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The Journal of Major George Washington, 1754

George Washington

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In 1753, the British and French found themselves engaged in a border dispute along the Ohio River near Pennsylvania. With the French building fortresses on land the British claimed as their own, the British authorities decided to step in by delivering a letter to the French demanding that they remove themselves from British land. That October, the Governor of Virginia sent a young, 22 year old major in the Virginia militia to deliver the letter. That major was none other than George Washington, who volunteered to carry a letter from the governor of Virginia to the French commander of the forts recently built on the headwaters of the Ohio River in northwestern Pennsylvania. Washington and his superiors were already aware of the French forces' machinations, and Washington strove to do far more than just deliver a letter.
In the journal he kept, Washington describes how he practiced diplomacy to keep the Native leaders allied to the English cause, as well as how he interviewed French deserters. With his background in land surveying, he reported on the extent of French military posts between New Orleans and the Great Lakes, and he skillfully reconnoitered the Forks of the Ohio with an eye to the proper site for building a fort. He even went so far as to inspect and report on the construction of the new French forts, and he made estimates of their strength and preparations for the following year's expeditions. All of this information would come in handy when Washington and the British found themselves in the midst of a border dispute over that same territory the following year, which would trigger the French & Indian War in North America, and the Seven Years War across the Atlantic.Washington's journal of his journey was reprinted throughout the colonies and became popular reading in the Empire.

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