

## Colonial Wars

Warfare was a recurring part of life for British and French colonists in North America. Britain and France were regularly at war throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so much so that some historians argue that the period from 1688 to 1763, for instance, can be regarded as one long war between the two countries. While the causes of war varied, they usually had to do with tensions in European politics and the strong religious enmity between Protestant Britain and Catholic France. The battles took place in the colonies as well as in Europe, and the winner often received some colonial possessions from the defeated empire. This reading examines the outbreaks of war between Britain and France between 1689 and 1744, specifically how those wars played out in North America. The next reading will examine the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War), in which the French were ultimately driven out of their North American territories.

### *King William's War*

As with all the wars fought between Britain and France in this period, King William's War, as it is known in the United States, is also known by other names. King William's War was a smaller theater in the wider European war known as the War of the League of Augsburg, or the Nine Years' War. In 1688 King Louis XIV of France invaded the Holy Roman Empire. To stop him, the Holy Roman Empire formed the League of Augsburg with Spain, Savoy, and many German princes. William III of Orange, stadholder of the Netherlands, who also became the king of England after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, also joined the League in an effort to curb the French king's power. In the end, the war had no victor; both sides returned any captured territories.

The American portion of the war is considered small but was characterized by fierce fighting. It began when mixed groups of Native American and French troops executed several surprise attacks on settlements in New England in 1689. This style of warfare would characterize the French approach to war in North America until 1763. The French and their Native American allies – Native American troops fought with both sides and only when it was in their tribe's interest – would attack a settlement before dawn or in the early hours of the morning. The raids were carefully planned, and the aim was to destroy the settlement and take captives, although British colonists were often killed in the process. This replicated a strategy the Iroquois Confederacy – allies of the British – had used against the French for the previous century. The French and Native Americans then took their captives north to Canada (modern-day Quebec). They took more than 1600 captives – so many that the route through the Connecticut River valley was called "Captives' Road." Many captives eventually returned to their homes in New England. Others, however, grew accustomed to life in New France and stayed, often converting to Catholicism. Women were more likely to remain in Canada than men, usually because they married Native American or French men.

French and Native American attacks on settlements at Dover, New Hampshire, and Pemaquid, Maine, produced an angry response from the New Englanders. In 1690 Sir William Phipps, the governor of Massachusetts, captured Port Royal, in modern-day

Nova Scotia. The New England forces pressed further and attempted to take Quebec, but failed and returned to Boston. Small raids characterized the war after this, as the French and Native Americans regained Port Royal and attacked settlements in Maine. The Treaty of Ryswick ended the war in 1697 but did not define the border between the British and French colonies. This was characteristic of European treaty making; war in the Americas was not a high priority and trouble spots were often neglected and left to fester.

### *Queen Anne's War*

The War of the Spanish Succession broke out in Europe in 1703, and again the North American colonies had a small part. Charles II of Spain died in 1700 without an heir, and next in line for the Spanish throne was Louis XIV's son. The rest of Europe did not want two powerful kingdoms to be joined together, so the Continent plunged into war once again.

The North American theater of the war was called Queen Anne's War because it occurred during the reign (and occupied the attention) of Queen Anne of Britain. Again, the war was characterized by French and Native American raids on settlements in New England. The most famous raid of this period was on Deerfield, Massachusetts, in which 56 people were killed and 109 taken prisoner. In response to the raids, the New England colonists launched another campaign against New France, and in 1710 they captured Port Royal for the second time. They also began a campaign against Canada, but it was abandoned before they reached the fortress of Quebec City. The war ended with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and the British colonies retained the French province of Acadia, which included Port Royal and part of Maine. It was almost three decades until the next war, but those decades were hardly peaceful. The Abanaki and Mi'kmaq tribes, who, as residents of Acadia, had come under British control, resisted British attempts to settle. Their resistance was often violent, and the French encouraged it. Thus tensions remained between the two colonies until war broke out again in 1744.

### *King George's War*

King George's War was, again, the result of another European conflict over the balance of power. This time the cause was the crowning of Maria Theresa as the queen of the Habsburg territories. When the War of the Austrian Succession broke out in 1740, Britain and France were on opposite sides once again. The conflict in North America took place from 1744 to 1748 and was named after King George, the British monarch at the time. Once again, the French and Native Americans raided British settlements while the New Englanders launched a campaign against French holdings. This time, the New England forces captured the new French fortress of Louisbourg, which the French had built to guard the St. Lawrence River after they ceded Acadia to Britain. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended the War of the Austrian Succession (and its North American theater) and returned Louisbourg to French control. Thus the principal irritants between the British and French colonies remained: the borders had not been defined and both sides remained bitter enemies. The British colonies had a much larger population and

army but had been unable to mount a successful campaign against Canada. This state of affairs – constant tension and inconclusive fighting – would only change with British victory in the Seven Years' War, and in 1748 this probably seemed like a distant possibility.

