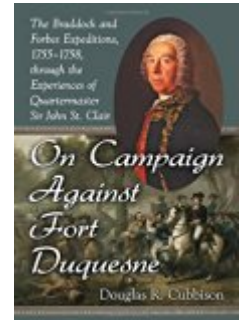


Douglas R. Cubbison. *On Campaign against Fort Duquesne: The Braddock and Forbes Expeditions, 1755/1758, through the Experiences of Quartermaster Sir John St. Clair.* Jefferson: McFarland, 2015. 232 pp. \$45.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-9783-6.



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Published on H-War (March, 2016)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In his magisterial *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*, Martin Van Creveld averred that during the eighteenth century, “the whole concept of supply from base was contrary to the spirit of the age, which always insisted that war be waged as cheaply as possible ... when wars could be launched for the sole purpose of making the army live at one’s neighbour’s expense rather than one’s own.”[1] British Major General Edward Braddock broke this mold of eighteenth-century logistics. Braddock, with Sir John St. Clair taking the lead as the army’s quartermaster, successfully marched his force of 3,200 a total of 110 miles into the North American wilderness to the gates of French-held Fort Duquesne. The march took more than thirty days. While most historians recall Braddock’s tactical failure at the Battle of the Monongahela on July 9, 1755, few remember the stunning success of the march.

Douglas R. Cubbison, in *On Campaign to Fort Duquesne: The Braddock and Forbes Expeditions, 1755-1758, through the Experiences of Quartermaster Sir John St. Clair*, sheds much-needed light

on the logistics of the Braddock campaign through the lens of St. Clair. His work serves as a solid companion to David Preston’s recently published *Braddock’s Defeat: The Battle of the Monongahela and the Road to Revolution* (2015), which illuminates the incredible work by the French to supply their own side of the campaign. Cubbison begins his narrative with excellent descriptions of the various staffs under Braddock with a detailed focus on logistics. In doing so, he references many primary sources to illustrate the inner workings of logistics in an eighteenth-century European army. In addition, Cubbison adds a full appendix of St. Clair’s complete letter book. The description of the army in clear detail, coupled with the full transcript of the letter book, makes Cubbison’s book worth purchasing for any scholar of the period. The author cobbles together many disparate primary sources from the mid-eighteenth century—especially the threadbare sources on logistics.

Through St. Clair’s letter book, Cubbison gives the reader a solid understanding of St. Clair’s personality and insight into the difficult task of mov-

ing a professional European army in the North American wilderness of 1755. As Braddock's quartermaster, St. Clair had many responsibilities from supplying food to leading the construction of a twelve-foot-wide road more than one hundred miles through the forest of the Alleghany Mountains while simultaneously moving 200 wagons, 1,500 horses, and 3,000 personnel in tow—his most Herculean task. Cubbison declares that St. Clair “truly worked miracles” (p. 59). Despite the failure to take Fort Duquesne and the French victory at the Monongahela, St. Clair delivered Braddock's army into the wilderness, intact and ready to fight.

While he succeeded in his duties as logistician, St. Clair's quick temper proved inadequate to the vagaries of colonial politics. In St. Clair's mind, the colonists did not support the campaign with appropriate zest. In one instance, he yelled at a colonial leader that “he would kill all kind of cattle and carry away the horses ... if the French defeated them by the delays of this province” (p. 63). By drawing St. Clair's temperament out of the primary sources, Cubbison paints a clear picture of St. Clair: tough and unbending. These traits served him well on the march to the Monongahela, but after defeat, they showed up once again during the successful Forbes expedition to win Fort Duquesne three years later. Cubbison spends a scant eleven pages on this campaign; however, he deftly illustrates St. Clair as a man whose baseline temperament and stress from the failure in 1755 rendered him unfit for the job in 1758 (Forbes recused St. Clair before the march began).

While Cubbison excels at pulling St. Clair's personality out of the primary sources, his argument would have been bolstered by a few more paragraphs discussing the relationship between British officers and colonial leaders and officers. The condescending attitudes of officers like St. Clair did much to clarify colonial opposition to the Crown two decades later. St. Clair as the first British officer in the colonies (for a true Euro-

pean-style campaign) may have planted that seed. As Cubbison suggests, “Sir John St. Clair's shortcomings were so severe that, by the conclusion of the Forbes campaign of 1758, the man succeeded in writing himself out of history” (p. 130).

Overall, Cubbison provides a much-needed look at the logistics of the Braddock and Forbes campaigns and commendably writes St. Clair back into history.

Note

[1]. Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 39.

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Citation: Jobie Turner. Review of Cubbison, Douglas R. *On Campaign against Fort Duquesne: The Braddock and Forbes Expeditions, 1755/1758, through the Experiences of Quartermaster Sir John St. Clair*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. March, 2016.

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