

# French & Indian War Foundation

*"Preserving and Interpreting the Colonial History of Virginia's Frontier"*

PO Box 751, Winchester, Virginia 22604

www.FIWF.org

Volume 16, Issue 2, Spring 2021

## Notes from the President

By David Grosso

We continue to hope that everyone has been able to weather the ongoing epidemic and will be able to take advantage of the increasing availability of the Covid vaccines. Many of us on the board are likely to have been vaccinated by the time you read this. To my knowledge only one board member has been infected and seems to have recovered completely.

So far this year the foundation has had scheduled two events. The first, a President's day muster of Captain Mercer's company at the Fort Loudoun site had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. Surprisingly for an outdoor February event, the cancellation was the first since the Company began holding their Musters in 2015.

The second event, the celebration of George Washington's birthday 289 years ago, was held virtually this year. Since the virtual format did not lend itself well to a strictly social activity as the birthday celebration is typically, we offered brief accounts of Washington's career from the young Washington in Winchester through the Revolution, by Jim Moyer, Steve Resan and Brett Osborn.

In addition, attendees received a sneak preview of a virtual tour of Fort Loudoun presented by Scott Straub. We are hopeful that this 'tour' will be completed this year and made available to the public on the website. Scott and others have put a great deal of effort into this multi-media project in the past year. We believe that this offering will 'bring to life' Fort Loudoun in a way that text and static displays are not able to do.

All-in-all, technical glitches aside, the

commemoration was received well by those in attendance.

Another notable offering first made available to the public at the 2020 Annual Meeting was the George Washington coloring book developed by Scott Straub. The first printing of 500 books is close enough to being sold out that a 2<sup>nd</sup> printing was authorized in January. Area locations where this book is being offered for sale can be found on the Home page of the foundation website, [fiwf.org](http://fiwf.org).

We are moving on, tentatively, with sponsoring and/or participating in a number of outreach activities for later in 2021. Planning for the 2021 Fort Loudoun event is ongoing. We have been discussing the possibility of offering a hybrid event in collaboration with the James Wood II chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. Whether we have a hybrid event this year or are able to have our traditional in-person event will be dependent on the trajectory of the epidemic and the Virginia COVID guidelines for public events. What I am relatively comfortable saying is that there will be a Fort Loudoun Day commemoration in 2021 in some form.

We also anticipate returning to our outreach efforts during the year as the economy and communities open back up. As examples we are planning on attending the Colonial Kids Day in July in Clarke County and Clarke County Heritage Day in November. We will be sending notifications nearer the scheduled dates to remind everyone of the events and as invitations to join in the activities.

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Should we be fortunate enough to participate in other events/activities we will let you know as they present themselves.

Again, we look forward to your continuing support in 2021 and hope we will be able to meet and continue to celebrate the early history of the Country.

*"Along the Potomac River: Extracts from the Maryland Gazette, 1728-1799"*

by Edith Moore Sprouse

Half King sends letter to the Governor of Virginia, asking that forts be built on the Ohio (river) as protection against the French. (29 Nov 1753)

Williamsburg. Major Washington reports on his return from the Ohio. (7 Feb 1754)

Upwards of 300 soldiers are now at Alexandria, and more are expected every day, who are to march in a few days to join Major Washington. (27 Jun 1754)

George Washington gives notice from Alexandria that all soldiers found two miles from camp without furlough or discharge papers may be taken up for deserters. (5 Sep 1754)

As she looked into my eyes, Sarah Rutan Robinson Buchanan formulated the chain of questions that were to come in rapid succession. My ever concerned Mom loaded up and excitedly exclaimed, "Why would you do such a thing." Do you not realize that others are going to think you are strange?

I am positive that if my mother were still with us, I know those demeaning words would never cross her lips. Although the light in those blue eyes of hers has long ago faded to nevermore, I fondly see it on occasion in the rays warming me from above. Instead of a vocal rant, she would be beaming with the light of parental proudness. Mom was always a history lover during her all too short existence on this ever changing world. Few local historical roadside markers escaped her attention and careful reading, despite the traffic zooming by. Few regional historical events, from covered bridge festivals to colonial fort encampments escaped her attentive attendance. Goldenseal, a West Virginia magazine, was her main source of printed regional history. Many pages of our worn copies bore the signs of her flipping thumbs.

Perhaps her boundless love of history and the need to share that was created by the history love of her revered father Paul Rudolphus Rutan. This man whom I fondly called grandpa, read, taught, preserved and promoted history. Since he was as a teacher at one-room schools, you could say he was perhaps a part of history. Roadside markers and local historical festivals could not quench his passion for historical knowledge. My grandfather led the charge for historical preservation through his actions, not just his words. He portrayed Abraham Lincoln at numerous events while reciting the Gettysburg Address. He was a proud member of the Sons of the American Revolution. Lastly, grandpa hitchhiked part-way across the state of Pennsylvania, teenage son in tow, to share that hallowed battle site with the next generation.

"What do you get out of all this?" At times that question has been posed to me as I stood there in all my regalia.

How do you answer that, is an answer that I struggle to formulate in a way that the general public would understand. Like so many endeavors that you choose to undertake, you can only hope to get the level of intensity out, that you put into it yourself. Living historians must come to the event ready to work. Work it is indeed, although many will say, if you do what you love, you will not work a day. With my fading memory, I seem to remember someone saying something like, "Life is a play and the world is your stage." Now I would certainly not put myself on the same stage as our old friend William, but my audience awaits me. It is show time folks and let your historical persona emerge from your modern self as a swallowtail sheds the cocoon. With one last adjustment of woolen clothing, I breathe deeply and head for the action. Hat on head, history in heart I set out to share my love and passion. At times I feel like a spider, sitting on the perimeter of my web, waiting for the vibrations of a passing person. Once within the grasp of imaginary net, my visitor and their family in tow, are assailed with my oratory skills.

Perhaps for many reenactors, our community is who we are trying to preserve history for. Without this preservation our future generations will be robbed of what made us. Many feel like I do, that our past history is the genesis of the current time. If the French had colonized North America in much larger numbers, perhaps they would have had the numbers to win the F&I War. If a few rolls of the dice had gone their way at battles; they might have won the F&I War. If that happened, we would all be speaking French right now. Some may say it is the law of supply and demand, where none would perform if there was no audience. Addressing another of my mother's questions would require me to say that I am proud! I am proud of the way I look in my regimental coat. I am proud that I

have worked hard in creating and do a great job portraying my chosen historical persona. I am proud that I survived the cold night in my canvas tent. I am proud that the adults that visited with us enjoyed my history lesson. Most importantly, I am proud of the way I was able to light up the eyes of a few young visitors. In those youthful energetic eyes, I saw potential historians just waiting their turn on the stage.



Eric Robinson, Sentinel at Ewing Marking

Enough has been said about me and my portrayal for now. Instead of more pointless self-reflection, let us spin the mirror, till you are the focus of its attention. Shows are not much without an audience. Are you the audience that will permit the knowledge that is being emitted by me to be absorbed?

Some may say that I have meandered like a farm creek in this writing. Some may say that I have provided no real answers to a myriad of unanswerable questions. Let me answer my naysayers by answering one, and only one, of the core unanswerable questions, "Why would you do such a thing."

Mom and grandpa, I hope you are as proud of me as I am of you. I do care what others think, yet you are among the chosen few, from whom I seek lasting approval. History is to be told. History is to be shared. History is to be experienced. History is to be lived. History can't be set aside to be blown away by the sands of time. I am in my sometimes colorful garb, but a simple pawn. Like a rare creature, history needs preserving so that more than the pages of old books remain. Perhaps when my time is up, a fate that all must certainly face, I will be permitted to once again join you both to excitingly exchange historical enlightenment.

# Membership

YES, I wish to become a member of the French and Indian War Foundation and play an important role in supporting the educational goals and preservation of the sites associated with this conflict on the American frontier.

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- Soldier \$ 1,000
- Captain \$ 5,000
- Colonel \$ 10,000

*The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization*

### Mission

*"The French and Indian War Foundation preserves and interprets the colonial history of the Virginia frontier."*

### Goals

- Raise public awareness about the war and its consequences through public lectures and tours, as well as publication in the media.
- Collect and conserve primary documents relating to the war.
- Identify, document, preserve and interpret French and Indian War era landmarks in the backcountry of the mid-Atlantic colonies.
- Cooperate with privately and publicly owned French and Indian War fort sites in research, promotion and preservation activities.

*We encourage high school and college History students to participate with all activities.*

- I will volunteer my services
- I would like to make a Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward this form to:

**The French and Indian War Foundation**

**P.O. Box 751  
Winchester, VA 22604**

www.FIWF.org

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### **Call for Committee Members!**

If you have ideas, time or resources we need your help. If you could serve on any of the above committees, please email [fiwf.dsg@comcast.net](mailto:fiwf.dsg@comcast.net).

The Board of Directors currently meets at 3:30 p.m. on the 1st Thursday of the month. Meetings are conducted via Zoom and will continue in this manner until further notice.

## Meet Board Member Eric Robinson

by Eric Robinson



Residing near Martinsburg, WV with his wife Sherry, Eric Robinson is our newest board member. Together they built their own home while raising four beautiful daughters. Creek side activities were a family favorite activity that continues with their grandkids.

Born in Ohio in 1960, Eric spent his youth in rural Southwestern PA near the WV border. As a teenager, Eric developed an interest in history with WW2 and American Indians being his favorite subjects. Later, Eric began attending flea markets in search of books for his collection. The Last of the Mohicans has remained his favorite. While in the area he attended Penn State and WVU.

Economics led to the migration of the Robinson brothers to the Shenandoah Valley in search of better job opportunities. After stints in construction and factory jobs, Eric returned to college to finish what he started. The result was an Associate's Degree in Marketing, a Bachelor's in Business, a Regent's BA Degree, a Social Studies Teaching Certificate and a Master's in Gifted Ed. Eric served as a substitute teacher. This experience led to his current decade long career at Musselman Middle School. He teaches WV History along with ELA Enrichment. On his classroom wall, Eric displays a creative photo of two of his daughters, which reinforces his belief in family.

Recently, Eric became involved in being a living historian. He is an active member of the George Mercer Co. of the VA Regiment; aka the Ft. Loudoun garrison. He has participated in events at: Abram's Delight; Fts Edwards, Ashby and Frederick. Eric has journeyed to Ft. Dobbs, NC and Ft. Niagara, NY to engage in encampments. Prior to reenacting, he visited F&IW historical sites in TN, PA and NY. Eric is also a member of the Colonel James Wood II Chapter of the SAR. He attends many events as a participant in the Color Guard unit. Extensive hours of volunteer work helping to rebuild Ft. Loudoun, PA along with engaging in amateur historical digs help round out his schedule.

Recently Eric created an extensive Power Point on: Ft. Loudoun, Washington and the F&IW regionally. He made this available to the public via YouTube and also introduced it to numerous regional schools.

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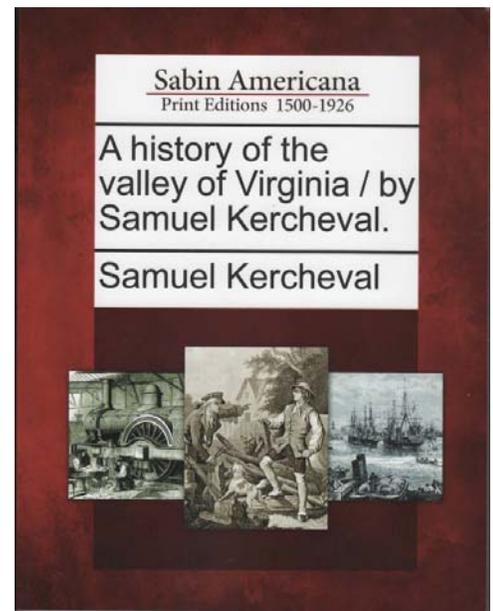


# KERCHEVAL, SAMUEL A History of the Valley of Virginia

**Editor's note:** *Friends and members of the French and Indian War Foundation. I was reading through a book by Samuel Kercheval, first printed in 1833 and found a couple of chapters of interest to the French and Indian War. It is interesting to see how an individual who grew up in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century described the events that led up to and included the war. Samuel was born in 1767, Frederick County, Virginia. Throughout his life, he was enamored with history. He married Susannah Chinn in 1787 and became a lawyer and noted author. Additionally, he interviewed long time residents of the lower Shenandoah Valley, collecting first hand accounts of the customs and accounts of the life during the Indian Wars and the Revolution. He compiled this information into a highly regarded volume, "A History of the Valley of Virginia", published in 1833 in Winchester. Chapter VI of the book is titled "Breaking out of the Indian War" about the start of the French and Indian War. Here is an excerpt from the beginning of that chapter.*

It has been noticed in a preceding chapter, that in the year 1753, emissaries from the Western Indians came among the Valley Indians, inviting them to cross the Allegany mountains, and that in the spring of the year 1754, the Indians suddenly and unexpectedly moved off, and entirely left the valley. That this movement of the Indians was made under the influence of the French, there is but little doubt. In the year 1753, Maj. Geo. Washington (since the illustrious Gen. Washington,) was sent by governor Dinwiddie, the then colonial governor of Virginia, with a letter to the French commander on the Western waters, remonstrating against his encroachments upon the territory of Virginia. This letter of remonstrance was disregarded by the Frenchman, and very soon afterwards the war, commonly called "Braddock's war," between the British government and France, commenced. In the year 1754, the government of Virginia raised an armed force with the intention of dislodging the French from their fortified places within the limits of the colony. The command of this army was given to Col. Fry, and George Washington was appointed lieutenant-colonel under him. Their little army amounted to three hundred men. "Washington advanced at the head of two companies of this regiment, early in April, to the Great Meadows, where he was informed by some friendly Indians, that the French were erecting fortifications in the forks between the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, and also that a detachment was on its

march from that place towards the Great Meadows. War had not been formally declared between France and England, but as neither were disposed to recede from their claim to the lands on the Ohio, it was deemed inevitable, and on the point of commencing. Several circumstances were supposed to indicate a hostile intention on the part of the French detachment. Washington, under the guidance of some friendly Indians, on a dark rainy night surprised their encampment, and firing once, rushed in and surrounded them. The commander, Dumonville, was killed, with eight or nine others; one escaped, and all the rest immediately surrendered. Soon after this affair, Col. Fry died, and the command of the regiment devolved on Washington, who speedily collected the whole at the Great Meadows. Two independent companies of regulars, one from South Carolina, soon after arrived at the same place. Col. Washington was now at the head of nearly four hundred men. A stockade, afterwards called Fort Necessity, was erected at the Great meadows, in which a small force was left, and the main body advanced with a view to dislodging the French from Fort Duquesne, (after coming under English control called Fort Pitt) which they had recently erected at the confluence of Alleghany and Monongahela rivers. They had not proceeded more than thirteen miles, when they were informed by friendly Indians that the French, as numerous as pigeons in the woods, were advancing in an hostile manner towards the



WarEnglish settlements, and also that Fort Duquesne had been strongly reinforced. -- In this critical situation a council of war unanimously recommended a retreat to the Great Meadows, which was effected without delay, and every exertion made to render Fort Necessity tenable, before the works intended for that purpose were completed. Mons. De Villier, with a considerable force, attached the fort. The assailants were covered by trees and high grass. The Americans received them with great resolution, and fought some within the stockade, and others in the surrounding ditch. -- Washington continued the whole day on the outside of the fort, and conducted the defence with the greatest coolness and intrepidity. The engagement lasted from 10 o'clock in the morning till night, when the French commander demanded a parley, and offered terms of capitulation. His first and second proposals were rejected, and Washington would accept of none but the following honorable ones, which were mutually agreed upon in the course of the night: The fort to be surrendered on condition that the garrison should march out with the honors of war, and be permitted to retain their arms and baggage, and to march unmolested into the inhabited parts of Virginia. (From Ramsey's Life of Washington)

# SAVE THE DATES:

## May

Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>

Fort Loudoun Day - 419 N. Loudoun St., Winchester, VA.

Visitors can meet Col. James Wood, founder of Winchester, and Capt.

George Mercer's Company of Col. George Washington's Virginia Regiment.

## June

Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 am

Daniel Morgan Commemoration Ceremony, Mt. Hebron Cemetery, Winchester, VA

## July

Saturday, July 10<sup>th</sup> - 11:00 am—4:00 pm

Colonial Kids Day, Burwell-Morgan Mill, 15 Tannery Lane, Millwood, VA

*All events will be held in accordance with the Governor's requirements for adhering to COVID-19 precautions in place at the time. All attendees will be expected to adhere to these guidelines.*

*"Preserving and Interpreting the  
Colonial History of the Virginia Frontier"*

French and Indian War Foundation  
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