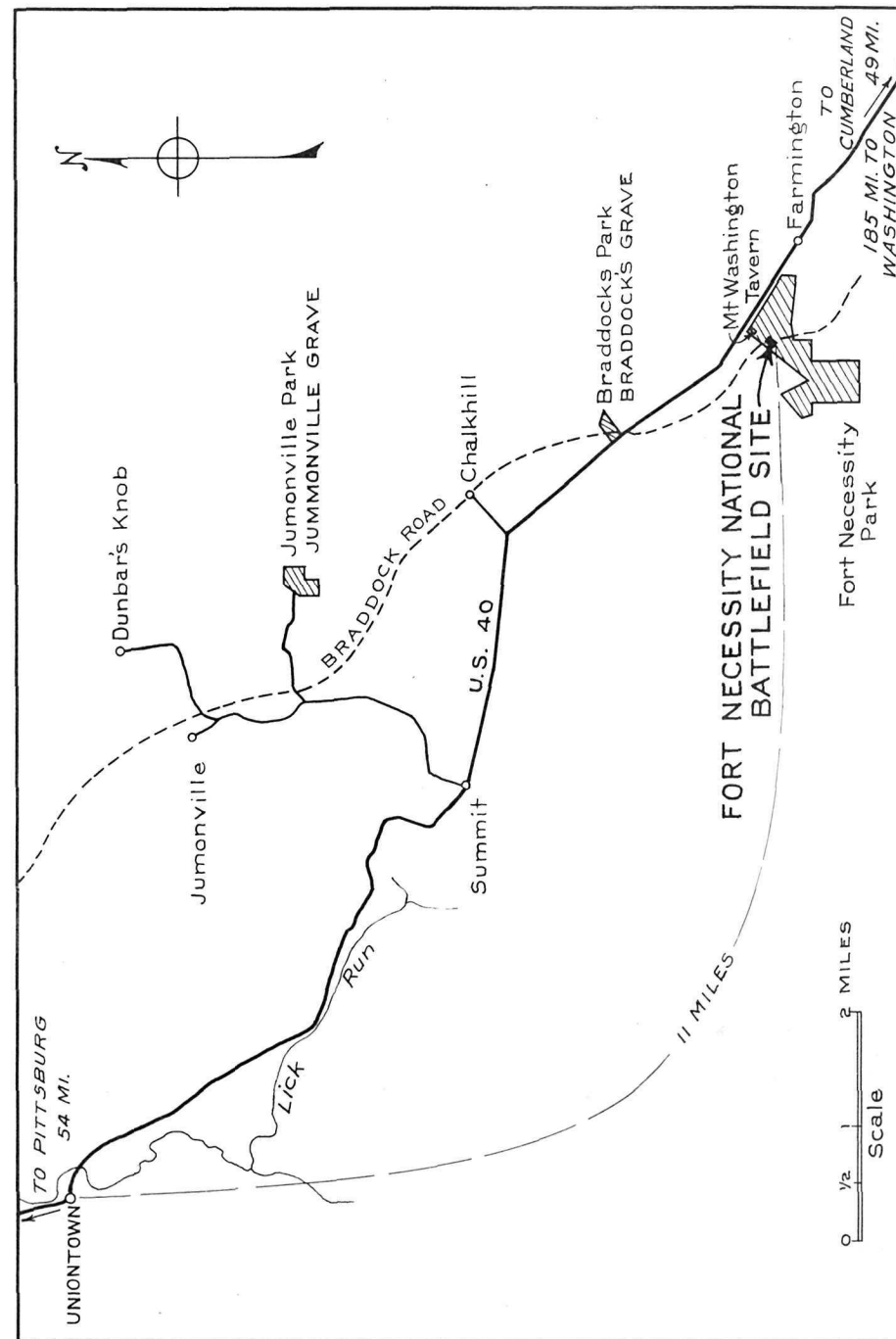
ACCOMMODATIONS

Hotel accommodations are available at Uniontown and during the summer season accommodations may be had at the Summit Hotel and Gorley's Hotel, both located on U. S. Route 40 a short distance from Fort Necessity. Many summer camps are located within a 6-mile radius of the Fort.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site is under the general supervision of the Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pa., and additional information may be obtained by addressing him.

August 1939.



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