

HE VISITS VENANGO AND WINS HIS FIRST GREAT TRIUMPH

Preceding the date of Washington's mission, the Half-King, Tanacharison,* hearing of the movements of the French, made a journey to their posts on Lake Erie to expostulate in person against their contemplated encroachments on the Ohio. His mission was fruitless, the French treating him with extreme *hauteur*; and the chief returned, disappointed, to *Logstown*.

About this time, according to one author, a trading-house, said to have been erected by the Ohio Company at *Logstown*, was surprised by a detachment of French, the traders killed, and their goods, to the value of twenty thousand pounds, seized and carried away.† This account is evidently a great exaggeration, and most probably entirely fictitious.

As Washington followed the route (marked or proposed) of the Ohio Company, a few words regarding it may not be amiss. Before the Company adopted this route it was well known by the name of *Nemacolin's Path*, from the fact that the Company employed Colonel Thomas Cresap, of OldTown, Maryland, to mark the road, and the Colonel hired a well-known Delaware Indian, named *Nemacolin*, who resided at the mouth of what is now Dunlap's creek, to select the best route. It was known to the Indians many years before, and used by the Indian traders as early, probably, as 1740. It led from the mouth of Will's creek (Cumberland, Maryland), to the "forks of the Ohio" (Pittsburgh). The Ohio Company first marked this road in 1750, by blazing the trees and cutting away the underbrush and removing the old dead and fallen timber. In 1753 they improved and enlarged it at considerable expense. Washington took the same route in his campaign of 1754, improving and extending the road; and Braddock, also, in the following year completed it in good condition as far as the mouth of Turtle creek, within ten miles of fort Duquesne. Since that unfortunate campaign of 1755 it has been known as "Braddock's road."

Washington had engaged as his principal assistants Christopher Gist, who had been sent out on a previous occasion by the Ohio Company; Jacob Vanbraam, a French Interpreter; and John Davidson, and Indian interpreter. He also engaged four others, named Henry Steward, William Jenkins, Barnaby Currien, and John McQuire – the two latter being Indian traders. After arriving at the "forks of the Ohio," he met the Indian chiefs at *Logstown*, and remained a few days to conciliate their friendship, gather information, and gain their assistance in proceeding upon his journey. The party set out for Venango, accompanied by *Tanacharison*, "the Half King of the *Six Nations*," two other chiefs and an Indian hunter.

Neville B. Craig, who edited the "Olden Time" Monthly, in speaking in the January number, 1846, of the Indian treaty with Bradstreet, in 1764, mentions "*Keyashuta*, a *Seneca* chief (one of the Indians, by the way, who accompanied Washington from Logstown to Le Boeuf, in 1753, whom the editor well recollects)." He afterwards adopts *Guyasutha* as the correct orthography.

Washington mentions the names of two chiefs in his journal as *Jaskakakee* and *White Timber*, and a hunter. This Indian hunter may afterwards have been the Chief *Guyasutha*.

The party carried their baggage and provision on pack horses, and arrived at Venango on December 4th, 1753. The French fort had not yet been completed, and Joncaire, who was the commandant stationed here, had his headquarters at the house of John Frazer, the Indian trader, whom he had driven off as we have already shown. Washington met with the commandant and two other French officers at Frazer's house, and was received with courtesy and affability.

Washington's journal affords the best information that can be obtained in reference to the character and events of the interview, and the efforts of the shrewd French commandant and his officers to effect influences upon the Indians of the party against the English interests. For the purpose of ascertaining the designs of the their English rivals and obtaining such information as they desired, whisky was produced by the Frenchmen in abundance. In their efforts to get the Indians of the party intoxicated, they easily succeeded; but in so doing, became very much under the influence of the beverage themselves.

Washington, though only an inexperienced youth, was ever mindful of the trust reposed in him; too conservative, resolute and firm to be swerved from his purpose by their seductive cunning, he remained perfectly sober. The result was quite the opposite from the object intended – the Frenchmen became extremely communicative themselves, the young Virginian obtained all the secrets of their intentions and designs, possessed himself of all their plans, and, at this very place, achieved the first great success of his eventful life. This ground is sacred to the foot-steps of George Washington.

* This name is spelled in a variety of ways.

† Patterson, history of the backwoods.