

The French and Indian War

SETTING THE SCENE

Read to Learn

- ★ what nations claimed land in North America in the mid-1700s
- ★ why France and England both wanted the land in the Ohio Valley
- ★ how the outcome of the French and Indian War affected North America

Terms to Know

- ★ French and Indian War
- ★ Iroquois League
- ★ Albany Plan of Union
- ★ Treaty of Paris

People to Meet

- ★ George Washington
- ★ General Edward Braddock
- ★ William Pitt
- ★ General James Wolfe
- ★ Marquis de Montcalm

Places to Locate

- ★ New France
- ★ St. Lawrence River
- ★ Mississippi River valley
- ★ Ohio Valley
- ★ Quebec



◀ FRENCH INFANTRYMAN, 1754

By the early 1700s, France and Great Britain were competing to be the richest and most powerful nation in Europe. Both had established empires around the world, with colonies in North America and the Caribbean islands. Both also maintained trading outposts in Africa and India.

The contest for power led to four wars in Europe and North America. King William's War (1689–1697), Queen Anne's War (1702–1713), and King George's War (1744–1748) all ended in an uneasy peace. When these wars were over, neither France nor Great Britain had won a clear victory, and by the 1750s yet another war was on the way.

The outcome of this war would change the map of North America. This struggle, known as the French and Indian War in the colonies and the **Seven Years' War** in Europe, resulted in the French losing all their holdings on the North American mainland.

★ European Claims in America

Although they were the most powerful, France and Great Britain were not the world's only empire-building nations. Two others—Russia and Spain—also claimed lands in North America.

Russia and Spain

Both Russia and Spain controlled territory in the West. Russia's fur-trading posts were located on the Pacific coast in the region that is Alaska and Canada today. Spain claimed a large part of the Southwest as New Spain. Included were Mexico and parts of present-day New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California.

Spain also held islands in the Caribbean and claimed the land that is now Florida. The border between Georgia and Spanish Florida was often a source of conflict between Britain and Spain.

France and Britain were the European powers that clashed most often. French

settlements, known as New France, lay north and west of the English colonies, or the Atlantic coast and inland along the St. Lawrence River. The French also claimed land in the Mississippi River valley.

Both the French and the English claimed the land extending westward from the thirteen colonies. Until the 1750s, however, the Native Americans who lived there still controlled that land. French and English traders competed for the profitable fur trade. It was not long before their nations would clash over the land itself.

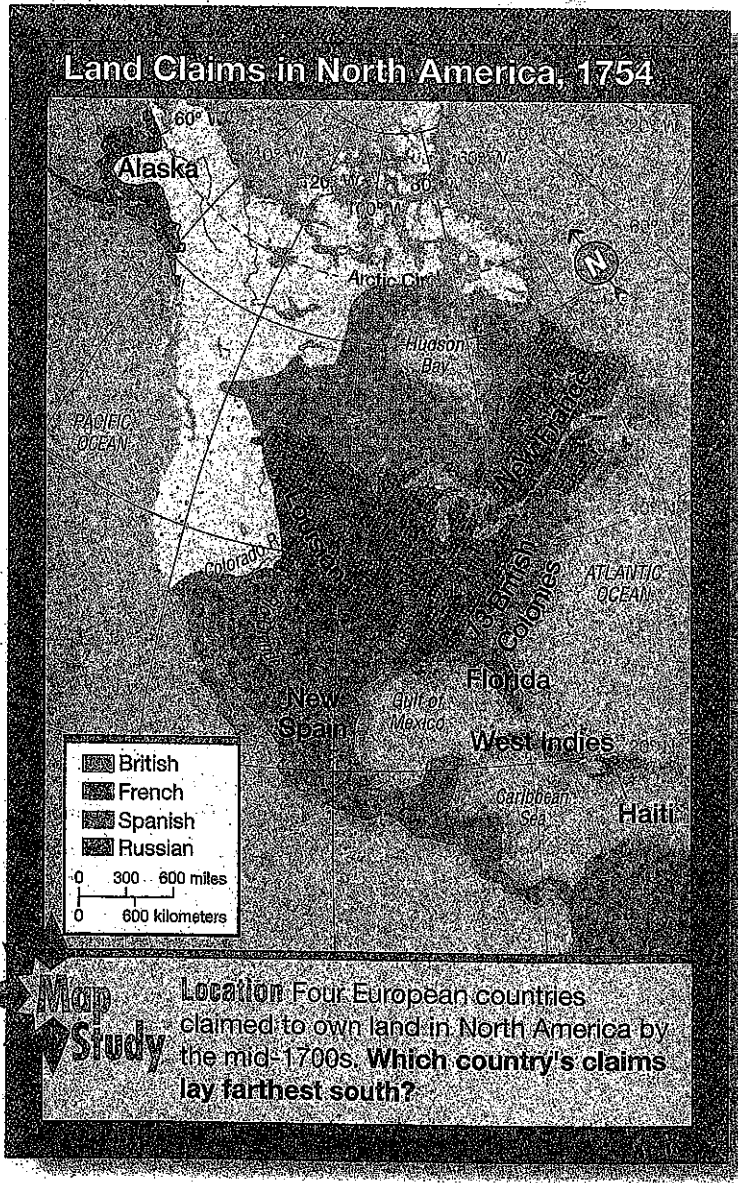
★ Trouble in the Ohio Valley

The center of the land quarrel was the Ohio Valley, located west of the Appalachian Mountains and south of the Great Lakes. The Ohio Valley was crossed by the Ohio River, which wound westward to the Mississippi River. Parts of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Illinois make up this region today.

Both France and England claimed the Ohio Valley, but the French moved into it first. At the beginning of the 1700s, French fur trappers roamed the valley in search of mink, beaver, and otter. By the 1740s, however, trappers from Virginia and Pennsylvania crossed into the Ohio Valley as well. This competition for fur trade upset the government leaders of New France.

English Colonists Move Into Ohio

Tensions grew when pioneer families from the English colonies moved west. Land companies owned vast areas of land that they had been granted by the colonial governments. Company owners hoped to make a profit by selling this frontier land and developing new settlements. Wealthy Virginia planters bought the land and backed these companies.



Both the British government and the leaders of New France were determined to protect their claims to the Ohio Valley. The French wanted the land because it lay between Canada and their settlements in the Mississippi River valley. British settlers wanted to move west. By 1750 a struggle was under way for control of the Ohio region.

★ Native Americans Take Sides

Control of the Ohio Valley depended mainly on people who were generally ignored in colonial politics—the Native Americans who lived there. Their decision to support one side or the other was crucial in determining the outcome of the conflict in their region.

British traders, richer than the French, could offer the Native Americans more and better goods. The French, however, offered them something more important—respect. Unlike the British, the French tried to understand the Native American lifestyle. By the mid-1700s, the French had proved more successful than the British in forming good relations with most of the eastern Native Americans.

The six nations of the Iroquois League, however, sided with the British. The Iroquois League was a powerful Native American confederation. The Iroquois lived mainly in western New York and along the St. Lawrence River. The Iroquois controlled the fur trade in their territory and all boat travel on the Great Lakes.

★ First Steps Toward War

The rivalry between the British and the French grew. That rivalry and tensions among Native Americans set the stage for clashes in the Ohio Valley. These were the first steps toward a conflict known as the French and Indian War. It was part of a larger conflict known as the Seven Years'

War, which was fought in Europe and Asia as well as in North America.

French Forts in the Ohio Valley

To strengthen their claims in the Ohio Valley, in 1752 the French began to build a string of military forts. These extended from Lake Erie in the northwest to as far south as the Ohio River.

The Virginians and other colonial leaders were furious. In 1753 Robert Dinwiddie, governor of Virginia, sent the French a warning. He accused the French of trespassing on Virginia's territory and ordered them to leave. A young major in the Virginia militia, 21-year-old George Washington, delivered the message.

The French commander treated Washington politely, but he refused to leave, saying that "no Englishman had a Right to trade upon those Waters (the Ohio River)."

The First Battles

When he returned, Washington was promoted and sent out once again. This time he led 150 soldiers from Virginia to the "forks of the Ohio," where present-day Pittsburgh stands. Their mission was to build a fort where the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio River. Washington soon learned, however, that the French were building Fort Duquesne (doo•KAYN) on that site.

As Washington and his small army marched into Pennsylvania, they met a French scouting party near Great Meadows, about 50 miles (80 km) from Fort Duquesne. Washington ordered an attack, and 10 French soldiers were killed.

Under pressure, Washington's men quickly built a makeshift fort that they called Fort Necessity. As quickly as the fort was built, however, French forces surrounded it. Outnumbered and forced to surrender, the Virginians were taken prisoner. Most, including Washington, were later set free.

Tensions Mount between France and England

1. What two countries are struggling for control of North America?
2. What is the result of the first three wars they fight?
3. The fourth war they fight has two names. What is this war called in the colonies? What is this war called in Europe?
4. What were French settlements known as in North America?
5. What did French and English traders compete for in the land west of the British 13 colonies (The Ohio Valley)?
6. In addition to the fur trade that both sides wanted to control, why did France want the land in the Ohio Valley? Why did England want the land in the Ohio Valley?
7. Control of the Ohio Valley depended on what group of people?
8. How did the British attempt to gain Native allies?
9. How did the French attempt to gain Native allies?
10. Are the French or English more successful at getting Native allies?
11. What group does England get as their allies?