US History Notes Chapter 4 Lesson 4

Rivalry Between the French and British -

1700’s France and England were competing for world power. This rivalry was especially strong in North America. The Ohio River Valley was a tipping point. This area was rich in natural resources and both powers felt they had a right to the land.

French built several forts from Lake Ontario to the Ohio River to protect their claims on the land. The English attempted to build a fort at the junction of the Ohio and Allegehney Rivers. The French seized the area and built Fort Duquesne instead.

1754 – The governor of Virginia sent a militia (military force made up of ordinary citizens) to drive out the French, the militia was led by George Washington. After marching to Fort Duquesne, Washington built a small fort call Fort Necessity, they were soon attacked and defeated by the French who later released them to return home to Virginia.

Native American Allies –

The French and the British both sought help from Native Americans. Native Americans typically trusted the French over the British. The French were mostly fur trappers who didn’t want to settle Native American lands like the British wanted to. These fur trappers would often marry Native American women. In addition, French missionaries converted many Native Americans to Catholicism.

The British turned to the Iroquois Confederacy (a group of Native American nations in eastern North America joined together under one general government) – the Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida and Tuscarora – delegates from 7 colonies met with the leaders in Albany, New York, in June of 1754. The Iroquois refused an alliance (partnership) but did agree to remain neutral in the conflict.

The Albany delegates also talked about how the colonies might work together against the French. They decided to adopt Benjamin Franklin’s Albany Plan of Union for a united colonial government. This union would require each colonial government to give up some of its powers, not a single colonial assembly was willing to do so. Franklin wrote, “Everybody cries, a Union is absolutely necessary; but when they come to the manner and form of the union, [they] are perfectly distracted.” The Albany meeting failed to unify the colonists.

The French and Indian War

French forces had early success against the British capturing several forts with their Native American allies raiding outlying colonial settlements.

1757 – a turning point – William Pitt becomes prime minister of England. Pitt was a great military planner. He sent more trained troops to the colonies and to stop colonial complaints about the cost of the war he decided Britain would pay for it. He knew after the war he could raise taxes on the colonists.

Pitt not only wanted the Ohio River Valley he also wanted to conquer French Canada.

1758 – British troops won a victory at Fort Louisbourg in Nova Scotia. Later that year militia from NY and New England captured Fort Frontenac at Lake Ontario. Another British force finally took Fort Duquesne renaming it Fort Pitt

1759 – Brisith forces hoped to capture the difficult to seize Quebec (the capital of New France). Quebec sat on a high cliff, however the British found a poorly guarded path along the back of the cliff. Wolfe’s soldiers overwhelmed the French troops and secured the path thus surprising the French army and defeating them on the Plains of Abraham. The fall of Quebec and the defeat of Montreal a year later marked the end of France in North America.

1763 – War in Europe finally ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The treaty forced France to give Canada and most of its lands east of the Mississippi River to Great Britain. Great Britain also received Florida from France’s ally Spain. Spain acquired French lands west of the Mississippi River as well as the port of New Orleans. North America was now in the hands of two European powers – Great Britain and Spain.

New British Policies

The defeat of the French was a huge blow to the Native Americans in the Ohio River Valley. They had lost their French trading partners and allies and now had the British to deal with. The British raised their prices of goods and refused to pay the Native Americans for their lands and colonists continued to move west and settle their lands.

Many Native Americans viewed the settlers as a threat. In 1763 one such group was Chief Pontiac from an Ottawa village. He attacked and captured several outposts and the British fort at Detroit, killing settlers along the Pennsylvania and Virginia frontiers.

That same year (1763) King George declared the colonists could not settle west of the Appalachian Mountains and to enforce this new rule the British planned to keep 10,000 troops in America. This is known as the Proclamation of 1763, he wanted to keep the colonists on the coast where he could control them.

Colonists viewed this as a limit on their freedom, they also feared so many British troops would interfere with their liberties and distrust began to build between England and the colonists. Britain’s financial problems didn’t help either. Deeply in debt due to the war with France, the British government made plans to tax the colonies and tighten trade rules…eventually leading to conflict and revolution!