

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY OCTOBER 10



The Battle of Point Pleasant was fought on October 10, 1774.

CSO: SS.8.20, SS.8.21, ELA.8.1

Investigate the Document: (*American Archives, Fourth Series. Vol I. 1774-1775. 973.3Am3*)

1. How did the Virginia Militia under Colonel Andrew Lewis learn of an impending attack from the Shawnee?
2. According to the letter, what were the *Indians* doing with their dead that made enumerating their losses difficult?
3. In the letter to Lord Dunmore, what was one of the “most inglorious designs that ever disgraced the name of a *British* soldier?”
4. What are the two ‘facts’ stated in the letter to Dunmore about the grievances the colonies had against the British?

Think Critically: Why is the Battle of Point Pleasant arguably the most significant battle fought in present-day West Virginia? What would have happened if the Virginia Militia had been unable to successfully pacify the Native Americans in the Ohio Valley prior to the American Revolution?

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM STAUNTON, IN VIRGINIA,
DATED NOVEMBER 4, 1774.

On the tenth of *October*, our Army being encamped in the Fork of the *Great Kenhawa*, two men went out early to hunt, but were fired upon by a number of *Indians*, when one of them was killed; the other made his escape, and brought the intelligence to the Camp. Colonel *Lewis* immediately ordered out three hundred men, who, after marching about three quarters of a mile before sun-rise, were attacked by a number (supposed to be from eight hundred to one thousand,) of desperate savages. They soon made our men retreat about one quarter of a mile, when a reinforcement coming up, they continued fighting till noon, and were never above twenty yards apart, often within six, and sometimes close together tomahawking one another. The *Indians* then began to fall back, but continued fighting at a distance till night came on and parted them. Such a battle with *Indians*, it is imagined, was never heard of before. We had upwards of fifty men killed, and ninety wounded. Amongst the slain were many brave men, both officers and privates; and a Magistrate of this place, Mr. *Frog*, a very worthy gentleman, was also killed. So eager were the *Indians* for his scalp, that one man shot three of them over him, endeavouring by turns to scalp him. The number of *Indians* killed cannot be ascertained, as they were continually carrying them off and throwing them into the River; but from the tracks of blood, the number must have been great. Our men got upwards of twenty scalps, eighty blankets, about forty guns, and a great many tomahawks; and intended in a few days to go over the River to meet the Governour, twenty or twenty-five miles from their Towns. The *Indians* the Governour lately concluded a peace with, it is assured, were in this battle. We suppose they have had the other struggle before this time, and are very impatient to know the issue.

Williamsburg, December 5, 1774.

To his Excellency the Right Honourable JOHN, Earl of
DUNMORE, his Majesty's Lieutenant and Governour-

* List of the Killed and Wounded *Virginians*.—KILLED.—Colonel Charles Lewis, Major John Field, Captains John Murray, Robert M. Clenachan, Samuel Wilson, James Ward, Lieutenant Hugh Allen, Ensigns Candiff and Baker; Privates, 44.

WOUNDED.—Captains W. Fleming, (since dead,) J. Dickenson, Thomas Blueford, John Stidman, Lieutenants Goodman, Robeson, Lard, Vanners; Privates, 79.

Boston, February 20, 1775.—On reading the account of the battle between the brave *Virginians* and their savage neighbours, it brought to my mind the keen resentments and mortifying reflections that must naturally kindle in the breasts of an experienced General, brave officers, and intrepid soldiers, to remember that the professed design of *Britain*, in maintaining Standing Armies in *America*, was the protection of the Colonies, and yet known at the very moment, the noble *Virginians* were bleeding, dying, and winning the laurels of victory, they were confined and basking in their tents, to execute one of the most inglorious designs that ever disgraced the name of a *British Soldier*, viz: enslaving a free Province that has supported itself more than one hundred and fifty years, against her savage foes. These resentments and reflections must still increase, when they feel and know the irresistible conviction this proceeding will give to every honest man in *Britain* or *America*, of these two facts: First. That the real design of keeping a Standing Army in *America*, was not protecting but enslaving the Colonies. The second thing thus demonstrated, is, that the Colonies do not need or desire protection from the Standing Armies, but are able and willing to defend themselves, and therefore they must view their stay in *America* as useless and burthensome. In this situation it is natural for *Americans* to imagine the honest, generous souls of the gentlemen of the Army will kindle to such a degree, when their inglorious and base employment is compared with that of the virtuous *Virginians*, gaining the art of war and glory of victory, that they would rather resign their commissions or lives, than suffer the eternal disgrace of having their names handed down to posterity, with these facts to sully some future page in *British* or *American* story. Can we expect less from these generous spirits, than that they let their corrupt employers know the just indignation they feel at this abuse and disgrace that is, and will be fixed eternally on their names, as the dupes of tyranny?