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BRADDOCK'S ROAD.

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The purpose of this paper is to give some account of Braddock's road before General Braddock's expedition passed over it and to add a few notes on the traces that still mark the route which he followed.¹ The interest attracted by the highway cross the Alleghenies which long bore the unfortunate general's name is of various kinds. Like other pioneer roads it was first an Indian trail and a traders' path. It was the earliest road laid out and opened west of the mountains by the English in conscious rivalry with the French for commercial and military control of the great west. When the country was opened to settlement, after the French and Indian war was ended and Pontiac's conspiracy was crushed, this road was the great immigrant route to the Ohio Valley. Barges built at Brownsville on the Monongahela, or at points on the Youghiogheny, received the immigrants after their difficult land journey over the mountains and floated them down these rivers and the Ohio to their future homes on either of its banks.

Very interesting, too, it is to note that the existence of this road between the waters of the Potomac and those of the Ohio had some influence in determining a matter of importance to the whole country. Thomas Scott of Washington, Pennsylvania, a member of the First Congress of the United States, introduced in the first session of that Congress (August 27, 1789) the earliest resolution looking toward the choice of a location for the National Capital. That resolution declared that "a permanent residence ought to be fixed for the General Government of the United States at some convenient place as near the center of wealth, population and extent of territory as may be consistent with convenience to the navigation of the Atlantic Ocean and having due regard to the

1. That portion of the following paper which contains a brief description of General Braddock's route and of the traces of the road that remain to the present time is taken from notes made along the line of the road in August, 1908, when, in company with seven others, the writer tramped over all but a few miles of it from Cumberland to the battlefield. The expedition was proposed and managed by Mr. John Kennedy Lacock, formerly of Washington, Pa., now of Harvard. The remaining members of the party were: Professor Clarence S. Larzelere of Mount Pleasant, Michigan; Mr. C. F. Abbott of Somerville, Massachusetts; Mr. Em. K. Weller, photographer for the expedition; Messrs. Edgar B. Murdoch, John H. Murdoch, Jr., John Parr Temple and myself. The five last named members of the party are all of Washington, Pennsylvania.

For a more detailed description of the route than I intend to give in this paper those interested must be referred to the article which Mr. Lacock is preparing, and which, he informs me, will be published in an early number of the "American Historical Review."

particular situation of the Western Country."² Richard Henry Lee soon afterward introduced a modification of this resolution which called for a location as nearly central "as communication with the Atlantic and easy access to the Western country will permit."³

This demand that the "particular situation of the Western Country" should have an influence in fixing the site of the National Capital, and even that the location should be only as nearly central as the navigation of the Atlantic and easy access to the West would permit astonished certain members from New England. They perceived that a choice governed by these considerations would fix the capital on one of the rivers rising in the "Western Country." Fisher Ames protested that "west of the Ohio is an almost unmeasurable wilderness; when it will be settled or how it will be possible to govern it is past calculation. . . . Probably it will be near a century before these people will be considerable."⁴

The debate thus precipitated lasted in one House or the other until July, 1790, and the proposals were of various sorts. Ease of access to the western country was claimed for the rival sites. The chief struggle was between the advocates of a location on the Susquehanna and those who preferred the banks of the Potomac. Mr. Vining, of Delaware said: "I declare that I look on the Western Territory in an awful and striking point of view. To that region the unpolished sons of earth are flowing from all quarters, men to whom the protection of the laws and the controlling force of government are alike necessary. From this great consideration I conclude that the banks of the Potomac are the proper station."⁵

Mr. Scott, the mover of the original motion, spoke again. He said: "The Potomac offers itself under the following circumstances: From the falls up the main river to Wills Creek, it is about 200 miles: From thence is a portage to the Youghioheny, down which you descend to the Monongahela which meets the Allegheny at Fort Pitt and forms the great river Ohio. This is a direct communication between the Atlantic and the Western Country."⁶

The portage between Wills Creek and the Youghioheny was made by way of the Braddock road which passed near Mr. Scott's early home in Fayette county, Pennsylvania. This congressman at first voted for a site on the banks of the Susquehanna, though he frankly said that the interests of his constituents would be better served if the site on the Potomac were chosen. This being his belief, his vote was one which Alexander Hamilton had little difficulty in delivering to Jefferson for the Potomac in return for votes influenced by Jefferson in favor of Hamil-

2. Annals of Congress, First Congress, vol. I., 786.

3. Same vol. page 836.

4. Same vol. page 869.

5. Same vol. page 848.

6. Annals of Congress, vol. II, page 860.

ton's project for the national assumption of the State debts. The dust of this almost forgotten man lies in a neglected grave in the Franklin Street graveyard in Washington, Pennsylvania, his former home.

The Braddock road is of interest therefore as a relic of Indian days; because of its association with the military struggle between France and England for colonial empire; as a reminder of the influence of the Ohio country on the location of the National Capital, and as the route afterward followed by the nation's great work of internal improvement, the National Pike.

As "Braddock's Road," however, its chief interest is that of Braddock's expedition and the smaller military movements which preceded his and determined the route by which he marched.

The Ohio Company of Virginia was organized in 1748. Early in the following year it presented a petition to the King in Council, setting forth "the vast advantage it would be to Britain and the Colonies to anticipate the French by taking possession of that Country Southward of the Lakes, to which the French had no Right, nor had then taken possession, except a small Block house Fort among the six Nations below the Falls of Niagara."⁷ In the Mercer Papers, which belonged to the Ohio Company, it is declared that the company opened a road from Wills Creek to Turkey Foot in 1751,⁸ though the minutes of the company for April 28, 1752, show that the members had some doubt whether "the road from Wills Creek to the Fork of Mohongaly" had yet been properly opened according to the instruction previously given to Colonel Cresap.⁹ However, the company's second petition to the King in Council asserts that the petitioners had "laid out and opened a wagon road thirty feet wide from their Store house at Wills Creek to the three branches of the Ganyangaine, computed to be near eighty miles."¹⁰

This assertion is so startling that it is well to inquire into it a little. The date of the document containing it is not given in the copy referred to, but it may be fixed approximately from the known dates of certain things referred to in the paper itself. The petition contains a statement that "the fort on Chartiers Creek" is "now building." Now the building of this fort was authorized at a meeting of the committee of the Ohio Company held at Stratford, Westmoreland County, Virginia, July 25, 1753.¹¹ The fort was not built that year, however, for Washington records in his journal, January 6, 1754, on that day, as he was returning from his mission to the French forts, he "met seventeen

7. Quoted in the Ohio Company's second petition. Darlington's Gist's Journals, pages 226-230.

8. Gist's Journals, page 225.

9. Gist's Journals, page 237.

10. "The Turkey Foot Forks" of the Youghiogheny.

11. Extracts from minutes of Ohio Company, Darlington's Gist, appendix, page 236.

horses loaded with material and stores for the fort."¹² In February, Governor Dinwiddie sent a company of troops to aid the men of the Ohio Company in the erection of the Fort.¹³ Work had not been begun on the fort on January 6, 1754, when Washington, having recently stood on the spot "where the Ohio Company intended to erect a fort," now met the expedition going out for that purpose. By May 4th, it was known in the Virginia capital that the French had driven the troops and the Ohio Company's people away from the unfinished fort,¹⁴ which had been placed not on Chartiers Creek but some distance above at the point between the Allegheny and the Monongahela. The document which asserts that the fort is "now building" must therefore have been written in 1754, between January 6th and May 4th. It is the same document which declares that a wagon road thirty feet wide had already been "laid out and opened" between Wills Creek and the Youghiogheny. That some kind of a road had been opened by the company in 1753 "at considerable expense" is asserted by Washington¹⁵ in a letter in which he also says that in 1754 the troops which he commanded had greatly repaired it as far as Gist's plantation, but that a wagon road thirty feet wide had been completed for any considerable portion of that distance is highly improbable. Washington reported to Governor Dinwiddie¹⁶ in 1754 that the work required to "amend and alter" the first twenty miles of the road, from the mouth of Wills Creek to Little Meadows, had occupied a detachment of sixty men from April 25th to May 1st, after which date the main body, 160 effective men, continued the work until May 9th. An analysis of these figures will show that it took, on an average, eighty-seven men to "amend and alter" one mile of road in a day. John Armstrong's experience a year later in building the road through Pennsylvania to intersect Braddock's road near the Turkey Foot fork showed, according to Armstrong's report to Governor Morris,¹⁷ that sixty men could make one mile of entirely new road in one day through the mountain wilderness. The suspicion seems to be justified that the assertion contained in the Ohio Company's second petition that the company had "laid out and opened a wagon road thirty feet wide" from their storehouse at Wills Creek eighty miles to the three forks was an overstatement of the improvements they had made, possibly intended to influence the King in Council to grant the requests made in this petition.

In a letter quoted above¹⁸ Washington reports to Governor Dinwiddie that his men have spent two days making a bridge at Little

12. Sparks, "Writings of Washington," II, 446.

13. Dinwiddie Papers, I, 136. Dinwiddie to the Earl of Halifax.

14. Dinwiddie Papers, I, 148.

15. Sparks, Writings of Washington, II, 302. Washington to Bouquet.

17. Penna. Colonial Records, VI, 401 Armstrong to Gov. Morris.

18. Dinwiddie Papers, I, 151.

Meadows. This evidently does not mean a bridge over Castleman River, the only nearby stream that would require two days to bridge, but to a bridge of corduroy across the swamp—a portion of the road which Captain Orme, who accompanied Braddock's army a year later, says has been "very well repaired by Sir John St. Clair's advance party."¹⁹ If the word "repaired" is to be taken in its ordinary meaning it is probably a reference to the work formerly done by Washington at this place.

By May 18th, 1754, Washington's little army had reached the Great Crossings, now Somerfield, Pennsylvania, and from that place he wrote to Governor Dinwiddie: "The road to this place is made as good as it can be, having spent much time and great labor upon it. I believe wagons may now travel with 15 or 1800 w't in them by doubling at one or two pinches only."²⁰

Not to prolong further this part of the paper, suffice it to say that Washington opened the road as far as Christopher Gist's plantation, about twenty-three miles beyond the Great Crossings. He withdrew afterwards about twelve miles to Fort Necessity, advanced again about six miles to attack Jumonville, and a few weeks later surrendered to 900 French and Indians who permitted him to march his defeated troops to Wills Creek.

The following summer Braddock's forces were assembled at Wills Creek, or Fort Cumberland as the place was now called, and by May 30th the expedition for the recovery of the Ohio country was ready to start. On that day a detachment of 600 men under Major Chapman set out, following Washington's road over Wills Mountain. The road, which Washington had said a year earlier might be traversed by wagons carrying 15 or 18 hundredweight, proved too steep for the heavy and clumsy army wagons, or king's wagons, as Captain Orme's journal calls them. Three of these were destroyed and other were shattered on the mountain-side. All the heavy wagons were sent back to the fort ten days later from Little Meadows, country wagons being substituted for them.²¹

After Major Chapman's experience of the difficulties of the way over Wills Mountain, Lieutenant Spendelow, of the detachment of seamen from Commodore Keppel's fleet, found a way to avoid the mountain by following the old road less than a mile from the fort, then swinging to the right to Wills Creek and following up that stream to the mouth of a rivulet still known as Braddock's Run, thence up the run, joining Major Chapman's route at the western foot of Wills Mountain about five miles from the fort. In Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History" there is a reduced copy of a map which shows the road leading from the fort and separating into two branches, one leading to Wills Creek and the other towards the mountain. The original has on the back an

19. Captain Orme's journal, entry for June 16, 1755.

20. Dinwiddie Papers, I, 170.

21. Captain Orme's Journal, entry for June 10, 1755.

endorsement in Washington's handwriting: "Sketch of the situation of Fort Cumberland".²² This sketch shows the road crossing to the left bank of Wills Creek.

Major Chapman's advance party had marched on to Little Meadows while the main body of the army waited at the fort for the opening of the new road. The army moved in three columns from the fort on June 7th, 8th and 10th, but was reunited and encamped together on the night of June 10th at the point where the new route joined the old.²³

The National Pike now follows Wills Creek and Braddock's Run, as did the Spendelow route, but the original line of the pike, like the pioneer road which was the main highway to the waters of the Ohio before the pike was built, took the way over Wills Mountain. It is now impossible to find on the ground any certain trace of the Spendelow loop. Perhaps an old packtrail still distinguishable on the hillside along Braddock's Run followed the old line of march. Over the mountain, however, the old route followed by Major Chapman's advance party, and afterwards by the pioneer road, is still marked by a well defined scar to where it joins the old route of the National Pike in Sandy Gap. It must be remembered, however, here and elsewhere in this paper identified with the route of General Braddock's army is a mark left by many years' travel on the pioneer road long called by Braddock's name. That it followed everywhere exactly upon Braddock's trace cannot be ascertained. Yet it is not a wholly unwarranted assumption that the early travelers would in general follow that trace rather than cut a new way through the forest.

Descending from Sandy Gap the old road leads to the grove now occupied by the summer cottages and auditorium of the Alleghany Camp Ground. Near this place was General Braddock's first camp, which in his orderly book is called "the camp in the grove," but in Captain Orme's journal it is called "Spendelow Camp." The old road crosses the run at a ford and proceeds westerly three and a half miles to Clarysville, lying most of the way north of the pike and distant from it sometimes only a few yards. At Clarysville the two roads separate and do not touch again for nearly ten miles, the Braddock road passing through a gap at the Hoffman mines, sometimes coinciding with the modern public road and sometimes showing a plain scar through the fields. It passes through the southern outskirts of Frostburg, Maryland. It was in this neighborhood that General Braddock made his second camp, at a place called in Captain Orme's journal "Martin's Plantations." Martin's place is shown in Shippen's draft, of 1759, reproduced in Hulbert's "Historic Highways."²⁴

Just beyond Frostburg the steep ascent of Big Savage mountain begins. Here as elsewhere the road climbs squarely up the grade.

22. Winsor's Narrative and Critical History, vol. V, 577.

23. Braddock's Orderly Book, page LIII.

24. Hulbert, Historic Highways, vol. V, 28.

Though there is an ascent of 1,000 feet in about two miles, some portions of which are remarkably steep, there is no movement along the mountainside to make the slope more gradual. Fronting the ascent squarely the wagons would be higher, of course, in front than at the rear, but one side of the wagon would be no higher than the other and the danger of overturning would be reduced to a minimum. The army had no time to make a "side hill cut" over every steep mountain it must cross.

About four miles west of the top of Big Savage mountain the old road crosses to the north of the present National Pike, and from that point leads westerly, the old trace following more nearly in a straight line than the modern road but never distant from it more than from a half to three-quarters of a mile. Before reaching Little Meadows the road crosses Red Ridge, Meadow Mountain and Chestnut Ridge. A short distance west of Little Meadows the trace passes again to the south of the pike and crosses Castleman River. About two miles west of Grantsville, Maryland, it crosses again to the north of the pike on the steep side of Negro Mountain. Two miles farther west both turn southward, but as the old trace turns more sharply it crosses once more to the south of the pike and follows on that side until both roads have left the soil of Maryland. A few hundred yards north of the Maryland-Pennsylvania line, on Winding Ridge, the trace crosses to the north of the pike. Just south of the boundary line is the site of Braddock's sixth camp, called in Captain Orme's journal, and in many accounts written by early travelers, "Bear Camp".²⁵ The trace again crosses to the south of the pike before reaching Somerfield, and fords the Youghiogheny (Great Crossings) near the mouth of Braddock's Run, about a mile above Somerfield. Keeping still to the south of the pike, but never more than one mile from it, the road leads westward over Briery Mountain, or Woodcock Hill, and at a distance of about twelve miles from Great Crossings comes to Fort Necessity, where it is within sight of the pike. Two miles farther west, at Braddock's grave, it crosses once more to the north and the two roads never touch again. The pike leads northwest to Uniontown, thence to Brownsville where it crosses the Monongahela, thence through Washington, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, West Virginia, to the West. The Braddock trace also leads to the northwest from the Old Orchard Camp near Braddock's grave to the Rock Fort where was the Half King's camp when he led Washington's little force along the mountain path to attack Jumonville in his hiding place. From the Rock Fort the trace leads almost due north seven miles to Christo-

25. Atkinson says (Olden Time II, 543. that he had not been able to identify Bear Camp. The map in Sargent's "Braddock's Expedition" is manifestly wrong in this as in other particulars. It locates Bear Camp at the Great Crossings, while Orme's Journal says that the army marched six miles from Bear Camp to reach Great Crossings. See the journal, entry for June 23, 1755.

pher Gist's plantation, then inclining a little to the northeast to Stewart's Crossing of the Youghiogheny, just below Connellsville. Thence passing along "the narrows" between Mounts Creek and the Youghiogheny, the old road passed through Prittsstown, across Jacobs Creek to the town of Mount Pleasant and to Jacobs Cabins, about two and a half miles farther north. This point is mentioned and called Jacobs Cabins in the journals of Christopher Gist²⁶ and others before Captain Orme mentions it as the site of Braddock's fifteenth camp.

From Jacobs Cabins the route of Braddock's army inclined a little more to the northwest. Crossing Sewickley Creek, five miles, little Sewickley, nine miles, the army came to the precipitous bluff on Brush Creek, a branch of Turtle Creek, fifteen miles from Jacobs Creek and about one mile west of Larimer. Unable to pass farther in the desired direction, the army turned almost at a right angle toward the southwest into the valley of Long Run, and on reaching the stream turned again to the right. The route followed Long Run to its junction with Jacks Run, thence passed over White Oak Level to the site within the present city of McKeesport where the army encamped on the night of July 8th. On the morning of the 9th the army moved down the steep hill into the valley of Crooked Run and followed that stream to the Monongahela. Just below the bridge which now connects McKeesport with Duquesne the army forded the river and marched down on the Duquesne flats to avoid the narrow pass on the right bank where the bluff crowds close to the river. Shortly after the army had passed over General Braddock received a message from Lieutenant-Colonel Gage, the commander of the advance party, saying he had passed the second ford and was safe on the right bank of the river once more. While the choppers, covered by a strong guard, were opening the road beyond the second ford Braddock's army marched down the left bank, posted strong guards on both sides of the ford and passed over.

Some knowledge of the last section of the road may be had from maps or sketches drawn by contemporaries and participants in the battle. Among these the most valuable are the two furnished by Patrick Mackellar, chief engineer of the expedition, who was with Gage in the advance column when the fight began.²⁷ They were drawn by Mackellar at the request of Governor Shirley who sent them to the War Office with a letter dated November 5th, 1755. Others are Captain Orme's plan of the battle, accompanying his journal,²⁸ a plan in the Harvard library, reproduced in Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History,"²⁹ and an unpublished plan in the Library of Congress. Each of the two last mentioned has a scale of distances. Though the two plans seem to be sketches,

26. Gist's Journal, entry for November 19, 1753.

27. Parkman. *Montcalm and Wolfe*, library edition, 1897, vol. I, page 229, note. See Mackellar's maps in the same volume.

28. See Sargent's "Braddock's Expedition."

29. Winsor. *Narrative and Critical History*, V. 499.

and not maps accurately drawn to scale, and the distances are estimated and not measured, they are of value in interpreting all the others, since all agree in the essential topographical features of the ground and in the position of the marching column when the French and Indians were first seen coming down the trail from Fort Duquesne. All these sketches show the vanguard of the advance party of Braddock's army just passing the head of a small stream which flows into the Monongahela. This may doubtless be identified with the stream mentioned by Colonel Burd in a letter of July 25th to Governor Morris. He says: "On Wednesday the 9th current there was a small body of French and Indians (about five hundred, and never was any more on the ground) discovered by the guides at a small run called Frazer's Run, about seven miles on this side of the French Fort."³⁰

It is still possible to identify Frazer's Run within the limits of the town of Braddock. Its location and surroundings correspond with the distance from the ford and the topographical features indicated in the sketch-maps mentioned above, and it is now possible to say that the vanguard of General Braddock's advance party had reached a point about a mile and a quarter from the ford when it was attacked by the French and Indians. The advance party was driven back about a quarter of a mile to a point near the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Braddock, to which the main body had advanced on hearing the firing in front. Here they held their ground for about two hours, until the General was wounded, when they retreated in disorder, pursued by a small number of Indians as far as the ford. While the main body was engaged near the site of the present railroad station the guard of several hundred men left with the baggage was also engaged with Indians who had crept around both flanks after the advance guard had been driven back and the flanking groups which General Braddock had thrown out to some distance on both sides of the army had run in to join the main body.³¹ This baggage guard, action was at a point considerably more than half a mile from the main fight and a little more than a quarter of a mile from the ford.

Three of the above mentioned plans of the battle were drawn by men who were present and participated in the fighting. The advanced party had been several hours on the ground before the battle began and had covered the choppers while they opened a mile and a quarter of road through the precise territory on which the fighting took place. Patrick Mackellar was with this advanced party.³² Being the chief engineer of the expedition, he may be presumed to have observed the

30. James Burd to Governor Morris, July 25, 1755. Penna. Col. Rec. vol. VI, page 501.

31. "The advanced flank parties which were left for the security of the baggage, all but one, ran in. The baggage was then warmly attacked." Captain Orme's Journal, entry for July 9th.

32. Parkman. "Montcalm and Wolfe." I., 229, note.

ground with some care. His sketch maps of the field should be considered trustworthy in all essential features, and particularly in indicating the road. The plan given by Captain Orme agrees with those of Mackellar. None of them can be reconciled with the map given by Sparks in his account of the battle.³² The Sparks map shows the road lying between two ravines, crossing neither but roughly parallel with both, and shows the French and Indians posted in the ravines. Mackellar's sketches show the road crossing these ravines almost at right angles, and his explanatory notes say that the Indians "did most of the execution" not from ravines but from a hill on the right of the army. Captain Orme also mentions a "rising ground" on the right, to face which Colonel Burton was forming his command.

The belief sprang up early and has persisted long that Braddock had fallen into an ambushade and that the French and Indians had fought either from intrenchments thrown up beforehand or from ravines which concealed them. There was no ambushade. According to the report of the French officer who commanded during most of the battle, the attack was made by the French troops when they were not yet in order of battle, and they fired the first volley when they were not yet within range.³⁴

General Braddock did not live to realize all the evil consequences which his defeat brought upon the frontiers. The road which he had opened from the Potomac to within seven miles of Fort Duquesne became again an Indian warpath. In the three years following this battle it was used by a few small parties of French and many bands of Indians as an open road to the Potomac, whence they ravaged the English settlements in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. General Braddock's expedition was a failure. The road which he left through the wilderness proved throughout the war a benefit to the enemy and an injury to his own countrymen; but in later years as a route for immigrants coming to settle in the Upper Ohio Valley and afterwards as a communication between the Potomac and the Monongahela, it proved to be this unfortunate man's most useful and most lasting work.
