

THE BEGINNINGS

The United States as a nation was in its origins a product of English expansion in the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a part of the general outward thrust of West European peoples in this epoch. British people and institutions, transplanted to a new continent and mixed with people of different origins, underwent changes that eventually produced a distinctive American culture. In no area was the interaction of the two influences—European heredity and American environment—more apparent than in the shaping of the military institutions of the new nation.

The European Heritage

The European military heritage reaches far back into antiquity. Organized armies under formal discipline and employing what we would recognize as definite systems of battlefield tactics first appeared in the empires of the Near East in the second millennium B.C. During that time, Mediterranean military establishments rivaled in numbers and in the scope of their conflicts anything that was to appear in the Western world before the eighteenth century. In the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great of Macedonia brought all these empires and dominions, in fact most of civilization known to the Western world, under his suzerainty in a series of rapid military conquests. In so doing, he carried to the highest point of development the art of war as it was practiced in the Greek city-states. He used the phalanx—a solid mass infantry formation using pikes as its cutting edge—as the Greeks had long done. But he put far greater emphasis on heavy cavalry and contingents of archers and slingers to increase the maneuverability and capability of his armies.

The Romans eventually fell heir to most of Alexander's empire and extended their conquests westward and northward to include present-day Spain, France, Belgium, and England, bringing these areas within the pale of Roman civilization. The Romans built on the achievements of Alexander and brought the art of war to its zenith in the ancient

world. They perfected, in the legion, a tactical military unit of great maneuverability comparable in some respects to the modern division; performed remarkable feats of military engineering; refined sophisticated war machines such as the ballista and the catapult; and developed elaborate systems for fortification and siege craft. With this system, they built a great empire that endured for hundreds of years.

As the *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace") disintegrated in Western Europe, the Roman Empire in the West was succeeded first by a number of kingdoms of Germanic tribes and eventually by a highly decentralized political system known as feudalism, under which a multitude of warring nobles exercised authority over local areas of varying size. The art of war underwent profound change, with the armored knight on horseback succeeding to the battlefield supremacy that under the Greeks and Romans had belonged primarily to disciplined formations of infantry. Society in the Middle Ages was highly stratified, and a rigid division existed between the knightly or ruling noble class and the great mass of peasants who tilled the soil, most of them as serfs bound to the nobles' estates.

Warfare became for the most part a monopoly of the ruling classes, for only men of substance could afford horse and armor. Every knight owed a certain number of days of military service to his lord each year in a hierarchical, or pyramidal, arrangement, the king at the apex and the great mass of lesser knights forming the base. But lords who were strong enough could defy their superiors with relative impunity. Fortified castles with moat and drawbridge, built on commanding points of terrain, furnished sanctuaries where lesser lords with inferior forces could defy more powerful opponents. Nonetheless, wherever freemen were found, in town or countryside, they continued to bear arms on occasion as infantry, although often as mere adjuncts to armies composed of heavy cavalry. This yeoman class was stronger, for the most part, in England than on the Continent. Even after the Norman Conquest brought feudal institutions to England, the ancient Saxon tradition of the *fyrð*, or militia, which required every freeman between sixteen and sixty to bear arms in defense of his country, remained alive. In 1181 the English King Henry II declared in his Assize of Arms that every freeman should keep and "bear these arms in his [the king's] service according to his order and in allegiance to the lord King and his realm."

Vestiges of feudal institutions survived even into the twentieth century, nowhere more prominently than in European military organizations where the aristocracy, descendants of the old feudal nobility, long dominated the officer ranks and continued its traditions of service, honor, and chivalry. At the other end of the scale, the militia system, so prominent in British and American history, also owed much to medieval precedents, for the Saxon *fyrð* and Henry II's Assize of Arms underlay the militia tradition transplanted from England to America.

Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, the feudal order as the basic political organization of European society gave way gradually to new national states under the hereditary rule of royal families. The growth of towns with their merchant and artisan classes and the consequent appearance of a money economy enabled ambitious kings to levy taxes and borrow money to raise and support military forces and to unify and rule their kingdoms. The Protestant Reformation of

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Alexander the Great

the sixteenth century shattered the religious unity of Western Christendom. A long series of bloody wars ensued in which the bitter animosity of Protestant and Catholic was inextricably mixed with dynastic and national ambition in provoking conflict.

Changes in military organization, weapons, and tactics went hand in hand with political, social, and economic change. During the later Middle Ages, formations of disciplined infantry using longbow, crossbow, pike (a long spear), and halberd (a long-handled ax with a pike head at the end) reasserted their superiority on the battlefield. The introduction of gunpowder in the fourteenth century began a process of technological change in weapons that was to enhance that superiority; more immediately, gunpowder was used in crude artillery to batter down the high “curtain” walls of medieval castles. The age of the armored knight and the castle slowly gave way to an age of mercenary infantry and new types of fortifications.

The Military Revolution

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe, a profound change occurred in the military capabilities of that portion of the Continent, a change so profound that it can accurately be phrased a revolution in the military art. In a relatively short space of time, European armies transformed themselves into highly disciplined and powerful military machines that lay the foundations for the coming European dominance of the world.

There were a number of key elements to this revolution. Armies grew larger with more efficient means to supply their material wants with a corresponding increase in the scope of warfare. Advances in fortification techniques (especially the *Trace Italienne*, with its revolutionary use of bastions as artillery firing platforms) established powerful city-states able to protect an expanding middle class. Tactical innovations led to a more highly disciplined force in which infantry armed with muskets, cavalry, and artillery merged into a standing national army. More ambitious strategies resulted from these new, more capable forces. Finally, this new type of army and form of warfare had a tremendous social, economical, and political impact on society. This military revolution shaped Europe into a collection of warlike, even predatory, states where constant innovation and technological experimentation was necessary for survival.

When this energy and destructive power was forced outward from Europe as part of this competition, great empires formed to dominate the world until the middle of the twentieth century. The foundation of the empire building of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was laid in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its impact on the British Empire in America was profound.

In the religious and dynastic wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as mercenary armies came more and more to be national armies, various weapons employing gunpowder gradually replaced pike and halberd as the standard infantry weapons, and armor gradually disappeared from the bodies of both infantry and cavalry soldiers. At first, musketeers were employed alongside pikemen in square formations, the pikemen protecting the musketeers while they reloaded. The army of

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Gustavus Adolphus

Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War in Germany (1618–1648) brought together these two weapons into a mixed, flexible formation that capitalized on their strengths and covered their weaknesses. When combined with dynamic leadership and artillery and cavalry support, the formations proved highly successful. As the wheel-lock musket succeeded the matchlock arquebus as a shoulder arm and the flintlock in turn supplanted the wheel lock, armies came to rely less and less on the pike, more and more on firepower delivered by muskets. By 1700, with the invention of a socket bayonet that could be fitted onto the end of the flintlock musket without plugging the barrel, the pike disappeared entirely and along with it the helmet and body armor that had been designed primarily for protection against pikes and swords. Meanwhile, commanders learned to maneuver large bodies of troops on the battlefield and to employ infantry, cavalry, and artillery in combination. The blending of such capabilities, today called combined-arms warfare, proved decisive on the early modern battlefield. National armies composed of professional soldiers came once again to resemble the imperial forces that had served Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors.

In the Thirty Years' War, religious passions combined with private armies led by rapacious military entrepreneurs to create a conflict of virtually unprecedented ferocity and destructiveness. In reaction to this descent into barbarism, European warfare turned away from "total" war and refocused on "limited" wars fought with professionals for dynastic and national rather than local or religious interests. After the chaos and destruction that had attended the religious wars, rulers and ruling classes in all countries seemed to seek some measure of stability and order. Beginning with the wars of Louis XIV of France in 1660, dynastic rivalries were to be fought out by professional armies within the framework of an established order. The eighteenth century European military system that resulted constituted a powerful environmental influence on the military origins of the United States.

Eighteenth Century European Warfare

In contrast to wars of the seventeenth century and the great world wars of the twentieth century, eighteenth century warfare was essentially limited in character. It was often fought by rival states for restricted territorial gains and not for the subjugation or total religious conversion of whole peoples or nations. Professional armies and navies, without the mass mobilization of men, economic resources, and public opinion that has characterized the more ideological conflicts of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, generally conducted the war. Except in areas where military operations took place, the people in the warring nations carried on their everyday life as usual.

The professional armies employed in this "limited" warfare reflected the society from which they sprang. Although Europe's aristocratic class no longer exercised political power independent of its kings, it remained the dominant privileged class, producing the proprietors of the great estates and leaders of the national armies. The great masses of people remained for the most part without property or voice in the government, either tilling the soil on the nobles' estates or working in the shops and handicraft industries in the towns. Absolute monarchy

was the prevailing form of government in every European country save England, the Netherlands, and certain smaller states on the Continent. In England, where the constitutional power of Parliament was successfully established over the king, Parliament was by no means a democratic institution but one controlled by the landed gentry and wealthy merchants.

The military distinction nobles had formerly found in leading their own knights in battle they now sought as officers in the armies of their respective kings. Aristocrats filled the higher commands, while “gentlemen” of lesser rank and means usually served as captains and lieutenants. Advancement to higher ranks depended as much on wealth and influence at the court of a monarch as on demonstrated merit on the battlefield. Eighteenth century officers were hardly professionals in the modern sense of the word, usually having entered the service as mere boys through inheritance or purchase of a commission. Except for technical specialists in artillery and engineering, they were not required to attend a military school to train for their duties.

As the officers came from the highest classes, so the men in the ranks came from the lowest. They were normally recruited for long terms of service, sometimes by force, from among the peasants and the urban unemployed; more than a sprinkling of paupers, ne'er-do-wells, convicts, and drifters were in the ranks. Since recruiting extended across international boundaries, foreign mercenaries formed part of every European army. Discipline, not patriotic motivation, was the main reliance for making these men fight. Penalties for even minor offenses ran as high as a thousand lashes, and executions by hanging or firing squad were frequent. The habit of obedience inculcated on the drill ground carried over into battle, where, it has often been said, the men advanced because they preferred the uncertainties of combat to the certainty of death if they disobeyed orders. The army of Frederick the Great of Prussia was built into a military machine of near clock-like precision by brutal discipline and unquestioning obedience throughout the officer corps and rank and file soldiers.

Most of the significant European wars of the period were fought over terrain that was open, relatively flat, and thickly populated. Generally, fighting took place only in favorable weather and during daylight hours; rain or darkness quickly called a halt to a battle. The large armies with their cumbersome formations were almost impossible to control under such conditions. By December opposing armies usually retired to winter quarters, where they awaited spring to resume hostilities. Road and river transportation systems were for the time highly developed, facilitating the movement of men and supplies. Food for men and forage for horses were usually available in the areas of military operations, but all supplies were customarily obtained by systematic and regular procedures, not by indiscriminate plunder. Each nation set up along the line of march of its army a series of fortresses or magazines in which replacement supplies, foodstuffs, “staples,” and forage for the horses could be stored.

Eighteenth century armies were composed predominantly of infantry, with cavalry and artillery as supporting elements. Because battles were usually fought in open country, cavalry could be employed to full advantage. As for artillery, it was used in both attack and defense, either

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in campaigns of maneuver or in siege warfare. Some eighteenth century commanders used the three arms skillfully in combination, but the clash of infantry usually decided the issue. In the eighteenth century, infantry was truly the “Queen of Battle.”

The standard infantry weapon of the time was the flintlock musket with bayonet, and probably the most famous model was the British Brown Bess. The Brown Bess had a smoothbore barrel three-feet-eight-inches long with a fourteen-inch socket bayonet and fired a smooth lead ball about three-quarters of an inch in diameter. The musket was highly inaccurate since the barrel had no rifling and the charge necessarily fit loosely, permitting the escape of gas and reducing the effect of the propelling charge. It misfired occasionally and was useless when the powder in the priming pan got wet. The rate of fire was at best about three rounds per minute. When the ball hit within its effective range, 150 to 200 yards, its impact was terrific, tearing ghastly holes in flesh and shattering bone; but the inherent inaccuracy of the weapon practically precluded its use, even for volley fire, at ranges greater than 100 yards. The ineffectiveness of the smoothbore musket as a firearm made its attached bayonet almost as important as its firepower, and infantry relied on the bayonet for shock action against an enemy softened by musketry fire, as well as in its continuing role as a final defense against cavalry attack.

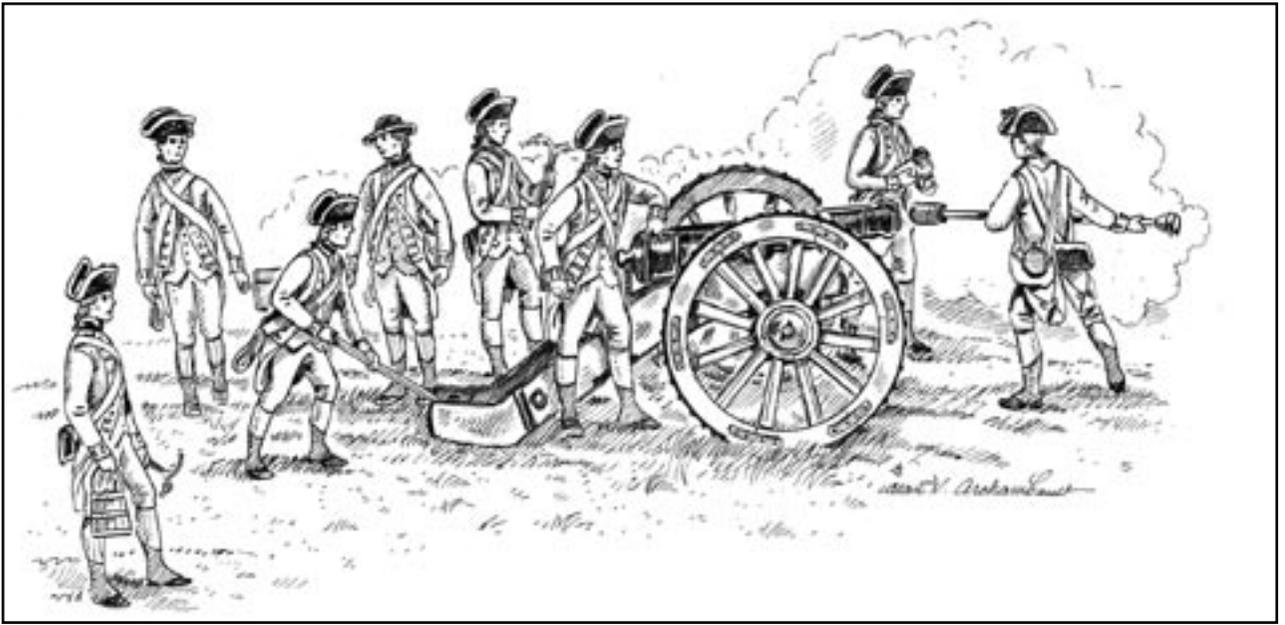
Cavalrymen were armed variously with pistol and lance, carbine and sword, depending on the country and the time. Pistol and carbine were discharged at close range against the ranks of opposing infantry or cavalry, while lance and sword were used for close-in shock action. Cavalry was most effective when used in a reconnaissance or foraging role and as a pursuit force after an enemy infantry formation had been broken.

There were many different kinds of artillery with a wide variety of bore sizes. The larger pieces were mainly for siege warfare and were relatively immobile. Artillery used in the field was lighter and mounted on wheeled carriages pulled by men or horses. Whether siege or field, these artillery pieces were like the muskets smoothbore muzzle-loaders, very limited in range and highly inaccurate. Loading and firing were even slower than in the case of the musket, since the artillerymen had to swab out the cannon barrel with water after each round to prevent any residue of burning powder from causing a premature explosion. There was no traverse, and the whole carriage had to be moved to change the direction of fire. Cannon fired mainly solid iron balls or, at shorter ranges, grapeshot and canister. Grapeshot was a cluster of small iron balls attached to a central stem (thus resembling a bunch of grapes) and dispersed by the explosion of a propellant charge. Canister consisted of loose pellets placed in a can and when fired had even greater dispersion than grape. At close range against a tightly packed infantry formation, it was devastating.

The nature of the soldiers, their weapons, and the terrain go far to explain the tactics used. These tactics were usually designated *linear* tactics to distinguish them from earlier mass formations such as the Spanish *Tercio* or the column formations Napoleon later employed. Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedish king and military innovator, in the Thirty Years' War was among the first to use linear tactics. They came



Brown Bess Musket, the British Infantryman's Basic Arm from About 1740 until the 1830s



American Artillery Crew in Action during the Revolutionary War, *Alan Archambault*

into general use in European armies during the later dynastic wars of Louis XIV of France, with the invention of the socket bayonet. Frederick the Great of Prussia carried them to their ultimate state of perfection, and his armies were the most methodically ordered in Europe. In the mid eighteenth century the Frederician system was the model that others tried to imitate.

In the employment of linear tactics, troops marched onto the battlefield in columns and then deployed into line. A line consisted of a number of battalions or regiments—the terms were then practically synonymous—formed three or more ranks deep. In the ranks the men stood shoulder to shoulder and delivered their fire. Loading, firing, and bayonet charge were all performed at command in a drill involving many separate motions. Firing, insofar as officers were able to maintain rigid discipline, was entirely by volley, the purpose being to achieve the greatest mass of firepower over a given area. The goal was always the “perfect volley.” Individual, aimed fire, given the characteristics of the smoothbore flintlock musket, was deemed to be of little value.

Artillery was deployed in the line with the infantry, cavalry on the flanks or in the rear. Usually, commanders also kept an infantry force in reserve for use at a critical point in the battle. In the traditional eighteenth century battle, both forces would be drawn up in similar formation, and the battle would be opened by artillery fire from both sides. In the midst of this fire, the attacking infantry would move forward, maintaining the rigid linear formation in which it was trained and stopping as frequently as necessary to dress its lines and fill in the holes in the ranks made by enemy fire. At a range of 50 to 100 yards, the attacking line would halt on the command of its officers. At a second command, a volley would be fired and answered by the opposing line; or there might be a great deal of jockeying over who should fire first, for

it was considered an advantage to take, not to give, the first volley and to deliver one's own answering volley at closer range. In any case, the exchange of volleys would continue until one side determined to try to carry the field by bayonet or cavalry charge, usually committing its reserves in this action. If either side was able to carry the field, the victorious commander then sought to execute a successful pursuit, destroying the enemy's army; the defeated commander attempted to withdraw his force in a semblance of order to a fortress or other defensive position, there to re-form and fight another day.

Despite the almost game-like movement of units on the battlefield like outsized chess pieces, eighteenth century battles were bloody affairs. At Zorndorf in 1758, for instance, the victorious army of Frederick lost 38 percent of its soldiers, the defeated Russians about half of theirs. Professional soldiers were difficult to replace, for there was no national reservoir of trained manpower to draw on and it took two years or more to train a recruit properly. Commanders, therefore, sparing of the blood of their soldiers, sought to avoid battle and to overcome the enemy by a successive series of maneuvers against his line of communications. They also tried to take advantage of terrain features and of fortified positions; to strike by surprise or against the flanks of the enemy, forcing him to realign his forces while fighting; and to employ artillery and cavalry to the greatest advantage in paving the way for infantry assault. Fortresses, normally constructed along the frontiers to impede the advance of an invading army, played a vital role in these maneuvers. It was considered axiomatic that no army could leave a fortress in its rear athwart its line of communications, that any major fortified point had to be reduced by siege. By 1700 the arts of both fortification and siege craft had been reduced to certain geometric principles by Marshal Sebastien Vauban, a distinguished soldier and engineer in the service of Louis XIV.

Vauban's fortresses were star-shaped and carried the style of the sixteenth century Trace Italienne (thick earthen walls with protruding bastions serving as artillery platforms) to its ultimate conclusion. Vauban designed thick stonewalls partially sunk into the earth and covered with earthen ramparts. Jutting forth from the walls were diamond-shaped bastions that allowed the mounted artillery to have mutually supporting fields of fire. Surrounding the fortress was a ditch or moat with a second, smaller wall in front of it with earth sloped against the wall to absorb the shock of cannon balls. These fortresses were expensive to build but nearly impregnable from direct assault.

Vauban's system for attacking this or any other type of fortified position was known as an approach by parallel lines. Once a fortress had been surrounded and outside aid cut off, batteries of siege artillery were brought up to within 600 yards of the fortress walls, the guns being so placed as to rake the lengths of the bastions with enfilade fire; behind these guns, the first parallel trench was dug to protect the gunners and assault troops. Zigzag approach trenches were then dug forward about 200 yards to the points from which a second parallel was constructed, then the same process was repeated with a third parallel. Infantry and siege artillery were moved forward as each parallel was completed until, in the third, they were beneath the outer wall of the fortress. From this vantage point the artillery could batter a breach in the main wall

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VAUBAN

Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707) was the foremost military engineer of his day. Born to a family of French nobility, Vauban entered the French Army at the age of seventeen, quickly showed a marked talent as an engineer, and captured the eye of King Louis XIV in the 1650s. For the next half century, he conducted nearly 50 sieges, fought in 140 engagements, fortified the French frontiers with 33 new fortresses, and remodeled 300 more. As well as revolutionizing siege craft and defensive fortifications, Vauban contributed to the growing professionalization of the military.

and the infantry could take the fortress by storm; but at that point in the battle the fortress commander usually surrendered to avoid further bloodshed. Under Vauban's system the capture of a fortress by a superior besieging force was usually only a matter of time; and the siege was conducted, often in leisurely fashion, along lines as rigidly fixed as those of the formal battle in the open field. But often time favored the defender, as sickness or supply problems forced the besieging force to withdraw. Logistics was often the key to successful defense or capture of a Vauban-type fortress.

Perhaps the most indelible picture of formal eighteenth century warfare that has survived is Voltaire's story of French and British officers at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745 bowing politely to each other and each inviting the other side to fire the first volley, thus starting the carnage that was to follow. This picture has a certain ludicrous quality about it, but there was method in their madness as there was in eighteenth century warfare generally. The line that fired first was often at a disadvantage if a resolute enemy charged before they had a chance to reload.

The eighteenth century army was adapted to the European environment of the time, to the political and social climate as well as to the geography and terrain. Men knowledgeable in military matters at the time firmly believed that no body of poorly trained citizens, however numerous and inspired, could stand before the disciplined ranks of professionals. If today we can see many of the weaknesses in the eighteenth century military system that were not so obvious to contemporaries (its basic lack of flexibility, a paucity of true professional leadership, and its failure to effectively mobilize national resources for war), these perceptions result from a vastly different social and political environment.

The Colonial Scene

The environment in the British colonies of North America was different from that of Europe. America was a new continent, heavily forested and sparsely populated. The main enemy with whom the English colonists had first to contend was the American Indian, who neither

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knew the rules of European warfare nor cared to learn them, but who had a military system of his own. Colonial society from its very beginnings developed along more democratic and individualistic lines than society in England or continental Europe. Military institutions and practices, though heavily influenced by English patterns, also evolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries along different lines. It would be a mistake to call the society that took form in the thirteen English colonies in North America a new society, for in most respects it followed the English pattern of social, economic, and political organization. But England itself had stronger democratic traditions than existed on the Continent, and important differences in the environment gave these English traditions much stronger force in America. Here, there was no titled nobility exercising a monopoly on governmental office or holding a vested title to most of the land. While an aristocracy of wealth soon appeared, it was never able to exercise the same prerogatives as titled nobility. Besides, it was far easier to move from the poorer to the wealthier class, since acquisition of landed wealth was easier in a country where land was plentiful and labor to work it scarce. If older settled areas tended to develop something approaching the pattern of European class distinction, new frontiers were constantly opening up where dissatisfied individuals could move and find new opportunities. Life under these conditions bred a spirit of individualism and self-reliance.

In political life, this spirit found expression in the elected assemblies that played an increasingly important part in the government of each of the colonies. Each colony had a government modeled generally on England's. Though there were variations in the pattern, the prevailing form consisted of a royal governor appointed by the British Crown, a council appointed by the governor from the ranks of the colonial aristocracy, and a popular assembly elected by the landholders. Modeled on the British House of Commons, these popular assemblies in the colonies rested on a much broader democratic base, since property ownership—the main qualification for voting in Britain and America in this age—was far more widespread in the colonies. The colonial assemblies claimed the same prerogatives vis-à-vis the royal governor that the British Parliament exercised in its relations with the Crown, including control of the purse and regulation of the military establishment of the colony.

The growth of the colonies and resulting encroachment into Indian territories resulted in a dynamic that both enhanced and threatened the colonist's way of life. While the colonist based his growth on economics, the Indian's way of life—and way of warfare—grew out of social and cultural motivations.

The Indian method of warfare in the forest, perforce adopted by the colonists also, was the most significant influence in developing and preserving the spirit of individualism and self-reliance in the military sphere. Before the European came to America, the Indian had relied on bow and spear or tomahawk and knife; but he soon learned the value of muskets and was not long in obtaining them in trade for his valuable furs. With bow or musket, his method of fighting was the same. The Indian tribes with whom the colonists first came in contact had no organized system of war; warriors generally formed voluntary bands un-

der war chiefs and took off on the warpath. In battle each Indian fought a separate opponent without regard for his fellows. Indians avoided pitched battle whenever possible, instead seeking victory by surprise and careful use of cover and concealment. Only when they had the advantage did they close in for hand-to-hand combat. In such combat the Indian brave lacked neither skill nor courage. Since he cared little about the rules of European warfare, he sometimes slaughtered men, women, and children indiscriminately or adopted prisoners permanently into his tribe. The favorite Indian tactic was a surprise raid on an isolated settlement. When the settlers organized a pursuit, the Indians lay in wait and ambushed them.

The European colonist soon adapted his tactics to the Indian's, quickly learning the value of surprise and stealth. To avoid ambush, he sent out scouts as the Indians did, frequently employing friendly Indians in the role. Instead of fighting in the closed formations of Europe, he too adopted the open formation and fought from behind trees, rocks, and fences. (If the Indians were accused of scalping dead and wounded, it should be noted that colonial soldiers occasionally did the same.) In such fighting more depended on individual initiative and courage than on strict discipline and control. Many of these tactics and techniques would serve the colonists well in their later war with Britain.

The European settlers also learned to benefit from some of the enemy's weaknesses. For all their cunning, the Indians never learned the lesson of proper security and often did not post guards at night. Nor did they like to fight in winter. Expeditions into the Indian country used as a favorite technique an attack on an Indian village at dawn and in the winter. This attack almost invariably came as a surprise; and the colonists, imitating the perceived savagery of their opponent, burned the Indian's villages and sometimes slaughtered all the inhabitants indiscriminately. Destruction of Indian villages and stocks of food proved to be the most effective colonial strategy, if also the most brutal.

The settlers tried to provide some permanent protection for their frontiers by erecting forts along the westernmost line of settlement in each colony, moving them forward as the line of settlement moved. These forts were not the elaborate earth and masonry structures of Europe but simple rectangular enclosures, their walls constructed of upright sharpened logs. Usually there were wooden blockhouses at each corner. These rude frontier forts served as points to which settlers and their families could retreat for protection in time of Indian trouble.

KING PHILIP

Metacom, a Pokanoket chief from southern New England, was known to the English settlers of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Rhode Island as King Philip. The charismatic sachem forged a coalition of Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Pucumtuck, and Narragansett Indians to stem the flow of English settlers into their territories. Tensions ran high; after several settlers and Indians were killed in an intensifying spiral of violence, the conflict called King Philip's War began in 1675. Hostilities ended in 1676, when Metacom was captured and decapitated. His head remained on public display in Plymouth for nearly twenty-five years.

Having no artillery, the Indians found the forts hard to take and could rely only on burning arrows to set them afire, on surprise attack, or on direct frontal assault. From the last alternative they almost invariably shrank. Their war chiefs possessed no power to order any group of braves to undertake an assault in which they would suffer heavy casualties for the sake of gaining an objective.

Colonial Militia

For fighting Indians, colonial governments were in no position to form professional armies, even had the nature of Indian warfare lent itself to such a practice. Instead they fell back on the ancient British tradition of the militia. This tradition took on new vitality in America at the same time it was declining in England, where, after Oliver Cromwell's time, most of the country's battles were fought on the sea and in foreign lands. The British government came to rely on its regular army and navy just as other European states did, despite a deep political tradition of opposition to a standing army. Each of the thirteen colonies (except for Pennsylvania, where Quaker influence was dominant) enacted laws providing for a compulsory militia organization generally based on the principle of the Saxon *fryd* that required every able-bodied free male from sixteen to sixty to render military service. Each member of the militia was obligated to appear for training at his county or town seat a certain number of days each year, to provide himself with weapons, and to hold himself in readiness for call in case of Indian attack or other emergency.

Each colony maintained a separate militia establishment, and each concentrated on the problems of protecting or extending its own frontiers. Cooperation among the militias of the various colonies was confined to specific expeditions in which two or more colonies had an interest. The militia was by and large a local institution, administered in county and town or township under the general militia laws of each colony. It was closely integrated with the social and economic structure of colonial society. Though the royal governors or colonial assemblies appointed the general officers and the colonels who commanded militia districts, the companies in each locality usually elected their own officers. This practice seemingly put a premium on popularity rather than wealth or ability, but rank in the militia generally corresponded with social station in the community.

Each militiaman was expected to provide his own weapon—usually a smoothbore musket—and ammunition, clothing, and food for a short expedition, just as the British knight had been required to provide his own horse, armor, and suitable weapons for feudal warfare. Local authorities maintained reserve supplies of muskets to arm those too poor to buy them and collected stores of ammunition and sometimes small cannon that could be dragged along through the wilderness. For very long campaigns, the colonial government had to take charge, the assembly appropriating the money for supplies and designating the supply officers or contractors to handle purchasing and distribution.

Although the militia was organized into units by county or township, it hardly ever fought that way. Instead the local unit served as a training and mobilization base from which individuals could be recruited for active operations. When a particular area of a colony was

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First Muster, *Don Troiani, 1985*

THE FIRST MUSTER

With no army from home to protect them, English settlers in America had to provide for their own defense. Initially, this was done at the local level; but on December 13, 1636, the Massachusetts Bay colony organized its disparate militia companies into three regionally based regiments. This date is considered the birthday of what would eventually become the U.S. National Guard. The picture depicts the first muster of the colony's East Regiment.

threatened, the colonial government would direct the local militia commander to call out his men and the commander would mobilize as many as he could or as he thought necessary, selecting the younger and more active men for service. For expeditions into the Indian country, usually individuals from many localities were chosen and formed into improvised units for the occasion. Selection was generally voluntary, but local commanders could be legally empowered to draft both men and property if necessary. Drafted men were permitted the option of hiring substitutes, a practice that favored the well-to-do. Volunteer, drafted man, and substitute, all paid while on active duty, alike insisted on the militiaman's prerogative to serve only a short period and return to home and fireside as quickly as possible.

As a part-time citizen army, the militia was naturally not a well-disciplined, cohesive force comparable to the professional army of the age. Criticism of the militia was frequent. Moreover, its efficiency, even for Indian fighting, varied from colony to colony and even from locality to locality within the same colony, depending on the ability and determination of commanders and the presence or absence of any threat. When engaged in eliminating an Indian threat to their own community, militiamen might be counted on to make up in enthusiasm what they lacked in discipline and formal training. When the Indian threat was pushed westward, people along the eastern seaboard tended to relax. Training days, one day a week in the early years of settlement, fell to one a month or even one a year. Festivities rather than military training increasingly became the main purpose of many of the gatherings, and the efficiency of the militia in these regions declined accordingly. In some towns and counties, however, the military tradition was kept alive by volunteers who formed their own units, purchased distinctive uniforms, and prepared themselves to respond in case of war or emergency. These units became known as the volunteer militia and were the predecessors of the National Guard of the United States. In Pennsylvania, which lacked a militia law until 1755 and then passed one that made militia service voluntary rather than compulsory, all units were composed of volunteers.

One of the more unpleasant manifestations of the militia system in America occurred in those colonies, most but by no means all in the south, with a large slave population. Fears of slave uprising and the rapidly growing imbalance between black and white populations in some areas of the colonies led to the establishment of militia units focused on detecting and defeating the smallest sign of trouble among the African slave population. In South Carolina in 1739, almost one hundred slaves organized themselves, seized weapons, and killed several white colonists before being suppressed by hastily raised militia soldiers. The resulting fear and legislative attempts to deal with the issue ensured that a primary focus of an organized militia in South Carolina, and later the rest of the southern colonies, was on internal security against the slaves.

On the frontier, where Indian raids were a constant threat, training days were frequent and militia had to be ready for instant action. Except on the frontier, where proficiency in this sort of warfare was a matter of survival, it is doubtful that colonial militia in general were really adept in forest fighting. Training days were devoted not to the techniques of fighting Indians but to learning the drill and motions required on a European battlefield. When raids were to be conducted against the Indians, often popularly elected officers selected individual volunteers from the militia to serve for the duration of the expedition. Thus the militia existed mostly as an internal defense force and a pool of trained manpower for ad hoc colonial expeditions against the Indians or other enemies, such as the nearby French Canadians.

The Colonies in the World Conflict, 1689–1783

While England was colonizing the eastern seaboard from Maine to Georgia, France was extending its control over Canada and Louisiana and asserting its claim to the Great Lakes region and the Mississippi Valley in the rear of the British colonies. (*Map 1*) Spain held Florida, an outpost of its vast colonial domains in Mexico, Central and South America, and the larger islands of the West Indies. England and France were invariably on opposite sides in the four great dynastic coalition wars fought in Europe between 1689 and 1763. Spain was allied with France in the last three of these conflicts.

Each of these European wars had its counterpart in struggles between British and French and Spanish colonists in America, intermingled with a quickening of Indian warfare all along the frontiers as the contestants tried to use the Indian tribes to their advantage. Americans and Europeans called these wars by different names. The War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697) was known in America as King William's War, the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1713) as Queen Anne's War, the War of Austrian Succession (1744–1748) as King George's War, and the final and decisive conflict, the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) as the French and Indian War. All these wars involved control of the North American continent; in the last of them it became the principal point at issue in the eyes of the British government.

The main centers of French strength were along the St. Lawrence River in Canada and at the cities of Quebec and Montreal. The strategic line along which much of the fighting took place in the colonies lay



Map 1

between New York and Quebec, either on the lake and river chain that connects the Hudson with the St. Lawrence in the interior or along the seaways leading from the Atlantic up the St. Lawrence. In the south, the arena of conflict lay in the area between South Carolina and Florida and Louisiana. In 1732 the British government established the colony of Georgia primarily as a military outpost in this region and as a dumping ground for their convicts.

In the struggle for control of North America, the contest between England and France was vital, the conflict with Spain, a declining power, important but secondary. This latter conflict reached its height in the “War of Jenkins’ Ear” (1739–1742), a prelude to the War of Austrian Succession, which pitted the British and their American colonists

against the Spanish. In the colonies the war involved a seesaw struggle between the Spanish in Florida and the West Indies and the English colonists in South Carolina and Georgia. Its most notable episode, however, was a British expedition mounted in Jamaica against Cartagena, the main port of the Spanish colony in Colombia. The mainland colonies furnished a regiment to participate in the assault as British regulars under British command. The expedition ended in disaster, resulting from climate, disease, and the bungling of British commanders. Only about 600 of over 3,000 Americans who participated ever returned to their homes. The net result of the war itself was indecisive, and it did little to inspire the average American soldier with admiration for British military leadership.

The first three wars with the French were also indecisive. The nature of the fighting was much the same as that in the Indian Wars. Although the French maintained garrisons of regulars in Canada, they were never sufficient to bear the brunt of the fighting. The French Canadians also had their militia, a more centralized and all-embracing system than in the English colonies; but the population of the French colonies was sparse, scarcely a twentieth of that of the British colonies in 1754. The French relied heavily on Indian allies whom they equipped with firearms. They were far more successful than the British in influencing the Indians. Their sparse population posed little threat to Indian lands; and the French-controlled fur trade depended on Indian workers, while the British colonies saw Indians as an obstacle to settlement. The French could usually count on the support of the Indian tribes in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions, though the British colonists did maintain greater influence with the powerful Iroquois Confederacy in New York. The French constructed forts at strategic points, like Niagara and Detroit, and garrisoned them with small numbers of regulars, a few of whom they usually sent along with militia and Indian raiding parties to supervise operations. Using guerrilla methods, the French gained many local successes and indeed kept the frontiers of the English colonies in a continual state of alarm, but they could achieve no decisive results because of the essential weakness of their position.

The British and their colonists usually took the offensive and sought to strike by land and sea at the citadels of French power in Canada. The British Navy's control of the sea made possible the mounting of sea expeditions against Canada and at the same time made it difficult for the French to reinforce their small regular garrisons. In 1710 a combined British and colonial expedition captured the French fort at Port Royal on Nova Scotia, and by the treaty of peace in 1713 Nova Scotia became an English possession. In 1745 an all-colonial expedition sponsored by Massachusetts captured Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in what was perhaps the greatest of colonial military exploits, only to have the stronghold bargained away in 1748 for Madras, a post the French had captured from the British in India.

While militia units played an important part in the colonial wars, colonial governments resorted to a different device to recruit forces for expeditions outside their boundaries such as that against Louisbourg. This was the volunteer force, another institution that was to play an important part in all American wars through the end of the nineteenth century. Unlike the militia units, volunteer forces were built from the

top down. One of the colonial governors or assemblies chose the commanding officer, who in turn enlisted his men. The choice of a commander was made with due regard for his popularity in the colony, since this was directly related to his ability to persuade officers and men to serve under him. While the militia was the main base for recruitment and the officers were almost invariably men whose previous experience was in the militia, indentured servants and drifters without military obligation were also enlisted. The enlistment period was only for the duration of a campaign, at best a year or so, not for long periods as in European armies. Colonial assemblies had to vote money for pay and supplies, and assemblies were usually parsimonious as well as unwilling to see volunteer forces assume any of the status of a standing army. With short enlistments, inexperienced officers, and poor discipline by European standards, even the best of these colonial volunteer units were, like the militia, often held in contempt by British officers.

The only positive British gain up to 1748 was Nova Scotia. The indecisive character of the first three colonial wars was evidence of the inability of the English colonies to unite and muster the necessary military forces for common action, of the inherent difficulty of mounting offensives in unsettled areas, and of a British preoccupation with conflicts in Europe and other areas. Until 1754 the British government contented itself with maintaining control of the seas and furnishing regulars for sea expeditions against French and Spanish strongholds. Until 1755 no British regulars took part in the war in the interior, though small “independent companies” of indifferent worth were stationed continuously in New York and occasionally in other colonies. No colony, meanwhile, was usually willing to make any significant contribution to the common cause unless it appeared to be in its own interest. Efforts to form some kind of union, the most notable of which was a plan that Benjamin Franklin promoted in a colonial congress held at Albany in 1754, all came to naught.

Between 1748 and 1754 the French expanded their system of forts around the Great Lakes and moved down into the Ohio Valley, establishing Fort Duquesne at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers in 1753 and staking a claim to the entire region. In so doing, they precipitated the final and decisive conflict that began in America two years before the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War in Europe. In 1754 Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia sent young George Washington at the head of a force of Virginia militia to compel the French to withdraw from Fort Duquesne. Washington was driven back and forced

THE CAPTURE OF LOUISBOURG

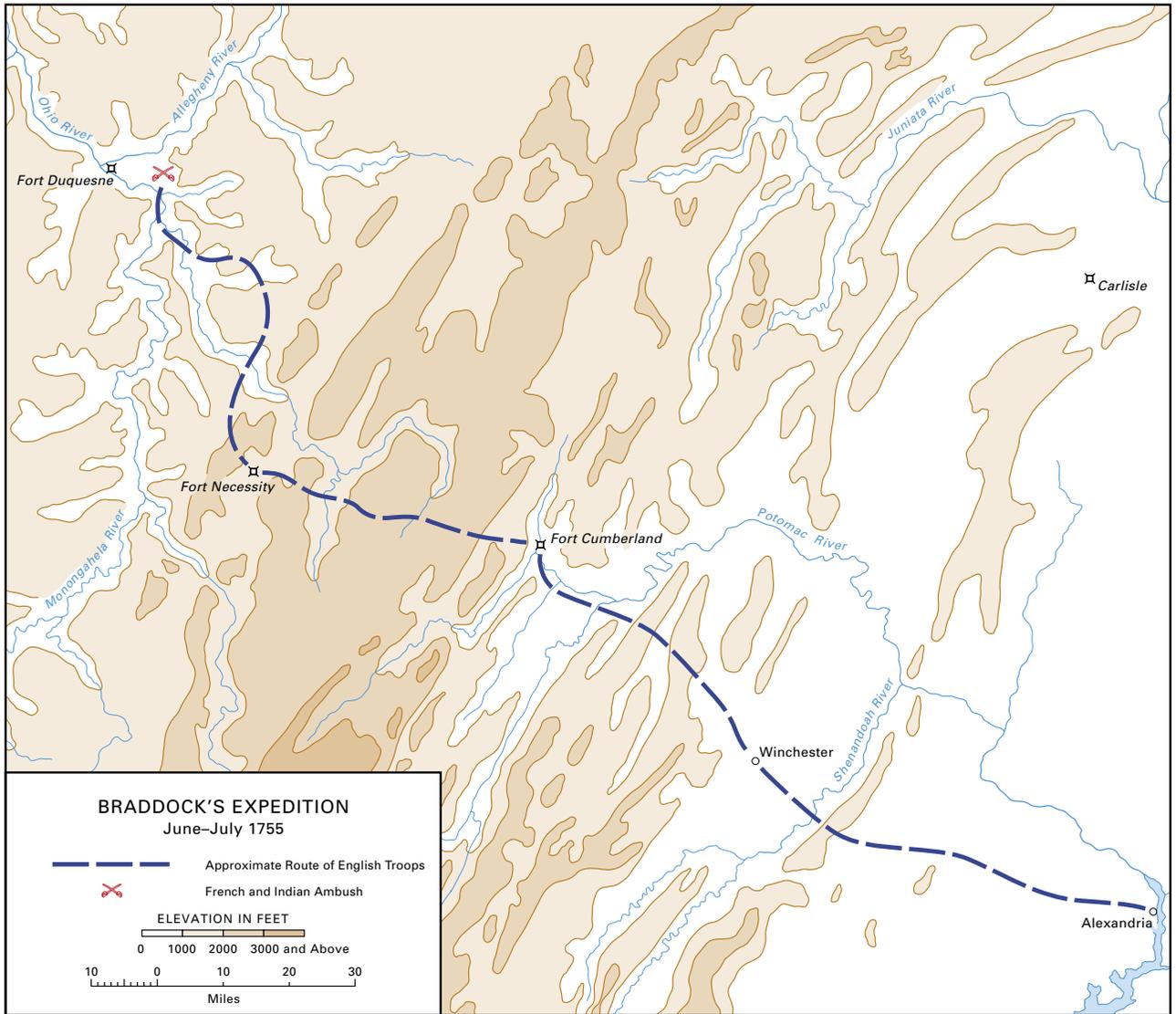
Guarding the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, the fortress of Louisbourg protected French settlements inland. The Massachusetts General Court voted in secret to attack the seemingly impregnable seaport 600 miles northeast of Boston. Colonial prisoners who had been held at the fort told of dispirited troops, masonry in disrepair, a shortage of gunpowder, and poorly mounted cannon. An eclectic American colonial force of 4,000 attacked after the drift ice left Gabarus Bay. A seven-week siege led to a spectacular victory in June 1745 for the colonists, who suffered minimal casualties.

to surrender, certainly an inauspicious beginning to his military career. The British government then sent over two understrength regiments of regulars under Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock, a soldier of forty-five years' experience on continental battlefields, to accomplish the task in which the militia had failed. Accustomed to the parade-ground tactics and the open terrain of Europe, Braddock placed all his faith in disciplined regulars and close-order formations. He filled his regiments with American recruits and early in June 1755 set out on the long march through the wilderness to Fort Duquesne with a total force of about 2,200, including a body of Virginia and North Carolina militiamen. (*Map 2*) Washington accompanied the expedition but had no command role.

Braddock's force proceeded westward through the wilderness in traditional column formation with 300 ax men in front to clear the road and a train of wagons in the rear. The heavy train so slowed his progress that about halfway he decided to let it follow as best it could and went ahead with about 1,300 selected men, a few cannon, wagons, and pack-horses. As he approached Fort Duquesne, he crossed the Monongahela twice to avoid a dangerous and narrow passage along the east side where ambush might be expected. He sent Lt. Col. Thomas Gage (later to gain a measure of infamy as the general in charge of the raids on Lexington and Concord in 1775) with an advance guard to secure the site of the second crossing, deemed a likely spot for an ambush. Gage found no enemy, and the entire force crossed the Monongahela the second time on the morning of July 9, 1755, then confidently took up the march toward Fort Duquesne, only seven miles away.

About three-quarters of a mile past the Monongahela crossing, Gage's advance guard suddenly came under fire from a body of French and Indians concealed in the woods. Actually, it was a very inferior force of 70 French regulars, 150 Canadian militiamen (many mere boys), and 650 Indians who had just arrived on the scene after a hasty march from Fort Duquesne. Some authorities think Gage might have changed the whole course of the battle had he pushed forward and forced the enemy onto the open ground in their rear. Instead he fell back on the main body of Braddock's troops, causing considerable confusion. This confusion was compounded when the French and Indians slipped into the forests on the flanks of the British troops, pouring their fire into a surprised and terrified mass of men who wasted their return volleys on the air. "Scarce an officer or soldier," wrote one of the participants, "can say they ever saw at one time six of the Enemy and the greatest part never saw a single man."

None of the training or experience of the regulars had equipped them to cope with this sort of attack, and Braddock could only exhort them to rally in conventional formation. Two-thirds of his officers fell dead or wounded. The militia, following their natural instincts, scattered and took positions behind trees; but there is no evidence they delivered any effective fire, since French and Indian losses for the day totaled only twenty-three killed and sixteen wounded. The few British cannon appear to have been more telling. Braddock, mortally wounded himself, finally attempted to withdraw his force in some semblance of order; but the retreat soon became a disordered flight. The panic-stricken soldiers did not stop even when they reached the baggage wagons many miles to their rear.



Map 2

Despite the completeness of the victory, the French and Indians made no attempt to pursue. The few French regulars had little control over the Indians, who preferred to loot the battlefield and scalp the wounded. The next day the Indians melted back into the forest, and the French commandant at Duquesne noted in his official report, “If the enemy should return with the 1,000 fresh troops that he has in reserve in the rear, at what distance we do not know, we should perhaps be badly embarrassed.” The conduct of the battle was not so reprehensible as the precipitate retreat of the entire force to the safety of the settled frontiers when no enemy was pursuing it.

Although Braddock had been aware of the possibilities of ambush and had taken what he thought were necessary precautions, in

the broader sense he violated the principles of security and maneuver: When the ambush came he had little idea how to cope with Indian tactics in the forest. As he lay dying on the wagon that transported him from the battlefield, the seemingly inflexible old British general is alleged to have murmured, “Another time we shall know better how to deal with them.”

Braddock could not profit from his appreciation of the lesson, but the British Army did. “Over the bones of Braddock,” writes Sir John Fortescue, the eminent historian of the British Army, “the British advanced again to the conquest of Canada.”

After a series of early reverses of which Braddock’s disastrous defeat was only one, the British government under the inspired leadership of Prime Minister William Pitt was able to achieve a combination of British and colonial arms that succeeded in overcoming the last French resistance in Canada and in finally removing the French threat from North America. In this combination, British regular troops, the British Navy, British direction, and British financial support were the keys to victory; the colonial effort, though considerable, continued to suffer from lack of unity.

As an immediate reaction to Braddock’s defeat, the British Government sought to recruit regulars in America to fight the war, following the precedent set in the Cartagena expedition. Several American regiments were raised, the most famous among them Col. Henry Bouquet’s Royal Americans. On the whole, however, the effort was a failure, for most Americans preferred short service in the militia or provincial volunteer forces to the long-term service and rigid discipline of the British Army. After 1757 the British government under Pitt, now convinced that America was the area in which the war would be won or lost, dispatched increasing numbers of regulars from England—a total of 20,000 during the war. The British regulars were used in conjunction with short-term militia and longer-term volunteer forces raised in the service of the various individual colonies. The most effective device to assure the sort of colonial cooperation the British desired was to shoulder the principal financial burden, reimbursing individual colonies for most of their expenses and providing the pay and supply of many of the colonial volunteer units to ensure their continued service. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York furnished about seven-tenths of the total colonial force employed.

Braddock’s defeat was not repeated. In no other case during the French and Indian War was an inferior guerrilla force able to overcome any substantial body of regulars. The lessons of the debacle on the Monongahela, as the British properly understood, were not that regular forces or European methods were useless in America or that undisciplined American militia were superior to regular troops. They were rather that tactics and formations had to be adapted to terrain and the nature of the enemy and that regulars, when employed in the forest, would have to learn to travel faster and lighter and to take advantage of cover, concealment, and surprise as their enemies did. Or the British could employ colonial troops and Indian allies versed in this sort of warfare as auxiliaries, something the French had long since learned to do.

The British adopted both methods in the ensuing years of the French and Indian War. Light infantry, trained as scouts and skirmish-

“Another time we shall know better how to deal with them.”



Braddock's Defeat, *Artist Unknown, ca. 1870*

ers, became a permanent part of the British Army organization. When engaged in operations in the forest, these troops were clad in green or brown clothes instead of the traditional red coat of the British soldier, with their heads shaved and their skins sometimes painted like the Indians'. Special companies, such as Maj. Robert Rogers' Rangers, were recruited among skilled woodsmen in the colonies and placed in the regular British establishment.

Despite this employment of light troops as auxiliaries, the British Army did not fundamentally change its tactics and organization in the course of the war in America. The reduction of the French fortress at Louisbourg in 1758 was conducted along the classic lines of European siege warfare. The most decisive single battle of the war was fought in the open field on the Plains of Abraham before the French citadel of Quebec. In a daring move, Maj. Gen. James Wolfe and his men scaled the cliffs leading up to the plain on the night of September 12, 1759, and appeared in traditional line of battle before the city the next morning. Maj. Gen. Louis Joseph, the Marquis de Montcalm, the able French commander, accepted the challenge; but his troops, composed partly of militia levies, proved unable to withstand the withering "perfect volleys" of Wolfe's exceptionally well-disciplined regiments.

The ultimate lesson of the colonial wars, then, was that European and American tactics each had a place; either could be decisive where conditions were best suited to its use. The colonial wars also proved that only troops possessing the organization and discipline of regulars, whatever their tactics, could actually move on, seize, and hold objectives and thus achieve decisive results.

Other important lessons lay in the realm of logistics, where American conditions presented difficulties to which European officers were unaccustomed. The impediments to supply and transport in a vast, undeveloped, and sparsely populated country limited both the size and variety of forces employed. The settled portions of the colonies produced enough food, but few manufactured goods. Muskets, cannon, powder,

ball, tents, camp kettles, salt, and a variety of other articles necessary for even the simple military operations of the period almost all had to come from Europe. Roads, even in the settled areas, were poor and inadequate; forces penetrating into the interior had to cut their roads as they went, as Braddock did. Movement by water, when possible, was by far more efficient. These logistical problems go far to explain why the fate of America was settled in battles involving hardly one-tenth the size of forces engaged in Europe in the Seven Years' War and why cavalry was almost never employed and artillery to no great extent except in fixed fortifications and in expeditions by sea when cannon could be transported on board ship. The limited mobility of large regular forces, whatever the superiority of their organization and tactics, put a premium both on small bodies of trained troops familiar with the terrain and on local forces, not so well trained, already in an area of operations. Commanders operating in America would ignore these logistical limitations at their peril.

The American Rifle

By the end of the French and Indian War, a new weapon had appeared on the frontier in Pennsylvania and to the south, one far better suited to guerrilla warfare than was the musket. This weapon would later become renowned as the Kentucky rifle. The effects of rifling a gun barrel, that is, of making spiral grooves that imparted a spinning effect to the bullet, giving it greater range and accuracy, had been known for some centuries in Germany and Switzerland. But the early rifles made there were too heavy and slow to load to be of military use. The Germans who settled in Pennsylvania developed, around 1750, a much lighter model, far easier and faster to load. They used a bullet smaller than the bore and a greased patch to keep the fit tight. This early American rifle could, in proper hands, hit a target the size of a man's head at 200 yards.

Despite its superior range and accuracy, the rifle was to undergo almost a hundred years of development before it would supplant the musket as the standard infantry weapon. At first, each individual piece was handmade and each required a custom-made bullet mold. The standard bayonet would fit none of them. The rifle was effective only in the hands of an expert trained in its use. The rate of fire was only

ROGERS' RANGERS

In 1755 Robert Rogers (1731–1795) recruited a company of woodsmen near his home in New Hampshire and was ordered by the British “to range the woods” and harass the French along the frontier. Rogers' Rangers, as his unit came to be known, was one of several ranger companies the British formed as a counter to the Indian allies of the French. Rogers and his men infiltrated into French-held areas of the northern colonies and Canada, using stealth and surprise to win several important engagements. After the French and Indian War, Rogers wrote down twenty-eight “Ranging Rules” learned during his encounters with an unconventional enemy; they are enshrined to this day in U.S. Army Ranger training.

GEORGE WASHINGTON IN THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

George Washington (1732–1799), as a 22-year-old lieutenant colonel in the Virginia militia, was a principal player at the opening of the French and Indian War. In 1754 he led a small force of Virginians to try to compel the French to relinquish control of Fort Duquesne, which was strategically placed to control the Ohio Valley. After a skirmish with a French reconnaissance party, he fell back to a hastily constructed stockade, Fort Necessity, where he resisted a larger French force before finally surrendering. A year later he served under Braddock and ultimately took part in Brig. Gen. John Forbes' successful campaign to capture what is now Pittsburgh.

about one-third that of the musket; and therefore, without bayonet, the rifle could hardly be used by troops in the line. For the guerrilla tactics of the frontier, however, where men did not fight in line but from behind trees, bushes, and rocks, it was clearly a superior weapon. Like the tactics of the American forest, it would have its place in any future war fought in America.

The Colonial Heritage

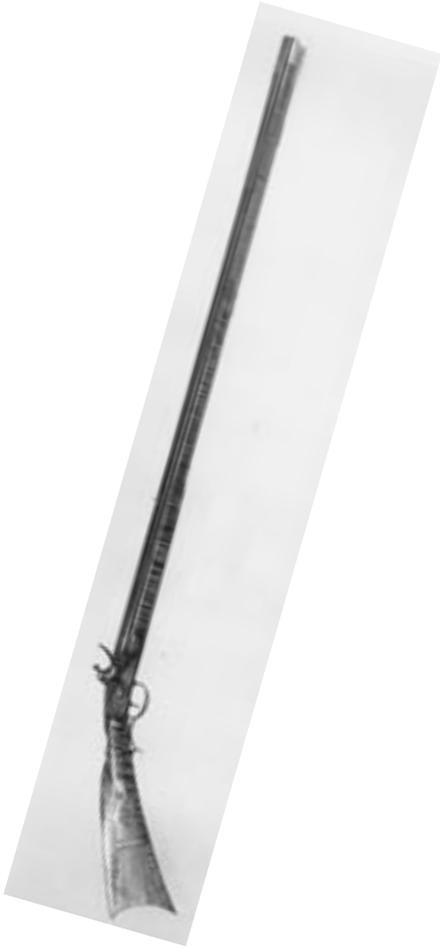
In the Indian Wars and the colonial wars with France, Americans gained considerable military experience, albeit much of it in guerrilla warfare that did not require the same degree of organized effort and professional competence as the European style. The British had, after all, directed the major effort against the French in Canada. Many colonials later to become famous in the Revolution had served their military apprenticeship as officers of middle rank in the French and Indian War: George Washington, Israel Putnam, Philip Schuyler, and John Stark, for instance, in provincial forces and Charles Lee, Horatio Gates, and Richard Montgomery in the British Army.

Certain traditions had been established that were to influence American military policy and practice right down to the two great world wars of the twentieth century. One of these was primary reliance on the militia for defense and on volunteer forces for special emergencies and expeditions. Another was that relatively permanent volunteer units should be formed within the militia. The fear of a standing army of professionals, an English heritage, had become an even stronger article of faith in America. The colonial experience also established a strong tradition of separatism among the colonies themselves, for each had for many years run its own military establishment. Within each colony, too, the civilian authority represented in the popular assembly had always kept a strict rein on the military, another tradition that was to have marked effect on American military development.

Some characteristics of the American soldier that were to be fairly constant throughout all future wars had also made their appearance. The American soldier was inclined to be highly individualistic and to resent discipline and the inevitable restrictions of military life; he sought to know why he should do things before he would put his heart into

doing them. If in the end he accepted discipline and order as a stern necessity, he did so with the idea of winning victory as quickly as possible so he could return to his normal civilian pursuits.

These traditions and characteristics were the product of a society developing along democratic lines. The military strengths and weaknesses they engendered were to be amply demonstrated when the American soldier took up arms against his erstwhile comrade, the British regular, in the American Revolution.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. To what degree is the American Army a European Army?
2. How did our early colonial experience modify our European military inheritance?
3. What did the British learn about the nature of warfare in the Americas from their initial defeats in the French and Indian War? How could this have helped them in their later fight against the “colonists”?
4. Why did the British and American armies defeat the French and their French-Canadian allies?
5. What did the British learn about the military capabilities of their American “cousins”? What should they have learned?
6. Why didn’t the rifle immediately replace the musket on the battlefield?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

This flintlock rifle, originally intended for hunting, dates from 1800–1820. One of the few truly American art forms of early America, the rifle inspired the design of U.S. military rifles that emerged from U.S. armories beginning in 1803.

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