

# The French and Indian War and the Fort Loudoun Massacre

*Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of the French and Indian war including the Fort Loudoun Massacre?*

Britain and France competed for land and resources in North America throughout the 1600's and early 1700s. Both nations wanted access to valuable natural resources, especially furs. In Europe, furs and skins were used for making clothing, hats and other items; beaver fur was especially valuable because it was waterproof. The British claimed land along the North American coast and along Hudson's Bay. The French claimed the lands along the St. Lawrence River, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River. As both nations expanded their settlements in the Ohio River Valley, conflict ensued. In 1755, British General Braddock was defeated at the Battle of the Monongahela by a force of both French and American Indian troops while attempting to reach Fort Duquesne. The global conflict between Britain and France between 1756 and 1763 is known as the Seven Years War. The fighting that took place in North America is known as the French and Indian War.

During the French and Indian War both the British and the French depended on their American Indian allies to help them fight in North America. This was especially important as the two European nations were also fighting in Europe, Cuba, the West Indies, India, and the Philippines. Frontier warfare between European settlers and American Indians led to increased anger and violence toward all American Indians. Despite seeking American Indian tribes as allies, the British misunderstood American Indian culture, looked on American Indians as uncivilized, and often treated their allies

poorly. The Cherokee had been strong allies of the British in the years leading up to the French and Indian War, however, a number of events during the conflict led to a breakdown in the alliance between the Cherokee and British.

In 1756, the British began to build Fort Loudoun near the Cherokee town of Chota. The Cherokee were pleased to have the fort as protection against attacks from the French and their American Indian allies. However, the military alliance between the Cherokee and the British began to sour after the fort's construction began. A group of Cherokee travelled north in February 1756 to fight the Shawnee alongside 200 Virginian troops.<sup>1</sup> Conditions were brutal, and a lack of supplies forced the group to kill their horses. When the returning Cherokee encountered roaming horses, they took the horses, reasoning that it was only fair since their own horses were lost while serving the interests of the colonists. However, the colonists did not share the Cherokee point of view; they pursued the Cherokee and killed several men. Seeking vengeance, young warriors then attacked and killed several backcountry settlers in South Carolina.<sup>2</sup> For the Cherokee, these deaths were justified under the concept of "blood law" as they viewed all settlers as belonging to the same tribe or clan.

Governor Lyttleton demanded that every Cherokee who had taken part in the attacks be surrendered for execution, including the chiefs of Citico and Tellico. Though the Cherokee wanted to avoid all-out war on the frontier, they could not hand over their leaders.<sup>3</sup> A group of 38 Cherokee leaders, including Oconostota, traveled to South Carolina in 1759 to seek peace with Governor Lyttleton, but he instead had them

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<sup>1</sup> James Mooney, (1900) *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*. Reprint. (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder Publishers, 1980.), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 42.

imprisoned at Fort Prince George. This action angered the Cherokee; even enraging Peace Chief Attakullakulla who had strongly supported the British. Attakullakulla arranged the release of the three most prominent captives, including the war leader Oconostota, by agreeing to turn over the Cherokee men who had killed the white settlers. When Fort Prince George's commander, Richard Coymore, refused to release the remaining prisoners, Oconostota's warriors killed him. In revenge, the soldiers in the fort killed the remaining Cherokee prisoners. After the deaths of the Cherokee prisoners, the Cherokee near Fort Loudoun surrounded the fort and cut off the soldiers' supply of food. On August 7, 1760, Captain Paul Demere was forced to surrender to the Cherokee at Chota; the terms of surrender stipulated that the Cherokee promised to allow the soldiers and their families to leave in peace as long as the troops left their cannons and ammunition at the fort. However, the British tried to hide the cannons and ammunition before leaving. This angered the Cherokee who attacked the retreating soldiers on August 10, 1760. The Cherokee killed 23 soldiers, 3 women, and took 120 hostages. The Cherokee viewed the deaths as justified since the British had killed Cherokee prisoners at Fort Prince George and had not kept the terms of the surrender. The British referred to the event as the Fort Loudoun Massacre.

By this point, the British had won several important victories against the French in the north including capturing Quebec, the French capital. This allowed the British to focus on the Cherokee, sending 2,000 troops into Cherokee territory where they destroyed 15 towns and the Cherokee food supply for winter. By 1762, the Cherokee surrendered and peace was restored, but hard feelings lingered. In 1763, the war between Britain and France officially ended with the Treaty of Paris. As a result of the

French and Indian War, France lost all its territories in North America except for a few islands in the Caribbean. Spain conceded Florida to the British but gained the French lands west of the Mississippi River. Britain gained all of France's lands east of the Mississippi River. American Indians who had sided with the French feared how they would be treated by the British. After years of fighting France, the British found themselves victorious but deeply in debt. The British knew that continued warfare with American Indians would further increase the debt. Therefore, they issued the Proclamation of 1763 which said that no British subject could settle west of the Appalachian Mountains. However, many settlers simply ignored the law and continued to move west onto Cherokee lands.

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Using information from the reading, complete the timeline below. Some of the information has been added for you

