

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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Comment specific to this chapter

In light of my mistaken interpretation of the Fry and Jefferson map, this chapter makes me very uneasy because of the big claim it makes regarding the course of an early trading path. I’ve spent hours trying to disprove the logic supporting the claim, but I just can’t do it.

3. Gist's journal indicates that a packer's path followed Jennings Run in 1751

Introduction

The post-Revolutionary War Turkey Foot Road followed the portion of the Jennings Run⁴⁸ water gap that is located between present-day Corriganville and Barrelville, Maryland. Christopher Gist's second journal is interpreted as indicating that the Jennings Run water gap was the route commonly used by traders in 1751. The journal helps to substantiate the tradition that the Turkey Foot Road was preceded by a packer's path.

Gist's journal locates the gap used by the common trading route

Christopher Gist began a journey of discovery for the Ohio Company on November 4, 1751. Among other things, his July 16, 1751 instructions from the Ohio Company stated:

...You are to look out & observe the nearest & most convenient Road You can find from the Company's Store at Wills's Creek to a Landing at Mohongeyela; from thence You are to proceed down the Ohio on the South Side thereof, as low as the Big Conhaway, and up the same as far as You judge proper, and find good Land—You are all the Way to keep an exact Diary & Journal & therein note every Parcel of good Land...

These instructions would make little sense if the Ohio Company was already aware of the best route for the “nearest and most convenient road” from the company storehouse to the Monongahela.

Gist describes the water gap the traders commonly passed through

In his journal of that trip (known as his second journal) Christopher Gist plainly indicates that the then common trade route out of the Wills Creek area to the Monongahela did not go along what is now known as Braddock Run, writing:

1751.—Pursuant to my Instructions hereunto annexed from the Committee of the Ohio Company bearing Date 16th July 1751

Monday Novr 4.—Set out from the Company's Store House in Frederick County Virginia opposite the Mouth of Wills's Creek and crossing Potomack River went W 4 M to a Gap in the Allegany Mountains upon the S W Fork of the said Creek — This Gap is the nearest to Potomack River of any in the Allegany Mountains, and is accounted one of the best, tho the Mountain is very high, The Ascent is no where very steep but rises gradually near 6 M, it is now very full of old Trees & Stones, but with some Pains might be made a good Waggon Road; this Gap is directly in the Way

⁴⁸ The 1787 Veatch map of lots west of Fort Cumberland shows a tract named “Mount Pleasant” located near present-day Frostburg and the beginning of Jennings Run. One possible lead regarding the naming of Jennings run may be the 1743 Fredrick County Maryland Patent Record EI 6, page 712, which is the survey of Joseph Jennings’ “Mount Pleasant” property. The survey needs to be reviewed to determine if it pertains to the property depicted on the 1787 Veatch map. Jennings Run is identified by name on the 1775 Sayer and Bennett “Map of Pennsylvania” ([Figure 0434](#)), and on Mason and Dixon’s map of their 1766 boundary line survey ([Figure 0978](#)).

to Mohongaly, & several Miles nearer than that the Traders commonly pass thro, and a much better Way.⁴⁹

Gist was following the Braddock Run water gap

The words “*but with some Pains might be made a good Waggon Road*” indicate that no wagon road existed in the gap Gist was traveling. It is well accepted that Gist followed the gap that Braddock’s road later followed. For example, on page 137 of his 1893 book “**Christopher Gist’s journals: with historical, geographical and ethnological notes**”, William M. Darlington provides the following commentary on Gist’s November 4, 1751 journal entry:

The gap in the Allegheny Mountains is four miles west of Cumberland, where the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad crosses the National Road at “Braddock’s Run,” as the southwest fork of Wills’ Creek has been called since 1755; Braddock’s route and the National Road as at first constructed being on the same track as that of Gist.

Gist’s phrase “4 M to a Gap is the nearest to Potomack River of any in the Allegany Mountains” agrees with the Braddock Run locale (the gap between Piney Mountain and Dan’s Mountain⁵⁰). Following the Route 40 freeway, it is 4.1 miles from Wills Creek to the eastern entrance to the Braddock Run water gap at the southern end of LaVale. Crossing the Potomac River at the storehouse, as Gist did, the distance would be very close to 4 miles. The phrase “*The Ascent is no where very steep but rises gradually near 6 M*” describes the ascent from LaVale to the top of Savage Mountain⁵¹ above Frostburg. The area where old Route 40 crosses Savage Mountain is very rocky ([Figure 0252](#)), which fits with the phrase “*it is now very full of old Trees & Stones*”.

The common traders route followed Jennings Run

According to Gist, the commonly used trading route to “*Mohongaly*” used a mountain gap that was more distant from the Potomac than the one Braddock Run (and the eventual Braddock’s road) followed. That gap could logically only be the valley of Jennings Run, which opens into the valley of Wills Creek at the location of present-day Corriganville ([Figure 0015](#)). Since a path was necessary to accommodate the traders’ packhorse trains, Gist’s November 4, 1751 journal entry proves that a packer’s path followed the Jennings Run water gap, and therefore was the traditional antecedent to the Turkey Foot Road.

In support of the proposition that the route along Jennings Run was the only other alternative to Gist’s November 4, 1751 route, note that the commissioners Thomas Jefferson appointed to lay out the route of the National Road wrote the following in 1806 ([Appendix 0061](#)):

In extending the route from Cumberland, a triple range of mountains, stretching across from Jenings’ run in measure with Gwynn’s⁵², left only the alternative of laying the road up Will’s creek

⁴⁹ The “*several Miles nearer*” statement was incorrectly interpreted in the first edition of this book. It applies to the location of the gap relative to the Potomac River, rather than the comparative length of the routes.

⁵⁰ According to John Jacob’s 1826 book “**A biographical sketch of the life of the late Captain Michael Cresap**”, Dan’s Mountain was named after Colonel Thomas Cresap’s son Daniel, who lived near the mountain. Page 1324 of Scharf’s 1882 book “**History of Western Maryland**” provides an alternate account involving mortal combat between Dan Cresap and an Indian. As with many traditions, variations exist. For example, [Figure 0075](#) indicates the location of the combat was on Savage Mountain instead of Dan’s Mountain.

⁵¹ Savage Mountain is named in honor of the eighteenth century surveyor John Savage.

⁵² Gwynn’s was a well-known tavern between the present-day locations of Cumberland and Frostburg. According to Patrick H. Stakem’s 2011 book “**Cumberland**”, Gwynn’s tavern was located in LaVale, and was later known as the Six-Mile House. Evan Gwynn owned military lots 3412 to 3415 and the Grove Camp property.

for three miles, nearly at right angles with the true course, and then by way of Jenings' run, or extending it over a break in the smallest mountain. on a better course by Gwynn's, to the top of Savage mountain; the latter was adopted, being the shortest, and will be less expensive in hill-side digging over a sloped route than the former, requiring one bridge over Will's creek and several over Jenings' run, both very wide and considerable streams in high water; and a more weighty reason for preferring the route by Gwynn's is the great accommodation it will afford travelers from Winchester by the upper point, who could not reach the route by Jenings' run short of the top of Savage, which would withhold from them the benefit of an easy way up the mountain ...

Was the Braddock Run gap known before Gist?

Gist's journal entry indicates that he is not the discoverer of the Braddock Run gap. He states: "*This Gap is the nearest to Potomack River of any in the Allegany Mountains, and is accounted one of the best, ... this Gap is directly in the Way to Mohongaly, & several Miles nearer than that the Traders commonly pass thro, and a much better Way.*" The words "*is accounted one of the best*" indicate that someone described the Braddock Run gap to Gist. He was exploring the Braddock Run gap because it was recommended by someone else. That someone else may have been Indians, hunters, trappers, or traders – although Gist makes no mention of an existing trader's path.

Gist did not return from his journey until March 29, 1752, and the French attack on Pickawillany occurred less than three months later, on June 21, 1752. As detailed in Chapter 6, an April 28, 1752 Ohio Company record indicates that their road had not yet been cut, and the Ohio Company was not even sure if any arrangements had been made to cut it. Trade out of Virginia was part of what incited the French attack on Pickawillany, and most of that trade must have followed the gap "*that the Traders commonly pass thro*"; i.e. the Jennings Run gap.

