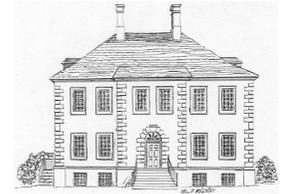




# Carlyle House Docent Dispatch



April 2005

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

## Prologue to the “Grandest Congress” and Braddock’s Ill-Fated Expedition”

By Mark Hill

*John Carlyle tendered his resignation from the Ohio Company in 1749 – two years after it was formed in 1747 in order to secure substantial land holdings in the Ohio Valley area for its investors. No reason was provided for his departure from this venture, but perhaps he had the foresight, as a prudent businessman, that his Ohio Valley investment would prove to be too risky given the competing French, Indian and British designs on this region. Such confrontation provided a spark for the start of the “first” World War—a war that spanned over three continents and seven years.*



*E. Braddock*

French North American colony). A few months later, Dinwiddie sent Washington to confront the French in the Ohio Valley. In late May 1754, Washington and about 70 men ambushed 30 or so French soldiers, killing several, wounding and capturing the remainder. In response, the French commander of Ft. Duquesne dispatched a much larger force, of about 700, to chase down and surround Washington and his reinforced men, now numbering about 400, at Ft. Necessity. The vast number of French troops, along with Indian assistance, forced

Washington to surrender and march back to Virginia.

### **British Plan Military Intervention in North America**

While Washington led expeditions into the Ohio Valley, Lt Gov Dinwiddie wrote and sent several letters to high-ranking British government ministers in London to implore the Crown to send troops to push the French and their Indian allies out of the Ohio Valley. Recipients of such letters included the Duke of Newcastle, Britain’s Prime Minister; Sir Thomas Robinson, Secretary of State; the Duke of Cumberland, Leader of the British Army and 2<sup>nd</sup> son of King George II; the Earl of Halifax, Board of Trade President; Henry Fox, Secretary of War and the Earl of Albemarle; Ambassador to France and titular Governor of Virginia, i.e., Dinwiddie’s superior. William Augustus, the Duke

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### **Clash in the Ohio Valley**

While French and British mutual ill-will had been spilling over into North America since the 1600s and sparked a series of conflicts such as Queen Anne’s War (1702-1713) and King George’s War (1745-1748), the more immediate cause of the outbreak of hostilities between France and Britain during the French and Indian War can be attributed in large part to the French starting to build a string of forts throughout the Ohio Valley in 1753. In December 1753, Virginia’s Lt. Governor Dinwiddie, viewing such construction as an encroachment on lands of Virginia and the Ohio Company (in which Dinwiddie was an investor), deployed George Washington as a messenger to the commander of Ft. LeBoeuf requesting the French to vacate the premises. France would not budge.

In April 1754, at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers the French forced a party of American colonists to quit a recently started fort/trading post of the Ohio Company; the French finished its construction and named it “Fort Duquesne” (after the governor of New France—the

<p><b>CARLYLE HOUSE</b></p> <p>Mary Ruth Coleman, Director          Jim Bartlinski, Curator          Cindy Major, Curator of Education</p>
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of Cumberland and others in London anticipated a fight with the French to occur soon as the French appeared to be challenging British dominion in America as well as in India and central Europe. Cumberland influenced the thinking of several ministers within the British Cabinet (such as Halifax, Fox, and Robinson) to send British Army units to quell French aggression in the Ohio Valley.

But not all of the powerful British politicians were rattling their swords. In the summer/fall of 1754, the British Prime Minister, was in the throes of negotiations with France over the situation in the Ohio Valley, hoping for a bloodless settlement. In September 1754, the Earl of Albemarle provided Paris with the formal request to withdraw France's troops from south of Lake Erie, in response, French officials stated that France was not guilty of either "invasions or usurpations" in this region and refused to withdraw. Prime Minister Newcastle offered a compromise, Britain would confine itself to the eastern half of the Ohio Valley. France rejected this overture outright. Consequently, Newcastle finally relented in his pursuit toward achieving a negotiated settlement with France and requested military advice from the Duke of Cumberland. It was most likely Cumberland that recommended (1) the Crown send two Regiments to the Colonies and (2) the selection of Edward Braddock, recently promoted to Major General (April 1754), as not only the leader of these two regiments but also the "General and Commander" of all British Forces in North America.

As any military expedition requires substantial funding, Cumberland's agenda received financial assistance from John Hanbury, a London-based partner of the Ohio Company, who had been keeping in constant communication with Dinwiddie and advanced £10,000, backed by Whitehall, to Virginia's Lt Governor to apply toward expenses to be incurred on Braddock's Ohio Valley military expedition.

### **Selection of Braddock as Leader of All North American Troops**

It is not clear why General Braddock was selected to command the entire contingent of North American-based British and Colonial troops against the French and Indians. *Throughout his 44-year military career, Braddock had never fought, much less led troops, in a battle.* Notwithstanding his lack of combat experience one possible reason for his selection could be his past ties with the Duke of Cumberland. During Braddock's long stint with the Coldstream Guards regiment (1710-1753), he was a subordinate of Cumberland on several occasions. The Duke briefly commanded the Coldstream Guards (1740-1741); against "Bonny Prince Charlie" in 1745, he led troops of which Braddock's brigade was a part; in 1748, Cumberland also commanded Braddock's battalion during a campaign against the French in Holland. General Braddock was likely considered to be very loyal to the Crown, very disciplined in following orders and a strong administrator and logistician. It was an officer of this ilk that Cumberland would have perceived as very useful in overseeing the various planned expeditions against the French and Indians throughout the American Colonies.

### **Britain's Grand Strategy for North America**

In November 1754, King George II issued written orders to Braddock, which included comprehensive instructions on military engagement of the French in North America.

Braddock's Expedition to Ft Duquesne was one of four major operations planned by the British Cabinet. The other three operations were to (1) attack Fort St. Frederic, (2) attack Ft. Niagara and (3) reinforce Ft. Oswego (located on Lake Ontario's southeast coast). It was made clear in the Crown's instructions to Braddock to seize Ft Duquesne first. As it was Virginia's Dinwiddie that petitioned for London's help and his military point man, George Washington, having already blazed a path from Virginia to the Ohio Valley, the most natural start point for Braddock's forces would be Virginia. This Colony also provided the

climate conducive for starting the Ft. Duquesne expedition earlier than if commenced in other northern Colonies.



