

## Hostage-taking 1754: Virginians vs Canadians I

Ian K. Steele

---

Volume 16, numéro 1, 2005

URI : [id.erudit.org/iderudit/015727ar](http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/015727ar)

DOI : [10.7202/015727ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/015727ar)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du  
Canada

ISSN 0847-4478 (imprimé)  
1712-6274 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

Citer cet article

Ian K. Steele "Hostage-taking 1754: Virginians vs Canadians I."  
*Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 161 (2005): 49–  
73. DOI : [10.7202/015727ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/015727ar)

---

Tous droits réservés © The Canadian Historical  
Association/La Société historique du Canada, 2007

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services  
d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous  
pouvez consulter en ligne. [[https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-  
dutilisation/](https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/)]

---

**é**rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université  
de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour  
mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. [www.erudit.org](http://www.erudit.org)

# Hostage-taking 1754: Virginians vs Canadians<sup>1</sup>

IAN K. STEELE

## Résumé

*Lorsque les Virginiens, les Canadiens et les Indiens s'affrontèrent dans les régions limitrophes des Alleghenys, ils transformèrent ce territoire en une zone de funeste confusion culturelle au lieu d'en faire un terrain de concessions mutuellement respectées. Faire des prisonniers est très tôt devenu un enjeu important et significatif. Les Indiens qui repeuplaient la région pratiquaient traditionnellement l'esclavage des Panis; ils organisaient des incursions pour faire des prisonniers dans le cadre de querelles sanglantes menées loin en territoire ennemi, et ces prisonniers indiens servaient de monnaie d'échange avec les Européens. La capture de commerçants européens, comme cadeaux diplomatiques, était une stratégie toute récente.*

*Les rivalités commerciales entre les colonies dégénérent en conflits militaires, et les forts dérisoires des deux partis firent l'objet d'une reddition négociée en 1754. Avant que les troupes régulières européennes arrivent en grand nombre et que la guerre franco-anglaise ne soit officiellement déclarée, les colons des deux camps adverses et leurs alliés indiens s'étaient affrontés à trois reprises : en avril, les Virginiens, battus, avaient dû céder leur palissade incomplète érigée au confluent de l'Ohio; en mai, les Virginiens et les Indiens avaient tendu une embuscade à un détachement de Canadiens commandé par l'officier de Jumonville, et les survivants de la première escarmouche avaient demandé quartier. Moins de cinq semaines plus tard, les Canadiens et leurs alliés indiens prenaient leur revanche et forçaient les Virginiens à rendre leur petit fort, le bien-nommé Fort Necessity.*

*En faisant des prisonniers et en prenant des otages dans la région des Alleghenys, les officiers coloniaux adaptaient et violaient les conventions européennes et indiennes; ils cherchaient à s'ajuster aux actions indépendantes de leurs alliés indiens. À la veille d'une guerre majeure, les captifs et leurs camarades d'infortune apprirent que les distinctions qui avaient été faites pourraient très bien être violées.*

---

1 Thanks to Ronald Hoffman, Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, José Igartua, Nancy Rhoden, Maureen Ryan, and the CHA assessors for their considerable help, and to the Ley and Lois Smith Research Fund for financial support.

### ***Abstract***

*When Virginians, Canadians, and Indians clashed, the Allegheny borderlands were a new 'muddle ground' of fateful cultural confusions rather than an established middle ground of recognized compromises. The taking of captives was an early, significant, and portentous part of the contest. Indians who were resettling the region were familiar with traditional panis slavery, with raiding for captives in long-range blood feuds, and with trading Indian captives to Europeans. Their capture of European traders, as diplomatic gifts, was a very recent development.*

*Colonial trade rivalries became military, and the paltry forts became sites of negotiated surrender in 1754. Before European regulars arrived in numbers, or the Anglo-French war was formally declared, colonial intruders surrendered to their Indian and colonial rivals on three occasions. Virginians surrendered their incomplete stockade at the forks of the Ohio in April. In May, Virginians and Indians ambushed a Canadian party under Ensign Jumonville, and survivors of the initial skirmish sought quarter. Within five weeks, avenging Canadians and Indians forced Virginians to surrender their aptly-named Fort Necessity.*

*In taking prisoners and hostages in the Allegheny borderlands, colonial officers adapted and violated both European and Indian conventions, and took different approaches in dealing with the independent actions of their Indian allies. On the eve of a major war, captives and their brethren learned what distinctions had been made, and that they might well be violated.*

When Algonquian, Iroquois and European colonial migrants resettled the Allegheny borderlands in the eighteenth century they brought with them a range of largely incompatible beliefs and habits, including assumptions and practices concerning the capture and treatment of enemies and aliens. This was not a negotiated middle ground of established compromises and tolerances, but a more confusing place of deadly or merciful surprises. In 1754, a year before British regulars arrived in the region and two years before the British and French formally went to war, Virginians, Canadians, and Indians clashed in what could be seen as three parodies of European siege and surrender: Ward's surrender, the Jumonville incident, and the surrender of Fort Necessity. In this new borderland, where no one had cultural dominance and everyone had cultural baggage, neither those who offered nor those who accepted surrender terms could be sure which conventions concerning captives or prisoners of war would apply, though these conventions were matters of life, death, and honour. The problems encountered anticipated features of the climactic war to come, and the distinctions that were made or ignored established and confirmed martial identities.

The captives and captors in colonial North America are always difficult to free from the purposes of their chroniclers. During the Seven Years' War, the terrors of Indian captivity were exaggerated to stiffen the inadequate British colonial resolve, as though Indian captivity was more atrocious than the white practice of taking no Indian captives at all. Captivity narratives remained the most popular American vernacular literature of colonial and early national periods, as long as any Indians were being fought or being sent into their own humiliating captivity on reservations. More recently, scholars have studied captives in very effective support of worthy causes. A fascinating but poorly documented minority of "White Indians" have helped with one recent historical liberation movement, and a minority of white women captives have been called as witnesses in support of another.<sup>2</sup> Captives are also irresistible subjects for the fashionable study of cultural identities and boundaries.<sup>3</sup> This micro-study of the captives of 1754 could be used, a quarter of a millenium after the event, to explore some rather peculiar origins of human rights or to comfort either side in current debates about hostages taken outside of war, 'combattant detainees,' or those imprisoned without trial under 'security certificates.' More comprehensive study of all captives and captors, men and women, Indians and Europeans, French and English, civilians and soldiers, would be rewarding, though evidence is often limited, obscured, and distorted. Captives can reveal risky acts of humanity and bold choices of cultural identity in the treatment of vulnerable enemy aliens. Fighting to take captives, as Indians often did, was not like hunting to kill, and imposed different restraints, risks, and responsibilities. Intercultural clashes, compromises, and cooperation can be seen starkly in the taking of captives by multicultural forces. Watching the captives can also transform our understanding of familiar events, like those of 1754, raising questions

- 
- 2 See, for example, James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 32 (1975): 55-88 [hereafter W&MQ]; cf. Alden T. Vaughan and Daniel K. Richter, "Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indian and New Englanders, 1605-1763," *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings*, 90(1980): 23-99; Peter Stern, "The White Indians of the Borderlands," *Journal of the Southwest*, 33(1991): 262-81. For discussion of white women captives, see *The Indian Captivity Narrative: A Woman's View*, ed. Frances R. Kestler (Garland; New York, 1990); June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill, 1992); Barbara E. Austen, "Captured ... Never Come Back; Social Networks among Female New England Captives, 1689-1767," in *New England/New France 1600-1850*, ed. Peter Bauer (Boston, 1992), 28-38. On white women as masters of white captives, see William Henry Foster, *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier* (Ithaca, NY, 2003).
- 3 Excellent examples include Geoffrey Plank, "The Changing Country of Anthony Casteel: Language, Religion, Geography, Political Loyalty, and Nationality in Mid-Eighteenth Century Nova Scotia," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 27(1998): 53-74; John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York, 1994); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London, 2002).

about the power of those who have long been so confidently reported as being in charge.<sup>4</sup>

Two forms of captivity were familiar in Allegheny country in the early eighteenth century, where Iroquois hunters became Mingo, and where Delaware and Shawnee ‘chain migrated’ to escape the consequences of increasing white settlement in Pennsylvania. There were long-established trades in captives among Indians of the region. The Pawnee, who lived in the center of the continent but were dragged as captives toward either coast, illustrated the range of traditional slave trading. Enough of them were enslaved in New France that the word *panis* was applied to any Indian slave.<sup>5</sup> Such slaves might be adopted, but they were also held in bondage, sold, traded, or given to settle disputes or confirm alliances between Indian communities or with Europeans.

Secondly, the Iroquois and Shawnee, and their perennial southern enemies, the Catawba and Cherokee, continued small-scale traditional raiding for captives who brought martial honour, and either suffered avenging torture or became adoptive kin. While these raids were often defiantly independent of European colonial leaders, the latter could not resist encouraging attacks that supported their own disruptive strategies. These long-distance raids also brought peripheral disputes with colonials, usually over hospitality which passing warriors expected of white settlers. There had been two incidents in 1753 that left seven Virginians dead and one boy captured; these victims would be used shamelessly to promote Virginian belligerence in support of their fledgling Ohio Company.<sup>6</sup> A Shawnee raid that year into South Carolina went awry,

---

4 Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, eds., *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst & Boston, 2003) is an excellent example of this approach.

5 Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, Cal., 1991), 149-56, 180-90; James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, 2002), esp. 1-19, and Brett Rushworth, “A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *W&MQ*, 60 (2003): 777-808 and his forthcoming *Savage Bonds: Indian Slavery and Alliance in New France* (Chapel Hill). For the southeast, where numerous Ohio Shawnee had lived, see Amy Turner Bushnell, “Ruling ‘the Republic of Indians’ in Seventeenth-Century Florida,” in *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, eds. Peter H. Wood, et al. (Lincoln, Neb., 1989), 136; Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The rise of the English empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, 2002).

6 Robert Foyle, his wife, and five children were among the first colonial families on the Monongahela. They were all found murdered on their farm in November 1753. Ten-year-old son of Thomas Cooper had been taken captive from the same region the previous month. *Pennsylvania Gazette* [hereafter *PG*], 27 Dec. 1753, 26 Feb. and 12 March 1754; Alexander Scott Withers, *Chronicles of Border Warfare* (Cincinnati, 1912), 74-5. Dinwiddie’s hyperbolic addresses to the Burgesses and Council, on 14 Feb. 1754, fostering war, were printed in the *PG*, 12 March 1754 and *South Carolina Gazette*, 26 Mar. 1754.

leaving six Shawnee imprisoned in Charleston; sixty years of Shawnee war with the ‘long knives’ began there.<sup>7</sup> The coming war in Allegheny country could be seen, especially by Indians, as growing out of this type of quest for captives.

A third form of Allegheny captivity began in the 1740s. Numerous Pennsylvanian and Canadian traders competed in upper Ohio country, representing alien economic, political, and religious cultures and traders, like missionaries, were potential hostages. Captivity or death could come through criminal opportunism, as retaliation for perceived wrongdoings, or as proof of Indian alliances and friendships. Competing Europeans were not above urging Indians to plunder rivals and sell the confiscated goods to themselves. In these circumstances, what is striking is how seldom Indians were willing to violate their own codes of hospitality in order to choose sides by robbing traders or capturing them for ransom. In 1745 a *métis* trader, licensed by Pennsylvania, had changed sides by leading a Shawnee party that robbed fellow Pennsylvanians of a convoy of furs and skins, and did so before Canadian witnesses.<sup>8</sup> The anti-French “conspiracy of 1747” had been a larger and more widespread resistance in the opposite direction, involving Wyandot, Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Piankashaw Miami. The attacks shook French confidence, and left sixteen Canadian traders dead, and eight others held briefly by the Miami.<sup>9</sup> After Céloron de Blainville’s seemingly ineffective tour of 1749 had posted lead plates declaring sovereignty and warning the English to leave, French commandants at Detroit began paying a bounty for captured English traders. The commandants routinely bought these ‘illegal traders,’ whom they rightly accused of seducing the Indians from their attachment to the French. The captured were seldom used as labourers, as was familiar in the St. Lawrence

---

7 See Ian K. Steele, “The Shawnee and the English: Captives and War, 1753-1765,” in *The Boundaries between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers Of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850*, ed. Daniel P. Barr (Kent, OH, 2006), 1-24.

8 On Peter Chartier, see William A. Hunter, *Peter Chartier, Knave of the Wild Frontier* (Carlisle, PA, 1973); James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), 73-5; Francis Jennings, “Bisaillon (Bezellon, Bizaillon), Peter,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, eds. Frances Halpenny et al. 14 vols. to date (Toronto, 1966-) [hereafter DCB], 3:65-6; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991), 190-2.

9 *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State Of New York*, eds. Edmund B. O’Callaghan and Berthold Fernow, 15 vols. (Albany, NY, 1856-87) [hereafter NYCD], 10:83-8, 114-6, 119-20, 140-41, 150, 181-5; *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 17 (1906), 474-77; White, *Middle Ground*, 202-8; “Orontony,” DCB, 3: 495-6. There is one unconfirmed report that, in their attack on the battoes, the Ottawa took the commanding officer prisoner, whom “they have resolved to return in place of a great trader from Philadelphia who was killed 4 years ago by the french or by his directions.” Public Record Office of Great Britain, Richmond, England [hereafter PRO], CO 5/1095, f. 431.

Valley,<sup>10</sup> but were sent as criminals to imprisonment in Québec and France. None were tried there and, after British diplomatic intervention, the Pennsylvanians were freed from jail in La Rochelle without apology, compensation, or passage money home. It is noteworthy that Canadians involved with the Ottawa in the siege of Pickawillany in 1752 negotiated to acquire the English traders caught there, and sent them to Canada in irons.<sup>11</sup> This strategy worked; by the time of the Canadian military invasion of the Allegheny Valley in 1753, very few Pennsylvania traders remained in the region.

The next year these three versions of captivity in Allegheny country, all of which implicated white colonials, would be joined by a fourth, intercolonial captivity. Although they had not confronted each other before, Virginian and Canadian militiamen and soldiers brought martial inheritances that reached back to the ferocities of Reformation Europe and had been reshaped by generations of belligerence and coexistence with Indian and colonial rivals. By 1754 these colonial practices were being challenged and changed, unevenly, by newer and more humane ‘honours of war’ conventions of the professional imperial armies.

Intercolonial captivity in 1754 was framed by the fact that this particular colonial invasion involved forts. Garrisoned forts not only established that the contest was military more than commercial, but also allowed defenders to negotiate their surrender and survival while still in a position to inflict some casualties upon their attackers. Additionally, surrender of a fort could provoke formal hostilities among Europeans, while documenting a land claim that had momentarily been trumped by force. Despite their reputation as adept and itinerant *coureurs de bois*, it was the Canadians who had long-since built a string of trading forts that linked their Great Lakes network and protected their Wabash route to Louisiana, while skirting the less valuable upper Ohio country at a considerable distance. Those French trading forts had only token garrisons and were less alien to Indians for being commanded by veteran Canadian officers of the *troupes de la marine*, whose experience in the area, awareness of local conventions, and personal trading interests moderated the application of the commands of the French noblemen who attempted to govern New France. In sharp contrast, the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania assembly opposed all

10 Ralph Kilgore and Morris Turner were captured by 7 Indians supported by the Detroit commandant Longueuil, who then bought the captives and put them to “country work” on a nearby farm for three months before taking them east. *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 1683-1790* 16 vols. (Harrisburg, 1851-2) [hereafter cited as MPCP], 5:480-4; PG, 1 November, 1750; Charles Augustus Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail: Or the Ventures and Adventures of the Pennsylvania Traders on the Allegheny Path*, 2 vols. (New York, 1911), 2:265-7.

11 R. David Edmunds, “Pickawillany: French military power vs. British economics,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 58 (1975): 169-84 and “Old Briton,” in his *American Indian Leaders* (Lincoln, Neb., 1980), 1-20.

forts on Pennsylvania's Allegheny/Ohio frontier, though hundreds of Pennsylvanian traders traveled the Ohio woods and waterways. Even more than the settlers on isolated borderland farms, these traders were entirely dependent upon the hospitality and tolerance of Indians who were more numerous and often better armed. The first British colonial military post on this frontier was not built until 1749, when Virginians built a cabin at Will's Creek, Maryland, in support of their Ohio Company.

The 1753 Canadian invasion of the Upper Ohio brought the building and garrisoning of forts at Presqu'île and Le Boeuf and improved the road between them that linked Lake Erie and the Allegheny River headwaters of the Ohio. Montreal-born Paul Marin de la Malue had spent most of the preceding thirty years as an officer and trader at upper Great Lakes posts; at sixty-one he worked himself, as well as many of his 1500-man army, to death completing this ambitious assignment. The first local Delaware chief to declare his support for these French was Munsee chief Custaloga, who did so by capturing two Pennsylvania traders and presenting them to Marin. Marin accepted the captives and followed what had become his government's convention since 1750 for dealing with English 'illegal' traders in this region; he sent them in irons into what would be six months of captivity at Montreal, Québec, and France.<sup>12</sup> Marin may have seen himself as military gentry despising alien traders; he more likely saw these captives as traders in effective competition against himself and his backers in the Indian trade.

Understandably, almost all English traders had abandoned the Upper Ohio in 1753, and the local Indians might be expected to have welcomed these new French forts as essential trading alternatives. However, Indian resettlers on the Upper Ohio were suspicious of forts and cautious about choosing sides, however much they would have appreciated the competition for their trade and alliance. Some of the Shawnee, Miami, Delaware and Mingo, for whom "first contact" was only a faint ancestral memory, had still occasionally stockaded their own villages in times of danger. The Shawnee had stockaded Lower Shawnee Town at the approach of Céloron's expedition in 1749, as did the Piankashaw Miami to protect their new centre of English trade at Pickawillany.<sup>13</sup> Indian protests against the Canadian invasion of 1753 came from as far away as the Mohawk Valley. Theyanoguin, a.k.a Chief Hendrick, complained angrily to New York authorities after Marin's outward-bound army was seen on Lake Ontario, and

---

12 Upon release, John Trotter and his servant James MacLaughlin somehow made their way to Bordeaux, where MacLaughlin was left for lack of passenger space in the *Betty and Sally* of Philadelphia, which brought Trotter home within seven months of his capture. *MPCP*, 5:659-60; *The Diaries of George Washington*, eds. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, 6 vols. (Charlottesville, Va., 1976-1979), I:138n.; William A. Hunter, *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758* (Harrisburg, 1960), 140.

13 "Marin de la Malue, Paul," *DCB*, 3:431-2; *Diaries of Washington*, I:138n.



this complaint helped provoke the famed Albany Conference of 1754. Ohio Seneca leader Tanighrisson, the Iroquois ‘Half-King’ who had recently emerged as the diplomatic leader of a growing number of pro-English Indians in the Upper Ohio, made three formal protests that were brushed aside by Marin and his successor. These rejections confirmed the new situation and were particularly humiliating because they were witnessed by Tanighrisson’s fellow-Seneca who were with the Canadians as hired hunters. He found no support among the cautious and formally-neutral leaders of Iroquoia. Pennsylvania authorities and traders had encouraged Tanighrisson with presents that seemed to confirm recent mutual-defence treaties, but now they failed him as well. Pennsylvania’s Lieutenant-Governor James Hamilton was restrained by the Quaker-controlled assembly, and by the suddenly-cautious English proprietors of the colony. Hamilton was forced to do nothing more belligerent than encourage the hitherto-rival Virginians as they confronted the Canadians.<sup>14</sup>

The objections to the new French forts that eventually precipitated war came from Virginia. Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie’s 1753 summons to the French to leave the Ohio country was even more quixotic than had been C eloron de Blainville’s demand that the English leave the Ohio country four years earlier. Yet Dinwiddie’s message, delivered by the ambitious young George Washington to Marin’s seasoned and unmoved successor,<sup>15</sup> was only a preliminary to more forceful objections. The Ohio Company storehouse at Will’s Creek became the base for their invasion and by January 1754 a newly-raised company of Virginian soldiers, under trader-turned-soldier Captain William Trent, were at the mouth of Redstone Creek on the Monongahela River, where they built “a strong Square Log House with Loop Holes sufficient to have made a good Defence with a few men ...”<sup>16</sup> The Virginians were now less than 50 miles south of the forks of the Ohio. Meanwhile, the Canadians were at Fort Le Boeuf, some 100 miles north of those same forks, and were negotiating to build their next fort at Logstown, halving the distance between them and their opponents.

Tanighrisson, humiliated into a desperately pro-Virginian stance, formally laid the first log of the new Ohio Company storehouse at the Forks of the Ohio, in February 1754. Ensign Edward Ward led forty-one Virginian soldiers and workmen in constructing something similar to the Redstone Creek blockhouse but, on hearing that a major French force was approaching, Ward and Tanighrisson oversaw a hastily constructed stockade around the new storehouse. This was to be the first of two indefensible Virginian stockades built that year, each succeeding only in providing a pretext for formal surrenders that

---

14 See Hamilton to Dinwiddie, 6 May 1753, quoted in Hunter, *Forts*, 15.

15 For Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, whom Washington described as “an Elderly Gentleman, and has much the Air of a Soldier,” see *DCB*, 3:374-6.

16 Ensign Edward Ward, quoted in Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire before the American Revolution*, 15 vols. (Caldwell, Idaho and New York, 1936-70), 4:188.

negotiated personal survival and also served as backhanded claims to land and sovereignty that had been temporarily overpowered.

Captain Claude-Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur, backed by at least 500 *troupes de la marine* and Canadian militia with eighteen cannon, formally summoned Ward to surrender on April 17. Contrecoeur was a thirty-year veteran of the frontier military, had been commandant at Fort Ste. Frédéric and second in command on Céloron's 1749 tour, but he was also a "wise and prudent" second-generation Canadian seigneur.<sup>17</sup> In an unwritten surrender that avoided bloodshed, captivity, or formal recognition, Ward's entire group of eight extraders and thirty-three green soldiers was allowed to retreat to Redstone Creek, bearing their small arms and the tools that they had refused to sell to Contrecoeur. This was not quite 'the honours of war', but these Virginians were certainly being treated as soldiers, rather than rival traders who would have been arrested.<sup>18</sup> Humanity had coincided with good sense in limiting casualties and additional friction with the Virginians. Tanighrisson left the stockade with the defeated, and railed against the French in vain. He was the only Indian noticed in this simple intercolonial incident, though others doubtlessly witnessed it, and many more heard of it. Contrecoeur had gained control of the Forks, and acquired some building materials for Fort Duquesne, construction of which began immediately on the site.

Within a week, Pennsylvanian traders Elizabeth Williams, Andrew McBriar, Nehemiah Stevens, and John Kennedy became the first of at least 139 English captives who would be brought to this fort in its five years of existence.<sup>19</sup> A trading session at a Virginian outpost had apparently turned ugly, and disgruntled Delaware led by 'English John' had taken these four Pennsylvanians captive and offered them for sale at Fort Duquesne. Contrecoeur negotiated for the captives, and sent them to Québec, from whence they were sent to France. English John had thereby declared himself with the French, perhaps more profitably than had Custaloga, and Contrecoeur had confirmed the clear distinction between illegal traders and rival soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

17 "Pécaudy de Contrecoeur," *DCB*, 4:617-8.

18 *Papiers Contrecoeur*, ed. Fernand Grenier (Québec, 1952), 117-9; Alfred Proctor James and Charles Morse Stotz, *Drums in the Forest* (Pittsburgh, 1958), 124-6; *Travels in New France by J.C.B.* (Harrisburg, 1941), 54-6; Gipson, *Empire*, 4:300-10; Edward Ward's deposition of 7 May 1754, PRO, CO5/1328, fols. 101-2.

19 Author's database, built on a wide study of printed and manuscript sources, which currently includes 5,769 people killed or captured on the Allegheny-Ohio frontier between 1745 and 1765.

20 The four worked for the Lowrey brothers, licensed traders of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. A Charles Williams was an unlicensed trader five years earlier. Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1:177-9; 2:334-42; *The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817*, ed. Kenneth P. Bailey (Arcata, Cal. 1947), 121; PG, 9 May, 1754 and 8 Dec. 1757; *New York Mercury*, May 13th, 1754; *South Carolina Gazette*, 4 Jun. 1754. John Kennedy was separated from the other; his experience is summarized in PG, 8 Dec. 1757.

While the Canadians had focused their displeasure on English traders rather than soldiers, and followed orders to maintain the fiction of peace, the Virginians were pursuing a more belligerent policy in an attempt to recover the lost initiative. Washington's men were building a road from Will's Creek to the Monongahela at Redstone Creek, intent on bringing cannon and reinforcements against Fort Duquesne. Dinwiddie's instruction to Washington had already authorized him to restrain anyone seeking to "disrupt the Works or interrupt our Settlements ... & in Case of resistance to make Prisoners of or kill & destroy them."<sup>21</sup> Tanighrisson prepared the battleground more directly. He warned Washington on 23 May that a French army had left Fort Duquesne to confront him. Five days later Tanighrisson led Washington's detachment on a night expedition that found the French camp, and ambushed Jumonville's substantial scouting party in the morning, leaving ten Canadians and one Virginian dead and twenty-one Canadians captives.

This Jumonville incident was a skirmish in peacetime that was bound to have consequences. Washington's diary<sup>22</sup> indicates Tanighrisson's role in planning the attack, in commanding the final scout, and notes that all the attackers had approached the camp "in Indian fashion." Washington records that, once positioned, he gave the order to fire and the fighting continued for a quarter of an hour, during which ten French were killed including Jumonville. He mentions that the Indians scalped the dead Frenchmen and took most of their weapons. Washington prefaced his brief battle report to Dinwiddie with a long defense of recent complaints by his officers (which he had supported and for which Dinwiddie had just rebuked him) insisting that they were not being paid "as gentlemen and officers," and threatening to resign. Washington then went on to offer a similar but even shorter version of the fighting than he had confided to his diary.<sup>23</sup> He claimed to have convinced Tanighrisson and those few with him to join the Virginians in attacking the French, which they did successfully. Jumonville was among the fatalities. As in his diary, Washington made no mention of any preliminary summons or shots from the French, any French request for quarter, or any explanation of how the killing stopped. He mentioned only that he sent the prisoners to Winchester because he and his officers were convinced that their pretense of being a diplomatic mission was cover

---

21 For Dinwiddie instructions to Washington [ January 1754] and Tanighrisson's message, see *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, ed. W.W. Abbott, 10 vols. (Charlottesville, 1983-95), 1:65, 105 [hereafter GWP].

22 The diary was captured at Fort Necessity. The initial translation, by Governor Duquesne's secretary, is the best surviving version, which varies little from *Mémoire contenant le Précis des Faîtes, avec leurs pièces justificatives pour servir de réponse aux observations envoyées par les ministres d'Angleterre dans les cours d'Europe* (Paris, 1756), published by the French government. The texts are compared in *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 133-81, see esp. 155-7.

23 G.W. to Dinwiddie 18 May 1754, answered 25 May, received 27 May. *GWP*, 1:100, 102-4.

for a force that was spying and preparing to call for reinforcements. "It was too great an indulgence to send them back." Twenty-two-year-old Washington portrayed himself as firmly in charge throughout, and was apparently untroubled by unavoidable comparisons with his own little summons-and-spying mission that had been met with civility a few months earlier. Washington promised surviving officers Jacques Druillon and Michel Pepin La Force "all the favour that's due to Imprison'd Officer's[sic]." It was only several days later, amid boastful comparisons between the Virginians and their opponents, that Washington mentioned that seven Indians had fought with the Virginians, while others merely "serv'd to knock the poor unhappy wounded in the head and beriev'd [sic] them of their Scalps."<sup>24</sup>

Washington's versions of what happened in what became known as Jumonville Glen were cryptic and misleading. Seeking quarter in battle was always riskier than offering to surrender from behind a stockade. European commanders routinely sent their cavalry to slaughter defeated enemies who were fleeing a battlefield. Indians could not understand why those who had just been trying to kill you were suddenly to be saved, simply because they asked. There were also three pro-French witnesses who reported that Washington ordered his men to fire while a translator with Jumonville was attempting to read the summons aloud.<sup>25</sup>

The first English colonial newspaper 'account from the westward,' which has been overlooked by scholars, gives a very full, illuminating, and plausible description. It begins with the claim that some of the French fired first, killing a Virginian, then Washington's men returned fire killing seven or eight Frenchmen.

... on which the Rest took to their Heels; but the Half King, and his Indians, who lay in Ambush to cut them off in their Retreat, fell upon them, and soon killed and scalped Five of them. Monsieur Le Force finding that they were all likely to lose their Lives under the Hands of the Savages, called to his Men, and advised them to surrender to the English; they immediately, with great Precipitation, ran towards the English, flung down their Arms, and begg'd for Quarter. Major Washington interposed between them and the Half-King, and it was with great Difficulty that he prevented the Indians from doing them fur-

24 Ibid., 1:107-17, 124. Washington's initial reports did not claim the French fired first. Cf. Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, 2000), 6.

25 Druillon to Dinwiddie, *The Official Papers of Robert Dinwiddie, 1751-1758*, ed. R.A. Brock, 2 vols. (Richmond, Va., 1883-4), 1:225. The Canadian Morceau, who was likely a runner sent back to Fort Duquesne as soon as the confrontation commenced, gave an account which Contrecoeur sent to Duquesne on 2 June 1754, printed in the *Précis des Faïtes*, 107. For English deserter Denis Kaninguen (Cunningham?) see "Journal de Joseph-Gaspard Chaussegros de Léry, Lieutenant des troupes, 1754-1755," *Rapport de l'Archivists de la Province de Québec pour 1927-1928* (Québec, 1928), 372-3 [hereafter RAPQ].

ther Mischief, the Half-King insisting on Scalping them all, as it was their Way of Fighting, and he alledged that those People had killed, boiled, and eat[sic] his Father,<sup>26</sup> and that the Indians would not be satisfied without all their Scalps; however, Major Washington at Length persuaded him to be content with what Scalps he had already got. One of those Five which were killed and scalped by the Indians, was Monsieur Jumonville, an Ensign, whom the Half King himself dispatched with his Tomahawk.”<sup>27</sup>

This account has verisimilitude and may well have come from an eyewitness. Parts of it are corroborated by two second-hand accounts. John Shaw, a soldier with the Virginia regiment in the area but not involved in the action, gave sworn evidence that he was told that one of the French had “fired a Gun upon which Col. Washington gave the Word for all his Men to Fire”, that the French attempted to flee “but our Indians haveing gone round the French when they saw them immediately fled back to the English and delivered up their Arms Desireing Quarter which was accordingly promised them.” Shaw was also told that Tanighrisson tomahawked Jumonville thereafter.<sup>28</sup> French officers retold an English deserter’s report that Tanighrisson had killed Jumonville when the fighting ended, after expressing surprise that “You are not dead yet, my father.”<sup>29</sup> It is puzzling that Washington’s cryptic accounts of the Jumonville incident never included either Tanighrisson’s execution of Jumonville nor his own negotiations to acquire and preserve the captives.

Virginia’s Lieutenant-Governor Dinwiddie, who had no military experience, decided what to do with the captured. He was comfortable with holding these prisoners in jail, though anxious to claim to his British superiors that the Virginians were merely auxiliaries to the Indians and had not been first to disturb the Anglo-

---

26 Tanighrisson was likely referring to the death and ceremonial eating of Memeskia, the Piankashaw Miami chief, after the surrender of Pickawillany in 1752. Tanighrisson was then speaking figuratively of being Memeskia’s son.

27 Reprinted in *PG*, 27 June 1754.

28 Deposition of 21 August 1754, *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750-August 7, 1754*, ed. William L. McDowell, Jr., (Columbia, 1958) [hereafter cited as *SCDIA*], 2:4.

29 Anderson, *Crucible*, 5-7; “Journal de de Léry,” 372 ff. On the entire incident, see Marcel Trudel, “L’Affaire Jumonville,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 6 (1952-3): 331-73 translated in abridged form by Donald H. Kent in *Pennsylvania History* 21(1954): 351-81. Tanighrisson’s execution of Jumonville deserves attention as contributing to the launch of war between the Europeans, but it should be noted that only eighty Ohio Valley Indians joined him and Scarouady on the English side; most resisted their subsequent recruiting tour, complete with French scalps and new hatchets, and instead allied with the French. *GWP*, 1: 122-3.

I have ignored Captain Stephen’s account, in *PG* 19 Sept. 1754, which is fictional about his own presence, and an implausible regular officer’s vision of some other regiment in claiming that, because the French had been better at keeping their muskets dry than had the Virginians, “we could not depend on ours, and therefore keeping up our Fire, advanced as near as we could with fixt Bayonets, and received their Fire ... our Bayonets gave us an Advantage over them.”

French peace.<sup>30</sup> Ensign Jacques Druillon who was one of relatively few French-born officers in the *troupes de la marine*, claimed to be part of a peacetime diplomatic party and produced the written summons from Contrecoeur ordering the Virginians out of the Ohio Valley. Druillon was the only one of the French wounded known to have survived the skirmish, and he was granted an officer's parole despite his sensible insistence that he was not a prisoner of war. After aborted negotiations to exchange him, Druillon spent parts of the next year at liberty in Williamsburg and Baltimore, then sailed in an English merchantman to Bristol in June of 1755. He was not considered a prisoner of war in England, and was sent home to France.<sup>31</sup> By 1756 he was back in Canada, and served actively until Montreal surrendered five years later. He eventually claimed expenses for helping his fellow captives during their thirteen months of detainment in Virginia.<sup>32</sup>

Two cadets and ten other Canadians of the captured group had also been sent to England, perhaps claiming to be French. Two of those soldiers later complained that they had been poorly fed while in a Virginian prison, during a rough voyage to London in March of 1755, and while held there aboard another ship for more than three months. They had not been made to work for their subsistence, either as crewmen aboard the homeward-bound English merchantman or on the naval vessel in the port of London, and they admitted that their poor food was the same as that of the ships' crews. Their rations were, however, vindictively withheld for four days after news of General Edward Braddock's defeat reached London late in August 1755, forcing them to live on food smuggled to them by sympathetic Catholics. Despite heightened diplomatic tensions, and a British naval attack on French ships in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, these captives of a colonial pre-war skirmish were given new clothes and allowed to board the packetboat for Calais at the end of September 1755.<sup>33</sup> The other

30 *Dinwiddie Papers*, 1:201-7, 227-8.

31 *Ibid.*, 1:298, 313, 347; 2:227-8, 367-8; Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa [hereafter LAC], MG5, A1, 439, 155.

32 LAC, MG5, A1, 439, 155; Archives Nationales, Paris, France, Col. E, 139, n.p.; "Druillon de Macé, Pierre-Jacques," *DCB*, 4: 226-7; E.Z. Massicotte, "Pierre-Jacques Druillon, seigneur de Macé," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques* 26(1920) : 125-6. *GWP*, 1:110-11, 119.

33 LAC, MG 1 E, vol. 27, n.p.; *NYCD*, 10:352-3. *Collections de Manuscrits relatifs à la Nouvelle-France*, 4 vols. (Québec, 1883-85 ), 3:521-2. News of Braddock's defeat was printed in London on 26 August. *Gentleman's Magazine* XXV, 378. On 20 October 1755, the British Navy's Commissioners for Sick and Wounded Seamen were still seeking Admiralty orders concerning a reported 21 prisoners from Virginia expected aboard various merchantmen. PRO, Adm. 98/5, fols. 118-9.

An official French *Précis des faits*, translated and printed in Philadelphia in 1757, claimed that only seven of the prisoners were sent to England and "Upon their Arrival, they implored the Assistance of the Duke de Mirepoix, who sent them over to France at the Expence of the King. What is become of the rest we are altogether ignorant?" *A Memorial Containing a Summary View of Facts, with their Authorities. In Answer to the Observations Sent by the English Ministry to the Courts of Europe* (Translated from the French, (Philadelphia, 1757), 25-6.

Canadian captives, with the notable exception of La Force, were sent home via Martinique, where a British colonial ship could combine that mission with some illicit trading and spying. These six Canadians were back in Canada by the end of October 1755.<sup>34</sup> All these captivities had ended while the colonies and empires were still formally at peace. The captors had paid to maintain their prisoners, and made no claims against the French for those expenses, as would have been part of European wartime exchanges.<sup>35</sup>

Washington's ambush had fortuitously captured Canadian frontier diplomat, linguist, trader, and soldier Michel Pepin La Force, whose considerable reputation Washington had earlier noted.<sup>36</sup> La Force should not have been risked on a scout or mission to Virginia that had not even included Indians. He became the prize captive of the Jumonville incident, and he would never return home. To keep La Force, Washington naively urged that all the captured be considered spies, or prisoners of a war that had not yet begun. Washington immediately claimed "looseing La Force, I really think, w'd tend more to our disservice than 50 other Men," a self-congratulatory judgement later supported from Fort Duquesne and Québec.<sup>37</sup> Dinwiddie ordered La Force brought to Williamsburg, and warned the escort to "Look on him as a cunning, designing man, and therefore require double care." Dinwiddie knew he was mistreating La Force, and in justification called him "a most wicked fellow" and said that the Virginia Council had begged that La Force be kept a close prisoner.<sup>38</sup> He was an officer, who had displayed wise leadership during the battle, and Washington had promised him appropriate treatment. This should have included a parole of honour, which he was apparently not given, and freedom

34 *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 157n.; *Collection de Manuscrits relatifs*, 3:521.

35 The Convention of Écluse [Sluis] of February 6, 1759 concerning prisoners was reprinted, in French and English, as *Traité et Convention pour les malade, Blessés et prisonniers de guerre ...* by W. Dunlap in Philadelphia in 1759. This convention revived, elaborated, and improved upon the convention signed at Frankfort on Mayne 18 July 1743 between the French and the Austrians. See *The Genuine cartel in French and English, faithfully compared with the original, which was signed at Frankfort, July the 18th 1743* (London, 1746). Thanks to Maureen Ryan for this reference. See also Francis Abell, *Prisoners of War in Britain 1756 to 1815* (Oxford, 1914).

36 Michel Pepin, son of surveyor Pierre Pepin La Force and Michelle Leber, was born at Fort St. Joseph-des-Illinois on 16 March 1721. He became a captain in the *troupes de la marine* in 1750 and was active in the fur trade in the early 1750s. His wife Agathe Limoge [Armand], whom he married in 1744, managed his affairs in his long absence, until her death in 1772. Parchemin: banque de données notariales (1626-1784), Université de Québec à Montréal, hereafter Parchemin UQAM, and [www.genealogie.umontreal.ca](http://www.genealogie.umontreal.ca). Thanks to José Igartua and Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne for these references.

37 GW to Dinwiddie, 29 May 1754, GWP,1:111,201-2; R. Stobo to Dinwiddie, 28 July 1754, *The Memoirs of Major Robert Stobo of the Virginia Regiment* [London, 1800] (Pittsburgh, 1854), 87-8. On La Force, see *South Carolina Gazette*, 11 Jun. 1754 and 8 Aug. 1754.

38 *Dinwiddie Papers*, 1:297; 2:227-8.

from imprisonment. Instead, La Force was held in prison in Williamsburg for five years, though he attempted to escape repeatedly, succeeding once briefly. He was finally sent to New York in November 1759, when the Virginians and British Major-General Jeffrey Amherst thought of exchanging him for the only pre-war hostage still held in Canada.<sup>39</sup> Captain Anthony Wheelock, Amherst's trusted, well-informed, and humane Commissary for Prisoners, called La Force 'the hostage,' but argued for his inclusion in a general prisoner exchange. As Wheelock set up the carefully graded exchange roster, he suspected La Force's accurate self-description as a "Captain of Provincials" who had no company, but reported "he must be something or other & having been so long Prisoner & being at Jamaica [New York] I cou'd not avoid sending him up" to Crown Point for exchange.<sup>40</sup> Amherst, who had developed increasing anxiety about Canadian *troupes de la marine* officers, stopped La Force, and sent him back to another full year in comfortable custody on Long Island.<sup>41</sup> To keep all captured *troupes de la marine* officers out of the rest of the war, Amherst not only refused to exchange them, he also interpreted the 1760 surrender of Canada to authorize the eventual shipping of these Canadian officers to France, rather than allowing them to settle in British colonies or return home to a British-controlled Canada, as he did with all other Canadian soldiers. In December of 1760 La Force, then thirty-nine, ended six-and-one-half-years in custody by joining more than 500 French regulars and marine officers who were sent to France. There is no evidence that La Force ever returned to North America.<sup>42</sup>

Diplomatically, the Jumonville affair had been a disproportional Virginian response to Contrecoeur's humane treatment of Ward's little band, but the Canadians had an opportunity to reply in kind just over a month later, when Washington surrendered Virginia's second hastily-assembled stockade, Fort Necessity. Contrecoeur had prepared a force of 500 Canadians and eleven Indians to avenge the killing of Jumonville and, upon request, gave the com-

39 Captain Jacob Van Braam. Amherst Papers, PRO, WO 34/38, fol. 207, 210.

40 Wheelock to Amherst, 29 Nov. 1759, PRO, WO 34/98, fols. 35-6; Huntington Library, San Marino, CA [hereafter HL], LO 5468; Fauquier to Amherst, 17 Mar. 1759, *Ibid.*, fol. 21-2. La Force was a captain, the highest rank given, in the *troupes de la marine*, from 1750.

41 Amherst Papers, PRO, WO 34/38, fol. 210; HL LO 5464 and 5468; *Maryland Gazette*, 26 August 1756. Pierre Pouchot, *Memoirs of the Late War in North America Between England and France*, ed. B.L. Dunnigan (Youngstown, New York, 1994), 515; *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:227-8, 367-8; Robert C. Alberts, *The Most Extraordinary Adventures of Major Robert Stobo* (Boston, 1965), 183.

42 In 1760 Quebec notary S. Sanguinet noted that La Force was a prisoner '*en la Nouvelle Angleterre*' and in 1771 notary J.-C. Panet observed that he had been away in foreign countries for a number of years. Parchemin, UQAM. Other marine officers sent to France with La Force did return. Captain Charles Philippe Aubry and Captain François Coulon de Villiers went to Louisiana; Testard de Montigny and Marin de La Malgue  *fils* were captured again aboard ships bound to Newfoundland early in 1762, and repatriated. DCB, 4:513-4, 733-4.



mand to Jumonville's elder brother, who had just arrived from Montreal with 600 Canadians and 130 mission Indians. After a long and divided Indian council that worried about causing a war that would disrupt their illicit trade along the Richelieu-Hudson corridor, ninety of these mission Indians decided to join the retaliatory expedition. Evidently only six or seven Ohio Indians, including "English John," joined this attack force.<sup>43</sup> Some three hundred Anglo-Virginian soldiers, armed with muskets, bayonets, and nine swivel guns, would normally have been expected to defend any fortified position against six hundred men attacking without cannon. What apparently began as a European-style open field battle very quickly became a small arms exchange in which the Virginians remained quite exposed within their low-lying stockade and surrounding two-foot-deep trenches that were filling with water. The Canadians and Indians were sniping from the better cover of nearby woods. In a day-long battle amid pouring rain, the Virginians suffered five times as many casualties as their opponents. Nonetheless, Villiers' Indian allies were losing enthusiasm for this kind of fight, and he proposed a parley.<sup>44</sup>

By the first minutes of that fourth of July, two colonial soldiers who had never been to Europe and had just spent a wet day fighting in what both must have seen as the middle of nowhere, agreed on a formal and decidedly European capitulation document. The terms were prepared by or for Villiers, who had never fought Europeans or colonials, though he was a hardened veteran of warfare against the Chickasaw and Fox. He had also commanded Fort Miami from 1750 to 1753, where he had confined at least seven English traders and sent them off to imprisonment in Canada.<sup>45</sup> Villiers' importation of European martial values into the capitulation may have owed something to his second in command, Captain François-Marc-Antoine Le Mercier, veteran French regular officer in the War of the Polish Succession, and now an artillery officer and engineer in the *troupes de la marine*.<sup>46</sup> Le Mercier knew what the honours of war were, but had also been with Contrecoeur at Ward's surrender a season earlier, where no written document had been thought necessary.

George Washington, ambitious to be a conventional officer-gentleman like his half-brother Lawrence, was new to that life but was familiar, from his newspaper the Virginia Gazette with current European siege surrender conventions. His immediate advisor on martial niceties in this sodden wilderness outpost was Jacob Van Braam, a former lieutenant in the Dutch army and teacher of fencing and French in Virginia, now serving as captain in the new Virginia

---

43 D. Peter MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years' War* (Toronto, 1996), 42-50. Stobo's letter of 28 July 1754, in MPCP, 6:162.

44 *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 200, not in the printed version of the journal in *Précis des faits*. John Shaw's affidavit, SCDA, 2: 3-7.

45 *DCB*, 3:148-9.

46 *Ibid*, 4:458-61.

Regiment and as Washington's translator.<sup>47</sup> Captain James Mackay, veteran of Georgia border warfare and commander of British regulars of the South Carolina Independent company that had joined Washington in time for the siege, signed the revealing terms of surrender as well. The English signers, perhaps hampered by their ignorance of French, by water drops on the paper, by poor light, or by the fact they were in a hopeless situation, were not much worried about the agreement's preamble, which stated that the French force never intended to disrupt the continuing peace between the crowns and sought only to revenge the assassination of Jumonville and to hinder English settlement on lands of the King of France. Whatever Washington misunderstood of that French document, it should not have been the word *l'assassin*.<sup>48</sup> Once again the French insisted that the peace continue, even amid this formal surrender of a fortification.

Villiers, noting in his journal that it was not normal to take prisoners in peacetime and that they were a drain on provisions even during war,<sup>49</sup> allowed the defeated garrison to return to Virginia, taking all their baggage except the artillery. They were to have the "honours of war" afforded to European enemies whose commendable resistance had almost always lasted much longer than one day. This meant that the defeated Virginians could retreat without being taken prisoner, could march out of the fort carrying their small arms, with drums beating and regimental flags flying. They could even be accompanied by one of their own swivel guns on its carriage, though they would need to pull it by hand. This was all *au courant* in western Europe, though not the added clause that stated these privileges were granted "to convince them we treat them as Friends." The Virginians were even allowed to cache their belongings, having no surviving draft animals, and to place a guard over those belongings until they could be removed.

In return for such generous terms, Villiers took hostages to ensure that his main demand was met: he required the safe return to Fort Duquesne, within two and a half months, of all the French and Canadian prisoners taken in the Jumonville incident. While such an arrangement was seldom reported in this borderland,<sup>50</sup> it had a long history in Europe, on the Atlantic, and in America.

47 John E. Ferling, *The First of Men: A life of George Washington* (Knoxville, 1988), 20.

48 Adam Stephen vigorously defended Washington, and accused Van Braam, in his account for the *PG*, 22 August 1754.

49 *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 201.

50 In 1751, after a Shawnee was killed and his family captured, the Shawnee captured four unlicensed French traders. They sent two of them, named Ste. Marie and La Mirande, to the Illinois to find the murderers, while holding La Mirande's wife and another trader as hostages. The investigators returned with condolence presents and the captives were soon returned as well. *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War*, eds. Theodore C. Pease and Ernestine Jenison, (Springfield, Ill., 1940), 362-5; Joseph L. Peyser, *Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre; Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur* (East Lansing, 1996), 26, 51-2.

The very last time that the British ever provided the French with diplomatic hostages in Europe had occurred only six years earlier, when two British peers were given as hostages to ensure the return of Cape Breton to the French.<sup>51</sup> In maritime war, and most recently between 1744 and 1748, fully one-third of prize vessels taken by privateers were ransomed, and one or two of a captured ship's officers were usually surrendered as hostages until the ransom was paid.<sup>52</sup> We do not know whether Washington and his officers worried much about whether they had the power to promise the return of Druillon and his comrades, but the defeated officers did decide that their hostages would be the only two unmarried captains of the Virginia regiment present, Jacob Van Braam and Robert Stobo, neither of whom had been born in Virginia.<sup>53</sup> The Virginians were also required to strike their colors, to surrender the fort, and to give their *parole d'honneur* that they would not rebuild there or anywhere west of the mountains for a year. This mimicked another common European convention that had parolees promise not to fight for a year, but the Governor of New France was understandably upset by this adaptation, which implied that the Virginians could return to contest the Ohio in a year, as they would.<sup>54</sup>

Nearly one hundred Indians who had assisted the victors were not part of the surrender negotiations, though the mission Indians who were the majority of this group were familiar with New France's lucrative trade in captives in war and in peace. Although Villiers guaranteed not to harm the retreating Virginians, he wisely added that the French would "restrain, as much as shall be in our Power, the Indians who are with us." This restraint did not include applying force against his allies to protect his enemies. He was admitting that that Indians were independent allies, and he knew they would not be impressed with these very alien and illogical terms after a siege in which one of them had been killed and two wounded.<sup>55</sup> Villiers confessed to his diary that, though the Indians had faithfully obeyed his commands, they now thought themselves entitled to booty. He hurried to have the Virginian artillery smashed, the stockade destroyed, and his force moved out to minimize "the disorder which could

---

51 *European Treaties bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, eds. F.G. Davenport and C.O. Paullin, 4 vols. (Washington, 1917-37) 4:74. The hostages were Henry Bowes Howard, 11th Earl of Suffolk and Charles, 9th Baron Cathcart.

52 Carl E. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes: American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1991), 203-5; Peter Earle, *Sailors: English merchant seamen, 1650-1775* (London, 1998), 123.

53 See Trudel, "L'Affaire Jumonville." Villiers' journal and the unadulterated French text of the surrender are printed in *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 196-205.

54 *Ibid.*, 223-4.

55 Such surrender terms would again trouble Indians from Canadian mission villages at the sieges of Fort Oswego (1756) and Fort William Henry (1757). On Fort William Henry, where Villiers and Le Mercier were present but not prominent in negotiations, see the author's *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (New York, 1993).

undoubtedly follow.”<sup>56</sup> Indians took or destroyed much of the English baggage, and killed and scalped two of the seriously wounded and three others who were evidently drunk and asleep.<sup>57</sup> The terrified Virginians fled, leaving much baggage including one of their flags and Washington’s own incriminating journal.

When Indians later offered Villiers ten English prisoners they had taken, he offended these allies by confirming his agreement, and the European values he evidently shared with his enemies. He ordered the ten released to join their retreating fellow-soldiers, and sent six Canadian militiamen along as what proved to be an inadequate escort. While this party was travelling to catch up with the other retreating Virginians, the Indians decided to strip the ten prisoners (they had not been instructed to return their clothes), killing and scalping three who likely resisted. This brought the number of Virginians killed after the surrender to eight. Understandably, the Canadian militiamen chose not to escort seven naked soldiers to Washington’s column, but let them go on alone. When the French forces returned to Fort Duquesne, they discovered that the Indians had taken six additional prisoners, who may have been from the same naked group or the Virginian baggage guard, and had made them run a gauntlet. They were still at Fort Duquesne three weeks later and an English hostage there claimed that a total of ten prisoners, all taken after the surrender, were for sale at the exorbitant price of 40 pistoles (c. £16) apiece. Contrecoeur insisted that their Indian captors were willing to part with only two of them. Contrecoeur handled the gift of those two captives more diplomatically than had Villiers; apparently he held the two until after the Indians had dispersed, and then returned them to Virginia.<sup>58</sup> Seven captured Virginians from this incident were taken to Canada by their Indian captors.<sup>59</sup> The Canadian-domiciled Indians, who had accompanied Villiers into this battle with some reluctance, eventually had at least seven prisoners and eight scalps to mark their participation in the capture of Fort Necessity.

56 “*pour obvier au desordre qui Seroit infailliblement arrivé*” *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 202. In having the artillery smashed, ‘*fait casser*,’ Villiers was speeding his withdrawal and likely fulfilling a private concession to the defeated that went beyond the 2nd article of the capitulation. In the *PG* 22 Aug. 1754, Captain Adam Stephen claimed this was the case.

57 Letter from Paxton to the governor of Pennsylvania, 16 July, 1754, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa., Penn Official Corr., 6:203. Aside from this letter, reprinted in *New York Mercury*, Supplement to the New York Mercury, July 22nd, 1754, none of the other reports in the colonial press, even those insisting that the French violated the terms by allowing the Amerindians to pillage, mention these five deaths. *PG*, 25 July, 1754; *New York Mercury*, July 29th, 1754; *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 Sept. 1754. The official report by Washington and MacKay does not mention this incident. *GWP*, 1:159-68, though they may have left before it occurred. *JCB*, 63. See also MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois*, 49.

58 Stobo’s letter of 28 July, *Memoirs of Stobo*, 91-2; *JCB*, 63-4.

59 *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 202; *Memoirs of Stobo*, 91-2; *JCB*, 64; those carried to Canada were Jacob Arants, John Baker, Barnabas Deven, Daniel Stuart Fager, Daniel Lafferty, Henry O’Brien, and John Smith.

It might seem puzzling that the Virginians, needing to claim matching inhumanity in their enemies, did not immediately argue that the terms of the capitulation were violated by the subsequent stripping of seven men, the capture of at least six, and the outright killing of eight more. Governor Dinwiddie intended to fulfill the surrender terms, and all twenty-one of the Jumonville prisoners were escorted westward from Fort Cumberland early in August.<sup>60</sup> Villiers' "escape clause" about the Indians, in the widely reprinted capitulation terms, might have satisfied French consciences but does not explain this Virginian reaction. Dinwiddie heard nothing of these violations in the initial reports of Washington and MacKay, and apparently no depositions were taken from the mistreated survivors. Perhaps none of them had escaped. One can only guess at what news and rumors were shared among soldiers of the Virginia regiment. Had Washington fled too far and fast to learn what had happened? Was he in denial about the lameness of his honourable surrender? Were Indians, once again, seen as peripheral and beyond either control or comprehension? Certainly the safety of Stobo and Van Braam would have been compromised if the capitulation was repudiated, though Washington was soon unjustly accusing Van Braam of duplicity or incompetence as translator of the terms by which Washington admitted to assassinating Jumonville.<sup>61</sup> Virginia's lieutenant governor initially intended to accept the formal capitulation, return his prisoners, recover the hostages, and spy on the Canadians at the forks of the Ohio in the process.

This plan changed abruptly when Dinwiddie received copies of hostage Stobo's two smuggled letters and a detailed plan of Fort Duquesne.<sup>62</sup> Stobo confirmed that Virginians involved in the capitulation were being held captive by Indians, that La Force was greatly missed by the French and should not be released even if Stobo and Van Braam suffered, and that Fort Duquesne was vulnerable to an attack which he outlined. Dinwiddie abruptly changed his mind, aborting what had been the way to conclude the incident, and took a more belligerent course. He sent an order to bring back the French prisoners, who were already escorted beyond Winchester and heading for Will's Creek. La Force was returned to prison in Williamsburg, while the others were held in Winchester and then Alexandria. New instructions to Colonel James Innes, commanding at Winchester, called for an attempt to exchange Druillon and two

---

60 *Dinwiddie Papers*, 1:293. Cf. John R. Alden, *Robert Dinwiddie, Servant of the Crown* (Charlottesville, Va., 1973), 47.

61 *New York Mercury*, August 26th, 1754; *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, ed. H.R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1919), 221.

62 Dinwiddie to Innes, 20 July 1754, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 1:232-4. In transit, Stobo's letters had been shown to George Croghan at Augwick, who broke them open, sent copies to the Pennsylvania governor, and allowed enough to circulate to compromise Stobo's safety. Moses the Song, Scarouady's son in law, carried the letters along with Delaware George.

cadets for the two Virginian captains held hostage. This was a plausible exchange, but only if both sides accepted that the capitulation was violated and invalid. On Dinwiddie's orders, Innes wrote Contrecoeur that the taking of captives after the capitulation had been a violation of "the Law of Nations and against all the rules and regulations of war even among the Turks,"<sup>63</sup> and that the capitulation was therefore invalid. Any French claims that the captured Virginians belonged only to the Indians was countered by noting that Tanighrisson claimed all the Frenchmen taken in the Jumonville incident.<sup>64</sup> Contrecoeur's reaction was to presume the messenger was spying, and to keep him from seeing the fort in daylight or from seeing Stobo at all. Contrecoeur replied that the capitulation had been honoured because the French had made every effort to restrain the Indians, and because he knew of only one captive with the Abenaki who had not been recovered and sent back to Virginia. Yet Contrecoeur knew the Virginians had decided not to honour the terms of the capitulation. The day the messenger left Fort Duquesne to return to Winchester, both Stobo and Van Braam were escorted north to Detroit and eventually to Montreal.<sup>65</sup>

Robert Stobo's eventful captivity reveals much about the awkward importation into Canada of European perceptions of hostages. Although Stobo later claimed that, as a military neophyte he had no idea what the duties of a hostage were and no one in long-peaceful Virginia knew either, his companion knew very well. Under interrogation, Van Braam admitted that a hostage should not act against the interests of his hosts if afforded liberties, but if imprisoned he may act as a regular prisoner of war, attempting to write home or to escape. Stobo and Van Braam were initially treated very well at both Fort Duquesne and Québec, were given small allowances and the freedom of Fort Duquesne, the town of Québec, and even the nearby Indian villages, and were allowed to socialize freely and even engage in trade.<sup>66</sup> Stobo's smuggled letters and map had been clear violations of his status as hostage, but not wrong if he was a prisoner of war.

When Governor Duquesne, a professional French naval officer who was personally generous to captives,<sup>67</sup> was replaced at the end of July 1755 by the first and only Canadian-born governor of New France, Pierre-François Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, the courtesies to Stobo and Van Braam stopped. Circumstances had also changed. Braddock's offensive had been a massive

---

63 Innes to Contrecoeur, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 254; *Dinwiddie Papers*, 1:297-8, 347; 2,227-8.

64 See instructions in *Ibid.*, 1:298 ff.; Alberts, *Stobo*, 107-15.

65 Report of Lieutenant Lyon, *South Carolina Gazette*, 12 Dec.1754; *New York Mercury*, 28 Oct.1754.

66 See Duquesne to Contrecoeur, 25 July 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 223.

67 See, for instance, Ian K. Steele, "Susannah Johnson, Captive," in *The Human Tradition in Colonial America*, ed. with Nancy Rhoden (Wilmington, DE,1999), 262-4.

escalation, and rumors that Stobo had smuggled out letters and a plan of Fort Duquesne were unwisely published in London newspapers, with which Vaudreuil confronted Stobo.<sup>68</sup> The hostages were briefly jailed, then restored to some freedom while Vaudreuil awaited the French court's reply to his request that the English captains be tried for treason. The trial, held in Montreal in November 1756 and featuring none other than Céloron de Blainville as procurator, acquitted Van Braam and found Stobo guilty, based on the undeniable evidence of his original letters from Fort Duquesne which had subsequently been found among the captured papers of the unfortunate General Braddock.<sup>69</sup>

Was the case as clear as that? Stobo, like Dinwiddie and Innes, argued that the capitulation at Fort Necessity had been violated by the French, thereby turning him from a hostage into a conventional European prisoner of war. Van Braam was not sure that the terms of surrender had been violated, because Villiers had done what he could to restrain the Indians. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, General Montcalm's aide-de-camp, asked his diary at this time just what hostages became when the agreement they represented had been violated. He wondered whether the capitulation was invalid because Washington had no power to pledge the return of those captured in the Jumonville incident. "In this case these hostages become no more than ordinary prisoners, who are not, I believe, subject to any punishment for trying to serve their country. It is up to those who hold them to see that they do not have the means."<sup>70</sup> Although Canadian judges found Stobo guilty of treason and ordered him beheaded, he was spared because the French court, in permitting the trial, had forbidden his execution if found guilty.<sup>71</sup> Whatever Vaudreuil, Céloron, or Villiers thought of the matter, to say nothing of any Indian told this fantastic story, Stobo was a military officer protected by European convention. He was not jailed as one convicted of treason. He escaped twice from rather comfortable confinement in Québec and was recaptured, before he finally succeeded in a harrowing third escape down the St. Lawrence with a small party of other prisoners in the spring of 1759. Virginia treated their returned hero to a handsome gratuity, a 9,000 acre Ohio land grant, and a precedent-setting gift of full pay during his entire captivity, a rare privilege for soldiers but one that was eventually applied to all captured soldiers of the Virginia Regiment.<sup>72</sup> Stobo was bold and incon-

68 *Whitehall Evening Post*, January 11, 1755, quoted in Alberts, *Stobo*, 140n.

69 See "Procès de Robert Stobo et de Jacob Wambram pour crime de haute trahison," *RAPQ* 1922, 299-347; LAC, MG 17, A 7-1, 4; *Memoirs of Stobo*; Alberts, *Stobo*, 153-69.

70 *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756-1760*, trans. and ed. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman, OK, 1964), 67.

71 Vaudreuil to Argenson, 1 Nov. 1756, *NYCD*, 10:492.

72 On October 8 1760, the House of Burgesses granted a petition of seven veterans 'and all others who shall hereafter appear in the same Circumstances, the common allowance and pay of soldiers, during their absence in captivity.' *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1758-61*, ed. H.R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1908), 150, 188 (quote).

sistent enough to petition successfully for the double pay that he claimed was usually awarded to hostages, though he had acted as a prisoner of war in spying and escaping, and had claimed to be a prisoner of war at his trial.<sup>73</sup> On the recommendation of William Pitt, Stobo was awarded a captaincy in a British line regiment.<sup>74</sup>

Jacob Van Braam had not remained a faithful hostage throughout the war; he joined Stobo in an escape, from rather comfortable house arrest, that lasted for only a few days in May of 1757. Aside from his trial and short periods of subsequent imprisonment, he lived comfortably until the surrender of Montreal. Thereafter the Virginia government gave him all his back-pay (he did not seek double pay), a gratuity of £500, and a recommendation that helped him become a captain in the Royal American Regiment. Like Stobo, he was given an unclaimable 9,000 Ohio land grant, but he shrewdly mortgaged it to help buy his retirement farm in Wales, not Virginia.<sup>75</sup>

The Virginia House of Burgesses was generous to hostages Stobo and Van Braam, but refused to compensate another of their veterans of 1754, John Ramsey,<sup>76</sup> whose case is suggestive of a wider issue with ‘captured’ soldiers. In one of his smuggled letters from Fort Duquesne, Stobo had identified Ramsey as “the cause of our misfortunes” deserting the day before the battle and informing the enemy of the location and numbers of Washington’s force.<sup>77</sup> Was John Ramsey a deserter, a captive from the baggage guard, or both? He claimed, in petitioning for his back pay of £66 in May of 1763, that he had been taken prisoner in the battle of Fort Necessity and held in cruel captivity by Indians for five and one-half years. On returning to Virginia in 1761 he had

73 Alberts, *Stobo*, 170-340, 387n.; *Journal of Lieut. Simon Stevens, From the Time of his being Taken, near Fort William Henry, June the 25th, 1758* (Boston, 1760); “L’Évasion de Stobo et de Van Braam de la prison de Québec en Mai 1757,” *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, 14 (1908): 154. In January 1764, however, the House of Burgesses refused Stobo’s petition for his salary as a major during a year’s leave of absence in England. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1761-1765*, ed. H.R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1907), 212.

74 Captain in the 15th regiment of foot for a decade, Stobo committed suicide in his barracks in Chatham, England, 19 June 1770. Alberts, *Stobo*, 317-8.

75 This despite the Burgesses having censured Van Braam in Oct. 1754. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, ed. H.R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1919), 221. Amherst Papers, PRO, WO 34/38, fols., 32-3, 38, 210. Virginia was paying Van Braam’s bills as a prisoner in Canada as late as November 1759. *Ibid.*, fol. 207. *Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1758-61*, 227,238. Alberts, *Stobo*, 174-80, 289-90, 334.

76 He was not likely the John Ramsay reported killed in a raid of 27 April 1758 on the South Branch. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, William Preston Papers, I, 83, The Draper Mss., QQ.

77 *Memoirs of Stobo*, 91-2. Villiers mentioned, but did not name, a deserter whom he questioned before the attack on Fort Necessity, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 199. Ramsay’s case was not as clear as that of Denis Kaninguen or Cunningham, an English deserter who certainly had additional incentive to flee Jummonville Glen quickly, though he claimed to have witnessed the entire incident. “Journal de Léry,” 372-3.



rejoined the Virginia Regiment. Having investigated his claim, as they routinely did in such cases, a Burgesses' committee admitted his continued membership in the Virginia Regiment but reported that he had "behaved in a cowardly dastardly manner," had an earlier record of desertion, and had gone missing at Fort Necessity. In denying his petition as unproven, the Burgesses recorded that it was not clear "whether he was taken prisoner, or voluntarily surrendered himself, or fled to the enemy."<sup>78</sup> Throughout the ensuing war soldiers tended to return from captivity in pairs, to answer such questions by corroborating each other's accounts and thereby avoid the potentially fatal charge of desertion.

Amid peacetime hostilities in a multicultural borderland, Virginians and Canadians came to make three significant distinctions when capturing each other in 1754. The Canadians consistently treated all captured soldiers entirely differently than all captured traders. No captured traders were released, whether initially taken by Indians or by garrisons. American colonial governments, particularly Pennsylvania, did not respond militarily to repeated capture of their traders; no martial 'honour' or reciprocity was involved or anticipated. Several well-known traders who were serving with Ensign Ward were released as soldiers. The military contest between the Virginians and the Canadians escalated during 1754 from involving no captives in Ward's surrender, to Washington's capture of the survivors in the Jumonville incident, answered by the taking of hostages at Fort Necessity's surrender. The restraint of European convention, and the reciprocity it was intended to generate, was noticable in both the awkward young Virginian major and in Jumonville's brother.

Secondly the distinction between a 'hostage' and a prisoner of war was recognized by the British and French officers and the French court, which taught Canadians this distinction in the case of Robert Stobo. Although those taken with La Force were military prisoners, they were not hostages, prisoners of war, nor criminals. They were somewhat better treated than the captured traders, and returned, except for La Force. The Virginians kept La Force in custody for years, less for what he had done than out of fear for what he might do. Having been jailed throughout his captivity and having attempted to escape several times, like Stobo, he was acting like a prisoner of war and being treated as one. Yet when he was eventually sent north for exchange, both Dinwiddie and Wheelock called him a hostage. Like the Virginians earlier, Amherst simply refused either to release or exchange him. Early in 1760, Virginia's new lieutenant governor asked Amherst to release La Force if he was of no further use, because Virginians "were desirous to set him at Large in order to be eased of the Expence of Maintaining him."<sup>79</sup> La Force lived more comfortably now, as an officer and prisoner of war on Long Island, but could not go home even after the conquest of Canada.

78 *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 1761-1765, 179, 186.

79 Letter of 17 Jan. 1760, Amherst Papers, PRO, WO 34/38, fol. 32-3.

The clearest and most consequential distinction was that being made between colonials and Indians. Inter-tribal raiding and slave-trading had established a culture of captivity understood by colonials. Delaware leaders Custaloga and English John used the capture and transfer of English traders to signal their new alliance with the French. It is interesting that these captives were sold or given as gifts; the Delaware were not keeping or adopting white captives, in sharp contrast with what would happen after 1755. The taking and treatment of prisoners was a sensitive and reliable measure of the limits of colonial influence over their Indian allies. Tanighrisson had disregarded Washington's grant of quarter to survivors of a skirmish. Washington never mentioned Tanighrisson's execution of Jumonville, perhaps because it was a violation of his own offer of quarter, which he had not been able to honour. Washington did not reveal this story even when widely accused of assassinating Jumonville himself. The more experienced Villiers considered Indians as independent allies who neither negotiated nor signed the surrender terms, and were not bound by them. He acknowledged and accepted this in his journal and in the terms offered at Fort Necessity. It is telling that the attack on Virginians retreating from Fort Necessity was not the result of ignorance, inexperience, or oversight by some recently-arrived French commander (like Montcalm at Oswego or Fort William Henry later). This was a distinction made by an experienced Canadian frontier commander, at the head of an overwhelmingly colonial force, who still recognized that even mission Indians were allies who would seek their own trophies and booty, including captives. Again, as with Jumonville Glen, Washington did not prevent either of them from considering what their Indian allies did as beyond their control, their responsibility and, in Washington's case, even beyond their version of what had happened.

\* \* \*

**IAN K. STEELE**, whose recent books include *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the 'Massacre' and Warpaths: Invasions of North America*, is completing a book entitled *Setting all the Captives Free: Humanity, Identity, and Remembrance on Allegheny Frontiers, 1745-1765*.

**IAN K. STEELE**, qui a déjà publié plusieurs ouvrages dont *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the 'Massacre' et Warpaths: Invasions of North America*, termine présentement un livre intitulé *Setting all the Captives Free: Humanity, Identity, and Remembrance on Allegheny Frontiers, 1745-1765*.