

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR (or The Seven Years War) 1754-1763

Early threats to the security of the colonies came from the Native Americans. Later, when the colonists became involved in Britain's struggle for empire with European rivals, the colonists were unavoidably drawn into these conflicts

BRITAIN'S IMPERIAL WARS

The Spanish were eliminated as a serious threat before Britain began colonizing North America. Her first rival there, the Netherlands, was eliminated in three short wars in the 1650s and 1660s, thus securing the Middle Colonies of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania for Britain. She then engaged in a series of European and imperial wars with France, all of which involved the colonies, took up much of the period between 1689 and 1815, and are sometimes referred to as the Second Hundred Years Wars.

The Second Hundred Years Wars began when William of Orange became King of England in 1689. King William's War (1689-1697) brought the colonies into their first world war. New England colonists captured Port Royal, Nova Scotia, but the English failed to take Canada. The Treaty of Ryswick (1697) restored peace without any territorial gains.

Queen Anne's War (1702-1713) paralleled the War of Spanish Succession in Europe. Native American attacks raged on the New England frontier. Port Royal was captured again in 1710. In 1709 the New England and Middle Colonies organized forces to help the British in an attack on Montreal, but the expedition ended after the loss of eight transports and a thousand men in a sea disaster at the treacherous entrance to the St. Lawrence River. The attacks on Canada continued and the Peace of Utrecht ended the war in a decided English victory over France and Spain. The British won 1) Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and the Hudson Bay region in North America, 2) the straits of Gibraltar in Spain, and 3) a 30 year monopoly of the African slave trade with South America.

King George's War (1740-1748) began in Europe where it was known as the War of Austrian Succession. Because New England suffered from the French-sponsored Indian attacks from Canada, the New Englanders organized an expedition to end this problem. They had great success and began to feel they were the protectors and defenders of British interests in Canada.

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR (1756-1763)

The French and Indian War (called the Seven Years War in Europe) began in America as a struggle over the Ohio Valley. It brought an end to the French empire on the mainland of North America.

BACKGROUND OF THE WAR

By 1750 the French, numbered about 100,000 in the vast holdings of New France, took alarm at the westward advancement of the English colonists who numbered about 2,000,000. Both France and England claimed the territory east of the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains. King George II in 1749 granted 200,000 acres beyond the Allegheny Mountains to the Ohio Company, a group of Virginia land speculators. To check this advance, the French began building a string of forts to protect French fur traders in the region. The main center of the new forts would be constructed at the forked beginning of the Ohio River, Fort Duquesne. To keep the French from finishing the fort, the governor of Virginia sent a twenty-one year old provincial officer, George Washington, with a body of colonial soldiers, to push the French away from the forks of the Ohio. A short engagement at Fort Necessity resulted in Washington's surrender and the start of the war. The French were able to finish Fort Duquesne soon after.

EVENTS OF THE WAR

The commander of the British forces in America, General Edward Braddock, cut a road through the wilderness from Fort Cumberland in Maryland northwestward to take Fort Duquesne. Braddock's army was ambushed about seven miles from the fort and he suffered his notorious defeat (1755). In 1756 the European phase of the war broke out and the war became global contest. The British forces, divided into four armies with huge colonial membership, in America suffered some defeats the first two years, however, the strength of the British war machine would soon kick in.

In 1758 the British captured Louisbourg, Fort Frontenac (on Lake Ontario), and Fort Duquesne that year. Quebec, the center of French power in Canada, fell the next year and, in 1760 Montreal was taken and France was virtually eliminated from the war in North America. British victories in Europe and India forced the French to negotiate a peace in 1763.

THE TREATY OF PARIS, 1763

By the terms of the treaty: 1) France ceded Canada and all territory east of the Mississippi River to Britain; 2) the French and the Spanish Islands in the West Indies were returned to their original owners; 3) Spain ceded Florida to Britain for the return of Cuba to Spain; 4) France transferred the Louisiana territory west of the Mississippi in exchange for Spain losing Florida. These provisions ended all French claim to any land on the North American continent.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

With the virtual elimination of the French from North America (they retained only two small islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence), the French and their Native American allies were eliminated as a threat to the colonists. Also, their considerable efforts during the war had demonstrated an increasing strength of the colonies and several campaigns, involving troops from various colonies, had familiarized them with other areas, especially in Canada. The colonies gained an increase sense of their own importance in the British Empire.

Conversely, the British believed the colonists should have contributed much more than they did and resolved to govern them more closely in the future. Also, the increased costs of imperial administration brought by the newly acquired territories convinced the crown of the necessity of securing a revenue from the colonies, as well as a revamped administrative structure for colonial relations. Neither of these problems would be dealt with in a manner considerate of colonial interests and feelings.