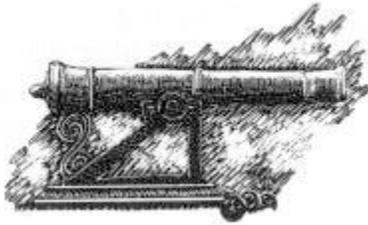


French Hostilities



Port of Supply

Alexandria became the military port of supply. The French hostilities in the region stirred up the Indians until the government of His Majesty became sufficiently exercised to dispatch an officer of the line, Major General Edward Braddock, two warships in which were stowed a fine arsenal of powder, rifles, and cannon, and two regiments of regulars. Word reached Alexandria in February of the arrival of Braddock in Williamsburg and that he and the Governor were in conference. The first result of this conference was a letter to "Mr. George Washington" written on March 2, 1755, and dispatched in the person of General Braddock's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Robert Orme, requesting the presence of Mr. Washington.

A second decision reached in Williamsburg was one that resounded along the Atlantic seaboard - to call a conference of the colonial governors to consider ways and means of waging the coming campaign against the French. Alexandria was chosen as a meeting place and the day set was April 14, 1755. In the meantime, the English warships Sea Horse and Nightingale under command of Admiral Keppel arrived in Alexandria. Two of His Majesty's regiments disembarked from the sea-grimed ships and the Redcoats in formation marched to the northwest of the town led by Colonel Sir Peter Halket and Colonel Dunbar. After the exchange of several letters, Colonel Washington volunteered to go unpaid with General Braddock on the campaign. All at once the town of Alexandria was overrun

with governors.

From Williamsburg came Dinwiddie; from Maryland, Governor Sharpe; from Massachusetts, Governor Shirley; from New York, Governor De Lancey; and from Pennsylvania, Governor Morris. Neither dress nor ceremony had yet been curtailed by the drabness of Democracy. Each governor arrived with a retinue of secretaries, attendants, and aides; each by coach, decorated in gilded scrolls and colorful arms, drawn by four to six horses; each governor resplendent in wig and powder, silken hose, coats of brocade, velvet or broadcloth, waistcoats of satin or damask, embroidered and braided, shirts of finest linen, betucked and belaced, and attended by servants in livery as colorful as their masters. The town was crowded, taverns full and private houses were put at the disposal of these visitors. Dinners and balls followed the serious councils of the day, which lasted until eleven or twelve o'clock at night. Redcoats were everywhere.

The conference over, pomp and pageantry departed, but not before Mr. Washington and General Braddock had disagreed heartily on the fashion of waging warfare. The heavy cannon brought by the British were dumped overboard, notwithstanding, or were otherwise abandoned as too cumbersome for the long trek west. General Braddock purchased from Governor Sharpe of Maryland an old English chariot and six horses for the march.

On April 20 the Redcoats and Bobtails (six companies, two from Alexandria and the nearby countryside) set out. Assigned to the regiment of Sir Peter Halket were Captain Stephens, Captain Peyronny and Captain Cocks Company of Rangers, and Captain Polsons Company of Artificers. The heavy coach lumbered over the rough country roads, at a great discomfort to General Braddock. Mr. Washington had temporarily returned to Mount Vernon to arrange his private affairs and was unable to join the military until eight days later. This tragically ill-fated expedition resulted in heavy casualties. On July 9, Braddock was attacked unexpectedly near Fort Du

Quesne by a body of French and Indians, some three hundred strong, which so surprised the British regulars they were struck with a "deadly panic" and ignominiously fled. Nearly sixty officers were killed and wounded, and scarcely thirty soldiers survived. The General was wounded in the shoulder and breast and died three days later.

George Washington miraculously saved the army from complete rout. He afterwards collected his decimated Virginians and marched them back to the market square in Alexandria. The reception was a sad one. Source: Seaport in Virginia: George Washington's Alexandria by Gay Montague Moore