

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to William Fitzhugh, November 15, 1754](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

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The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 01

Belvoir, November 15, 1754.

... Dear Sir: I was favored with your letter from Rousby Hall, of the 4th instant. It demands my best acknowledgements for the particular marks of Esteem you have expressed therein; and for the kind assurances of his Excellency Governour Sharpe's good wishes towards me. I also thank you, and sincerely, Sir, for your friendly intention of making my situation easy, if I return to the service; and I do not doubt, could I submit to the Terms, that I should be as happy under your command, in the absence of the General, as under any gentleman's whatever: but I think, the disparity between the present offer of a Company, and my former Rank, too great to expect any real satisfaction or enjoyment in a Corps, where I once did, or thought I had a right to, command; ...

You make mention in your letter of my continuing in the Service, and retaining my Colo's Commission. This idea has filled me with surprise; for if you think me capable of holding a commisson that has neither rank nor emolument annexed to it, you must entertain a very contemptible opinion of my weakness, and believe me to be more empty than the Commission itself.

Besides, Sir, if I had time, I could enumerate many good reasons, that forbid all thoughts of my Returning; and which to you, or any other, would, upon the strictest scrutiny, appear to be well-founded. I must be reduced to a very low Command, and subjected to that of many who have acted as my inferior Officers. In short, every Captain, bearing the King's Commission, every half-pay Officer, or other, appearing with such a commission, would rank before me; for these reasons, I choose to submit to the loss of Health which I have, however, already sustained, (not to mention that of Effects,) and the fatigue I have undergone in our first Efforts; rather than subject myself to the same inconveniences, and run the risque of a second disappointment.

I shall have the consolation of knowing, that I have opened the way when the smallness of our numbers exposed us to the attacks of a Superior Enemy; that I have hitherto stood the heat and brunt of the Day, and escaped untouched in time of extreme danger; and that I have the Thanks of my Country, for the Services I have rendered it. ...

... I herewith enclose Governour Sharp's Letter, which I beg you will return to him, with my Acknowledgments for the favour he intended me, assure him, Sir, as you truly may, of my reluctance to quit the Service, and of the pleasure I should have received in attending his Fortunes, also inform him, that it was to obey the call of Honour, and the advice of my Friends, I declined it, and not to gratify any desire I had to leave the military line. My inclinations are strongly bent to arms.

... {excerpt ends}

Questions:

1. What was the tone of Washington's reply to the invitation to accept a commission under Governor Sharpe's command?
2. What are the reasons Washington gives for rejecting the appointment?
3. To what extent would Washington's reply to Governor Sharpe's offer reflect negatively on his military career?
4. What does this letter reveal about Washington's character?

Source: Library of Congress American Memory Collection, updated 26 September 2002, <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/gw/gw1.html>

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to Robert Orme, April 2, 1755](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

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The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 01

Mount Vernon, April 2, 1755.

Dear Sir: The arrival of a good deal of Company (among whom is my Mother, alarm'd with the report of my attending your Fortunes) prevents me the pleasure of waiting upon you to day as I intended,⁷⁸ therefore I beg you'll be kind enough to make my compliments and excuse to the Genl., who I hope to hear is greatly recover'd from his indisposition; and recruited sufficiently to prosecute his journ'y. to Annapolis.

[Note 78: General Braddock landed in Virginia on February 20. The transports with the British troops, who were to act under him, came into the Chesapeake soon afterwards. ...

Since his resignation in October, Colonel Washington had remained inactive at Mount Vernon. General Braddock, knowing his value and the importance of securing his services to the expedition, directed Mr. Orme, his aide-de-camp, to write to him the following letter, the original of which is in the Washington Papers, proposing an expedient by which the chief obstacles of rank would be removed. "Williamsburg, 2 March, 1755. "Sir: The general, having been informed that you expressed some desire to make the campaign, but that you declined it upon some disagreeableness that you thought might arise from the regulations of command, has ordered me to acquaint you, that he will be very glad of your company in his family, by which all inconveniences of that kind will be obviated. I shall think myself very happy to form an acquaintance with a person so universally esteemed, and shall use every opportunity of assuring you how much I am, Sir, your most obedient servant. "Robert Orme, Aid-de-camp." ...]

I find myself much embarrass'd with my Affairs; having no person in whom I can confide, to entrust the management with. Yet, under these disadvantages and circumstances, I am determin'd to do myself the honour of accompanying you with this proviso only, that the General will be kind enough to permit my return, so soon as the [?] or grand Affair is over, (if desir'd). Or, if there should be any space of inaction long enough to admit of a visit (for otherwise I could by no means obtain my own consent, what ever private losses I might sustain) to indulge me therein and I need not add, how much I should be oblig'd by joining at Wills Creek only,⁷⁹ for this the General has kindly promised. These things Sir, however unwarrantable they may appear at first sight, I hope will not be taken amiss when its consider'd how unprepar'd I am at present to quit a Family, and Estate scarcely settled, and in the utmost confusion.⁸⁰

[Note 79: In reply Captain Orme wrote: "The general orders me to give you his compliments and to assure you his wishes are to make it agreeable to yourself and consistent with your affairs, and, therefore, he desires you will so settle your business at home as to join him at Will's Creek if more convenient to you; and, whenever you find it necessary to return, he begs you will look upon yourself as entirely master, and judge what is proper to be done."]

[Note 80: Lawrence Washington's estate, which included, of course, Mount Vernon. From 1755 on, for several years, Washington paid a yearly rent for Mount Vernon to Col. George Lee, who had married Lawrence Washington's widow, Ann Fairfax.]

... {excerpt ends}

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to William Bird, April 20, 1755](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 01

Mount Vernon, April 20, 1755.

... I am now preparing for, and shall in a few days sett off, to serve in the ensuing Campaigne; with different Views from what I had before; for here, if I can gain any credit, or if I am entitled to the least countenance and esteem, it must be from serving my Country with a free, Voluntary will; for I can very truly say, I have no expectation of reward but the hope of meriting the love of my Country and friendly regard of my acquaintances; and as to any prospect of obtaining a Comn. I have none, and am pretty well assur'd it is not in Genl. Braddock's to give such a one as I wou'd accept off as I am told a Compa. is the highest Comn. that is now vested in his gift. He disir'd my Company this Campaigne, has honoured me with particular marks of Esteem, and kindly invited me into his Family; which will ease me of that expence, which otherwise wou'd undoubtedly have accrued in furnishing a proper Camp Provision; whereas the expence will now be easy, (comparatively speaking) as baggage Horses, tents and some other necessarys will constitute the whole of the charge tho' I mean to say to leave a Family just settling, and in the utmost confusion and disorder (as mine is in at present) will be the means of my using my private Fortune very greatly, but however this may happen, it shall be no hindrance to my making this Campaigne. I am Sir with very g't esteem, etc.

... {excerpt ends}

Questions (covering the previous two letters):

5. Why would Washington wish to serve under General Braddock as a volunteer?
6. Would service under General Braddock enhance Washington's military career?
7. Under what conditions would Washington serve?
8. Why do you think General Braddock would agree to Washington's request for special privileges?
9. What does the letter to William Bird reveal about Washington's motives for serving under General Braddock?

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, July 18, 1755](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 01

Fort Cumberland, July 18, 1755.

... We continued our March from Fort Cumberland to Frazier's (which is within 7 Miles of Duquisne) with't meet'g with any extraordinary event, hav'g only a stragler or two picked up by the French Indians. When we came to this place, we were attack'd (very unexpectedly I must own) by abt. 300 French and Ind'ns; Our numbers consisted of abt. 1300 well arm'd Men, chiefly Regular's, who were immediately struck with such a deadly Panick, that nothing but confusion and disobedience of order's prevail'd amongst them: The Officer's in gen'l behav'd with incomparable bravery, for which they greatly suffer'd, there being near 60 kill'd and wound'd. A large proportion, out of the number we had! The Virginian Companies behav'd like Men and died like Soldiers; for I believe out of the 3 Companys that were there that day, scarce 30 were left alive: Captn. Peyrouny and all his Officer's, down to a Corporal, were kill'd; Captn. Polson shar'd almost as hard a Fate, for only one of his Escap'd: In short the dastardly behaviour of the English Soldier's expos'd all those who were inclin'd to do their duty to almost certain Death; and at length, in despite of every effort to the contrary, broke and run as Sheep before the Hounds, leav'g the Artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, and, every individual thing we had with us a prey to the Enemy; and when we endeavour'd to rally them in hopes of regaining our invaluable loss, it was with as much success as if we had attempted to have stop'd the wild Bears of the Mountains. The Genl. was wounded behind in the shoulder, and into the Breast, of w'ch he died three days after; his two Aids de Camp were both wounded, but are in a fair way of Recovery; Colo. Burton and Sir Jno. St. Clair are also wounded, and I hope will get over it; Sir Peter Halket, with many other brave Officers were kill'd in the Field. I luckily escap'd with't a wound tho' I had four Bullets through my Coat and two Horses shot under me. It is suppose that we left 300 or more dead in the Field; about that number we brought of wounded; and it is imagin'd (I believe with great justice too) that two thirds of both [?]⁴⁰ received their shott from our own cowardly English Soldier's who gather'd themselves into a body contrary to orders 10 or 12 deep, wou'd then level, Fire and shoot down the Men before them.

[Note 40: Two words obliterated.]

I tremble at the consequences that this defeat may have upon our back settlers, who I suppose will all leave their habitations unless there are proper measures taken for their security.

... *{excerpt ends}*

Questions:

10. According to Washington, what was the reason for the British defeat at the hands of a smaller French and Indian force?
11. How does Washington describe the actions of the British regulars in the battle?
12. What were the consequences of the British defeat?

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to John Augustine Washington, July 18, 1755](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

...{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 01

Fort Cumberland, July 18, 1755.

Dear Jack: As I have heard since my arriv'l at this place, a circumstantial acct. of my death and dying speech, I take this early oppertunity of contradicting both, and of assuring you that I now exist and appear in the land of the living by the miraculous care of Providence, that protected me beyond all human expectation; I had 4 Bullets through my Coat, and two Horses shot under me, and yet escaped unhurt.⁴⁴

[Note 44: The 1784--85 change is as follows: "oppertunity of contradicting the first and of assuring you that I have not as yet, composed the latter. But by the all powerful dispensams. of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability and expectation for I had 4 Bullets" etc.]

We have been most scandalously beaten by a trifling body of men; but fatigue and want of time prevents me from giving any of the details till I have the happiness of seeing you at home; which I now most ardently wish for, since we are drove in thus far. A Weak and Feeble state of Health, obliges me to halt here for 2 or 3 days, to recover a little strength, that I may thereby be enabled to proceed homewards with more ease; You may expect to see me there on Saturday or Sunday Se'night, which is as soon as I can well be down as I shall take my Bulb skin Plantation's in my way.⁴⁵ Pray give my Compl'ts to all my F'ds. I am Dr. Jack, y'r most Affect. Broth'r

[Note 45: He arrived at Mount Vernon on July 26. He still retained the office of adjutant of the northern division of militia, and immediately wrote to the county lieutenants, ordering the militia to be ready and properly equipped in each county on certain days, when he should be present to review and exercise them. Such was the alarm created by the success of the French at Braddock's Defeat that volunteer companies embodied themselves in different parts of Virginia to march to the frontiers. The Rev. Samuel Davies, at that time a clergyman in Hanover County, preached a sermon to one of these companies on August 17, which was printed in Philadelphia and London, and entitled Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a Good Soldier. After applauding the patriotic spirit and military ardor, which had begun to manifest themselves, the preacher adds: "As a remarkable instance of this, I may point out to the public that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has has hitherto preserved in so signal a manner for some important service to his country."-- Sparks.]

... {excerpt ends}

Questions:

13. What rumor had spread about Washington? What had actually happened?
14. How does the Rev. Samuel Davies describe Washington? Do you think he was correct? Explain.

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, September 17, 1757, two same date](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 02

Fort Loudoun, September 17, 1757.

Honble. Sir: A letter of the 22d ultimo, from Captain Peachy, came to my hands the other day, contents as follows: (here was inserted the letter).⁷² I should take it infinitely kind, if your Honor would please to inform me, whether a report of this nature was ever made to you; and, in that case, who was the author of it?

[Note 72: The letter begins by detailing a conversation, which the writer had lately held with Mr. Charles Carter, of Shirley, Va., respecting a transaction in which Captain Peachy has been concerned some months before, on a mission to Williamsburg, Va., when the frontiers were in great alarm from the incursions of the enemy; and then proceeds: "He [Mr. Carter] says, that Mr. Christopher Robinson told him he heard Colonel Richard Corbin say, that I affirmed, that my whole business at that time was to execute a scheme of yours to cause the Assembly to levy largely both in men and money, and that there was not an Indian in the neighbourhood; that the frontiers, or even Winchester and the adjacent country, did not appear to be in any more danger at that time than any other. Mr. Robinson also informed Mr. Carter, it was said, that that piece of deceit, or imposition of yours (as they term it), had lessened the Governor's and some of the leading men's esteem for you; or, at least, they make use of it as a reason for their ill treatment, and the worse opinion (they say) they have than formerly of you. I hope Colo. Washington knows me better than even to suppose I could be guilty of a thing of this kind; therefore, shall only add, that you may depend I shall use my endeavor to trace the matter, till I find the scoundrel that dares make himself the author of such a scandalous report. If you think fit to make use of the above, you are at full liberty to do so." The entire letter is printed in Hamilton's Letters to Washington, vol. 2. p. 181.]

It is evident, from a variety of circumstances, and especially from the change in your Honor's conduct towards me, that some person, as well inclined to detract, but better skilled in the art of detraction, than the author of the above stupid scandal, has made free with my character. For I cannot suppose, that malice so absurd, so barefaced, so diametrically opposite to truth, to common policy, and, in short, to every thing but villainy, as the above is, could impress you with so ill an opinion of my honor and honesty.

If it be possible, that Colonel Corbin, (for my belief is staggered, not being conscious of having given the least cause to any one, much less to that gentleman, to reflect so grossly,) I say, if it be possible, that Colonel Corbin could descend so low as to be the propagator of this story, he must either be vastly ignorant in the state of affairs in this county at that time, or else he must suppose, that the whole body of inhabitants had combined with me, in executing the deceitful fraud. Or why did they, almost to a man, forsake their dwellings in the greatest terror and confusion; and while one half of them sought shelter in paltry forts, (of their own building,) the other should flee to the adjacent counties for refuge, numbers of them even to Carolina, from whence they have never returned?

These are facts well known; but not better known, than that these wretched people, while they lay pent up in forts, destitute of the common supports of life (having in their precipitate flight forgotten, or were unable rather to secure, any kind of necessaries,) did dispatch messengers of their own (thinking I had not represented their miseries in the piteous manner they deserved), with addresses to your Honor and the Assembly, praying relief. And did I ever send any alarming account, without also sending the original papers, (or the copies,) which gave rise to it?

That I have foibles, and perhaps many of them, I shall not deny. I should esteem myself, as the world also would, vain and empty, were I to arrogate perfection.

Knowledge in military matters is to be acquired by practice and experience only; and, if I have erred, great allowance should be made for my errors for want of it; unless these errors should appear to be willful; and then,

Source: Library of Congress American Memory Collection, updated 26 September 2002,
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/gw/gw1.html>

I conceive it would be more generous to charge me with my faults, and let me stand or fall according to evidence, than to stigmatize me behind my back.

It is uncertain in what light my services may have appeared to your Honor; but this I know, and it is the highest consolation I am capable of feeling, that no man, that ever was employed in a public capacity, has endeavoured to discharge the trust reposed in him with greater honesty, and more zeal for the country's interest, than I have done; and if there is any person living, who can say with justice, that I have offered any intentional wrong to the public, I will cheerfully submit to the most ignominious punishment, that an injured people ought to inflict. On the other hand, it is hard to have my character arraigned, and my actions condemned, without a hearing.

I must therefore again beg in more plain, and in very earnest terms, to know, if Colonel Corbin has taken the liberty of representing my character to your Honor with such ungentlemanly freedom as the letter implies? Your condescension herein will be acknowledged, as a singular favor done your Honor's most obedient, humble servant.⁷³

[Note 73: To this request, Governor Dinwiddie replied (September 24): "Your other letter of the 17th I perused. I would gladly hope there is no truth in it. I never heard of it before, or did I ever conceive you would have sent down any alarms without proper foundation. However, I shall show it to Colonel Corbin when he comes to town; but I'd advise you not to give credit to every idle story you hear; for if I was to notice reports of different kinds, I should be constantly perplexed. My conduct to you from the beginning was always friendly; but you know I had great reason to suspect you of ingratitude, which I am convinced your own conscience and reflection must allow, I had reason to be angry, but this I endeavor to forget; but I cannot think Colonel Corbin guilty of what is reported. However, as I have his Majesty's leave to go home, I propose leaving this in November, and I wish my successor may show you as much friendship as I have done." Dinwiddie's letter is printed in Hamilton's Letters to Washington, vol. 2, p. 204.]

Questions:

15. How does Washington respond to accusations against him?
16. How does Washington defend himself?
17. What is the tone of the letter?
18. How does Governor Dinwiddie respond?

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, September 24, 1757](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 02

Fort Loudoun, September 24, 1757.

Honble. Sir: Enclosed is a copy of a letter, which I received from Captain McKenzie. Since my last, the different parties I detached in quest of the enemy, (who committed the late depredations in this neighborhood,) are returned, after having prosecuted the most probable measures, and exerted their utmost efforts in vain, in endeavoring to come up with and prevent the enemy's escape. Nor is it in any degree surprising, for when the vast extent of country, the scattered and distant manner in which the inhabitants are settled, the nature of the ground, and disposition of the enemy we have to cope with, are collectively considered, it is next to impossible, that any of our parties should ever see the enemy, except when they possess such advantages as render their victory certain.

The inhabitants of this valuable and very fertile valley are terrified beyond expression. Some have abandoned their plantations, and many are packing up their most valuable effects in order to follow them. Another irruption into the heart of this settlement will, I am afraid, be of fatal consequence to it. I was always perswaded, and

Source: Library of Congress American Memory Collection, updated 26 September 2002,
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/gw/gw1.html>

almost every day affords new matter for confirming me in the opinion, that the enemy can, with the utmost facility, render abortive every plan, which can be concerted upon our present system of defence; and that the only method of effectually defending such a vast extent of mountains covered with thick woods, as our frontiers, against such an enemy, is by carrying the war into their country. And I think I may, without assuming uncommon penetration, venture to affirm, that, unless an expedition is carried on against the Ohio next spring, this country will not be another year in our possession.

... {excerpt ends}

Questions:

19. What is Washington's assessment of the situation on the frontier in his letter to Governor Dinwiddie?

NOTE: This is an excerpt. The full text version of [Letter from George Washington to Francis Fauquier, November 28, 1758](#) is in [George Washington Papers, 1741-1799](#).

{excerpt begins}

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 02

Camp, at Fort Duquesne, November 28, 1758.

Honble. Sir: I have the pleasure to inform you, that Fort Duquesne, or the ground rather on which it stood, was possessed by his Majesty's troops on the 25th instant. The enemy, after letting us get within a day's march of the place, burned the fort, and ran away (by the light of it,) at night, going down the Ohio by water, to the number of about five hundred men, from our best information. The possession of this fort has been matter of great surprise to the whole army, and we cannot attribute it to more probable causes, than those of weakness, want of provisions, and desertion of their Indians. Of these circumstances we were luckily informed by three prisoners, who providentially fell into our hands at Loyal Hannan, at a time when we despaired of proceeding, and a council of war had determined, that it was not advisable to advance beyond the place above mentioned this season, but the information above caused us to march on without tents or baggage, and with a light train of artillery only, with which we have happily succeeded. It would be tedious, and I think unnecessary, to relate every trivial circumstance, that has happened since my last. To do this, if needful, shall be the employment of a leisure hour, when I have the pleasure to pay my respects to your Honor.

The General purposes to wait here a few days to settle matters with the Indians, and then all the troops, (except a sufficient garrison which will I suppose be left here, to secure the possession,) will march to their respective governments. I therefore give your Honor this early notice of it, that your directions relative to those of Virginia may meet me timely on the road. I cannot help premising, in this place, the hardships the troops have undergone, and the naked condition they now are in, in order that you may judge if it is not necessary that they should have some little recess from fatigue, and time to provide themselves with necessaries, for at present they are destitute of every comfort of life. If I do not get your orders to the contrary, I shall march the troops under my command directly to Winchester; from whence they may then be disposed of, as you shall afterwards direct.

... {excerpt ends}

Questions:

20. How does Washington describe the fall of Fort Duquesne to Governor Fauquier?

Source: Library of Congress American Memory Collection, updated 26 September 2002, <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/gw/gw1.html>