

Cover Sheet

Overview

This is a chapter from the fourth edition of the e-book “**In Search of the Turkey Foot Road: Unraveling the mystery, charting new history, plotting the route**” (2014). To access other chapters, see the [online table of contents](#).

As described on pages 3 to 6 of [Addendum A](#), the fourth edition mistakenly claims that a dashed line route on the 1755 Fry and Jefferson map is an antecedent to the Turkey Foot Road. Shortly after publication, I realized that the dashed lines actually represent Christopher Gist’s second Ohio Company Tour. If that or another known mistake affects this or another chapter of the book, the relevant text will be highlighted in yellow, and the mistake will be briefly described in a comment that is accessible via a clickable comment icon.

In this and other chapters of the book, any supplemental information will be provided via clickable comment icons, inserted yellow sheets, or other readily identifiable means.

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August 23, 2026

2. The Indian and bridle path traditions

The naming of a legendary road

The road that is the subject of this book is one of several similarly named routes that came to the Turkeyfoot region from different directions. They all derive their name from the simple fact that they went to the Turkeyfoot region. Such destination based naming conventions were, and still are quite common.

A road name is an elusive, transitory thing. It should come as no surprise that a road name can even be reversible, depending on a person's physical location at the moment the road is described.

Only within the past few decades have many small country roads received official names to facilitate 911 emergency services. Before that, a country road name often changed as the people or landmarks along it changed. These facts make it all the more surprising that the one-time existence of a road called the Turkey Foot Road is still well-known by so many rural people.³⁶ The road was obviously important enough to their ancestors to have been handed down in tradition from generation to generation, and eventually reached legendary status.

Traditions survive that indicate the Turkey Foot Road began as an Indian and packer's path³⁷. Based on evidence presented in Chapters 3 to 5 and 42, such traditions seem plausible. A Department of the Interior document³⁸ sums up this aspect of southwestern Pennsylvania history succinctly, stating:

As the traders had basically followed the paths and routes of the Indians, the earliest settlers followed the routes of the traders and subsequently settled on or near these routes.

A Cumberland tradition

An April 30, 1765 letter from Winchester, Virginia states:

*The frontier inhabitants of this colony and Maryland are removing fast over the Allegheny mountains, in order to settle and live there.*³⁹

The May 1962 issue of the "**Laurel Messenger**" describes a trail through the Wills Creek water gap that settlers from Maryland followed into Pennsylvania:

Pioneer settlers in Somerset County from Maryland followed a trail through the historic Wills Creek gorge, later known as the Canyon Trail, into the Brothersvalley and Somerset settlements.

³⁶ One example of local interest in the Turkey Foot Road is a 1984 powder horn made by Robert Owen Brenneman of Bittinger, Maryland. The horn features a map of the route, and refers to the route as the "*Turkey Foot Path*" ([Figure 0715](#)). Mr. Brenneman is known locally for making muzzleloading firearms and powder horns. He was born in 1918, and died in 2012.

³⁷ Packers were traders who used pack trains (i.e., strings of horses carrying packs) to carry their goods into regions where suitable wagon roads did not exist. Chapter III of Shank's 1988 book "**Indian Trails to Super Highways**" provides a good description of packhorse trains.

³⁸ Greensboro/New Geneva Multiple Property Submission, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, prepared by Jerry A. Clouse.

³⁹ Quoted from page 58 of the 1884 book "**History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties...**".

During Indian raids on the early settlements, many families fled via this route to Fort Cumberland for safety.

This clearly describes a route that includes a portion of the antecedent to the Turkey Foot Road.

The Mount Savage tradition

In discussing the part of the Turkey Foot Road near present-day Mount Savage, Amanda Paul⁴⁰ indicates on page nine of her 2004 book “**Mount Savage**” that it was an Indian trail when Archibald Arnold settled along it in the 1700s. A similar statement appears in the June 1972 issue of the “**Heritage Press**”,⁴¹ as follows:

*The Arnolds settled beside a trail, which became known as the Turkey Foot Road... They operated a farm and Inn referred to as Arnold’s Hotel*⁴².

Greenville Township, Pennsylvania

An article in the February 1960 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**” states: “*The Indian trail first used by travelers was located to the north of the present course of the Braddock Road, and passed through Pocahontas.*” In an article titled “*Early History of Pocahontas*”, the May 1962 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**” states: “*Early maps show locations of both earthen and stone mounds nearby. An ancient Indian Trail crossed at this point from Wills Creek to the Great Crossings of the Youghiogheny River. Many Indian artifacts have been found in the area.*” Volume XLI, Number 2, 2001 of “**The Casselman Chronicle**” (a publication of the Springs Historical Society) repeats the concept that the Turkey Foot Path passed through the present-day site of Pocahontas, and indicates that the village was established along the path in 1845 by Daniel Yutzy.

The route of the Turkey Foot Road that is documented on early property surveys passes near, but not literally through, the little village of Pocahontas. Nevertheless, as will be shown by documentary evidence, the Greenville Road through Pocahontas was already in use by 1794, and merged with the documented route of the Turkey Foot Road just west of Pocahontas. Between there and where the two routes meet again near the Mason-Dixon line, the route of the Turkey Foot Road was typically within about 600 to 1,000 yards of the present-day route of the Greenville Road. Functionally, the two roads are simply variations of the same overall route.

The Elk Lick Township tradition

In the 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**”, a paragraph about the Cumberland to Salisbury portion of the Turkey Foot Road states: “*... Tradition has it that the road was preceded by a packer’s trail.*” Chapter 5 of the same book provides Christian C. Livengood’s description of the packer’s path that passed through the old Beachy farm, west of Salisbury. Christian, who was among the third generation of Salisbury area Livengoods, was born in 1803.

The May 1962 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**” describes Saint Paul⁴³ as “*Being near the Packer’s Trail, later Turkeyfoot Road to Cumberland, which crossed the Castleman river at West Salisbury,*

⁴⁰ Amanda Paul was raised near Mount Savage, Maryland. According to her grandfather Wilbert Paul, she is the present owner of his farm. It is the old Mattingly farm.

⁴¹ The “**Heritage Press**” was published by the Allegany County Preservation Society (Maryland).

⁴² The earliest usage of the term “*Arnold’s Hotel*” that has been identified is in the 1900 book “**A Century of Growth: or, The History of the Church in Western Maryland**” ([Appendix 0056](#)).

gave the settlers an outlet to eastern markets.” In the November 1970 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**”, an article titled “*Somerset County – 175 Years Ago*” by Marguerite L. Cockley⁴⁴ states: “*The Turkeyfoot Road followed an old Indian trail in Elk Lick Township...*” Her article covers the circa 1795 time period.

Several articles in the “**Casselman Chronicle**” also recite an Indian path tradition. The Volume XVI, Number one (1976) issue of “**The Casselman Chronicle**” has an article by Jack Pyle and his daughter Judith⁴⁵ titled “*The Turkeyfoot Path*”, which states:

This primitive path, located in south-western Pennsylvania, probably existed before 1750. ...⁴⁶ For many years traders using both packhorses and wagons traveled this path. Generally and wherever possible, it traversed the high ground in order to protect the feet and equipment of the settlers. ...

As a boy, Charles A. Pyle, our father and grandfather, walked the old road with his father all the way to Maryland for a cow. In the early 1880's it was still open for wagon traffic but today only scars remain of this once well-traveled Indian Path and road.

Turkeyfoot Township

The February 1963 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**” includes an article stating: “*Harnedsville ... was located on the north fork of the Turkeyfoot Road. The early settlers ... used this trail, which was an Indian and buffalo trail as well as an early pack horse trail through Negro mountain and the foothills.*” (This material is quoted more completely in Chapter 31.)

Wallace's opinion

In his 1965 book, Wallace states that by local tradition, which he felt had some documentary support, the Turkey Foot Road began as an Indian and packer's path. He wrote:

According to local tradition (which finds some support in documentary evidence) the ... highway known as the Turkeyfoot Road—of which many sections are still visible and a few carry modern traffic—was based on an Indian and packer's path.

Wallace does not describe the documentary evidence he alludes to. In regard to Turkeyfoot, Wallace states:

It was at the junction of several Indian paths, each of which, from its terminal point, was called the Turkeyfoot Path. ... The remains of old Indian settlements are found in this vicinity.⁴⁷

⁴³ The village of Saint Paul is located about two miles north-northwest of Salisbury, at Latitude 39.775627°, Longitude -79.106627°, on William Dwyer's April 25, 1786 survey. When the Keim post office was located there, the village was known as Keim. After the closure of the post office, the village adopted the name of the local church.

⁴⁴ Mr. and Mrs. Eber Cockley were aficionados of Somerset County History, and influential charter members of the Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County.

⁴⁵ The late Mrs. Judith Ann (Pyle) Yoder; Richard Ivan Yoder's wife.

⁴⁶ The omitted material refers to the belief that the Ohio Company cleared the road in 1752. Pyle most likely acquired this belief as a result of his association with historian Paul A. W. Wallace. Pyle's sentence on the subject is not quoted here because it is extremely unlikely to be part of the local tradition. Chapter 6 of this book examines and refutes the belief that the Ohio Company was responsible for creating the Turkey Foot Road.

⁴⁷ Wallace indicated that the statement was based on page 78 of Cassaday's 1932 book “**Somerset County Outline**”.

Indian villages along the route

During the research for this book, references to a number of Indian occupation sites along the route of the Turkey Foot Road were encountered. For example, Indian villages from the 1700s were located at Corriganville, Salisbury, and Confluence. While the dates of other occupation sites along the route are unknown, one thing is absolutely certain: Anywhere an Indian village was located, at least one Indian path was needed to access it. The Indian village sites are harmonious with the tradition that the Turkey Foot Road had Indian path antecedents.

Chapter 42 provides a summary of the evidence that the eastern part of the Turkey Foot Road was preceded by an Indian path. Although various traditions, and ample evidence, support the existence of an antecedent path between the mouth of Wills Creek and the Turkeyfoot settlement, no clear cut evidence of an antecedent path, and only one tradition, have been identified north of the settlement.