

obscure place." Did Jumonville hope to spy on Washington and report back to Contrecoeur about the English strength and then make contact, or possibly even attack as Washington had feared? On the other hand, if Jumonville was on a military patrol rather than a diplomatic mission, why did he, an experienced officer, allow himself to be completely surprised at breakfast?

Washington's actions have also been questioned by historians. If the French had in fact been merely diplomats, he was guilty of shooting down men who were only doing what Washington himself had done the previous year at Fort LeBouef. This skirmish was the first in Washington's career and he could not possibly help but be eager for success. He was also tired, having had little sleep in the previous 48 hours. Under these circumstances, his decision-making capability may have been hampered. It is possible only to speculate on the true answer. Nonetheless, dire consequences of both Jumonville's and Washington's actions at Jumonville Glen, as it is known today, soon followed.

*Jumonville Glen, which has changed little with the passage of time, is part of Fort Necessity National Battlefield and is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is The National Pike, Farmington, PA 15437, is in immediate charge. The glen is 7½ miles from Fort Necessity. It may be reached by driving 4.9 miles west of the main park on U.S. 40, turning right on the Jumonville Road at Mount Summit and driving 2½ miles north.*

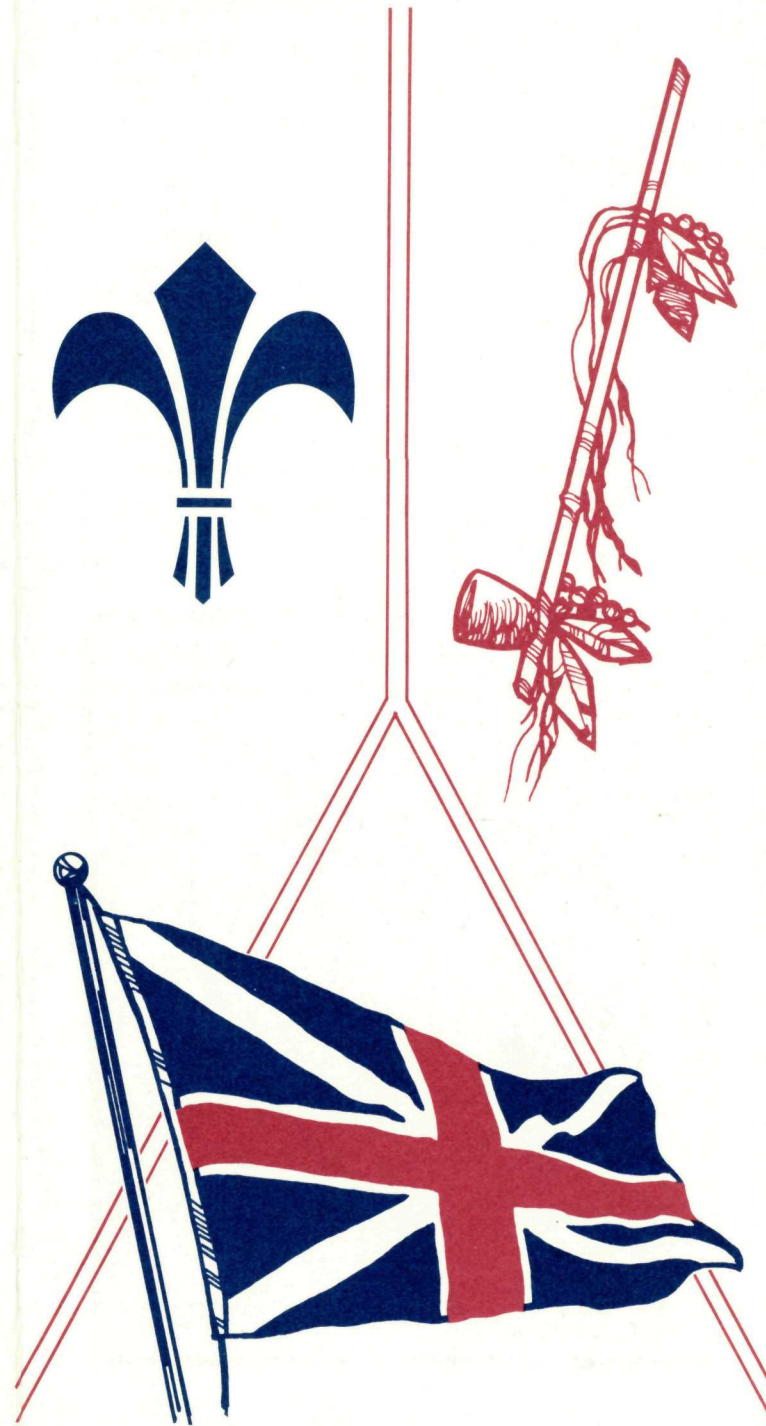


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# JUMONVILLE GLEN



Fort Necessity National Battlefield  
The National Pike  
Farmington, PA 15437

*On May 28, 1754, a small group of Virginians, under the command of 22-year-old George Washington, attacked a French patrol at what is now known as Jumonville Glen. Although only a few men became casualties, this 15-minute skirmish deep in the North American wilderness was the first in a series of major events that eventually plunged most of the western world into warfare. Horace Walpole, a contemporary British statesman, described the brief fight by saying, "A volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire."*

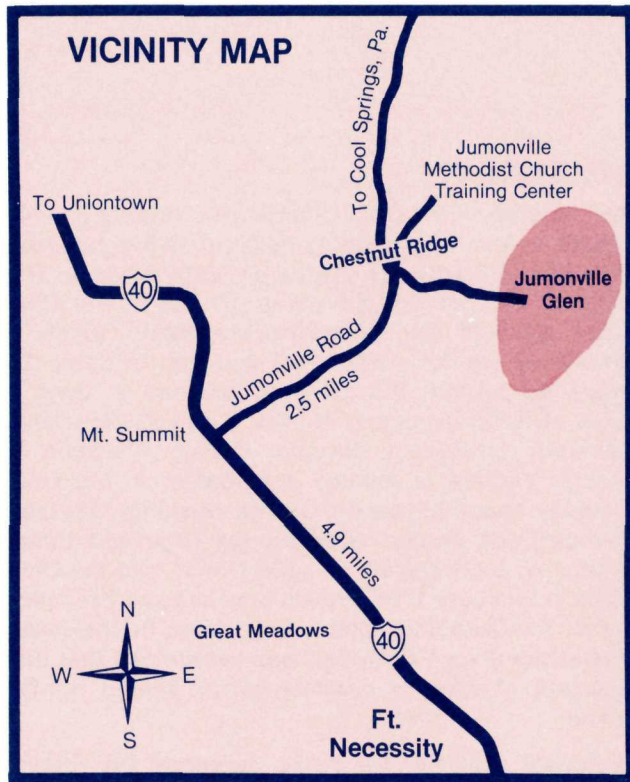
## THE THREAT

The founding of the Ohio Company of Virginia in 1749 marked a new beginning in colonial rivalry between England and France for control of North America. The company claimed 200,000 acres of land in the Ohio Valley west of the Allegheny Mountains which it planned to use for speculation and the fur trade. To secure its control, the company planned to build a series of forts, beginning at Wills Creek (Cumberland, Maryland). Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie of colonial Virginia, a leading stockholder in the Ohio Company, chose 22-year-old George Washington to lead the expedition. France reacted to the Virginians' threat by sending a contingent of 1,800 troops into the Ohio Valley in February 1754. France depended on the valley to link its Canadian colony with those in the lower Mississippi River Valley. She was determined that this important channel of communication should not be broken.

Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie described the French advance into the valley as an "invasion," and decided to send a warning message to be carried by Washington to the French at Fort LeBouef. When he arrived at the fort on November 25, 1753, Washington was informed by the commander that the French "... do not think (themselves) obliged to obey (your summons)." Washington then returned to Williamsburg, but not before inspecting French fortifications at LeBouef. Dinwiddie determined to use military force to drive the French from the Ohio Valley back into Canada. He requested money and troops from the Virginia legislature, as well as from other colonial assemblies, and began enlisting 300 militia to be commanded by Colonel Joshua Fry and Lt. Colonel Washington.



Washington departed Winchester, in the Colony of Virginia, on April 18, 1754, for Wills Creek. From there he was to build a military road into the Ohio Valley. On May 24, the Virginians arrived at Great Meadows where a temporary camp was established. Here, they would await promised supplies and reinforcements. Rumors soon reached the camp, via several Indian scouts led by the Seneca, Half-King, that a large French detachment was approaching. On May 27, Christopher Gist, the owner of a small plantation 13 miles from Great Meadows, informed the Virginians that his farm had been visited by 50 French soldiers in an "ugly mood." A scouting party was sent immediately to locate the French troops.

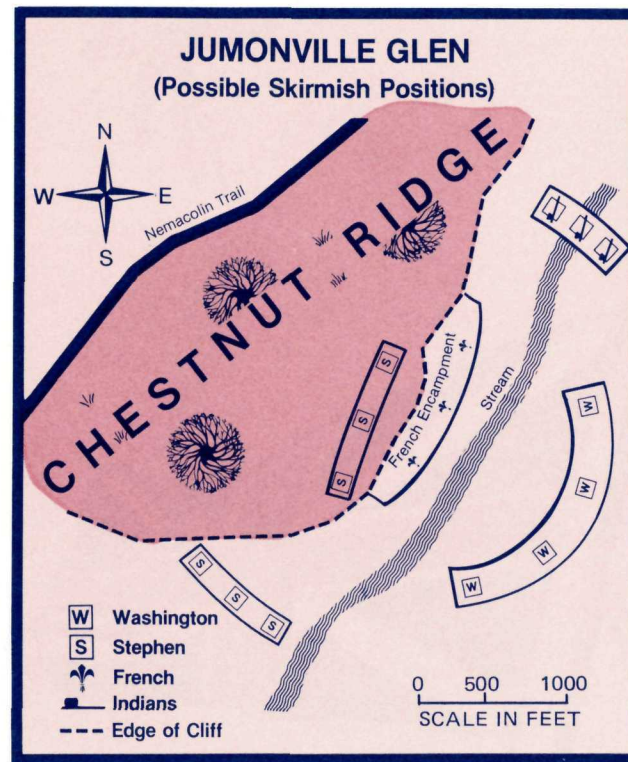


At 9 p.m. on May 27, the Indians sent word that the French had been located in a ravine along Chestnut Ridge, 7½ miles from Great Meadows. Washington, not knowing the French intentions, decided to confront them rather than let the French make the first contact. Washington set out with forty men for Half-King's camp. They arrived near dawn, after having marched all night through a driving rain. Joined now by a dozen Indians, the force moved north along the Nemaocolin Trail to the French camp which was commanded by Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville. They arrived at about seven in the morning, May 28, 1754.

The French were camped in a ravine running generally parallel to Nemaocolin's Trail, about a quarter mile northwest of the camp. They utilized rock overhangs and bark lean-tos for protection for themselves and their equipment. At the time of the attack, the French were preparing breakfast. Apparently, no guards were posted.

### THE SKIRMISH

Washington divided his force in half, one group under the command of Captain Adam Stephen and the other under his own control. Half-King and his warriors went to the far end of the ravine. Stephen deployed his men along the left edge of the glen and Washington posted his force on the right side in a semi-circle. The French caught a glimpse of the English as Washington was maneuvering his men into position and shouted the alarm. A shot rang out, followed quickly by more shots and yelling as the sleeping French soldiers jumped for their weapons, stacked under the ledge. A brisk exchange of fire took place, with Washington's section taking most of the French volley.



After the first discharge—according to the eyewitness account of the Frenchman Monceau, who escaped by hiding in the woods—Jumonville called out to the English that the French were on a diplomatic and not a

military mission and demanded an immediate cease-fire. After the skirmish, captured French soldiers also claimed this; but Washington, who had been at the head of his troops, affirmed that he had been in a position to observe, and had witnessed no such appeal for a cease-fire. Perhaps the noise and smoke of battle, coupled with the cries of the wounded and yells of the Indians, drowned out the French appeal.

The French surrendered, after a 15-minute skirmish, possibly to avoid the loss of more men and the threat of Indian torture. Ensign Jumonville and nine others had been killed; 21 Frenchmen were captured. However, Monceau escaped and walked barefoot back to Fort Duquesne to report the action to the French.

Washington lost one man killed and two or three others wounded. He sent the French prisoners back to Winchester, in the Colony of Virginia, and retired to Great Meadows. There he began construction of a more substantial fortification—Fort Necessity. He had decided to wait there for the promised supplies and reinforcements from Governor Dinwiddie, hoping they would arrive before a new French force returned to the area.

### THE AFTERMATH

Within a month, on July 3, 1754, Washington's camp at Great Meadows was attacked by a large French force led by Jumonville's older stepbrother, Louis Coulon de Villiers. After an eight hour battle, the Virginians were forced to surrender.

In the French articles of surrender, which Washington could not read, was the statement that he had assassinated Jumonville. This was incorrectly translated for him to mean killed in action. Taken back to France, the articles were published and circulated throughout the continent to discredit the English claims to the Ohio Valley. This was a prelude to a declaration of war by France against England in 1756 which became known in America as the French and Indian War and in Europe as the Seven Years' War. One of the prizes of this war was control of a vast North American empire.

### UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Some interesting questions have been raised concerning the exact nature of Jumonville's mission and why he was hidden in the ravine. Jumonville's second-in-command, Drouillon, claimed the party was on a diplomatic mission simply to warn the English to leave the valley. To this end, Jumonville carried written instructions from Contrecoeur, the commander of Fort Duquesne; but, why was his force hidden in the forest only seven miles from the English camp? The spot was located one-half mile off the forest path in a "low