

Ok, who started the war?

It is an accepted fact that the Battle of Jumonville Glen was the event that started the French and Indian War for the colonist, better known as the Seven Years War in Europe. Fought on the frontier of colonial Pennsylvania, this battle would trigger a worldwide conflict between Britain and France, and their respective allies, that would change the course of history. But like many key moments in history, exactly what happened during the actual event isn't clear. We know why Joseph de Jumonville with the France's Native American allies were there. We know why George Washington and his men, supported their own Native American fighters had come to the Ohio River valley from Virginia. History knows the names of almost every person involved, their role in the event, and the result of it all, when the dust settled, but the key issue who killed Jumonville, can't be answered with 100% certainty, and most likely never will.

Your task is to;

First, read the facts, the summaries of the event, and the primary source accounts of several of the people involved in the event answering the comprehension questions included with each.

Second, compare the sources for similarities and contradictions

Last, understanding that all sources are biased and or written to persuade the reader to the authors view, explain why each source presents the event as happening the way it did and none completely agree with each other.

The players:

- France had a better claim to the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains than the English settlers, because they had first explored it and had developed strong relations and trade with the Natives in the area as well as establishing trading posts and forts in the area.
- Virginia (English) claimed the land based on its original charters and a desire to expand the colony through land sales
- The native American were finding their land invaded by both, but of the two France seemed the better partner because, unlike the English, the French were interested in trade and less interested in taking the Native's lands.

Facts:

- The event happened on May 28, 1754
- A company of colonial militia from Virginia under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Washington, and a small number of Mingo warriors led by Tanacharison (also known as "Half King"), ambushed a force of 35 Canadians under the command of Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville.
- Washington was alerted to Jumonville's presence by Tanacharison, and they joined forces to surround the Canadian camp. Some of the Canadians were killed in the ambush, and most of the others were captured. Jumonville was among the slain, although the exact circumstances of his death are a subject of historical controversy and debate.
- The battle lasted about 15 minutes
- Jumonville was killed, and that most of his party were either killed or taken prisoner
- Washington wins the battle

*Glossery:*

**Name of the Battle:** Battle of Jumonville Glen

**Washington:** Leader of the Virginia (British) forces sent to build a fort to stop the French from moving into the area

**Tanacharison:** (Half King) leader of the Mingo warriors allied with Washington

**Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville:** Leader of the French force involved in the battle

**Contrecoeur :** the French commander at fort Duquesne

**Fort Duquesne:** The French fort built where Washington intended to build his fort

**Virginian, Virginia, British colonist, British, English:** names used for English colonist, Washington's forces

**French, Canadians:** Names used to describe the French forces

**Monsieur:** means mister in French

**Militia:** civilian soldiers, not full time professional soldiers

Background:

Discovering the French had already built Fort Duquesne, Washington and his small band of militia were informed by their Native American allies, the Mingo, that a small group of French were near, and decided to engage them. Following Half King, Washington's troops of about 40, surprised the 35 French early in the morning when many were still asleep. A quick battle followed and one Virginian and about a dozen French were killed, including their commander. A few French managed to escape but about 20 were taken prisoner. The sources below are various accounts of what happened during that battle.

*Note:* The following sources were copied from Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 52-59.

**Source 1: Excerpt from George Washington's description of the event in his diary**

"...we [Washington, his men, and his Native American allies] formed ourselves for an Engagement, marching one after the other, in the *Indian* Manner: We were advanced pretty near to them [the French], as we thought, when they discovered us; whereupon I ordered my company to fire; mine was supported by that of Mr. *Wag[gonn]er's*, and my Company and his received the whole Fire of the *French*, during the greatest Part of the Action, which only lasted a Quarter of an Hour, before the Enemy was routed.

We killed Mr. *de Jumonville*, the commander of that Party [the French], as also nine others; we wounded one, and made Twenty-one Prisoners, among whom were M. *la Force*, M. *Drouillon*, and two Cadets. The *Indians* scalped the Dead, and took away the most Part of their Arms. . . ."

1. According to Washington's account, what made him give the order to "fire"?

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2. Who killed Mr. *de Jumonville*? By what method was Mr. *de Jumonville* killed?

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**Source 2: In the confusion of the event, one of French soldiers managed to hide in the woods, where he watched the fight and part of its aftermath before slipping away to make his report. His account was retold in a letter on June 2:**

“One of that Party [the French], *Monceau* by Name, a *Canadian*, made his Escape and tells us that they had built themselves Cabbins, in a low Bottom, where they sheltered themselves, as it rained hard. About seven o’Clock the next Morning, they saw themselves surrounded by the *English* on one Side and the *Indians* on the Other. The *English* gave them two Volleys [a group of guns firing at once], but the *Indians* did not fire. Mr. *de Jumonville*, by his Interpreter, told them to desist [stop], that he had something to tell them. Upon which they ceased firing. Then Mr. *de Jumonville* ordered the Summons [an official notice] ... to be read. ... The aforesaid *Monceau*, saw all our *Frenchmen* coming up close to Mr. *de Jumonville*, whilst they were reading the Summons, so that they were all in Platoons [small group], between the *English* and the *Indians*, during which Time, said *Monceau* made the best of his Way to us, partly by Land through the Woods, and partly along the River *Monaungahela*, in a small Canoe. This is all, Sir, I could learn from said *Monceau*.”

1. Based on the “facts” you know about the event; what key part of the incident did Monsieur *Monceau* not see because he claims he had fled the scene shortly after they began reading the summons?

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2: When the summons was being read, where were the English, French, and Indians in relation to each other?

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**Source 3: Another witness, an Indian from Tanaghrisson’s forces who were supporting Washington, had come to Fort Duquesne and informed Contrecoeur [the French commander] of the following:**

“that Mr. *de Jumonville* was killed by a Musket-Shot in the Head, whilst they were reading the Summons; and the *English* would afterwards have killed all our Men, had not the Indians who were present, by rushing between them and the *English*, prevented their Design.”

1: This Account is told by who, and is told to whom?

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2: Based on this source how was Mr. *de Jumonville* killed and by whom?

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3: When the source says the Indians “prevented their design” what does it mean?

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**Source 4: The following account comes from an illiterate twenty-year-old Irishman from Washington's forces who was not in fact at the event. Private John Shaw, however, heard detailed accounts of the fight from soldiers who had been present, and he recounted them in a sworn statement before South Carolina's governor on August 21:**

"That an Indian and a White Man haveing brought Col. Washington Information that a Party of French consisting of five and thirty Men were out [scouting] and lay about six miles off upon which Col. Washington with about forty Men and Capt. Hogg with a Party of forty more and the Half King with his Indians consisting of thirteen imediately set out in search of them, but haveing taken different Roads Col. Washington with his Men and the Indians first came up with them 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 {I have} heard, one of [the French] fired a Gun upon which Col. Washington gave the Word for all his Men to fire. Several of them [the French] being killed, the Rest betook themselves to fight, but out Indians having gone round the French when they saw them immediately fled back to the English and delivered up their Arms desireing Quarter which was accordingly promised them.

Some Time after the Indians came up the Half King took his Tomahawk and split the Head of the French Captain [*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 but knows nothing of it from his own Knowledge only he has seen the Bones of the Frenchmen who were killed in Number 13 or 14 and the Head of one stuck upon a Stick for none of them were buried, and he has also heard that one of our Men was killed at that Time."

1. According to this account, who fired first?

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2. What part do the Indians take in the battle?

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3. Who killed the "French Captain" according to this account? With what did he kill him?

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**Source 5: The French obtained their following account of the battle more than three weeks after it occurred from a deserter "from the English army camp" whose name suggests that he was a most likely a member of Tanaghrisson's party. His account was transcribed by French officials.**

Denis Kaninguen, who deserted from the English army camp yesterday morning, arrived at the camp of Fort Duquesne today, 30 June.

He reports that the English army is composed of 430 men, in addition to whom there are about 30 savages. . . .

That Monsieur de Jumonville had been killed by an English detachment which surprised him[. T]hat that officer had gone out to communicate his orders to the English commander {Washington} [ N]otwithstanding the discharge of musket fire that [Washington] had made upon him, he [Washington] intended to read it [the summons Jumonville carried] and had withdrawn himself to his people, whom he had [previously] ordered to fire upon the French[. T]hat Monsieur de Jumonville having been wounded and having fallen[,] Thaninhison [Tanaghrisson], a savage, came up to him and had said, Thou art not yet dead, my father, and struck several hatchet blows with which he killed him.

That Monsieur Druillon, ensign and second in command to Monsieur de Jumonville, had been taken [captive] with all of the detachment, which was thirty men[.] Messieurs de Boucherville and DuSable, cadets, and Laforce, commissary, were among the number of prisoners[. T]hat there were between ten and twelve Canadians killed and that the prisoners had been carried to the city of Virginia [Williamsburg].

1: Who does this account say started the shooting?

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2: Who does this account say killed the French Commander?

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