



**Paper, Pens, & Prose: Discovering Early Manuscripts**

# WASHINGTON'S RISE BEGINS

A Journal of a Noteworthy Journey



**Grade 5**  
**United States History and Geography**

*The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens*

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## **I. Introduction**

**W**e often think of journals as personal documents, but they can also be used to record information intended for larger audiences. The publication of George Washington's diary of his 1754 trip to deliver an expulsion order to the French on the shores of Lake Erie made him a noted figure in Europe as well as the Colonies.

## **II. Objective**

- ◆ Students will use excerpts from the journal of George Washington's strenuous trip to French forts on the frontier to draw conclusions about Washington and his era.

## **III. History-Social Science Standards Addressed**

- 5.3 Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the Indians and between the Indian nations and the new settlers, in terms of:
- 1 competition among the English, French . . . and Indian Nations for control of North America
  - 2 the cooperation that existed between the colonists and Indians during the 1600s and 1700s (e.g., . . . military alliances. . . )

- 3 the conflicts before the Revolutionary War (e.g., . . . the French and Indian War)
- 5.5 Students explain the causes of the American Revolution, in terms of:
- 4 the views, lives, and impact of key individuals during this period (e.g., . . . George Washington)

#### IV. Background

By the middle of the eighteenth century, English colonists were looking to the West while French forces were moving south. They collided in Ohio, where the French had begun to establish forts in what the English claimed as part of Virginia.

#### V. Materials Needed

Class set copies of:

- Governor Dinwiddie's letter (**Document 1**)
- The French reply to Governor Dinwiddie (**Document 2**)
- Diary entries from Washington's journey (**Document 3**)

#### VI. Lesson Activities

1. Tell the students that as a young man in the English colony of Virginia George Washington copied into his notebook 110 rules of "Decent Behavior" including such warnings as "Strive not with your Superiors in argument, but always Submit your Judgment to others with Modesty." Ask what kind of person would choose to do that. Let them answer, then explain that social opportunity in the English colonies in the 1700s was dependent on money or connections. After his father's death made it impossible for George Washington to get an education in England, he was determined to succeed on his own and worked hard to make himself into an accomplished gentleman.
2. Washington hoped to get an education and to further his career by getting a commission in the British army, so at the age of 22, he took on the task of carrying a letter from Governor Dinwiddie to the French forces on the Ohio. Pass out copies of the letter (**Document 1**), assist the students in reading it, and have them predict how the French will react to it. Then have them read the French reply (**Document 2**). Does it contain anything surprising?  
  
[Students may mention the politeness of the closing, which suggests the gentlemanly nature of diplomacy at that time.]
3. Tell the students that they will be reading excerpts from a journal George Washington kept on his journey (see #2 above), which will tell a lot about relations with the Indians. Have them make a list of reasons the Indians would want to be friends with the French and English, who were, after all, pushing them out of their traditional homelands.

[They may note such goals as protecting the territory they now occupied, maintaining trade links, settling scores with old enemies, and for the gifts the Europeans offered—money, food, guns, blankets. . . .]

You may want to have them research which tribes were “French Indians” or “English Indians” and mark them on a map. [Carl Waldman’s *Atlas of the North American Indian* is a good reference.]

4. Review the vocabulary list at the end of the lesson. Pass out the diary entries (**Document 3**), which can be divided up and assigned to small groups. The students should answer these questions:
  - a. What were some of the ways the French and English tried to earn the friendship of the Indians?
  - b. What evidence is there that even though the French and English were about to go to war, they still thought they should act like “gentlemen”?
  - c. What did the Indians and Europeans exchange to seal agreements?
  - d. What shows that the French did not think of the Indians as equals? How was that different from what the English did (at least as Washington reported it)?
  - e. Why did the French say they had a claim to the territory they now occupied?
  - f. Why did the French expect to defeat the English in the war that was clearly coming?
  - g. What did Washington do on the trip that would make him a hero when he returned?
  - h. What is unusual about the spelling and punctuation?
5. When Washington got back to Williamsburg, Governor Dinwiddie had the diary published and sent to all the colonial governors. It was later reprinted in colonial newspapers and a London magazine. How would Washington have been affected by this? Inform the students or have them read about some of Washington's blunders in the forthcoming months and note the power of an initial impression to overcome later information about flaws.
6. This journal was the first of many Washington kept during his life. These journals are a valuable source of historical information. Ask the students to compare the journal-keeping of Washington's day to modern journals. Will diaries soon be computerized or videotaped? If so, what problems might there be in finding out about the lives of modern heroes the way we found out about George Washington?

## VII. Extension Activity

Have the students read about Washington's failure to win the English commission he so desperately wanted. How might our history have been different if he had earned that commission?

## VIII. Vocabulary

<i>churlish</i>	rude or surly
<i>commission</i>	an official appointment to a military rank
<i>dilatory</i>	slow, tardy
<i>foregoing</i>	that which went before
<i>half-king</i>	term for an Indian leader
<i>prosecute</i>	[as used in Washington's journal]—proceed with, continue
<i>sachem</i>	an Indian hereditary chief
<i>wampum</i>	shell disks or beads, often strung on "belts," used by the Indians as money

## Document 1

## GOVERNOR DINWIDDIE'S LETTER



COPY of his Honour the GOVERNOR'S Letter, to the Commandant of the French Forces on the OHIO, sent by Major Washington.

S I R,

THE Lands upon the River *Ohio*, in the Western Parts of the Colony of *Virginia*, are so notoriously known to be the Property of the Crown of *Great-Britain*; that it is a Matter of equal Concern and Surprize to me, to hear that a Body of *French* Forces are erecting Fortresses, and making Settlements upon that River, within his Majesty's Dominions.

The many and repeated Complaints I have received of these Acts of Hostility, lay me under the Necessity, of sending, in the Name of the King my Master, the Bearer hereof, *George Washington*, Esq; one of the Adjutants General of the Forces of this Dominion; to complain to you of the Encroachments thus made,

and of the Injuries done to the Subjects of *Great-Britain*, in open Violation of the Law of Nations, and the Treaties now subsisting between the two Crowns.

If these Facts are true, and you shall think fit to justify your Proceedings, I must desire you to acquaint me, by whose Authority and Instructions you have lately marched from *Canada*, with an armed Force; and invaded the King of *Great-Britain's* Territories, in the Manner complained of? that according to the Purport and Resolution of your Answer, I may act agreeably to the Commission I am honoured with, from the King my Master.

However Sir, in Obedience to my Instructions, it becomes my Duty to require your peaceable Departure; and that you would forbear prosecuting a Purpose so interruptive of the Harmony and good Understanding, which his Majesty is desirous to continue and cultivate with the most Christian King.

I persuade myself you will receive and entertain Major *Washington* with the Candour and Politeness natural to your Nation; and it will give me the greatest Satisfaction, if you return him with an Answer suitable to my Wishes for a very long and lasting Peace between us. I have the Honour to subscribe myself,

S I R,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant,

ROBERT DINWIDDIE.

*Williamsburgh, in Virginia,* }  
*October 31st, 1753.* }

## Document 2

## THE FRENCH REPLY TO GOVERNOR DINWIDDIE



TRANSLATION of a Letter from  
Mr. Legardeur de St. Piere, a principal  
French Officer, in Answer to the Govern-  
or's Letter.

S I R,

AS I have the Honour of commanding here  
in Chief, Mr. *Washington* delivered me  
the Letter which you wrote to the Commandant  
of the *French* Troops.

I should have been glad that you had given  
him Orders, or that he had been inclined to pro-  
ceed to *Canada*, to see our General; to whom it  
better belongs than to me to set-forth the Evi-  
dence and Reality of the Rights of the King,  
my Master, upon the Lands situated along the  
River *Ohio*, and to contest the Pretensions of the  
King of *Great-Britain* thereto.

I shall transmit your Letter to the Marquis  
*Duguisne*. His Answer will be a Law to me;

and if he shall order me to communicate it to  
you, Sir, you may be assured I shall not fail to  
dispatch it to you forthwith.

As to the Summons you send me to retire, I  
do not think myself obliged to obey it. What-  
ever may be your Instructions, I am here by  
Virtue of the Orders of my General; and I in-  
treat you, Sir, not to doubt one Moment, but  
that I am determin'd to conform myself to them  
with all the Exactness and Resolution which can  
be expected from the best Officer.

I don't know that in the Progress of this Cam-  
paign any Thing has passed which can be re-  
puted an Act of Hostility, or that is contrary  
to the Treaties which subsist between the two  
Crowns; the Continuation whereof as much in-  
terests, and is as pleasing to us, as the *English*.  
Had you been pleased, Sir, to have descended to  
particularize the Facts which occasioned your  
Complaint, I should have had the Honour of  
answering you in the fullest, and, I am per-  
suaded, most satisfactory Manner.

I made it my particular Care to receive Mr.  
*Washington*, with a Distinction suitable to your  
Dignity, as well as his own Quality and great  
Merit. I flatter myself that he will do me this  
Justice before you, Sir; and that he will signify  
to you in the Manner I do myself, the profound  
Respect with which I am,

S I R,

Your most humble, and

most obedient Servant,

LEGARDEUR DE ST. PIERE.

*From the Fort sur La Riviere au Beuf,  
the 15th of December 1753.*

## Document 3

## DIARY ENTRIES FROM WASHINGTON'S JOURNEY

## JOURNEY TO THE FRENCH COMMANDANT

[Washington reported to the Governor]

On Wednesday the 31st. of October 1753 I was Commission'd & appointed by the Honble. Robert Dinwiddie Esqr. Governor &ca. of Virginia

To visit & deliver a Letter to the Commandant of the French Forces on the Ohio. . . .

. . . I went to Monacatoocha . . . & inform'd him . . . that I was sent a Messenger to the French General, & was ordered to call upon the Sachems of the Six Nations, to acquaint them with it. I gave him a String of Wampum, & a twist of Tobacco, & desir'd him to send for the Half King . . . & for other Sachems. . . .

About 3 o'Clock this Evening the Half King came to Town; I went up & invited him . . . to my Tent, & desir'd him to relate some of the Particulars of his Journey to the French Commandant, & reception there . . . When he went to the Fort he said he was receiv'd in a very stern Manner by the late Commander, who ask'd him very abruptly..to declare his Business; which he says he did in the following Speech.

[The Half King spoke to the French]

FATHERS I am come to tell you your own Speeches, what your own mouths have declar'd. FATHERS You in former Days set a Silver Bason before us wherein there was the Leg of a Beaver, and desir'd of all Nations to come & eat of it; to eat in Peace & Plenty, & not to be Churlish to one another; & that if any such Person shou'd be found to be a Disturber; I here lay down by the Edge of the Dish a rod, which you must Scourge them with; & if Me your Father shou'd get Foolish in my old Days, I desire you may use it upon me as well as others.

NOW FATHERS it is you that is the Disturber in this Land, by coming & building your Towns, and taking it away unknown to us & by Force. FATHERS We kindled a Fire a long Time ago unknown to us & by Force. FATHERS We kindled a Fire a long Time ago at a Place call'd Morail [Montreal] . . . I now desire that you may dispatch to that Place; for . . . this is our Land, & not yours . . . If you had come in a peaceable Manner like our Brothers the English, We shou'd not have been against your trading with us as they do, but to come Fathers, & build great Houses upon our Land, & to take it by Force, is what we cannot submit to.

FATHERS both you & the English are White. We live in a Country between, therefore the Land does not belong either to one or the other; but the GREAT BEING above allow'd it to be a Place of residence for us; so Fathers, I desire you to

withdraw, as I have done our Brothers the English, for I will keep you at Arm's length. I lay this down as a Tryal for both, to see which will have the greatest regard to it, & that Side we will stand by, & make equal Sharers with us . . . I am not afraid to discharge you off this Land. . . .

[The French Commander replied]

NOW MY CHILD I have heard your Speech. You spoke first . . . but you need not put yourself to the Trouble of Speaking for I will not hear you: I am not affraid of Flies or Musquito's; for Indians are such as those; I tell you down that River I will go, & will build upon it according to my Command: If the River was ever so block'd up, I have Forces sufficient to burst it open, & tread under my Feet all that stand in Opposition together with their Alliances . . . Child, you talk foolish; you say this Land belongs to you, but . . . I saw that Land sooner than you did . . . If People will be rul'd by me they may expect kindness but not else. . . .

[Washington spoke to the Indians]

BROTHERS I have call'd you together in Council, by Order of your Brother the Governor of Virginia, to acquaint you that I am sent with all possible Dispatch to visit & deliver a Letter to the French Commandant . . . I was desir'd Brothers, by your Brothers the English: & I dare say to you their Friends & Allies. I was desir'd Brothers, by your Brother the Governor, to call upon you, the Sachems of the Six Nations, to inform you of it & to ask your Advice & Asistance . . . You see Brothers I have got thus far on my Journey. His Honour likewise desir'd me to apply to you for some of your young Men to conduct and provide Provisions for us on our Way: & to be a Safeguard against those French Indians, that have taken up the Hatchet against us. I have spoke this particularly to you Brothers, because His Hon. our Governor, treats you as good Friends & Allies, & holds you in great Esteem. To confirm what I have said I give you this String of Wampum.

[Washington's report continued]

I gave them back a String of Wampum that I met with at Mr. Frazer's, which they had sent with a Speech to his Honour the Governor, to inform him, that three Nations of French Indians (vizt.) Chippaway's, Ottaway's, and Arundacks, had taken up the Hatchet against the English. . . .

. . . Monacatoocha Informed me, that an Indian from Venango brought News a few Daus ago; that the French had call'd all the Mingo's, Delawar's & ca. together at that Place, & told them . . . that they might be quite Passive, & not intermeddle, unless they had a mind to draw all their force upon them; for that they expected to fight the English three Years, (as they suppos'd there would be some Attempts made to stop them) in which Time they shou'd Cconquer, but if they shou'd prove equally strong, that they & the English wou'd join to cut them off, & divide the Land between them. . . .



29th: The Half King and Monacattoocho came very early & beg'd me to stay one Day more . . . When I found them so pressing in their request; & knew that returning of Wampum, was the abolishing of Agreements; & giving this up was shaking of all Dependence upon the French, I consented to stay. . . .

We . . . travl'd on the road to Venango, where we arriv'd the 4th: of December . . . We found the French Colours hoisted at a House where they drove Mr. John Frazer an English Subject from: I immediately repair'd to it . . . Capt. Joncaire, inform'd me, that he had the Command of the Ohio . . . He invited us to Sup with them, & treated with the greatest Complaisance. The Wine . . . soon banish'd . . . restraint . . . They told me it was their absolute Design to take Possession of the Ohio, & and by G--they wou'd do it, for tho' they were sensible, that the English cou'd raise two Men for their one; yet they knew their Motions were too slow & dilatory to prevent any Undertaking of theirs. They pretended to have an undoubted right to the river from a Discovery made by one La Sol 60 Years ago. . . .

The Half King told me that he offer'd the Wampum to the Commander, who evaded taking it, & made many fair Promises of Love & Friendship; said he wanted to live in Peace & trade amicably with them; as a Proof of which, he wou'd send some Goods immediately down to the Logstown for them . . . I was enquiring of the Commander by what Authority he had taken & made Prisoners of several of our English Subjects. He told me the Country belong'd to them, that no English Man had a right to trade upon them Waters' & that he had Orders to make every Person Prisoner that attempted it on the Ohio or the Waters of it. . . .

15th: The Commander order'd a plentiful Store of Liquor, Provisions & ca. to be put on board our Canoe, & appear'd to be extreamly complaisant, though he was plotting every Scheme that the Devil & Man cou'd invent, to set our Indians at Variance with us, to prevent their going 'till after our Departure. Presents, rewards, & every Thing. I saw that every Stratagem . . . was practis'd to get the Half King won to their Interest . . . I went to the Half King and press'd him in the strongest Terms to go. He told me the Commander wou'd not discharge him 'till the Morning; I then went to the Commander & complain'd of ill Treatment; for keeping them . . . He protested he did not keep them but was innocent of the Cause of their Stay; though I soon found it out. He had promised them a Present of Guns, &ca. if they wou'd wait 'till the Morning. . . .

16th: The French . . . then endeavour'd to try the Power of Liquor; which I doubt not wou'd have prevail'd at any other Time than this, but I tax'd the King so close upon his Word that he refrain'd, & set off with us. . . .

. . . Our Horses were now so weak & feeble, & the Baggage heavy . . . that we doubted much their performing it; therefore my Self & others . . . gave up our Horses for Packs . . . & put my Self into an Indian walking Dress . . . the Horses grew less able to travel every Day. The Cold increas'd very fast . . . I determin'd to prosecute my Journey the nearest way through the Woods on Foot . . . I took my necessary Papers, pull'd off

my Cloths; tied My Self up in a Match Coat; & with my Pack at my back, with my Papers & Provisions in it, & a Gun set out. . . .

. . . The next Day we continued traveling 'till it was quite Dark, & got to the River about two Miles above Shanapins; we expected to have found the River Froze, but it was not, only about 50 Yards from each Shoar. . . .

There was no way for us to get over but upon a Raft, which we set about with but one poor Hatchet, & got finish'd just after Sunsetting, after a whole days Work: We got it launch'd . . . but before we got half over, we were jamed in the Ice in such a Mannner, that we expected every Moment our Raft wou'd sink, & we Perish; I put out my seting Pole . . . it Jirk'd me into 10 Feet Water . . . The Cold was so extream severe, that Mr. Gist got all his Fingers, & some of his Toes Froze . . . We found no Difficulty . . . in the Morning, & went to Mr. Frazers. . . .

As we intended to take Horse here . . . I went up . . . to visit Queen Aliquippa . . . I made her a Present of a Match Coat; & a Bottle of rum, which was thought much the best Present of the two.

Tuesday 1st: Day of Jany . . . this Day we arriv'd at Wills Creek, after as fatiguing a Journey as it is possible to conceive, rendered so by excessive bad Weather: From the first Day of December 'till the 15th. there was but one Day, but what it rain'd or snow'd incessantly & throughout the whole Journey we met with nothing but one continued Series of Cold wet Weather. . . .

On the 11th. I . . . set out for, & arrived at Williamsburg, the 16th. & waited upon His Honour the Governor with the Letter I had brought from the French Commandant, & to give an Account of the Proceeedures of my Journney. Which I beg leave to do by offering the Foregoing, as it contains the most remarkable Occurrences that happen'd to me.

I hope it will be sufficient to satisfy you Honour with my Proceedings; for that was my Aim in undertaking the Journey. . . .

. . . I with infinite Pleasure subscribe my Self Yr. Honour's most Obedt. & very Hble. Servant.