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Original Documents
Testimony

Directions: Follow your teacher's instructions for using the testimony below in an inquiry into the death of Ensign de Jumonville who was killed in an encounter with British troops and Indian allies under Major George Washington in May 1754.

Background: In 1754 George Washington, as second in command of a Virginia military force, was ordered by Lt. Governor Dinwiddie to reinforce William Trent at the Forks of the Ohio. Upon learning that the French had occupied the Forks, Washington moved to drive the French out. On May 28, 1754, an incident took place that would move Britain and France closer to war. Below are comments from George Washington; British soldiers Adam Stephens and John Shaw; and the Frenchman Jolicoeur Bonin regarding the incident. These descriptions offer differing points of view about what happened.

George Washington

Background: George Washington penned the following letter to Lt. Governor Dinwiddie the day after the incident involving the death of Ensign de Jumonville.

“ When we came to the Half King, I council'd with him, and got his assent to go hand in hand and strike the French. Accordingly, himself, Monacatoocha, and a few other Indians set out with us; and when we came to the place where the Tracts were, the Half King sent two Indians to follow their tracts, and discover their lodgement, which they did ab't half a mile from the Road, in a very obscure place surrounded with Rocks. I thereupon, in conjunction with the Half King and Monacatoocha, form'd a disposition to attack y'm on all sides, which we accordingly did, and, after an Engagement of ab't 15 Minutes, we killed 10, wounded one, and took 21 Prisoners. Amongst those that were killed was Monsieur Jumonville, the Commander, princip'l Officers taken is Monsieur Druillong and Mons'r La force, who your Honour has often heard me speak of as a bold Enterprising Man, and a person of great subtility and cunning. With these are two Cadets.

These Officers pretend they were coming on an Embassy; but the absurdity of this pretext is too glaring, as your Honour will see by the Instructions and Summons inclos'd. These Instructions were to reconnoitre the Country, Roads, Creeks, &ca. to Potomack, which they were ab't to do.”

Source: Fitzpatrick, John C. ed., *The Writings of George Washington from Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, Electronic Version 2002.

John Shaw

Background: An excerpt from John Shaw's sworn deposition of de Jumonville's death, based on reports he heard from fellow soldiers who had witnessed the death.

... “Col. Washington with his Men and the Indians first came up with them (French) and found them encamped between two Hills. It being early in the morning some of them were asleep and some eating, but haveing heard a Noise they were immediately in great

Confusion and betook themselves to their Arms and as this Deponent has heard, one of [the French] fired a Gun upon which Col. Washington gave the Word for all his Men to fire. Several of them being killed, the Rest betook themselves to flight, but our Indians haveing gone round the French when they saw them immediately fled back to the English and delivered up their Arms

Some Time after the Indians came up the Half King took his Tomahawk and split the Head of the French Captain [de Jumonville] haveing first asked if he was an Englishman and haveing been told he was a French Man. He then took out his Brains and washed his Hands with them and then scalped him. All this he [Shaw] has heard and never heard it contradicted”

Source: *Pennsylvania. Gazette*. Philadelphia: 19 Sept. 1754

Jolicoeur Charles Bonin

Background: This is from a first-person account of Bonin’s experiences in the French and Indian War. (He may not have been a witness since he does not use the pronoun “we” as he typically does when discussing an event in which he was involved.)

“...numbering sixty, half of them English and half savages, they surrounded the French. The French did not realize this until a musket shot was fired at them by the enemy. Then Sieur Dejumonville performed his duty by reading the summons he was carrying. The enemy paid no attention to it, and a second volley Sieur Dejumonville was killed. The rest, numbering twenty-four were taken prisoner and conducted to Winchester.

Only one man of the Jumonville party was able to escape before or during the engagement. He was a Canadian named Monceau... He brought word of the defeat of the Jumonville party....

Source: Gallup, Andrew. *Memoir of a French and Indian War Soldier: “Jolicoeur” Charles Bonin*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1993. pp. 96-97.

Adam Stephen

Background: Major Adam Stephen, having been recently promoted by Washington, was present at the incident at Jumonville Glen. In his personal remarks, Stephen indicates that he commanded the opposite end of the line from Colonel Washington.

“Washington Commanding the Right -- Stephen the Left. It is uncertain whether the English or French fired first--Stephen with the platoon he Commanded rush'd in among them, and took Monsieur Drullion prisoner with his own hand--Jumonville who had Commanded was killed in the first fire. The number of the Enemy was forty, -- they were all kill'd or taken ...---This happen'd on the 18th of May, in the Morning.”

Source: Ward, Harry M. *Major General Adam Stephen and the Cause of American Liberty*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
