

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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10. Reconciling Veech, Morgan, and tradition

As noted in Chapter 2, tradition indicates that the Turkey Foot Road “*was based on an Indian and packer’s path*”. As noted in Chapter 9, circa 1858, James Veech wrote down his belief that the Turkey Foot Road “*...was established as a nearer route to Fort Pitt from Cumberland, than Braddock’s road.*” As noted in Chapter 9, there is clear documented evidence that Morgan had a road cut through Turkeyfoot (the present-day Confluence area) in 1779. The Veech and Morgan documents, and the traditions of Salisbury and Mount Savage are not mutually exclusive—none of them logically rules out any of the others. In fact, the documents and traditions shed light upon each other.

Veech’s ‘nearer route’ statement is obviously based on Morgan’s road

One cannot tell if Mr. Veech means Fort Pitt literally, or if he just refers to the general location that became Fort Pitt. Page 258 of Swank’s 1908 book “**Progressive Pennsylvania**” indicates that although General Forbes captured the burned ruins of Fort Duquesne on November 25, 1758²⁹², the new British Fort there seems first to have been called “*Fort Pitt*” in a letter by General Stanwix dated December 24, 1759.²⁹³ If one takes Veech literally, his statement is only applicable to roadwork performed after Stanwix’ 1759 letter, and therefore does not apply to the routes shown on earlier maps.

This literal interpretation of Veech is harmonious with Morgan’s 1779 construction of a new road to supply Fort Pitt. Since Veech mentioned Morgan’s bullock pens and a Turkey Foot Road cattle drive, and since Morgan paid Clinton and Mounts to cut a Turkey Foot Road and was responsible for bringing cattle to Fort Pitt, Veech was obviously on the right track, even if he may have been unaware of the documentation relating to the preparation of Morgan’s road.

Morgan’s road probably followed an earlier route

Big game animals were talented pathfinders long before Indians arrived in North America. Any deer hunter can tell you that deer pick excellent routes through open woods²⁹⁴, leaving well-trodden trails along the path of least resistance. A hunter often ends up walking along sections of deer trail as he tries to divine the best route.

In the introduction to his 1965 book, Wallace points out that deer and men do not have the same final destination in mind, and deer trails meander in their courses. For this reason, Wallace gives the Indian most of the credit for the direct nature of Indian paths. We certainly do not disagree. It is only

²⁹² Charles Campbell’s 1847 book “**Introduction to the history of the colony and ancient dominion of Virginia**”.

²⁹³ Upon capturing the ruins of Fort Duquesne, Forbes wrote a letter that was dated “*Pittsburgh 27th Novem^r 1758.*”

²⁹⁴ Deer trails through thick underbrush are not convenient walkways for man, but those in open woods often are. In the early days, virgin timber largely composed Pennsylvania’s forests. In the context of the Allegheny mountain west of Bedford, Thomas Ashe’s “**Travels in America Performed in 1806**” states: “*The American forest have generally one very interesting quality, that of being entirely free of under or brush wood. This is owing to the extraordinary height, and spreading tops, of the trees; which thus prevent the sun from penetrating to the ground, and nourishing inferior articles of vegetation. In consequence one can walk in them with much pleasure, and see an enemy from a considerable distance.*”

natural, however, that the *convenient* portions of such animal trails became prehistoric human footpaths.

A sophisticated network of Indian footpaths existed long before the arrival of Europeans²⁹⁵. Carbon-dated archaeological excavations in the Shawnee Fields area of Allegany County, Maryland prove that trading between Indians there and in the Ohio valley had been going on for thousands of years. Artifacts have even been found there that originated from places as distant as the Gulf of Mexico²⁹⁶. Such widespread commerce proves the existence of a far reaching and interconnected transportation network.

Before the Europeans came, there were no large domesticated animals²⁹⁷ in eastern North America. As a result, the Indian transportation network consisted of footpaths. After the arrival of Europeans, the footpaths were eventually widened into bridle paths to accommodate packhorses²⁹⁸, which were primarily used by European traders, packers and settlers.²⁹⁹ Eventually, many of these bridle paths formed the basis for early wagon roads, portions of which transmuted over time into our present-day highways.

It would be surprising if Morgan's road did not follow at least part of the general course of an earlier bridle path that owed its origins to an Indian path. It would be equally surprising if that Indian path did not owe a significant percentage of its route to convenient portions of various meandering trails that were originally established by various species of big game animals.

The post-Revolutionary War route this book documents between Salisbury and Mount Savage could certainly have followed the general route of the Indian or packer's path that is shown on the 1755 Fry and Jefferson map (Figure 0007) and the 1776 Sayer and Bennett map (Figure 0639). Such an antecedent route is described by local traditions. Chapter 42 reviews the accumulated evidence, scattered throughout this book, supporting the concept that the Turkey Foot Road began as an Indian path.

²⁹⁵ For a modern example of what Indian footpaths are said to have looked like, see [Figure 0513](#).

²⁹⁶ Archaeological excavation information provided by Robert Bantz and Francis Bridges. The Barton archaeological site is privately owned and listed on both the Maryland Historical Trust and National Register of Historic Places. It is situated alongside the north side of the Potomac River, southwest of the City of Cumberland, to the east of U.S. Route 220 in Pinto, Maryland, and has been explored by archeologists since 1960. The Maryland Historical Trust indicates that the Shawnee used the area for crop cultivation. Mayo's circa 1737 survey indicates that the Shawnese had already abandoned the area, labeling the region west of present-day Cumberland along the north side of the Potomac River as "*Shanno Ind^l. Fields deserted*".

²⁹⁷ As told in Jared Diamond's magnificent book "**Guns, Germs and Steel**", the lack of large domesticated animals in North America is one of the key factors that predetermined the fate of the Indians long before the arrival of Europeans. For example, Indians had not developed resistance to various diseases that had transferred from herd animals to humans in Europe.

²⁹⁸ One book (which one now forgotten) indicates that packhorses were lightly built, and unsuitable for pulling wagons.

²⁹⁹ Eastern Indians did have some horses by the time of the French and Indian War; see the 1799 autobiography "**An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, (Now a Citizen of Bourbon County, Kentucky,) During His Captivity With the Indians, in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, & '59...**"