French and Indian War

In late-May of 1754, 21-year old George Washington was a newly commissioned British lieutenant colonel. He and other British troops had started westward from Alexandria with part of a newly recruited regiment of Virginians.
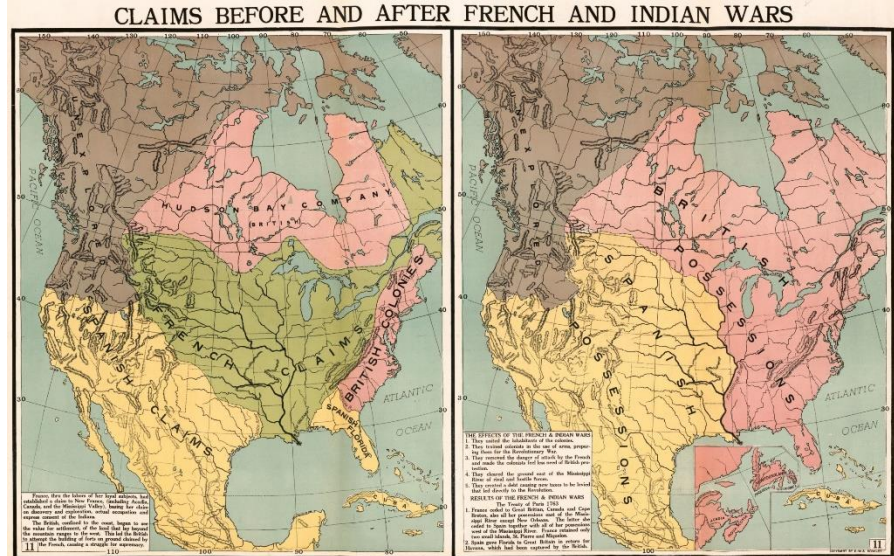
They were to build a road to the Monongahela River at Redstone Creek, present day Brownsville, PA. He was then to help defend the English fort on the Ohio.

They engaged the French. A shot was fired, no one really knows by whom, and soon the peaceful glen was filled with the crash of musketry and the smell of powder. The skirmish lasted 15 minutes.

When it was over, 13 Frenchmen were dead and 21 captured. One escaped and made his way back to Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio. Washington's casualties were one man killed and two or three wounded.

The battle in the summer of 1754 was the opening action of the French and Indian War. This war was a clash of British, French and American Indians. It ended with the removal of French power from North America. The stage was set for the American Revolution.

The war in North America settled into a stalemate for the next several years, while in Europe the French scored an important naval victory and captured the British possession of Minorca in the Mediterranean in 1756.

CLAIMS BEFORE AND AFTER FRENCH AND INDIAN WARS

After 1757, the war began to turn in favor of Great Britain. British forces defeated French forces in India, and in 1759 British armies invaded and conquered Canada.

Facing defeat in North America and a tenuous position in Europe, the French attempted to engage the British in peace negotiations.

After these negotiations failed, Spanish King Charles III offered to come to the aid of his cousin, French King Louis XV, and their representatives signed an alliance known as the Family Compact on August 15, 1761.

Despite facing such a formidable alliance, British naval strength and Spanish ineffectiveness led to British success. British forces seized French Caribbean islands, Cuba, and the Philippines.

Fighting in Europe ended after a failed Spanish invasion of British ally Portugal.

By 1763, French and Spanish diplomats began to seek peace. In the resulting Treaty of Paris (1763), Britain secured significant territorial gains in North America, including all French territory east of the Mississippi river, as well as Spanish Florida, although the treaty returned Cuba to Spain.

The war had been enormously expensive, and the British government's attempts to impose taxes on colonists to help cover these expenses resulted in increasing colonial resentment of British attempts to expand their authority in the colonies.

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