

Spanning the Gap

The French and Indian War in the Delaware Valley



U.S. Dept. of the Interior
National Park Service

Spanning the Gap
The newsletter of
Delaware Water Gap National
Recreation Area
Vol. 21 No. 2 Summer 1999

by John R. Wright

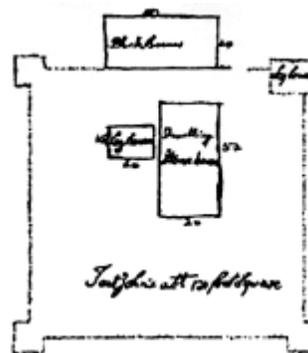
The **French and Indian War** (1754-1763) is the name given in the New World to the last of four wars waged from 1689 to 1763 between the British and French in North America. In Europe it is termed the Seven Years War (1756-1763.) It was fought by Frenchmen, French Canadians, and Indians on the one side against Englishmen, Irishmen, Scots, British Colonials, and Indians on the other side. The earlier wars had consisted primarily of skirmishes between smaller regular units and colonial militia, but the French and Indian War was part of a "great war for empire".

Would North America be French-speaking or English-speaking? Who would be their king? The French and Indian War decided much of America's heritage, and park archeologist John Wright is investigating how the Delaware Valley prepared for this crucial colonial war.

The British won, and the war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The terms of peace stripped France of nearly all of her North American possessions. Great Britain now ruled the territory of what would be eastern Canada and the United States.

At the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754, about 3,000 European settlers lived in the Upper Delaware River Valley. The Delaware Indians proclaimed their independence from the Iroquois, who were allied with the British, and in 1755 attacked the Moravian settlement at Gnaden-hütten (Lehigh) and the Brodhead residence at Dansbury (Stroudsburg). Pennsylvania and New Jersey colonial governments then developed fortifications to protect European settlers in the valley.

Hampton's Map



Sketch from Captain Jonathan Hampton's undated map of frontier forts, depicting "Fort Johns ab(ou)t 120 foot Square". The exterior line denotes a log palisade, but it is uncertain if the fort was

In late 1755, Pennsylvania developed a plan to erect 12 stockaded forts, 15 miles apart, that could house 50 men each. These fortifications were to run from the Upper Delaware Valley southwestward across the colony to act as guard posts to protect and prevent raids on the more populated areas in the southeast. In Pennsylvania, four forts were prescribed for what was then Northampton County, but only two were actually constructed: Fort Hamilton, erected at present-day Stroudsburg, and Fort Hynshaw, on James Hynshaw's property, near present-day Bushkill. By 1757, Fort Hynshaw was abandoned and by 1758, Fort Hamilton was forsaken also.

ever built on this scale. The opening just to the right of the 50 x 24 foot "Blockhouse" (*at the top*) may have led southward downhill to Van Campen Inn. Inside the palisade are shown a 15 x 20 foot "Log house" next to a 20 x 57 foot "Dwelling Stone house."

Also in late 1755, the New Jersey colonial government authorized four blockhouses and 250 men along the Delaware River in Sussex County. By 1757, there were a total of six blockhouses reported for Sussex County: the blockhouse near the Abraham Van Campen house, Fort Walpack; Fort Johns (Headquarters Fort), Fort Nominack, Fort Shipeconk, and Fort Cole (present-day Port Jervis.)

In 1997, the National Park Service entered into a five-year research project for historical archeology in cooperation with the New York University Department of Anthropology to investigate French and Indian War period fortifications along the Delaware River within the recreation area.

Fort Johns, headquarters for the New Jersey colonial defenses, was investigated first. Most of the information concerning these forts is historic narrative; however, a 1758 schematic map of Fort Johns (*above, right*) by Jonathan Hampton has survived, making this fort the most reasonable place to start. Also, in 1975, Professor Herbert Kraft of Seton Hall University had undertaken a preliminary archeological investigation at Fort Johns, documented several possible stockade post molds, and excavated the ruins of a stone structure purported to be the blockhouse.

Current investigation began on July 6 and ended on

The Excavation Team



The 1998 excavation team consisted of Dr. Pamela Crabtree (*above, right, at Fort Johns in 2002*); four graduate students and one undergraduate student from the Department of Anthropology, New York University; Dr. Douglas Campana, Archeologist, Center for Cultural Resources, Valley Forge National Historical Park; John Wright, Park Archeologist, and Geoff Klemens, archeology college intern,

July 31, 1998, at the site of Ft. Johns. The 1998 archeological team (*see below, right*) concentrated on the location of the structures inside the stockade wall. A team will return this summer to continue the investigation of the interior portion of the stockaded fortification and will begin preliminary testing at Fort Hynshaw in Bushkill. Fieldwork will continue into the years 2000 and 2001.

These investigations will meet several goals. The first goal is to utilize the new data as interpretive information in wayside exhibits, brochures, and exhibits in local historical societies and in park sites. The second goal is to provide information for local schools on the history of the French and Indian War period in the Upper Delaware River Valley. The final goal is to begin nominating specific sites for a National Historic Landmark District.

Educational activities will play a very important role during these summer field seasons. Both undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of Anthropology, New York University, will fulfill regular and advanced field-school requirements. In addition, local middle and high school students and other volunteers will assist in the fieldwork and learn about archeological field methodology and the history of our area.

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area; and a volunteer group consisting of teachers and students from Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, and Eatontown, New Jersey, public school systems, and the Walpack Environmental Education Center.



The 1999 dig in progress.
(*Photo courtesy of New York University*)

John R. Wright is the park's archeologist.