

Major GEORGE WASHINGTON's Journal to the River OHIO

George Washington

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The Storm arising in the West, being the present Topic of Conversation, we think that we can not oblige our Readers, at this Juncture, with anything more entertaining than Major Washington's Journal Journal to Ohio, who was sent last Fall, by the Governor of Virginia, to the Commandant of the French Forces there. (Major Washington introduces his Journal with an Advertisement, with which we likewise present our Readers). From a Copy just Printed in Williamsburg.

ADVERTISEMENT

As it was thought adviseable by his Honour the Governor to have the following Account of my Proceedings to and from the French on Ohio, committed to Print, I think I can do no less than apologize, in some Measure, for the numberless Imperfections of it.

There interspersed but one Day between my Arrival in Williamsburg and the Time for the Council's Meeting, for me to prepare and transcribe, from the rough Minutes I had taken in my Travels, this Journal: The writing of which only was sufficient to employ me closely the Whole Time, consequently admitted of no Leisure to consult of a new and proper Form to offer it in, or to correct or amend the Diction of the old; neither was I apprised, or did in the least conceive, when I wrote this for his Honour's perusal, that it ever would be published or even have more than a cursory Reading; till I was informed, at the Meeting of the present General Assembly, that it was already in the Press.

There is nothing can recommend it to the Public, but this. Those Things which came under the Notice of my own Observation, I have been explicit and just in a Recital of: – Those which I have gathered from Report, I have been particularly cautious not to augment, but Collected the Opinions of the several Intelligencers, and selected from the whole, the most probable and consistent Account.

G. WASHINGTON

Major GEORGE WASHINGTON's Journal to the River OHIO, etc

Wednesday, October 31, 1753

I was commissioned and appointed by the Honourable Robert Dinwiddie, Esq, Governor, Etc. of Virginia, to visit and deliver a Letter to the Commandant of the French Forces on the Ohio, and set out on the intended Journey the same Day; the next, I arrived Fredericksburg, and engaged Mr. Jacob Van Braam, to be my French Interpreter;

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and proceeded with him to Alexandria, where we provided Necessaries; from whence we went to Winchester, and got luggage, Horse, Etc. and from thence we pursued the new Road to Wills Creek, where we arrived the 14th of November.

Here I engaged Mr. Gist to pilot us out, and also hired four others as Servitors, Barnaby Currin, and John MacQuire, Indian Traders, Henry Steward, and William Jenkins, and in Company with those Persons, left the Inhabitants the Day following.

The excessive Rains and vast Quantity of Snow that had fallen, prevented our reaching Mr. Frazier's, an Indian Trader, at the Mouth of Turtle rock, on Monongahela, till Thursday, the 22nd, we were informed here, that Expresses were sent a few days ago to the Traders down the River, to acquaint them with the French General's Death, and the Return of the major Part of the French army into Winter Quarters.

The Waters were quite impassable, without swimming our Horses; which obliged us to get the loan of a Canoe from Frazier, and to send Barnaby Currin, and Henry Steward, down Monongahela with our Baggage, to meet us at the Forks at Ohio, about 10 miles, to cross Allegany.

As I got down before the Canoe, I spent some time in viewing the Rivers, and the Land in this Fork, as it has the absolute Command of both Rivers. The Land at the Point is 20 or 25 Feet above the common Surface of the Water, and a considerable Bottom of flat, well-timbered Land all around it, very convenient for Building; the Rivers are each a Quarter of a Mile, or more, across, and run here very near at right Angles; Allegany bearing N.E. and Monongahela S.E. the former of these two is a very rapid and swift running. Water, the other deep and still, without any perceptible Fall.

About two Miles from this, on the South East Side of the River, at the Place where the Obis Company intended to erect a Fort, lives Shingiss, King of the Delawares; we call'd upon him, to invite him to Council at the Loggs Town.

As I had taken a good deal of Notice Yesterday of the Situation of the Forks, my Curiosity led me to examine this more particularly, and I think it greatly inferior, either for Defence or Advantages; especially the latter, for a Fort at the Forks would be equally well situated on Ohio, and have the entire command of Monongahela, which runs up to our Settlements and is extremely well designed for Water Carriage, as it is of a deep still Nature; besides, a Fort at the Fork might be built at a much less Expense, than at the other Places.

Nature has well contrived the lower Place, for Water Defence; but the Hill whereon it must stand being about a Quarter of a Mile in Length, and then Descending gradually on the Land Side, will render it difficult and very expensive, making a sufficient Fortification there. – The whole Flat upon the Hill must be taken in, or the Side next the Descent made extremely high; or else the Hill cut away; Otherwise, the Enemy may raise Batteries within that Distance without being expos'd to a single Shot from the Fort.

Shingiss attended us to the Loggs Town, where we arrived between Sun setting and Dark, the 25th Day after I left Williamsburg; We travelled over some extreme good, and bad Land, to get to this Place. –

As soon as I came into Town, I went to Monacatoocha (as the Half King was out at his hunting Cabbin on little Beaver Creek, about 15 miles off) who inform'd him by John Davison my Indian Interpreter, that I was sent a Messenger to the French General; and was ordered to call upon the Sachems of the Six Nations, to acquaint them with it. – I gave him a String of Wampum, and a Twill of Tobacco, and desired him to send for the Half King; which he promised to do by a Runner in the Morning, and for other Sachems; – I invited him and the other great Men present to my Tent, where they stay'd about an Hour and return'd.

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According to the best Observations I could make, Mr. Gist's new Settlement (which we pass'd by) bears about W.N.W. 70 Miles from Wills Creek; Shanapins, or the Forks N. by W. or N.N.W. about 50 miles from that; and from thence to the Loggs Town, the Course is nearly Well about 18 or 20 Miles; so that the whole Distance, as we went and computed it, is at least 135 or 140 Miles from our back Inhabitants.

25th, Came to Town four of ten Frenchmen that deserted from a Company at the Cuscus, which lies at the Mouth of this River; I got the following Account from them. They were sent from New Orleans with 100, and 8 Canoe Loads of Provisions to this Place; where they expected to have met the same Number of Men, from the Forts this Side Lake Erie, to convoy them and the Stores up, who were not arrived when they ran off.

I enquired into the Situation of the French, on the Mississipp, their Number, and what Forts they had built; They inform'd me, That there were four small Forts between New Orleans and the Black Islands, garrison'd with about 30 or 40 Men, and a few small Pieces, in each; That at New Orleans, which is near the Mouth of the Mississippi, there are 35 Companies of 40 Men each, with a pretty Strong Fort mounting 8 Carriage Guns, and at the Black Islands there are several Companies, and a Fort with 6 Guns. The Black Islands are about 130 Leagues above the Mouth of the Ohio, which is about 350 above New Orleans; They also acquainted me, that there was a small pallisado'd Fort on the Ohio, at the Mouth of the Obaish, about 60 Leagues from the Mississippi; The Obaish heads near the West End of Lake Erie, and affords the Communication between the French on Mississippi and those on the Lakes. These Deserters came up from the lower Shawnee-Town with one Brown, an Indian Trader, and were going to Philadelphia.

About 3 o'Clock this evening the Half King came to Town; I went up and I invited him and Davisan, privately, to my Tent, and desir'd him to relate some of the Particulars of his Journey to the French Commandant, and Reception there; and to give me an Account of the Ways and Distance. He told me, that the nearest and levellest Way was now impassable, by Reason of many large miry Savannas, that we must be obliged to go by Venango, and should not get to the near Fort under 5 or 6 Night's Sleep, good Travelling. When he went to the Fort, he said he was received in a very stern Manner by the late Commander; Who ask'd him very abruptly, what he had come about, and to declare his Business, which he said he did in the following Speech.

Fathers, I am come to tell you your own Speeches; what your own Mouths have declared. 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 and eat of it; to eat in Peace and Plenty, and not to be churlish to one another; and that if any such Person should be found to be a Disturber, I here lay down by the Edge of the Dish a Rod, which you must scourge them with; and if I your Father, should get foolish, in my old Days, I desire you may use it upon me as well as others.

Now Fathers, it is you that are the Disturbers in this Land, by coming and building your Towns, and taking it away unknown to us, and by Force.

Fathers, We kindled a Fire a long Time ago, at a Place called Montreal, where we desired you to stay, and not to come and intrude upon our Land. I now desire you may dispatch to that Place; for be it known to you, Fathers, that this is our Land, and not yours.

Fathers, I desire you may hear me in Civilness; if not, we must handle that Rod which was laid down for the use of the Obstreperous. If you had come in a peaceable Manner, like our Brothers the English, we should not have been against your trading with us, as they do; but to come, Fathers, and build great Houses upon our Land, and to take it by Force, is what we cannot submit to.

Fathers, both you and the English are white, we live in a Country between; therefore the Land belongs to neither one nor to 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 Arms length. I lay this down as a Trial for both, to see which will have the greatest Regard to it, and that Side we will stand by, and make equal Sharers

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with us. Our Brothers the English have heard this, and I come now to tell it to you, for I am not afraid to discharge you off this Land.

This he said was the Substance of what he said to the General, who made this Reply.

Now, my Child, I have heard your Speech, you spoke first, but it is my Time to speak now. Where is my Wampum that you took away, with the Marks of Towns in it? This Wampum I do not know, which you have discharged me off the Land with; but you need not put yourself to the Trouble of Speaking, for I will not hear you; I am not afraid of Flies, or Mosquitos, for Indians are such as those; I tell you, down that River I will go, and will build upon it, according to my Command; if the River was backed up, I have Forces sufficient to burst it open, and tread under my Feet all that stand in Opposition, together with their Alliances; for my Force is as the Sand upon the Sea Shore; Therefore, here is your Wampum, I fling it at you. Child, you talk foolishly; you say this Land belongs to you, but there is not the Back of my Nail yours; I saw that Land sooner than you did, before the Shannoahs and you were at War; Lead was the Man that went down, and took Possession of that River; It is my Land, and I will have it, let who will stand up for, or say against it. I'll buy and sell with the English (mocking). If People will be ruled by me, they may expect Kindness, but not else.

The Half King told me he enquired of the General after two Englishmen that were made Prisoners, and received this Answer.

Child, You think it is a very great Hardship that I made Prisoners of those two People at Venango, don't you concern yourself with it, we took and carried them to Canada, to get Intelligence of what the English were doing in Virginia.

He informed me that they had built two Forts, one on Lake Erie, and another on French Creek, near a small Lake about 15 Miles asunder, and a large Waggon Road Between; they are both built after the same Model, but different in the Size; that on the Lake the largest; he gave me a Plan of them, of his own drawing.

The Indians enquired very particularly after their Brothers in Carolina Goal.

They also asked what sort of a Boy it was that was taken from the South Branch; for they had, by some Indians, heard that a Party of French Indians had carried a white Boy by the Caseusea Town, Towards the Lakes.

26th, We met in Council at the Long-House about 9 o'Clock, where I spoke to them as follows.

Brothers, I have called 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, and deliver a Letter to the French Commandant, of very great Importance to your Brothers the English; and I dare say, to you their Friends and Allies.

I was destined, brothers, by your brother, the governor, to call upon you, the sachems of the nations, to inform you of it, and to ask your advice and assistance to proceed the nearest and best road to the French, You see, brothers, I have gotten this far on my Journey.

His Honor likewise desired me to apply to you for some of your young men to conduct and provide provisions for us on our way, and be a safeguard against those French Indians who have taken up the hatchet against us. I have spoken thus particularly to you, brothers, because his Honor, our governor, treats you as good friends and allies, and holds you in great esteem. To confirm what I have said, I give you this string of wampum.

After they had considered for some time on the above discourse, the Half-King got up, and spoke:

'Now, my brother, in regard to what my brother, the governor, had desired of me, I return you this answer:

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I rely upon you as a brother ought to do, as you say we are brothers and one people. We shall put heart in hand and speak to our fathers, the French, concerning the speech they made to me, and you may depend that we will endeavor to be your guard.

'Brother, as you have asked my advice, I hope you will be ruled by it, and stay until I can provide a company to go with you. The French speech-belt is not here; I have to go for it to my Hunting-Cabin. Likewise, the people whom I have ordered in are not yet come, and cannot until the third night from this; until which time, brother, I must beg you to stay.

'I intend to send a Guard of Mingoes, Shannoahs, and Delawares, that our brothers may see the love and loyalty we bear them.'

As I had orders to make all possible Dispatch, and waiting here was very contrary to my inclination, I thanked him in the most suitable manner I could, and told him that my business required the greatest expedition, and would not admit of that delay: He was not well pleased that I should offer to go before the Time he had appointed, and told me that he could not consent to our going without a Guard, for Fear some Accident should befall us, and draw a Relexion upon him; besides, says he, this is a Matter of no small Moment, and must not be entered into without due Consideration; for now I intend to deliver up the French Speech-Belt, and make the Shannoahs and Delawares do the same: And accordingly he gave Orders to King Shingiss, who was present, to attend on Wednesday Night with the Wampum, and two Men of their Nation to be in Readiness to set out with next Morning. As I found it was impossible to get off without affronting them in the most egregious Manner, I consented to stay.

I gave them back a String of Wampum that I met with at Frazier's, which they had sent with a Speech to his Honour the Governour, to inform him, that three Nations of French Indians, viz. Chippeways, Ottoways, and Orundacks, had taken up the Hatchet against the English, and desired them to repeat it over again, which they postponed doing till they met in full Council with the Shannoahs and Delaware Chiefs.

27th, Runners were dispatched very early for the Shannoah Chiefs, the Half King set out himself to fetch the French Speech-Belt from his Hunting-Cabbin.

28th, He returned this Evening, and came with Monacatoocha, and two other Sachems to my Tent; and begged (as they had complied with his Honour the Governor's Request, in providing Men, Etc.) to know on what Business we were going to the French. This was a Question I all along expected, and had provided as satisfactory Answers to, as I could, and which allayed their Curiosity a little.

Monacatoocha informed me, that an Indian from Venango brought News, a few Days ago, that the French had called all the Mingos, Delawares ctogether at that Place, and told them that they intended to have been down the River this Fall, but the Waters were growing cold, and the Winter advancing, which obliged them to go into Quarters: But they might assuredly expect them in the Spring, with a far greater Number; and desired that they might be quite passive, and apt to intermeddle, unless they has a Mind to draw all their Force upon them, for that they expected to fight the English three Years, (as they supposed there would be some Attempts made to stop them) in which Time they should conquer, but if they should prove equally strong, that they and the English would join to cut them all off, and divide the land between them; that tho' they had lost their General, and some few of their Soldiers, yet there were Men enough to reinforce them, and make them Masters of the Ohio.

This Speech, he said, was delivered to them by one Captain Joncaire their Interpreter in Chief, living at Venango, and a Man of Note in the Army.

29th, The Half-King and Monacatoocha came very early, and begged me to stay one Day more, for notwithstanding they had used all the Diligence in their Power, the Shannoah Chiefs had not brought the

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Wampum they ordered, but would certainly be in Tonight; if not, they would delay me no longer, but would send it after us as soon as soon as they arrived; When I found them so pressing in their Request, and knew that returning of Wampum was the abolishing of Agreements; and giving this up, was shaking off all Dependence upon the French, I consented to stay, as I believe an Offence offered at this Crisis, might be attended with greater ill Consequence, Than another Day's Delay. They also informed me that Shingiss could not get in his Men, and was prevented from coming himself by his Wife's Sickness, (I believe, by Fear of the French) but that the Wampum of that Nation was lodged with Custaloga, one of their Chiefs at Venango.

In the Evening late they came again and acquainted me that the Shannoahs were not yet come, but it should not retard the Prosecution of our Journey. He delivered in my Hearing the Speeches that were to be made to the French by Jeskakake, one of their Old Chiefs, which was giving up the Belt the late Commandant had asked for, and repeating near the same Speech he himself had done before.

He also delivered a string of Wampum to this Chief, which was sent by King Shingiss, to be given to Casalega, with Orders to repair to the French, and deliver up the Wampum.

He likewise gave a very large String of black and white Wampum, which was to be sent up immediately to the Six Nations, if the French refused to quit the Land at this Warning; which was the third and last Time, and was the Right of this Jeskakake to deliver.

30th, Last Night the great Men assembled to their Council–House, to consult further about this Journey, and who were to go; the Result of which was, that only three of their Chiefs, with one of their best Hunters, should be our Convoy; The Reason which they gave for not sending more, after what had been proposed at Council the 26th, was, that a greater Number might give the French Suspicions of some bad Design, and cause them to be treated rudely: But I rather think they could not get their Hunters in.

We set out about 9 o'Clock with the Half–King, Jeskakake, White Thunder, and the Hunter, and travelled on the road to Venango, where we arrived the 4th of December, without any Thing remarkable happening but a continued Series of bad weather.

This is an old Indian Town, situated at the Mouth of French Creek on Ohio, and lies near N. about 60 Miles from Logg–Town, but more than 70 the Way we were obliged to go.

We found the French colours hoisted at a House which they drove Mr. John Frazier, an English Subject, from; I immediately repaired to it, to know where the Commander resided. There were three Officers, one of whom, Capt. Joncaire informed me, that he had the Command of ther Ohio, but that there was a General Officer at the near Fort, which he advised me to for an Answer. He invited us to sup with them, and treated us with the greatest Complaisance.

The Wine, as they dosed themselves pretty plentifully with it, soon banished the Restraint which at first appear'd in their Conversation, and gave a Licence to their Tongues to reveal their Sentiments more freely.

They told me, That it was their absolute Design to take Possession of the Ohio, and by G – they would do it; for that they were sensible the English could raise two Men for their one; yet they knew, their Motions were too slow and dilatory to prevent any Undertaking of theirs. They pretend to have an undoubted Right to the River, from a Discovery made by one LaSalle 60 Years ago; and the Rise of this expedition is, to prevent our Settling on the River or Waters of it, as they have heard of some Families moving out in Order thereto. From the best Intelligence I could get, there have been 1500 Men on this side Ontario Lake, but upon the death of the General all were recalled to about 6 or 700, who were left to garrison four Forts, 150 or thereabouts in each, the first of which is on French Creek, near a small Lake, about 60 miles from Venango, near N.N.W. the next lies on Lake Erie, where the greatest part of their Stores are kept, about 15 Miles from the other; from that it is 120 Miles to the carrying

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Place, at the Falls of Lake Erie, where there is a small Fort which they lodge their goods at, in bringing them in from Montreal, the Place that all their Stores come from: The next Fort lies about 20 Miles from this, on Ontario Lake; between this Fort and Montreal there are three others, the first of which is near opposite to the English Fort Oswego. From the Fort on Lake Erie to Montreal is about 600 Miles, which they say requires no more, if good Weather, than four Weeks Voyage, if they go in Barks or large Vessels, that they can cross the Lake; but if they come in Canoes it will require 5 or 6 Weeks, for they are oblig'd to keep under the Shore.

5th, Rain'd excessively all Day, which prevented our Travelling. Capt. Joncaire sent for the Half King, as he had but just heard that he came with me: He affected to be much concern'd that I did not make free to bring them in before; I excused it in the best Manner I was capable, and told him I did not think their Company agreeable as I heard him say a good deal in Dispraise of Indians in general; but another Motive prevents me from bringing them into his Company; I knew he was Interpreter, and a Person of very great Influence among the Indians and had lately used all possible Means to draw them over to their Interest; therefore I was desirous of giving no Opportunity that could be avoided.

When the came in, there was great Pleasure express'd at seeing them; he wonder'd how they could be so near without coming to visit him, made several trifling Presents, and applied Liquor so fast, that they were soon render'd incapable of the Business they came about, notwithstanding the Caution that was given.

6th, The Half-King came to my Tent, quite sober, and insisted very much that I should stay and hear what he had to say to the French; I would have prevented his speaking any Thing, 'till he came to the Commandant, but could not prevail: He told me, that at this Place, a Council Fire was kindled, where all their Business with the People was to be transacted, and that the Management of the Indian Affairs was left solely to Capt. Joncaire. As I was desirous of knowing the issues of this, I agreed to stay, but sent our Horses a little Way up French Creek, to refresh and encamp, which I knew would make it near Night.

About 10 o'Clock they met in Council; the King spoke much the same as he had before done to the General, and offer'd French Speech Belt which had before been demanded with the Marks of four Towns on it, which Monsieur Joncaire refused to receive; but desired him to carry it to the Fort to the Commander.

7th, Monsieur La Force, Commissary of the French Stores, and three other Soldiers, came over to accompany us up. We found it extremely difficult getting the Indians off Today, as every Stratagem had been used to prevent their going up with me; I had last Night left John Davison (the Indian Interpreter that I brought from the Logg Town with me) strictly charg'd not to be out of their Company, as I could not get them over to my Tent (they having some Business with Custaloga, to know the reason why he did not deliver up the French Belt which he had in Keeping) but was obliged to send Mr. Gist over Today to fetch them, which he did with great Persuasion.

At 11 o'Clock we set out for the Fort, and were prevented from arriving there 'till the 11th by excessive Rains, Snows, and bad Travelling, through many Mires and Swamps, which we were obliged to pass, to avoid crossing the Creek, which was impossible, either by fording or rafting, the Water was so high and rapid.

We passed over much good Land since we left Venango, and through several extensive and very rich Meadows; one of which I believe was near four Miles in Length, and considerably wide in some Places.

12th. I prepar'd early to wait upon the Commander, and was received and conducted to him by the second Officer in Command; I acquainted him with my Business, and offer'd my Commission and Letter, both of which he desired me to keep 'til the arrival of Monsieur Riparti, Captain at the next Fort, who was sent for and expected every Hour.

This Commander is a Knight of the Military Order of St. Louis, and named Legardeur de St. Piere. He is an elderly Gentleman, and has much the Air of a Soldier; he was sent over to take the Command, immediately upon

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the Death of the late General, and arrived here about seven Days before me.

At 2 o'Clock the Gentleman that was sent for arrived, when I offer'd the Letter, etc. again: which they receiv'd, and adjourn'd into a private Apartment for the Captain to translate, who understood a little English; after he had done it, the Commander desired I would walk in, and bring my interpreter to peruse and correct it, which I did.

13th, The chief Officers retired, to hold a Council of War, which gave me an opportunity of taking the Dimensions of the Fort, and making what Observations I could.

It is situated on the South, or West Fork of French Creek, near the Water, and is almost surrounded by the Creek, and a small Branch of it which forms a Kind of an island; four houses compose the sides; the Bastions are made of Piles driven into the Ground, and about 12 feet above, and sharp at Top, with Port Holes cut for Cannon and Loop Holes for the small Arms to fire through.. There are eight 6 lb. pieces mounted, two in each Bastion, and one Piece of four Pound before the Gate; in the Bastions are a Guard House, Chapel, Doctor's Lodging, and the Commander's private store, round which are laid Eight Forms for the Cannon and Men to stand on; There are several barracks without the Fort, for the Soldiers Dwelling, covered, some with Bark, and some with Boards, and made chiefly, such as Stables, Smith's Shop, Etc.

I could get no certain Account of the Number of Men here; but according to the best Judgment I could form, there are an hundred exclusive of Officers, of which there are many. I also gave Orders to the People that were with me, to take an exact Account of the Canoes that were hauled up to convey their Forces down in the Spring, which they did, and told 50 of Witch Bark, and 170 of Pine, besides many others that were blotk'd out, in Readiness to make.

14th, As the Snow increased very fast, and our Horses daily became weaker, I sent them off unloaded, under the Care of Barnaby Currin and two others to make all convenient Dispatch to Venango, and there at our Arrival if there was a Prospect of the Rivers freezing, if not, then to continue down to Shawnee's Town, at the Forks of Ohio, and there to wait 'til we came to cross Allegany, intending myself to go down by Water, as I had the Offer of a Canoe or two.

As I found many Plots concerted the Indians Business, and prevent their returning with me; I endeavor'd all that lay in my Power to frustrate their scheme, and hurry them on to execute their intended Design; they accordingly pressed for Admittance this Evening, which at length was granted them, privately, with the Commander and one or two other Officers: The Half-King told me, that he offered the Wampum to the Commander, who evaded taking it, and made many fair Promises of Love and Friendship: said he wanted to live in Peace, and trade amicably with them, as a Proff of which he would send some Goods immediately down to the Loggs Town for them; but I rather think the Design of that is, to being away all our struggling Trades they meet with, as I privately understood they intended to carry an Officer, Etc., with them: and what rather confirms this Opinion, I was enquiring of the Commander, by what Authority he had made Prisoners of several of our English subjects; he told me that the Country belong'd to them, that no Englishman had a Right to trade upon those Waters; and that he had Orders to make every Person Prisoner that attempted it on the Ohio, or the Waters of it.

I enquir'd of Capt. Riparti about the Boy that was carried by, as it was done while the Command devolved on him, between the Death of the late General, and the Arrival of the present; he acknowledged, that a Boy had been carried past, and that the Indians had two or three white Mens Scalps. (I was told by some of the Indians at Venango Eight) but pretended to have forgot the Name of the Place that the Boy came from, and all the particulars, though he question'd him for some Hours, as they were carrying him past: I likewise enquired what they had done with John Forster and James MacClachlan, two Pennsylvania Traders, whom they had taken, with all their Goods. They told me, that they had been sen to Canada, but were now returned Home.

This Evening I received an Answer to his Honour the Governor's Letter from the Commandant.

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15th, The Commandant ordered a plentiful Store of Liquor, Provision, Etc. to be put on board our Canoe, and appeared to be extremely compliant, though he was exerting every Artifice that he could invent to set our own Indians at Variance with us, to prevent their going 'til after our Departure: Presents, Rewards, and every Thing that could be suggested by him or his Officers I can't say that ever in my life I suffer'd so much Anxiety as I did in this Affair; I saw that every Strategem that the most fruitful Brain could invent, was practic'd, to win the Half-King to their Interest, and that leaving Him here was giving them the Opportunity they aimed at. I went to the Half-King, and press'd him in the strongest Terms to go: He told me the Commandant would not discharge him 'til the morning. I then went to the Commandant, and desired him to do their Business, and complained of ill treatment: for keeping them, as they were Part of my Company, was detaining me: which he promised not to do, but to forward my journey as much as he could: He protested he did not keep them, but was ignorant of the Cause of their Stay; though I soon found it out: He had promised them a Present of Guns, Etc. if they would wait 'til the Morning.

As I was very much press'd, by the Indians, to wait this Day for them, I Consented, on a Promise, That nothing should hinder them in the Morning.

16th, The French were not slack in their Inventions to keep the Indians this Day also; but as they were obligated, according to Promise, to give the Present, they then endeavored to try the Power of Liquor, which I doubt not would have prevailed at any other Time than this, but I urged and insisted with the King so closely upon his Word, that he refrained, and set off with us as he had engaged.

We had a tedious and very fatiguing Portage down the Creek, several Times we had like to have been staved against Rocks, and many Times were obliged all Hands to get out and remain in the Water Half an Hour or more, getting over the Shoals; at one Place the ice had lodged and made it impassable by Water; therefore we were obliged to carry our Canoe across a Neck of Land, a Quarter of a Mile over. We did not reach Venango, till the 22nd, where we met with our Horses.

This Creek is extremely crooked, I dare say the Distance between the Fort and Venango can't be less than 130 Miles, to follow the Meanders.

23rd, When I got Things ready to set off, I sent for the Half-King, to know whether he intended to go with us, or by Water, he told me that White Thunder had hurt himself much, and was sick and unable to walk, therefore he was obliged to carry him down in a Canoe: As I found he intended to stay here a Day or two, and know that Monsieur Joncaire would employ every scheme to set him against the English as he had before done; I told him I hoped he would guard against his Flattery, and let no fine Speeches influence him in their Favour: He desired I might not be concerned, for he knew the French too well, for any Thing to engage him in their Behalf; and though he could not go down with us, he would endeavor to meet at the Forks with Joseph Campbell, to deliver a Speech for me to carry to his Honour the Governor. He told me he would order the young Hunter to attend us, and get Provision, Etc. if wanted.

Our Horses were now so weak and feeble, and the Baggage heavy, as we were obliged to provide all the Necessaries that the Journey would require; that we doubted much their performing it; therefore myself and others (except the Drivers which were obliged to ride) gave up our Horses for Packs, to assist along with the Baggage; I put myself in an Indian Dress, and continued with them three Days, 'til I found there was no Probability of their getting in, in any reasonable Time; the Horse grew less able to travel every Day; the Cold increased very fast, and the Roads were becoming much worse by a depp Snow, continually freezing; and as I was uneasy to get back, to make Report of my Proceedings to his Honor the Governor, I determined to prosecute my Journey the nearest Way through the Woods, on Foot.

Accordingly I left Mr. Van Braam in charge of our Baggage, with Money and Directions, to provide Necessaries from Place to Place for themselves and Horses, and to make the most convenient Dispatch in.

Major GEORGE WASHINGTON's Journal to the River OHIO

I took my necessary Papers, pulled off my Clothes, tied myself up in a Match Coat, and with my Pack at my Back with my Papers and Provisions in it, and a Gun, set out with Mr. Gist, fitted to the same Manner, on Wednesday the 26th. The Day following, just after we had passed a Place called the Murdering Town, where we intended to quit the Path, and steer across the Country for Shannopins Town, we fell in with a Party of French Indians, who had lain in wait for us; one of them fired at Mr. Gist or me, not 15 Steps, but fortunately missed. We took this Fellow into Custody, and kept him till about 9 o'Clock at Night, and then let him go, and walked all the remaining Part of the Night without making any Stop, that we might get the Start so far, as to be out of the Reach of their Pursuit the next Day, as we were well assured they would follow our Track as soon as it was light: The next Day we continued travelling till quite dark, and go to the River about 2 Miles above Shannapins; we expected to have found the River frozen, but it was not, only about 50 Yards from each Shore; the Ice I suppose had broke up above, for it was driving in vast Quantities.

There was no Way for getting over but on a Raft, which we set about, with but one poor Hatcher, and got finished just after Sun setting, after a whole Day's Work; we got it launched, and on board of it, and set off; but before we were half Way over, we were jammed in the Ice in such a Manner that we expected every Moment our Raft to sink, and ourselves to perish: I put out my setting Pole to try to stop the Raft, that the Ice might pass by, when the Rapidity of the Stream threw it with so much Violence against the Pole, that it jirked me out into 10 Feet Water, but I fortunately saved myself by catching hold of one of the Raft Logs; notwithstanding all our Efforts we could not get the Raft to either Shore, but were obliged, as we were near an Island, to quit our Raft and make to it.

The Cold was so extremely severe, that Mr. Gist had all his Fingers, and some of his Toes frozen, and the Water was shut up so hard, that we found no Difficulty in getting off the Island on the Ice in the Morning, and went to Mr. Frazier's. We met here with 20 Warriors, who were going to the Southward to War, but coming to a Place upon the Head of the Great Cunnaway, where they found 7 People killed and scalped, all but one woman with very light Hair, they turned about and ran back, for Fear the Inhabitants should rise and take them as the Authors of the Murder: They report that the People were lying about the House, and some of them much torn and eaten by Hogs; by the Marks that were left, they say they were French Indians of the Ottaway Nation, Etc. that did it.

As we intended to take Horse here, and it required some Time to find them, I went up about 8 miles to the Mouth of Youghiogheny to visit Queen Aliquippa, who had expressed great concern that we pressed her in going to the Fort. I made her a Present of a Match coat and a bottle of Rum, which later was thought much the best Present of the two.

Tuesday the 1st Day of January, we left Mr. Frazier's House, and arrived at Mr. Gist's at Monongahela the 2d, where I bought Horse, Saddle, Etc. The 6th we met 17 Horses loaded with Materials and Stores for a Fort at the Forks of Ohio,, and the Day after some Families going out to settle. This Day we arrived 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 to the 15th, there was but one Day but it rained or snowed incessantly; and throughout the whole Journey we met with nothing but one continued Series of cold wet Weather, which occasioned very uncomfortable Lodgings, especially after we had left our Tent which was some Screen from the inclemency of it.

On the 11th I got to Belvoir where I stopped one Day to take necessary Rest, and then set out and arrived in Williamsburg the 16th, and waited upon his Honour the Governour with the Letter I had brought from the French Commandant, and to give an Account of the Proceedings of my Journey, which I beg Leave to do by offering the foregoing, as it contains the most remarkable Occurrences that happened to me.

I hope it will be sufficient to satisfy your Honour with my Proceedings; for that was my Aim in undertaking the Journey, and chief Study throughout the Prosecution of it.

Witht the Hope of doing it, with infinite Pleasure, subscribe myself,

Major GEORGE WASHINGTON's Journal to the River OHIO

Your Honour's most Obedient,
And very humble Servant,

G. WASHINGTON

Source: The Maryland Gazette, March 21, 1754 and March 28, 1754.