A COLONIAL TRILOGY REVISITED

The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of 0hio

Presents

“Why We Are Free - Our English Heritage”

by

Dr. W. Frank Steely

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“A Skeleton in Ohio's Backwoods Closet”

by

Nolan W. Carson, Esq.

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“A Synopsis of the Port Necessity Story”

by

Robert E. Davidson

with

“A Treatise of Military Discipline”

1753

Musket Commands

DEDICATION

C. HARRISON DWIGHT

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, self-control. There is no law which condemns things like that.

GALATIANS 5: 22-23

CHARLES HARRISON DWIGHT

Educator, Scientist and Historian was born July 9, 1897, Closter, New Jersey; died Cincinnati, Ohio, December 6, 1975. Was the son of Charles Abbott Schneider Dwight and Susan Wilson Wilbur. A descendent of a family which has produced numerous outstanding educators and clergy, Professor Dwight was a life-long Presbyterian. Received B.A., Bellevue College; M.S., University of Chicago; and Ph.D., University of Cincinnati. His teaching career of 43 years was spent in the Physics Department of the University of Cincinnati, interrupted only by his World War II Radar Research for Columbia University and the War Department. His publications in his field were numerous, as were the instructional aids that he developed. He pioneered the field of teaching physics to students of Architecture and Music.

He researched and published the accepted biography of Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count von Rumford, American born, European scientist and social reformer. This contribution was exceedingly well received and published by the Sigma Xi Society.

A member of the Ohio Society of Colonial Wars, he was Registrar for many years. He served as Historian General of the General Society and was a Life Member of the Council until his death. His participation and know- ledge added much to the life of the Society of Colonial Wars. He was a member of numerous historical and patriotic societies and held offices in many of them. For over forty years, he was a member and officer of the Cincinnati Chapter of Sigma Xi, National Research Society.

On July 3, 1934, he married Virginia Moore Burke, of an old established Cincinnati family.

C. Harrison Dwight was a Christian gentleman who contributed much in his broad fields of interest. He will long be favorably remembered by his students, co-workers and friends.

"WHY WE ARE FREE - OUR ENGLISH HERITAGE"

Dr. W. Frank Steely
President
Northern Kentucky State College

I am not unaware of the honor you do me in inviting me to have this part in your meeting of the Society of Colonial Wars. It is of profit to me academically as it forces me to verbalize some of the ideas I have long espoused in the classes I have taught in American History over the past 20 years. No one of you, including my colleague Max Dieffenbach, could have been aware of the emphasis I place on our Colonial (that is English) background in the shaping of America. How appropriate tonight that this has been a central thesis of my teaching.

Some years ago, as the story goes, an American tourist at Oxford asked a caretaker what made the grass on the quads so green and beautiful. The caretaker's response states simply the basic point I would elaborate in these remarks: he said, "That comes from clipping and rolling it every Thursday afternoon for seven hundred years."

America enjoys freedom and self-government today not because of the influence of the frontier upon her history. Other nations, including Russia and Argentina for example, had analogous frontier experiences which obviously failed to produce democracy or liberty in those nations. There is nothing unique about the fields and forests of North America that destined their settlers to develop free institutions while settlers in the wildernesses of Central and South America failed to do so. Nor was it our Revolutionary experience that brought freedom to our new land.

Allow me to tell you another little story to illustrate my point. Two Americans vacationing in Vermont were discussing the role of the American Revolution with its many settings in the New England they were visiting, in bringing freedom to this country. One of them challenged the other's emphasis on the Declaration of Independence, the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the Bill of Rights, and other American institutions. He asked his friend to take a drive with him. As they sped over the mountain roads of New England he turned to the champion of "1776 and all that" and said, "Do you not still feel as free as when we began our conversation." When the second man agreed that he did, the driver observed, "For the last twenty miles we have been outside the United States in Canada."

I doubt if many Americans would challenge the fact that Canada and other countries of the British Empire and Commonwealth enjoy as much freedom as do those of us who broke with England in 1776. The answer,

therefore, to the query "Why are we free" must lie in the history of the development of free institutions in our mother country prior to and during our Colonial era. For, although we are the cultural heirs of all of Western Europe, we are more particularly the political heirs of Great Britain. We are about as English politically as we are linguistically. And this is to acknowledge the modification of English institutions on the American frontier. A point made by that great historian of the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner; but unfortunately overemphasized and exaggerated by some of his disciples.

The beginnings of American political institutions are to be discovered, indeed, some seven hundred or more years ago (as our story of the grass on the Oxford quads suggests) in Medieval England. The Norman King Henry II in the middle of the 12th Century sent judges on assize throughout the realm. The precedents they established in their decisions became common to all of England, thus we have the beginning of the Common Law, still taught and practiced in the United States and in other countries which share the English political heritage. An early assertion of the concept of government under law was the Magna Charta (or Great Charter) extracted from King John by the barons at Runnymede in 1215.

But the most portentous development for man's political future were the beginnings of representative self-government in the English Parliaments of that Medieval Age. The word Parliament comes from the practice of the kings to summon representatives from all parts of the realm to have "deep talk" or to "parley." As in the case of most historically significant developments it is impossible to fix the date of the first Parliament which may be called antecedent to our Federal Congress and to our State Legislatures. In 1295 Edward I summoned his "Model Parliament" with two representatives from each borough and from each shire or county, but there had been forerunners of these groups who would one day evolve into the present House of Commons.

Parliament was an outgrowth of the kingly power. It re- presented a desire by the sovereign to get approval for additional taxes and sometimes generally to bring a counter force to bear against the nobility in his council. Certainly none of those Medieval or early Modem kings envisioned or desired the growth of this representative assembly into the most powerful legislative body in the world. Little did their majesties realize the threat to their prerogatives posed by permitting these commoners to present petitions to "redress grievances." When such petitions were heeded and enacted into statutory law, however, the precedents for legislating were established. Lasting freedom is never achieved by a single act, nor is it guaranteed by official documents; it is built over the years and centuries by tradition or custom. There should be comfort for the fearful in this because it implies, and I think correctly implies, that freedom is not lost by single acts or momentary developments.

In Medieval England were laid the foundations of other political institutions we Americans imported from our Mother Country. Local government at both the county (or shire) and parish (or township) levels began there. Our "sheriff ' is a corruption of the "shire reeve." Although the parish as such had ecclesiastical connotations its vestrymen were more secular than ecclesiastical when they began the institution of the "constable" to maintain law and order. In the small rural town where I was born and reared the only paid public official was the "constable."

The colonization of America came in the early Modern period. English trading companies planted upon these shores. The Colonial term "freemen" meant "free of gild" or company and represented a development here analogous to the development in English boroughs or towns. Freemen could take part in the affairs of local government.

America was a product of Reformation England. Remember the central theme of the Reformation was the universal priesthood of believers (a foundation principle of democracy), and the rightful duty of free inquiry (a necessity to liberty) was the hallmark of Reformation leaders. Roger Williams of Rhode Island taught Englishmen in England, such as Cromwell and Milton, as he taught Englishmen in America. He foreran John Locke in his emphasis on the compact or contract theory of government in place of the divine right emphasis. Williams believed that sovereignty resided in the people.

Certainly when John Locke wrote in defense of the compact theory to justify the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England he could not have foreseen the use of his writing, and even of his phraseology, by Thomas Jefferson as the latter authored our own Declaration of Independence. Thus, we used British theory to justify revolt against Britain. And in the years before 1776 we were claiming our rights as Britishers. James Otis' famous revolutionary pamphlet was entitled "The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved."

We will not here attempt to weigh the justice of our revolt against the Mother Country. Suffice it to say that more mature historical study has corrected the super patriotic distortions of our National youth and of a century of Irish immigrants. We know now that George III himself was not the tyrant Tom Jefferson said he was (I doubt if Tom really believed it when he wrote it.) Journalists of the Revolutionary era were as sensational as journalists of our day. The Stamp Act was really not that important. It penalized the two most loud-mouthed groups in society, the lawyers and the newspaper men. The result was such a disproportionate amount of attention to the Act in the Colonial press that later generations of American historians, by using contemporary newspapers as their sources, have perpetuated the distortion. The point is simply that the American Revolution began as an assertion by Englishmen in America of their rights as Englishmen. The "freest of peoples were the first to rebel" and we were never more English than when we revolted against England. Remember the Revolution was, in a sense, a civil war in both

the mother country and the colonies. We had powerful allies among the statesmen in London, and the military success of our arms contributed to their political victory.

One of the high tributes to the free institutions we had enjoyed as Colonials was seen when Connecticut and Rhode Island only slightly re-phased their colonial charters and used them as State constitutions for many years. When Washington formed his first cabinet he borrowed position titles (Sec. of State, Attorney General, etc.) from the titles of some of his majesty's officials. The two party system, so fundamental to the effective functioning of representative assemblies, came from the Tories and the Whigs of early Stuart England. And our own initial parties, Federalist and Republican, were not entirely unlike those first English organizations in their sup- port of, in the first instance, and challenge to, in the second, the chief executive officer of the state.

How fitting was tonight's toast to Her Majesty. Because before we were Americans *we were* all *Englishmen*. *We remained Englishmen* when we broke with the Mother Country, and, in our political institutions, we are tonight still *ENGLISHMEN!!*

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“A SKELETON IN OHIO'S BACKWOODS CLOSET''

Nolan W. Carson

This afternoon I’d like to reminisce with you for a few moments about a little bit of Ohio history that has almost been lost and forgotten in the 170 years since it occurred - but which for almost a century was the subject of a raging debate between politicians and historians and the people of the great Ohio Valley -and which even today, nearly two centuries later, is still clouded with mystery. It is a story with all the ingredients of a great, historical novel - intrigue in high places, famous actors, treason, mob scenes, court room drama, stark tragedy -and all of this portrayed against the backdrop of a little island in the middle of the Ohio River at a time when Ohio was still a dense forest land. It was almost totally unpopulated except for a few hardy souls at Marietta and Cincinnati who were beginning to carve out a new land from the forest which had, until a few years before, been the sole possession of the great Shawnee, the Mingoes, the Miami, the Tuscaroras and the other tribes of the Ohio Indian nation.

I call this story "A Skeleton in Ohio's Backwoods Closet" because, among other reasons, it exposes to full view the greed of men in high places and the great political struggle that divided the country and threatened to pull our new government down; and more than anything else, it shows the in- tense tragedy which this incident inflicted on the lives of all the people it touched.

The story begins in France in 1796 when a young Irish nobleman, Harman Blennerhassett by name, married the vivacious and beautiful young daughter of one of England's most distinguished families. Harman was the third son of a wealthy Irish aristocrat and a direct descendant of King Edward III of England. He was reared in luxury in Conway Castle, his father's estate. His family had served in the English Parliament for 500 years. His new wife, Margaret Askew, was the daughter of the Lt. Governor of the Isle of Man, also a very wealthy person.

Since Harman was the third son and hence third in line to inherit his father's fortune under the laws of primogeniture, it had been necessary that he prepare himself for an honorable profession. Prior to his marriage, he had studied law in Dublin and became a barrister. He had little occasion to practice, however, because in a very short span of time, his father and his two older brothers died, leaving Harman as the sole owner of Conway Castle and all of his father's estate. Strangely enough, Harman did not elect to live the life of an Irish aristocrat like his father. Immediately after his marriage, he sold all of his inheritance to a cousin and took his bride of less than six months to make his fortune in America. After a 73-day passage, the Blennerhassetts arrived in New York in August, 1796. They visited in New York and later in Philadelphia for almost a year. They then decided to make a tour through Kentucky and Tennessee to find a likely place to build a new home and establish a plantation

that would support a way of life such as they had known across the ocean. On their way west, they heard of a new, young settlement called Marietta which a group of Revolutionary Officers had formed just 10 years before at the confluence of the Muskingum and the Ohio Rivers. They decided to stop briefly in Marietta on their way west and were pleasantly surprised to find that Marietta, little more than a clearing in the forest, had been founded by a group of cultured people -people who were interested in music, literature, science and the arts and who loved balls, fine wines and hard spirits as much as the Blennerhassetts. In short order, they decided to make their new home there and began searching for a likely place to build their plantation. Since they planned to live their new life on a scale like that of the aristocratic families in the South, they would need slaves to work their land and staff their mansion; and since slavery was prohibited in the Ohio lands by the Northwest Ordinance, but permitted across the Ohio in Virginia (now West Virginia), they decided to build their home on an island in the middle of the Ohio River, which was then a part of Virginia. The island was 14 miles down river from Marietta and 2 miles from Newport, Virginia, a little settlement consisting of 12 log houses, which is known today as Parkersburg, West Virginia. They bought 170 acres on the upper end of the island -then called Backus Island -for $4,500.00. The island was about 3 1/5 miles long and contained about 500 acres. Blennerhassett called his new farm Isle de Beau Pre.

The Blennerhassetts immediately moved into an old block house which had been built on the island during the Indian wars and began to build the largest, most magnificent mansion in the west -a home that would permit them to live in the luxury to which they had always been accustomed. They employed all of the carpenters and artisans who were available at Marietta and began construction. Their mansion was to be of wood since Harman was deathly afraid of earthquakes, and it was designed to be a showplace in keeping with their station in life. The main house had two stories and long fan-shaped, one-story wings stretched out on either side of the main building. These wings curved toward the front, forming a handsome lawn which stretched down to the tip of the island. The main house had 10 rooms, including a ballroom for the levies and parties that Margaret planned. The left wing contained the kitchen, pantries and servants' rooms. The right wing housed Harman's office, a large library and the laboratories where Harman planned to conduct experiments in electricity, to study the heavens through his telescope, and to play his bass viol and cello.

Harman was very proud of the fact that his new mansion had 36 glass windows - an unheard of indicia of wealth and luxury in the land across the Alleghenies. In fact, when Ohio built its first capitol building some three years later at Chillicothe, it had less than half as many windows as the Blennerhassett Mansion - and people came from far and wide to marvel at the sight of so much glass in Chillicothe.

Harman and Margaret bought ten slaves in Virginia and brought an English gardener to their Island. They filled their home with magnificent

furniture, gold cornices, fine silver and china and expensive drapes and wall hangings -all brought from England and packed across the mountains on horseback. Their gardener established a 2-acre English flower garden with both native and imported plants. Their plantation also included an orchard and a kitchen garden full of vegetables and herbs. They employed a local farmer to manage a farm and dairy on the balance of their land.

Early in the year 1800, just 12 years after the first permanent settlement in the Northwest Territory was founded - just 5 years after Anthony Wayne had ended the Ohio Indian Wars at Fallen Timbers and at Greenville, just three months after George Washington's death, and 3 years before Ohio be- came a state - Harman and Margaret moved into their new home.

Margaret presided over her household with all of the grace, charm and efficiency to which she had been born. The appearance of notable visitors at Marietta almost always occasioned a ball or a party at the Isle de Beau Pre and often Margaret persuaded her guests to take part in impromptu readings and performances of Shakespeare's plays. The Blennerhassett mansion soon became the center of social activity in that entire part of the Trans-Allegheny backwoods. Margaret was indeed an unusual woman for her day. She was well schooled in history, literature, music and art; she spoke Italian and French fluently; and she wrote poetry and rode her horse like the wind. She often rode the 14 miles to Marietta in her scarlet riding habit and a white beaver hat with an ostrich plume - all this with her negro man galloping along behind her, trying his best to keep up.

Her husband, Harman, was almost an exact opposite. He was tall, stooped and had very bad eyesight. In fact, the writers say that when he hunted, a man servant had to point the rifle for him. He still wore knee breeches, silk stockings and shoes with silver buckles, even though that type of dress had for the most part gone out of style some years before. He was deathly afraid of lightning and it is said he would hide in a closet during thunderstorms. On one occasion it is reported that he was convinced he could change fat into oil useable for lamps by immersing meat in water for a long period. He kept a side of beef tied under the surface of the Ohio River for several days only to find when he pulled it up that most of the meat had been eaten by the catfish. Every venture he tried seemed to fail. His farm did not begin to pay the expenses of his household. He imported thousands of dollars worth of Irish linen, pewter, velvet, slippers and hose, only to find he had few customers for these goods in the back country. He went into the shipbuilding business and failed. Suddenly, through pure chance, he became involved in a web of intrigue that ruined him financially and cast a pall on his family for the rest of their lives.

Harman's tragic venture began in Marietta on a fine May day in 1805 when Harman was introduced to a very famous statesman who had stopped there briefly on a fiat-boat trip to New Orleans. This visitor was indeed possessed of a notable, and some thought notorious, background. His father had been president of Princeton and his grandfather had been Jonathan Edwards, the famous New England theologian. He graduated from Princeton at

16 and studied law. In 1775 he joined the Continental Army and became one of the youngest command officers serving in Washington's forces. After 4 years of military action, he retired from the army because of ill health and began to practice law in New York City where he quickly became one of the most successful and brilliant members of the Bar. He also married the widow of a British officer and became the stepfather of five children, 2 of whom were officers in the British army. This visitor and his wife had one daughter, a lovely girl who later married a man who became the Governor of South Carolina and the wealthiest rice planter in America.

In 1791, five years before Harman and Margaret had set sail for the new land, this visitor to Marietta had been elected to the United States Senate on the Republican ticket, and in securing this victory, soundly defeated the arch Federalist, General Phillip Schuyler, the father-in-law of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was furious, not only because his father-in- law had been defeated, but also because this defeat signaled the beginning of troubles for the Federalist party which had held the political power firmly in its grasp in the country since the adoption of the Constitution in 1787. This man served two terms in the Senate and during this period, the tide continued to turn toward the Republicans. In 1800, the same year Harman and Margaret moved into their new mansion far to the west, this man was nominated for the Vice Presidency of the United States as the running mate of that gentleman planter from Charlottesville, Thomas Jefferson. At that time the Constitution provided that the candidate receiving the largest vote in the electoral college would serve as President and the candidate receiving the second largest would be Vice President. In this bizarre case, the electoral college ended in a tie vote for the two offices and so the decision was sent to the House of Representatives where Jefferson was not overly popular. Nevertheless, the vote was to be taken by states, not by individual members, and after 36 ballots covering 6 days of voting, Jefferson was declared the winner by one vote. From that moment on, Jefferson and his new Vice President, who had lost the Presidency by one vote, were bitter enemies.

This visitor to Marietta had served as Vice President under Jefferson for four years and won many compliments from the Congress for his excellence as a presiding officer. In February, 1804, in the last year of his term as Vice President, he ran for Governor of New York. Alexander Hamilton campaigned bitterly against him and the Vice President was defeated. Six weeks after the election he became enraged over a newspaper story in which Hamilton was quoted as insulting him rather liberally. This seemed to be one of the political customs of the day. This man, still the Vice President of the United States, challenged Hamilton to a duel. This also appears to have been quite common among politicians of that day. These two men, one a well-known general in the Revolution and the Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington, and the other the Vice President of the United States, met a few minutes after 7:00 in the morning on July 11, 1804 at Weehawken, New Jersey, just across the Hudson from New York City. The Vice President fired and Hamilton dropped, mortally wounded. He would die 31hours later.

Although duels were illegal, the parties were not usually prosecuted in those days. However, because of the public shock over the death of such an important figure, indictments for murder were issued against the Vice President in both New York and New Jersey. He very wisely decided a long trip to Georgia and South Carolina might be in order. However, in January 1805 when Congress reconvened, he was back in Washington ready to preside over the Senate, which he did until his successor took over as Vice President on March 3, 1805. He was never tried for Hamilton's death.

Who was this man -this brilliant lawyer, popular leader of the New York Republicans and former Senator -this man who came within a breath of being President of the United States? His name, of course, was Aaron Burr, a name which, probably unjustly, has come through the years to be almost a synonym for treason, treachery, mystery and intrigue.

Many volumes have been written about the next adventure in Burr's varied career and I shall not dwell on these events in detail since the principal actors in this little vignette are the Blennerhassetts. However, the activities in which Burr engaged during the next eighteen months, and the resulting events, are fascinating and have intrigued historians for generations.

From the moment Burr pulled the trigger on his little one-shot dueling pistol, he knew his future as a political candidate was gone forever. And when the door of the U.S. Senate slammed behind him at the end of his term as Vice President, he was a very disappointed man. Always amibitous, however, he looked for an opportunity to redeem his reputation and fortune. Looking toward the opportunities that might lie in the Spanish territories of the Southwest and Mexico, he embarked in April 1805, one month after his Vice Presidential term ended, on a flat-boat trip down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh. On May 5, 1805, as mentioned earlier, Burr stopped in Marietta and touched the life of Harman Blennerhassett.

Blennerhassett, of course, invited Burr to his island and entertained him lavishly there. After a brief visit, Burr proceeded on down the river to New Orleans, putting together plans during the rest of that year for a grand scheme to invade Mexico and other Spanish-held territories and establish a new empire, undoubtedly with himself as the head of state. In December, Burr wrote to Harman offering him a part in the expedition and Harman enthusiastically agreed. A number of other people in high places were involved with Burr in varying degrees of complicity; they include General James Wilkinson, the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army, who, by the way, was also a paid secret agent of Spain. In fact, his pay from the Spanish government was more than his pay as head of our own country's armed forces. Consider the duplicity here: General Wilkinson held the highest military position the United States could offer; he was an agent of an unfriendly foreign nation; he was involved with Burr in a plot against Spain which encouraged the secession of the Western states to join Burr's new empire; and in the end, he betrayed Burr by disclosing Burr's plans both to President Jefferson and to his Spanish contacts by coded letters. If we have ever had a double agent, or rather

a quadruple agent, in this country, here was one. In addition, Andy Jackson of Nashville, later to become President, seems to have been involved in some manner never fully proved.

At any rate, Burr decided to start his expedition at Blennerhassett's Island and in August 1806 Burr arrived there and began assembling boats, supplies and recruits, mostly with Blennerhassett's money and guarantees. During the next few weeks, Burr made side trips to Cincinnati, Lexington, and Chillicothe to recruit men and money for his expedition. While in Cincinnati he stayed in Terrace Park at the home of Senator John Smith, one of Ohio's two original U.S. Senators. Smith was later to be forced to resign from the Senate because of his complicity with Burr. In October, Governor Alston of South Carolina and his wife, Theodosia Burr, Aaron's daughter, arrived at the island. In October, President Jefferson received Wilkinson's coded letter and sent a secret agent of his own to Marietta to investigate Burr's activities. This agent sent back full reports to Jefferson who issued a proclamation in late November warning the nation about the venture and ordering all civil and military authorities to arrest the participants. Spurred on by Jefferson's proclamation and the urging of Jefferson's special agent, Governor Tiffin, our first Governor, requested the Ohio Legislature to pass a special law (which it did on December 6) empowering the Governor to arrest Burr and his comrades. Quickly the Governor alerted the militia at Marietta and they were successful in impounding a number of Burr's boats and many supplies. Nevertheless, the small expedition left the island in December and floated on down the River to Natchez, Mississippi where Burr and Blennerhassett were ultimately arrested and charged with treason. Since the alleged treasonable acts occurred on Blennerhassett's Island in Virginia, the trial was held in Richmond and was presided over by Jefferson's violent enemy, John Marshall, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. After a long and fascinating trial, on September 1, 1807 Burr and Blennerhassett were acquitted of treason and they parted company - Burr, a totally ruined man, and Blennerhassett, a very discouraged man because most of his remaining fortune had evaporated along with Burr's grand plans for conquest.

After the trial, Harman returned to his island only to find his home had been almost totally ruined by mobs of militia, by vandals, and by a flood that had occurred in the meantime. Most of the household furnishings had been attached·and sold by his creditors and his slaves had escaped. Harman and Margaret packed up the remainder of their possessions and what little was left of their fortune, and went down the river to try to start a new home in Mississippi, never again to return to his little island in the forest.

The aftermath of the story is more tragic still. Within three years, the beautiful mansion was set afire by vandals and burned to the ground. Burr's vivacious and accomplished daughter, Theodosia, was lost at sea, and Burr's only grand-child died, Burr eventually went to England and later came back to New York where he lived in almost total oblivion for many years, still dreaming dreams of what might have been. In 1820 Harman failed again and

was forced to sell his Mississippi farm. The Blennerhassetts moved to Montreal for a time before Harman went back to England to attempt to regain his fortune. He died there, a broken man, in 1831. Margaret later came back to America and petitioned Congress for damages done by the militia to their mansion so many years before. Just days before Congress was ready to act on the measure, Margaret died quietly and unknown in New York.

This, then is the end of the tale. And yet perhaps I have left out one part - perhaps the most tragic part of all. That part involves the reason why Harman and Margaret, both born in high station in Great Britain, had decided to leave their friends, their families and their opportunities and come to the hard, unsettled backwoods of the American west when it was still frontier. Historians, of course, always must find reasons for the actions of participants in historical events, and for a hundred years after Harman and Margaret built their mansion on their little Island in the Ohio, the historians opined that their reason for coming to America was simply so that they could live in a free country. In fact, in a lengthy paper on the Burr Conspiracy published by the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society in 1886, the author said:

> "Harman's heart glowed with the principles of revolt and republicanism. Though closely allied by marriage, relationship and social rank to the nobility of Ireland and England, he had become a Republican and looked with longing eyes toward America, which had shaken off the distasteful chaperonage of the mother country, and was leading the nations in the onward march of independence and popular liberty."

This flowery declaration, as it turned out, was pure speculation.

In July 1901, more than 100 years after Harman and his pretty wife came to Ohio, the real reason for their flight from Ireland was told in a magazine article written by a direct descendant of Harman's family. The true fact, as it turns out, is that Harman, in marrying Margaret, had married his sister's daughter and was guilty of incest. This scandalized their families and the English society of that day. Margaret was disinherited by her family and the newlyweds were ostracized from society. It was for this reason and none other that they came to America, and after arriving here, this was the reason they found a remote, inaccessible island in the middle of the Ohio River on which to build their home. It was for this reason that they had become convinced, even before they had met Aaron Bun, that they should move on down river and find a new home since Marietta was attracting more and more visitors, even in that early day, and the chance that their secret might be discovered was increasing every day they remained there. And so with this final tragic note in a tale filled with sad episodes, the story comes finally to a close. -A story which I like to call for reasons which I'm sure are now quite obvious, "A Skeleton in Ohio's Backwoods Closet."

1973 Spring Court
Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio
Miamiville, Ohio
June 2, 1973

A SYNOPSIS OF THE FORT NECESSITY STORY

Robert E. Davidson
Superintendent
Fort Necessity National Battlefield
United States Department of the Interior

In many ways, the French and Indian War is a forgotten conflict: school children receive only a passing mention of it in most history text books, Fort Necessity is the only site connected with it receiving federal protection and support, and many people somehow believe that George Washington materialized in 1776 a mature, experienced, military leader ready to challenge the highly regarded British Army.

On closer examination, however, it becomes very clear that the personalities and events of this war not only set the stage for the soon-to-follow American Revolution but initiated a chain of circumstances which actually made it inevitable. Seen in this light, the French and Indian War becomes over-whelmingly significant and not worthy of the inattention usually paid to it.

By 1753, the French in Canada had moved far enough south to lay claim to the Ohio Valley in direct conflict with westward moving British interests along the Atlantic Sea- board. This fertile region was too valuable to each nation's colonial economic aims for either to retreat and the two began preparation for armed conflict.

First, however, the British tried diplomacy and Gov. Dinwiddie of Virginia sent a young emissary north to the French settlements with a final warning to withdraw -that emissary was a youthful civilian of good family, who was looking for adventure. He was selected for the trip partly because of his surveying knowledge, partly because few others volunteered for the job, and mostly because of his sponsorship by Lord Fairfax. Not yet 21 years old, George Washington was being entrusted with a mission which was entangled with colonial, international, and interracial conflict. Additionally, he was not able to leave until October 31, 1753, just in time to encounter winter snows. Washington completed his mission on January 16, 1754 after two brushes with death - a point- blank volley by hostile Indians and an overturned raft on the Allegheny in December. Although Washington's trip was a failure diplomatically (the French reaffirmed their intentions to remain) it did provide him with valuable contacts among the Indians and knowledge of the terrain which was to prove invaluable later.

Governor Dinwiddie began immediate plans for defense against the French although his sister colonies of South Carolina, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Maryland at first reacted with either total opposition, or at most, lukewarm enthusiasm. Nevertheless, Dinwiddie decided to take the

offensive and organized a military expedition to the forks of the Ohio under Colonel Joshua Fry. Ably assisted by young Washington, Fry was to lead a band of "Volunteers" to the Ohio "there to aid Captain Trentin building forts, and in defending the possession of his Majesty against the attempts and hostilities of the French." A secondary goal was the construction of a passable wagon road from Wills Creeks (Cumberland, Md.) to the forks which would facilitate movement of military supplies.

Lt. Col. Washington, leading a spearhead of two companies marched from Alexandria on April 2, 1754. He was heading into the midst of an extremely ticklish international confrontation primed to explode with the least provocation. As we shall soon see, Washington himself was to supply the final spark.

After an arduous 50 mile trek, cutting the road as they went, Washington's command reached Great Meadows on May 24th: The first time a wheeled vehicle had crossed the Alleghenies. Recognizing the military advantages of this large, swampy vale, Washington decided to establish a temporary base of operations. He further fortified it when he learned from friendly Indians that a French force was already at the forks (Fort Duquesne): "We have, with nature's assistance, made a good intrenchment, and by clearing ye bushes out of these meadows, prepar'd a charming field for an encounter."

Washington's troops had barely rested up when, on the evening of May 27th, he received a message from Half-King, a friendly chief of the Senecas or Mingoes, that a French patrol had been spotted encamped in a deep ravine, 5 miles to the west. Leaving only a few men to guard his camp, Washington immediately set out to locate and evaluate this possible threat. From Washington's own journal we read: "(I) set out in a heavy rain, and in a night as dark as pitch, along a path scarce broad enough for one man; we were sometimes fifteen or twenty minutes out of the path before we could come to it again, and we would often strike each other in the darkness: All night long we continued our route and on the 28th about sunrise we arrived at the Indian camp. . . ." Following a brief conference with Half-King and his men, the combined force quietly surrounded the French party, which was just beginning to stir in the early morning light. Apparently, the decision had already been made to attack without warning. In a few brief moments, musket fire would ring out in this sheltered glen, shots which Horace Walpole later characterized as "a volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America (which) set the world on fire."

Even today, the events which followed Washington's arrival are clouded in controversy . . . and international controversy not too unlike numerous other "massacres" down through history.

For the sake of improved perspective let's look at the incident through the eyes of the opposing groups. First Washington's own description.

"We had advanced pretty near to them when they discovered us: I then ordered my company to fire; my fire was supported by that of Mr. Waggoner

and my company and his received the whole fire of the French, during the greater part of the action, which lasted a quarter of an hour before the enemy was routed. We killed Mr. De Jumonville, the commander of the party, as also nine others; we wounded one and made twenty-one prisoners. . . ."

Compare this to the French version:

"At seven o'clock in the morning, they saw themselves encircled on one side by the English, on the other by Indians. Two discharges of musketry were fired upon them, but none by the savages. M. De Jumonville called to them to desist, as he had something to say to .them. The firing ceased. M. De Jumonville had the summons read, which I had sent, admonishing them to retire. . . . While the reading was going on, (here we switch to another account) M. De Jumonville was killed by a musket shot through the head. . . ."

"I believe, sir, it will surprise you to hear how basely the English have acted: it is what has never been seen, even amongst nations that are the least civilized, to fall upon ambassadors and assassinate them."

Notwithstanding the patriotic rhetoric, one thing is clear: from that moment on the French and English were for all practical purposes, at war.

In weighing the actual facts surrounding this incident and generously compensating for possible Anglo-Saxon prejudice, one is forced to conclude that Washington's account is more believable and his actions justifiable.

Washington convincingly contradicts the French claim that Jumonville was acting as a peaceful ambassador thusly: "They, finding where we were encamped, instead of coming up in a public manner, sought out one of the most secret retirements, fitter for a deserter than an ambassador to encamp in, and stayed there two or three days, sending spies to reconnoitre our camp. . . .Why did they, if their designs were open, stay so long within five miles of us, without delivering their message....?

"I have heard, since they went away, that they should say they called to us not to fire: But I know that to be false, for I was the first man to approach them, and the first whom they saw, and immediately upon it they ran to their arms, and fired briskly till they were defeated."

The large size of Jumonville's party of 34 armed men and his care in avoiding contact with the English for several days combine to convincingly contradict the French claim of a diplomatic purpose. This, added to previous hostile French activities (capture and imprisonment of English traders and expulsion of the English fort builders from the forks) left Washington with little alternative but to assume they were sent as spies and dispatch them accordingly.

The events which followed the Jumonville incident were almost inevitable and in some ways anti-climatic. Washington's first sweet taste of victory would soon turn to the bitterness of defeat.

Anticipating the possibility of French reprisals, Washington sent a messenger back to Wills Creek to request additional help from Colonel Fry - unfortunately, Fry had been killed in a fall from his horse and command of the Virginia Volunteers now fell on young Washington. Some reinforcements did arrive eventually from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia and by the middle of June the British force numbered about 400. Although Washington outranked all other officers in the group and attempted to assume command, he was continually thwarted by Capt. James MacKay, a regular army officer holding a king's commission. Nevertheless, Washington exuded confidence in his men and fortifications and on May 31st remarked -"We have just finished a small palisade'd fort, inwhich, with my small number, I shall not fear the attack of 500 men." On June 25th, Washington first calls his stockade by name -"Fort Necessity."

While English preparations for defense progressed the French at Fort Duquense were preparing an expedition of 600 French regulars and 100 Indians to march against Washington -this group ironically was led by Capt. Louis De Villiers, older brother of Jumonville who had specifically requested this opportunity to avenge his brother's death. They departed Fort Duquesne on June 28th. The stage was now set for armed confrontation.

By daybreak on July 3rd the French reached the glen where Jumonville had died. Pausing only briefly to complete burial of the dead, they proceeded eastward reaching Great Meadows just before noon in the midst of a heavy rainstorm. Spotted almost immediately by an English sentry, the alarm was sounded and the battle was on: The first *major* armed conflict of the French and Indian War.

The English immediately withdrew to their stockade and trenches, while the French took up positions in the surrounding forests-the heavy rain continued. Washington recorded his observations in these words" "We continued this unequal fight with an enemy sheltered behind trees, ourselves without shelter, in trenches full of water, in a settled rain, and the enemy galling us on all sides incessantly from the woods, till 8 o'clock at night." Washington's earlier optimism had noticeably faded by this time. Because of the continual rain and the resulting failing of many weapons, the firepower of both groups was significantly reduced -the situation was quickly turning into a stand-off.

Although the French did hold a somewhat superior position, all was not well with them either. Capt. De Villiers noted in his journal - "We had endured rain all day long and the detachment was very tired and the savages were making known that their departure was set for the next day. . . ." Suspecting the possibility of English reinforcements, the French took the first initiative in calling for a truce. Although Washington remained wary of French motives, a meeting of representatives was immediately arranged behind French lines. After several hours of discussions and exchanges, the terms of the English capitulation, mutually agreeable to both sides, were finalized. Although some might question the advisability of surrendering so quickly, the situation facing

Washington and MacKay was very grim, indeed. All of his horses and livestock had been lost, his provisions were almost non-existant, ammunition was scanty, a third of his men were incapacitated with illness or wounds, and little hope of reinforcements remained.

In summary the articles called for:

1. Washington to withdraw under French protection from the Indians.
2. Washington could take all equipment except artillery.
3. Washington to be granted the honors of war.
4. Washington to strike the English colors.
5. French possession of the fort.
6. French protection of property until transportation arrived.
7. No English activity in the Ohio Valley for a year.
8. The turning over of two hostages to insure compliance.

Although these provisions seemed reasonable and even generous under the circumstances, the French successfully deceived Washington in the introduction which reads as follows: 'Whereas our intention has never been to disturb the peace and harmony which exist between the two friendly princes, but only to avenge the murder of one officer. . . ."

The original French version of the articles had been verbally translated to Washington by his own man, Jacob Van Braam, and copied down in English prior to their signing and the French word "L'assassinat" had been expressed as meaning the "death" or "loss of ' one officer . . . a world apart from assassination or murder.

One can only imagine Washington' s and MacKay's chagrin when they discovered its true meaning and that the French were circulating throughout Europe this signed ad- mission of guilt in Jumonville's murder. It was a mistake which caused Washington many years of embarassment.

With the truce signed and sealed, the English marched from their "Fort Necessity" on July 4th (A date which later becomes significant for other reasons) in 1754 -leaving 30 dead and carrying 70 wounded. The battle of Fort Necessity was now history.

Although in itself, a small fight, the battle marked the real beginning point of organized hostilities between the two nations -hostilities which would eventually produce global ramifications by the time peace finally came in 1763.

Frances Parkman, noted 19th century historian and traveler, summed up the results of the French and Indian or Seven Years War in this way: -"The

British victory crippled the commerce of her rivals, ruined France on two continents and blighted her as a colonial power. It gave England control of the seas . . . made her the first of commercial nations, prepared that vast colonial system that has planted new Englands in every quarter of the globe, and it supplied to the United States the indispensable condition of their greatness, if not of their national existence."

Indeed, if England had lost this war in North America, I would probably be presenting this talk in French here today.

For the colonials, however, .the period of warfare from 1754 to 1763 set the stage for their fight for independence from England only twelve years away.

For the first time, this collection of independently administered colonies had been convinced of the need for cooperation in defending themselves from the French and Indian threat. The realization that concerted action for their common interests was possible, produced a confidence which was essential for the break with England in 1776.

Resounding defeats of the highly regarded British regulars such as Braddock's case in 1755, pointed out clearly to the colonists that this military organization could be beaten -something almost unthinkable prior to the war. It also provided a first class training ground for colonial militia officers such as young George Washington -training and experience which would be put to the test in a few short years.

Finally, the tremendous costs of defending North America from France produced increased pressure from Parliament for the colonies to carry the financial burden of their own defense -a philosophy which quickly produced increased taxation, discontent, and eventually the final break.

Because the French and Indian War is so directly related to the War of Independence, Fort Necessity has been designated one of 22 bicentennial sites in the nation by the A R B C. It is hoped that these sites will play a prominent role in the celebration of our Country's 200th birthday in 1976. We have already initiated our planning in cooperation with local citizen groups. Together we intend to make '76 a special time at Fort Necessity National Battlefield.

1974 Summer Court
Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio
Miamiville, Ohio
June 8, 1974

HUMPHREY BLAND

A Treatise 0f Military Discipline
1753

Order Your Firelocks
Shoulder Your Firelocks
Join Your Right Hands To Your Firelocks
Poize Your· Firelocks
Join Your Left Hands To Your Firelocks
Half-Cock Your Firelocks
Handle Your Cartridges
Open Your Cartridges
Prime
Shut Your Pans
Cast About To Charge
Charge With Cartridge
Draw Your Rammers
Shorten Your Rammers
Put Them In The Barrels
Ram Down Your Charge
Recover Your Rammers
Shorten Your Rammers
Return Your Rammers
Your Right Hands Under The Lock
Poize Your Firelocks
Join Your Left Hands To Your Firelocks
Cock Your Firelocks
Present
Fire
Recover Your Arms

Firing By Volleys In Combat:

Make Ready
Present
Give Fire