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## *The Weekly Historical Note*


By Nic Reynolds  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009


### *The French and Indian War, 1756-1763*

This week's message is on the French and Indian War. The war began officially in 1756, however, skirmishes between the French and British had been going on since two years prior to that. The war revolved around the control of the Fur Trade. As the furs closest to the East Coast were quickly depleted, Colonist had to move further and further inland to acquire the numbers of furs that they wanted. It was this eventual shift inland and the strength of the Iroquois Confederacy that lead to the prominence of the Iroquois during the late 1600's and first half of the 1700's. However, by the mid 1700's, the furs of New England had been harvested to the point of localized extinction and the traders had to push further into the Ohio Valley and beyond.

The French had moved further inland than the English and as a result they had claimed rights to Midwest, most of Canada, and the Mississippi valley all the way to the Gulf of Mexico; in effect, the British were cut off from moving further west. When the majority of the Fur Trade moved into the Ohio Valley, the French cleared the area of the small number of British forces and quickly built Fort Duquesne near present-day Pittsburgh. George Washington was a young man at the time and experienced on of his first losses of his military career. The English were infuriated and as time wore on it became more and more evident that full scale war was imminent. Both sides enlisted the Tribes all through the Eastern Portions of the Continent to fight on their behalf. The majority of the Iroquois supported the British and were involved in battles throughout the coarse of the war.

Following the capture of Montreal, the war in America was coming to an end. The number of battles and skirmishes drastically reduced. However, when peace did not come as soon as the French has supposed it would, tensions increased and the war almost broke out with renewed vigor. In an attempt to ensure that the French could not again call on their Indian allies, the British asked Sir William Johnson, the Indian Agent appointed to the Iroquois to re-mobilize the Iroquois warriors. The intent was to use the





Iroquois warriors to distract the pro-Spanish and pro-British tribes from lending assistance to the Spanish and French and therefore eliminating their confidence in re-starting the war. In the end, whether because of the Iroquois influence at this stage of the war or not, the British and French signed the Treaty of Paris in 1763 and the war came to an end.



Below is an excerpt from *The Papers of Sir William Johnson, Vol. III*, published in Albany by The University of the State of New York, 1921, pages 742-743. The text is from a letter sent to Jeffery Amherst, who, in 1762, was serving as Governor General of British North America and appears as it does in the original letter.


*To Jeffery Amherst  
Johnson Hall, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1762*


*Sir,*

*I am to acknowledge the rec<sup>t</sup> of your Excellencys Letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> Inst and to return you thanks for y<sup>e</sup> Cobby of Lord Egremonts letter therewith, as far as it relates to Indian matters, which you received from home, relative to the Indians, & which I shall make the best use of for his Majestys service.*

*Herewith I inclose your Excellency a Copy of my Transactions with the 6 Nations at the late Meeting, together with an Extract from Mr. Croghnas Journal, relative to the murder Committed by the Shawanese which he has lately transmitted me an acc<sup>t</sup> of.*

*Your Excellency will observe in these Transactions the great Jealousy of the Indians with regard to their Lands, & particularly their uneasiness concerning the designs of some Connecticut people who to the Number of 1000 families, are preparing, & some of them as I am Informed already gone to Settle on a large tract of Country on the Susquehanna River, which they Claim a Right to in virtue of a purchase made for them by one Lydius of Albany some years ago in a very wrong manner, one Woodbridge of Stockbridge sent a Speech to the 6 Nations, which I had a Copy taken of, some time ago, & now Enclose it with y<sup>e</sup> rest to your Excellency.*





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*I am glad to find my proposal of procuring some Indians to the Southward &<sup>ca</sup> hath met with your Excellencys approbation & I shall in consequence thereof, send amongst the Nations to excite them thereto. As the Indians generally chuse to go in small parties of 20, or 30 Men, it will not be easy to ascertain the exact Number I may be able to Depend on, but I look upon it I shall have it in my power to send several parties of that Number, who may answer the purposes of much larger, by harassing, & continually alarming the inhabitants of the interior part of that Country, as well as keeping the Spanish & French Indians too much Employed at home to afford the Enemy much assistance.*

*As these parties will chuse to make their inroads in different Quarters about, I believe the places must be chiefly left to themselves.*

*Whenever I am made acquainted therewith, & with the manner in which they receive my proposals, I shall give your Excellency notice of their Sentiments & Resolutions thereon.*

*I have the hone to be &<sup>ca</sup>.*

*Sir W<sup>m</sup>. Johnson*