

The Seven Year's War: 1754-1763

The French and Indian War (1754-1763) was the North American chapter of the Seven Years' War.



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fig. 1

Map of the French and Indian War

Schematic map of the French and Indian War showing territorial possessions and troop movement.

- The French and Indian War pitted the royal French forces and various Native American forces against British colonial forces in North America.
- The main causes of the French and Indian War include territorial expansion and concern over religious freedoms.
- While the French enjoyed battle success during the early portion of the war, this success reversed in 1756 until French surrender in 1760.

- **Seven Year's War**

A world war that took place between 1756 and 1763, involving most of the great powers of the time and affected Europe, North America, Central America, the West African coast, India, and the Philippines.

- **Ohio country**

(also called the Ohio Territory or Ohio Valley by the French) The 18th-century name for the regions of North America west of the Appalachian Mountains and in the region of the upper Ohio River, south of Lake Erie.

The French and Indian War (1754–1763) was the North American chapter of the Seven Years' War. The name refers to the two main enemies of the British: the royal French forces and the various American Indian forces allied with them. The conflict, the fourth

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such colonial war between the kingdoms of France and Great Britain, resulted in the British conquest of all of New France east of the Mississippi River, as well as Spanish Florida. The outcome was one of the most significant developments in a century of Anglo-French conflict.

Causes

There were numerous causes for the French and Indian War, which began less than a decade after France and Britain had fought on opposing sides in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). Both New France and New England wanted to expand their territories with respect to fur trading and other pursuits that matched their economic interests. Using trading posts and forts, both the British and the French claimed the vast territory between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, known as the Ohio Country. English claims resulted from royal grants which had no definite western boundaries. The French claims resulted from La Salle's claiming the Mississippi River for France, whose drainage area includes the Ohio River Valley. In order to secure these claims, both European powers took advantage of Native American factions to protect their territories and to keep each other from growing too strong.

The English colonists also feared papal influence in North America, as New France was administered by French governors and Roman Catholic hierarchy. Likewise, the French feared the anti-Catholicism prevalent among English holdings.

French Expeditions

Three prominent French expeditions took place between 1747-1754 under the leadership of Pierre-Joseph Céloron, Charles Michel de Langlade, and Paul Marin de la Malgue, respectively. The purpose of these expeditions was to remove British influence from the Ohio Country and to confirm and enforce the allegiance of the Native Americans inhabiting the area to the French crown.

Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia responded to the French expeditions in 1753 by ordering Major George Washington of the Virginia militia to send a message to the commander of the French forces in the Ohio Country, Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre. Dinwiddie could not allow the loss of the Ohio Country to France since many

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Virginian merchants had invested heavily in fur trading in Ohio. The French responded by explaining that France's claim to the region was superior to that of Britain since the French had explored the Ohio Country nearly a century earlier.

War

The French and Indian War was the last of four major colonial wars between the British, the French, and their Native American allies. Unlike the previous three wars, the French and Indian War began on North American soil and then spread to Europe, where Britain and France continued fighting. Britain officially declared war on France on May 15, 1756, marking the beginnings of the Seven Years' War in Europe. Native Americans fought for both sides, but primarily alongside the French (with one exception being the Iroquois Confederacy, which sided with the American colonies and Britain).

A major event in the war was Edward Braddock's campaign against the French at Fort Duquesne in 1755. Braddock employed European tactics: bold, linear marches and firing formations. This led to disaster at the Monongahela, where the French and natives, though heavily outmanned and outgunned, used superior tactics to gun down and rout the British. This stunning British defeat heralded a string of major French victories over the next few years, at Fort Oswego, Fort William Henry, Fort Duquesne, and Carillon. The sole British successes in the early years of the war came in 1755, at the Battle of Lake George, which secured the Hudson Valley; and in the taking of Fort Beauséjour (which protected the Nova Scotia frontier).

In 1756 William Pitt became Secretary of State of Great Britain. His leadership, and France's continued neglect of the North American theater, eventually turned the tide in favor of the British. The French were driven from many frontier posts such as Fort Niagara, and the key Fortress Louisbourg fell to the British in 1758. In 1759, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham gave Quebec City to the British, who had to withstand a siege there after the Battle of Sainte-Foy a year later. In September of 1760, Pierre François de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal and the King's Governor of New France, negotiated a surrender with British General Jeffrey Amherst to bring an end to the French and Indian war portion of the Seven Year's War.

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