

## Stand Therefore

In the summer of 1755, a tailor in the city of Alexandria, Virginia, was commissioned to make a blue coat and red vest for a young Colonel in the Virginia regiment. The young Colonel, though unpaid, had accepted an appointment as guide and “Aid de Camp” to Great Britain’s General Braddock, who had two divisions of British troops headquartered in Alexandria. In April of that year, the young Colonel guided General Braddock’s force of approximately 2,000 men – which included a Virginia regiment of 100, on a westward journey to expel the French from Fort Duquesne. The young Colonel guided the force through the rugged and rough terrain of the Allegheny Mountains and through the dense country that surrounded the Monongahela River. Ten days prior to the Battle of Monongahela, the young Colonel fell ill outside of what is now present day Pittsburgh, and subsequently had to be carried in a wagon, as he was unable to mount his horse.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, as General Braddock’s troops made their final approach towards Fort Duquesne, the young Colonel, having partially recovered, mounted his horse on a pillow, and joined General Braddock’s advanced division. The troops were arranged in columns so precisely ordered, it betrayed all ambiguity; they were clearly products of the finest military training known to man. And when they marched, their movements flowed as seamlessly as the tranquil Monongahela river which flowed by their right side. The deep forest which escorted them to the left, would have overshadowed them had not their polished arms glistened so brightly in the morning sun. The young Colonel, fitted in his handsome red vest and tailor-made blue coat, moved effortlessly over the uneven country’s twelve-foot-wide road until he reached the river’s crossing point.

It was not long after the advanced division had emerged on the other side of the river’s crossing, when upon reaching a small clearing trapped between a rising hill on the right, and particularly dense undergrowth on the left, they came under immediate attack. For all of their precise drilling, and their reputation as the world’s most polished and feared army, the British regiment could not overcome the pandemonium and chaos that erupted as musket fire poured down upon them. The Virginia regiment however, not used to the formal military tactics of the day as perfected by General Braddock’s troops, split up to a man, and returned fire at the French and Indians who had ambushed them, often standing behind the forest’s trees for protection.

As the Virginia regiment began to fight back, General Braddock could only watch helplessly as his own troops began to break rank and run for cover. In panic, they chose not to obey their revered commander’s orders not to deviate from the formal platoons and columns which for so long had served the British well on the open plains of battlefields everywhere. The young Colonel, who watched the British troops he had guided on the journey crumble into chaos chose to disregard the more effective guerilla tactics of the Virginia regiment, and flying in the face of both common sense and self-preservation, remained seated upon his horse by the General’s side, amongst the few remaining officers the General had left. Refusing to give ground, those that chose to remain advanced slowly toward the direction of oncoming fire, often at the expense of those who would fall at the front, and in death still serve to protect their comrades who continued to advance directly behind their fallen bodies.

But in spite of all attempts to remain both brave and calm in the face of attack, the grim certainty of death that such a well planned ambush promised eventually materialized. In just three hours 714 men laid dead – including 26 decorated officers. General Braddock himself had no less than five different horses shot out from under him, and in the process sustained a gunshot wound to his right arm, the musket ball of which finally lodged in the General's lungs. The young Colonel who sat beside him had no less than two horses shot out from beneath him, and close to a half dozen bullet holes shot through his freshly sewn blue coat. Those left alive finally retreated eastward with what remained left of the once pristinely organized troops, forced to leave the dead and their equipment on the grounds of the ambush. Four days later, the General died from his wounds. The young Colonel, emblazoned with the memory of the General whose fearlessness had inspired him to stand by his side during the attack, knew that the General's body would be desecrated if his gravesite was discovered by the Indians, and thus chose to bury the renowned General's body in the road that bears his name today.

Afterwards, still weak from his illness, the young Colonel wrote home to his Mother and Brother, explaining "That it was by the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, that I have been protected beyond all human probability. I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me yet escaped unhurt."

Seventeen years later, that same man – now a General himself – was exploring the Kenhawa river with his close friend, Dr. James Craik, and their hunting party when they once again encountered Indians in the forest. The now friendly Indians led them to the flaming fire of their Chief Council, where through an interpreter, the Chief, awaiting them said:

"I am Chief and ruler over many tribes. My influence extends to the waters of the great lakes and to the far blue mountains. I have traveled a long and weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. It was on the day when the white man's blood mixed with streams of our forest, that I first beheld this Chief. I called to my young men, and said, 'mark yon tall and daring Warrior, he is not of the Red Coat tribe, he hath an Indian's wisdom, and his warriors fight as we do, himself is alone and exposed. Quick! Let your aim be certain, and he dies.' Our rifles were leveled, rifles which but for him, knew not how to miss; 'twas all in vain, a power mightier far than we, shielded him from harm. He can not die in battle. I am old, and soon will be gathered to the Great Council fire of my fathers in the land of shades; but ere I go, there is something here, Listen! The Great Spirit protects that man and guides his destinies – he will become the Chief of Nations, and a people yet unborn, will hail him as the Founder of a mighty Empire! I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of heaven and who can not die in battle."

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