

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.

L. Dietle

August 23, 2026

14. The west side of the Allegheny Mountain

The focus changes, beginning with this chapter

Previous chapters have presented primarily a study of the history of the Turkey Foot Road. Those remaining will be primarily a study of the road's traceable route locations, although the text is sprinkled here and there with bits of history to add context. These route studies are presented working both east and west from Salisbury. The first part of the study deals with the route between present-day Salisbury and Cumberland, and the second part deals with the route between Salisbury and Mount Pleasant. This Salisbury-centric orientation is largely an artifact of the order in which the research was tackled and documented. For a schematic map of the southern portion of the post-war route, see [Figure 0537](#).

Multiple alignments

This is a study of a primitive road that ran through rugged mountainous terrain in western Maryland and southwestern Pennsylvania. The Turkey Foot Road was clearly subjected to both minor and major alterations and improvements. A primitive road constantly evolved, as its travelers detoured around worn spots and fallen trees, and sought out better courses. In certain areas, alternate routes appear to have existed simultaneously, just as modern roads often have alternate routes. In many areas, mazes of crisscrossing roadbeds have been identified. In other areas, major alterations are known by tradition and early documents.

As transportation needs and modes changed, and better roads evolved, the Turkey Foot Road was largely forgotten. Several of the more rugged mountain crossings were abandoned in favor of more lengthily detours that take but little time in an automobile. Much of the original route is, however, still being served by modern alignments. While not all sections of the modern alignments would be recognizable as sections of the old route to someone from the 1785 to 1804 time period, many sections would. Now widened and renamed, and straightened a bit here and there, these sections of the primitive Turkey Foot Road still are traveled daily, unidentified as such and mostly unbeknownst to the present generations.

Wallace's description of crossing the Allegheny Mountain

On page 165 of his book, Wallace describes this portion of the route from the Pocahontas area to Salisbury as follows:

Crossing the head of Little Piney Creek, it bore south of west to top the Allegheny Mountain at a slight depression about a mile northeast of the junction of Big and Little Piney creeks and not far from Wildcat Lookout³⁶⁴. From the summit it descended in a west-northwest direction to big Piney Creek, which it crossed near Engle's Mill, thence approaching

³⁶⁴ "Wildcat Lookout" may be the "Wildcat Knob" ([Figure 0233](#)) that is described in Volume XXXI of the 1991 Casselman Chronicle Number 1 and 2, as being on the south side of the Greenville Road where it passes through a gap in the Allegheny Mountain.

Salisbury by way of the cemetery east of town. It ran through the town of Salisbury about where Union Street is today, crossed Main Street...

Wallace credits most or all of this description to Salisbury resident Jack Pyle, who later wrote that the route followed Ord Street, not Union Street. Pyle's description seems to be in agreement with the route that is shown on the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map of Somerset County ([Figure 0083](#)) and its 1830 derivative ([Figure 0784](#)). In Wallace's "For the Motorist" instructions on page 166 of his book, he gives the following description from the Pocahontas area:

*There the motorist again must leave the Turkeyfoot road, which took a short but steeper way over the Allegheny Mountain. From Pocahontas take S.R. 2010 for over 4 miles down Little Piney Creek, then turn right on a township road down Big Piney Creek to Engle's Mill at the edge of Boynton. From the mill, a township road (left) keeps fairly close to the old path through Salisbury. Salisbury was the site of the so-called Long Field, a narrow strip of cultivated ground on the south side of the early town which has always been looked upon as the work of Indians.*³⁶⁵

The area was indeed piney

Josephine Emerick kept a diary of her 1881 to 1882 visit to Somerset County and nearby Maryland ([Appendix 0014](#)). Her January 12, 1882 diary entry describes heading east from Salisbury. Although it is unclear whether she went over the mountain or through the Greenville gap, her diary hints at why the Piney creeks received their names:

At nine in the morning we started for home and the mud flying, yet such a long lonesome journey. East of Salisbury there was such a dense pine grove and the sun cannot shine through, then we came to Pocahontas it is not much of a place and east of there was so much pine woods to go through.

According to an article by David Husband in the January 12, 1894 issue of the "**Somerset Standard**", "*Piney creek takes its name from the dense pine and spruce forests through which it passes.*"

The early land surveys

Property surveys are referenced in many places in this book, and in some cases are included as figures. Some mention the Turkey Foot Road but do not show it; some explicitly show the location of the road; and some illustrate an unlabeled road.

The surveys included herein as figures are not the original surveys. Instead, nearly all of them are manually drafted copies that were made in accordance with a Pennsylvania statute that was passed on February 16, 1833.

Since we are dealing with copies, rather than originals, we have to ask the question "*What if some of the copiers deviated from the actual original survey and illustrated modern roads?*" This is unlikely for two reasons. First, the copies include an affidavit that states: "*In testimony that the above is a copy of the original remaining on file in the Department of Internal Affairs of Pennsylvania, made conformably to an Act of Assembly approved the 16th day of February, 1833, I have hereunto set my Hand and caused the Seal of said Department to be affixed at Harrisburg...*". In other words, they

³⁶⁵ Wallace credits the "Long Field" information to page 78 of Cassaday's 1932 book "**The Somerset County Outline**".

are official copies, and were intended to be used for legal purposes.³⁶⁶ Second, the individuals making the copies were simply copying documents that were located at the Department of Internal Affairs, which presumably was at Harrisburg. Such individuals would not have been familiar with rural Somerset County roads.

The 1939 W.P.A. maps, on the other hand, do occasionally show landmarks that are not depicted on the copies of the early surveys. For example, on the W.P.A. map fragment of [Figure 0307](#), the borough of Salisbury is shown on the 1786 John Markley survey. Page 550 of the 1884 book “**History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties...**” indicates that the town of Salisbury was not laid out until 1794 and was not incorporated as a borough until 1862. It would therefore be impossible for the 1786 Markley survey ([Figure 0380](#)) to depict the then non-existent borough of Salisbury, and it does not. (To more easily understand the Markley survey, and match it to the warrantee survey map of [Figure 0293](#), rotate it 180°.)

The early survey plats in Elk Lick Township

[Figure 0307](#) is an enlarged portion of the 1939 W.P.A. map of early Elk Lick Township surveys. It shows that immediately east of Salisbury, the Turkey Foot Road crossed the 1805 survey of Abraham Peachy, the 1775 survey of Chew and Wilcox, the land of Michael Engle³⁶⁷, the 1786 survey of Clement Engle, the 1791 survey of John Feick, the 1794 survey of Charles Grandman, the 1794 John Riley survey, and the 1846 survey of the 1794 Ann Tom warrant. [Figure 0309](#) is a present-day tax map that has been marked up to show where the Turkey Foot Road ran, relative to the present-day road. The surveys of Chew and Wilcox ([Figure 0429](#)), Clement Engle ([Figure 0360](#)), and John Feick ([Figure 0361](#)) do not actually show the route, but the Abraham Peachy³⁶⁸ survey ([Figure 0363](#)), the Charles Grandman survey ([Figure 0362](#)), and the John Riley “*Saddle Baggs*” survey (Book C-184, Page 181, [Figure 0646](#)) do.

Part of the route is still identifiable on the ground, and knowledge of its location still survives via information that has been passed down from generation to generation. Photographs from a 2010 on-the-ground study with local resident Harry Ringler ([Figure 0385](#)) are included below.

Engle’s Mill

Volume II, page 653 of the 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**” makes an 1837 reference to “...*the road across the mountain, east of Engle’s mill.*” Page 652 of the same book indicates that Engle’s Mill was built by Clement Engle³⁶⁹ in 1807. In describing the family of John J. Engle, Volume 3, page 399 of the same book states:

³⁶⁶ This act is titled “*An act to preserve the evidence of title to the donation and other lands in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania*”. It includes the following statement: “*That the Surveyor General be and he is hereby authorized and required to make fair and accurate copies from general drafts of the several districts of donation lands now in his office, and that official copies taken from the said copies of the general drafts as aforesaid, shall be evidence, and have the same force and effect as copies taken from the original official drafts... That when the Surveyor General shall find any old returns of surveys or other ancient official papers important to be preserved in his office, becoming too much worn and defaced, he shall or may cause accurate copies of all such, from time to time, to be made out for the files of his office, as far as can be done when discovered, and official certified copies taken from such copies as aforesaid shall be equally valid in evidence and have the same force and effect as those of the originals.*”

³⁶⁷ Based on its shape and location, Michael Engle’s property clearly was purchased from Clement Engle.

³⁶⁸ Peachy’s survey refers to a tributary of the Casselman River as “*Waters of the Little Crossings*”.

³⁶⁹ Clement Engle is an ancestor of Mr. Dietle. The May 19, 1810 title to Clement Engle’s “*Union*” property is reprinted in an issue of the Laurel Messenger. Mr. Ringler reported that Clement Engle is buried at the Lowry cemetery, and there is a Revolutionary War service marker marking his grave ([Figure 0756](#)). Mr. Ringler also reported that the mill was destroyed

Clement Engle, born in Germany, was the American ancestor. He came to this country prior to the Revolutionary war, fought with the colonists and did his part in throwing off the yoke of the tyrant. He afterward settled in Elk Lick township and acquired considerable property, land, timber, etc.

The site of Engles Mills shows up on the 1860 Walker map ([Figure 0604](#)), the 1876 “**County Atlas of Somerset Pennsylvania**” map of Elk Lick Township ([Figure 0022](#)), and on a 1921 topographical map ([Figure 0023](#)). The 1860 map shows the Turkey Foot Road going over the Allegheny Mountain, while the 1876 map illustrates a variation of Piney Run Road following the water gap of Piney Run and Little Piney Run ([Figure 0674](#)).

[Figure 0322](#) is a 2010 photo that shows the location Harry Ringler identified as the site of Engle’s Mill. It was taken looking generally east. [Figure 0371](#) is a 1939 aerial photo that identifies the location of the mill site³⁷⁰, and provides global positioning satellite (GPS)³⁷¹ coordinates of the nearest road intersection. At least some of the fields above the old mill site have been strip mined since 1939.

According to the Google map service, the present-day location known as “*Engles Mill*” is located approximately 1.3 miles east of Salisbury³⁷², near the terminus of two different Engles Mills roads, one of which comes from Salisbury. [Figure 0287](#) shows a millstone that is reportedly from Engle’s Mill.

Photos from the west side of the Allegheny Mountain

Our on-the-ground study of the route on the west side of the Allegheny Mountain began near the crest. We were there courtesy of Andy Hershburger, who gave Mr. Ringler³⁷³ access to his private road, allowing us to drive up the west side of Allegheny Mountain.

[Figure 0242](#) was taken on the west side of the Allegheny Mountain, looking west, to show the vista. It was taken from a location near the old roadbed, generally west of the Findley place that is described in the next chapter. [Figure 0243](#) is a telescopic view looking toward Salisbury; the red-roofed buildings are just east of Salisbury. According to Harry Ringler, the route of the Turkey Foot Road ran past the location of those red-roofed buildings.

by fire in 1927, and there was an Indian village site near the mill, south of Bill Mast’s house. The presence of such a village means that there was at least one Indian trail through the area. The 1927 fire was not the only calamity at Engle’s mill. The March 27, 1913 issue of the “**Meyersdale Republican**” reports “*On Monday afternoon, March 24, the historic Engle’s Mill situated on Piney Run about 1.5 miles east of Salisbury, and more than a century old, came close to being totally destroyed. The mill was badly rent and shattered by a gas explosion and Samuel Engle was seriously injured as the result of an experiment he was conducting in the office of the mill.*” More information on the Clement and Michael Engle families is provided in Dull’s 1996 book “**Early Families of Somerset and Fayette Counties Pennsylvania**”. Clements Engle appears in the list of 1779 property holders in Brothersvalley Township, with 150 acres. In the Brothersvalley Assessment list for 1784, Clemens Ingle is listed with five people in his household. In his May 1810 deed for the “*Union*” tract, the name is given as “*Clemens Engel*”.

³⁷⁰ According to Mr. Ringler, there is an old stone bridge that is buried in the vicinity of the mill, but it was not part of the Turkey Foot Road.

³⁷¹ GPS coordinates can be entered into Internet mapping services to locate the referenced sites. Several services, such as “*Google maps*”, allow the user to switch between map, satellite, and topography views. In “*Google maps*”, enter the latitude and longitude coordinates without the degree symbols, separated by a comma, into the “*search maps*” edit field. The exact software controls will vary among service providers, and will vary as revisions to the mapping software occur. The coordinates can also be used in navigation systems to generate directions.

³⁷² The distance was estimated using map software.

³⁷³ References to “*Mr. Ringler*” herein pertain to Harry Ringler, Senior, Mayor of Salisbury, born July 25, 1930.

Lowry Hollow

Mr. Ringler says the route passed through Lowry Hollow west of Engle's Mill; Lowry Hollow is a low spot on the ridge. After the trip, he wrote the following:

The Turkey Foot Trail crosses Piney Run up Lowry Hollow towards Salisbury. It passes the Lowry farm house built by my great Grandad in the early 1800's. His wife was from the Beachy farm at West Salisbury.

Mr. Ringler's son Harry "Cork" Ringler, Junior wrote the following on the same subject:

My middle name and dad's are Lowry. The Lowry's came to Elk Lick Twp. around 1840 from Stonycreek Twp. Somerset County. The Lowry farm is west of Big Piney Run just above the Bill Mast farm. It has the old two story brick farm house on it. The brick for the house were made just below the farm house.

The Ringler letters are harmonious with Volume III, page 347, of the 1906 book "**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**", which states:

...George Lowry, was born October 5, 1820, in Stony Creek township. George Lowry was a farmer, and about 1840 moved to Elk Lick Township. He married Lucinda, daughter of Peter Beachy, of the same township...

The Lowry³⁷⁴ family, and George Lowry's homestead, are described in an article in the "**Casselman Chronicle**", Volume XXXI, Numbers 1 and 2. The article indicates that the brick house was built circa 1845 by George Lowry, who married Clement Engle's granddaughter Lydia Engle. The 200-acre property was a gift from Lydia's father John Engle on the occasion of George and Lydia's marriage. The article also states that the Turkeyfoot path ran through the property at that time. According to Mr. Ringler, the Turkey Foot Road ran past the brick house (his sketch shows it on the northern side of the house). Mr. Ringler reports that after Lydia died, George Lowry married a Beachy. [Figure 0321](#) is a 2010 photo of the Lowry brick house, which is at Latitude 39.749924°, Longitude -79.067466°. [Figure 0373](#) is a 1939 aerial photo of the area. The location of the "G. Lowry" home is identified on the 1860 Walker map ([Figure 0604](#)).

Straight down the mountainside

The west side of the Allegheny Mountain is one of the principal slopes³⁷⁵ of Somerset County. [Figure 0244](#) was taken while standing on a modern bulldozed lane on the steep west side of the Allegheny Mountain, looking generally west down over the side of the mountain from Latitude 39.742317°, Longitude -79.044017°. It shows a deep sunken roadbed heading straight down over the side of the mountain. It seems rather remarkable that the Turkey Foot Road did not follow the slope at an angle to reduce the grade, but that would have required digging to provide a level path. In the absence of such digging, wagons were taken straight down the mountainside to avoid tipping³⁷⁶.

³⁷⁴ Mr. Ringler, whose middle name is "Lowry", pronounces "Lowry" more like "Loary".

³⁷⁵ John Cassaday, on page seven of his 1932 book "**The Somerset County Outline**".

³⁷⁶ The mystery of why the road went straight down the mountainside was solved by Mr. Dietle's brother-in-law Dale Moore, who knows from farm experience that wagons must be taken straight down hills to avoid tipping. Mr. Moore was raised on a working farm in Mercer County, Pennsylvania. The same technique is also standard operating procedure when off-roading with Jeeps.

The roadbed is still visible on satellite photos today. Except for the several large rocks in the foreground of [Figure 0244](#) that were knocked down by a bulldozer when the modern lane was built across it, the sunken roadbed is completely clear of rocks.

By comparison, [Figure 0251](#) shows a nearby rock-choked shallow ravine on the west side of Allegheny Mountain that was slightly eroded by a rivulet. Note how the erosion has exposed numerous rocks. The sunken road has no rocks in the bottom, even though a great many would have been exposed by erosion. All such rocks had been removed in order to provide a smooth roadbed for wagon and horse traffic.

Figures [0245](#), [0246](#), [0247](#) and [0248](#) show the sunken road a little farther west, down over the hill from Figure 0244. Figures [0249](#) and [0250](#) show the 2010 remains of a 30-inch diameter tree that grew after the sunken road was formed. Based on a large white oak stump in Barrelville that has 60 rings per 10 inches of radius, this tree was about 90 years old when it was cut down 40 or 50 years ago. The location and shape of the stump means the sunken road already existed while the tree was growing. [Figure 0462](#) shows how deeply eroded the sunken roadbed is near the stump. Figures 0244 to 0250 were taken at the location that is circled at the lower right-hand corner of [Figure 0378](#). The route identified by white dots on Figure 0378 correlates well to the route illustrated on the 1860 Walker map ([Figure 0604](#)), which identifies the Lowry and Engle residences.

In his article on the Turkey Foot Road in the “**Casselman Chronicle**” (Volume XXXI, 1992, Number 1 and 2), Rich Yoder indicates there were several (still visible) places on the west side of the mountain for pulling over to allow passing. [Figure 0246](#) may show one such place.

Descriptions of taking a wagon down a mountainside

Archer Butler Hulbert’s 1903 book “**The Old Glade (Forbes’s) road (Pennsylvania state road)**” contains an interesting quote from page 124 of Doctor S. P. Hildreth’s book “**Early Immigration**”, concerning travel on Pennsylvania roads in 1788. Although not written about crossing the Allegheny Mountain on the Turkey Foot Road, it is nevertheless instructive:

The roads at that day across the mountains were the worst we can imagine — cut into deep gullies on one side by mountain rains, while the other was filled with blocks of sand stone. . . As few of the emigrant wagons were provided with lock-chains for the wheels, the downward impetus was checked by a large log, or broken tree top, tied with a rope to the back of the wagon and dragged along on the ground. In other places, the road was so sideling that all the men who could be spared were required to pull at the side stays, or short ropes attached to the upper side of the wagons, to prevent their upsetting. . .

The phrase “*cut into deep gullies on one side by mountain rains*” certainly fits the Turkey Foot Road on the western side of the Allegheny Mountain (as exemplified by [Figure 0244](#)). The phrase “*lock-chains for the wheels*” refers to short chains ([Figure 0209](#))³⁷⁷ that were used to prevent the wagon wheels from turning while going down over steep, slippery terrain. These chains were also known as “*rough brakes*”.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ The rough brake of Figure 0209 was made available for photographing by owner Warren L. Korn, who lives in the Pocahontas area.

³⁷⁸ In 2011 Irvin Dietle, Senior’s youngest son Ralph told his nephew Mr. Dietle that when he was a boy, his father Irvin used a rough brake to bring the wagon down the road ([Figure 0619](#)) from their upper fields because the horse team could not hold the wagon back. The wagon had three rubber tires and one steel wheel; the rough brake was used on the steel

In reference to the old pike between Bedford and Pittsburgh, Volume I of the 1906 book “**History of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania**” also describes bringing a wagon down a mountainside:

It may be somewhat surprising to the modern reader that the best of wagons in the early days of our pike were not supplied with brakes, or rubbers to enable the wagoner to move slowly going down a steep hill. They were not in use till later in the history of the pike, and are said to have been invented by a man named Jones, of Brownsville, on the old National pike. They were never patented, but came into general use soon after the inventor first put them on a wagon. In place of these the wagoner tied a hickory pole across his wagon, so that the one end bore heavily on the wheel. Sometimes he cut a small tree, which he tied to his rear axle and allowed it to drag behind, and thus descended the hill safely. In winter when the pike was covered with ice, he used a rough lock which was a heavy linked chain tied around the wheel, and then he tied the wheel when the chain touched the ground or ice.

In Searight’s 1894 book “**The Old Pike**”, wagoner John Deets provides a firsthand account of the difficulty of descending steep hills, albeit in the context of the National Road:

And now with regard to getting up and down the hills. They had no trouble to get up, but the trouble was in getting down, for they had no rubbers then, and to tight lock would soon wear out their tires. They would cut a small pole about 10 or 11 feet long and tie it to the bed with the lock chain and then bend it against the hind wheel and tie it to the feed trough, or the hind part of the wagon bed, just tight enough to let the wheel turn slow. Sometimes one driver would wear out from 15 to 20 poles between Baltimore and Wheeling. Sometimes others would cut down a big tree and tie it to the hind end of the wagon and drop it at the foot of the hill. When there was ice, and there was much of it in winter, they had to use rough locks and cutters, and the wagon would sometimes be straight across the road, if not the hind end foremost.

A runaway team on the Allegheny Mountain

Page 653 of the 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**” states that “*In 1837 _____ Baker, a son of Douglas Baker, was killed by a runaway team on the road across the mountain, east of Engle’s Mill.*” Douglas Baker was the individual who surveyed the town site of Salisbury. At one time, he owned property along the Turkey Foot Road on the east side of the Allegheny Mountain, as shown by [Figure 0292](#). He is included in the 1813 tax list for Greenville Township.

The route crosses the Bill Mast farm coming down off the mountain

[Figure 0318](#) is a 2010 photo taken at Latitude 39.750450°, Longitude -79.057967° on the Bill Mast farm,³⁷⁹ looking generally southeast. It shows an area where, according to Harry Ringler, the Turkey Foot Road was located.

[Figure 0319](#) is a 2010 photo taken at Latitude 39.7475°, Longitude -79.050850° just above the fields on the Bill Mast farm, looking generally southeast. It shows where the Turkey Foot Road comes down off the Allegheny Mountain. [Figure 0320](#) was taken from the same location, but in the

wheel. Irvin Dietle did not get a tractor until 1961. He lived in Larimer Township, near the White Oak churches, on White Oak Hollow Road approximately at Latitude 39.783505°, Longitude -78.896553°. There were several small mounds that appeared to be Indian graves in the meadow of his farm, west of the house.

³⁷⁹ According to Volume XXXVIII of the “**Casselman Chronicle**”, 1998 number 2, Bill Mast’s farm was hit by two tornados during a two day time period. The tornados took the roofs off of two of his barns, destroyed two of his other farm buildings, and destroyed his stand of sugar maple trees.

opposite direction, and shows where the roadbed comes out to the field. The locations where Figures 0318 to 0320 were taken agree well with the route shown on the 1939 W.P.A. map of early property surveys ([Figure 0309](#)). [Figure 0378](#) is a 1939 USDA aerial photo that has been marked up to show the location where the Figure 0319 and 0320 photos were taken, and to show several routes then visible across the mountain. The most prominent trace can still be seen on present-day satellite imagery.

What must be a more recent route of the Turkey Foot Road is illustrated on [Figure 0400](#). The large northward switchback does not match the early surveys ([Figure 0309](#)), the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map of Somerset County ([Figure 0083](#)) and its 1830 derivative ([Figure 0784](#)), or the 1860 Walker map ([Figure 0604](#)). Figure 0400 was created based on a printout of a 1939 USDA aerial photo that was marked up in pen by Harry Ringler, Senior, of Salisbury. In regard to preparing the markup, Mr. Ringler wrote:

I conferred with Jack Holler of Boynton age 93 who hunted all his life on the Turkey Foot Trail. Talked with Bob Holler age 85 who hunted years on the same mountain. Bill Mast owner and farmer, agrees. I, Harry Ringler hunted the area many times. I killed a large buck at the Shunk place in 1954, and still have the horns.

Mr. Ringler reported that in his own experience, in the old days, the old timers that he knew were familiar with where the road ran, and sometimes used it as a reference point when describing where they were hunting.

The top of the Allegheny Mountain

Mr. Ringler has read that there was a wagon repair shop atop the Allegheny Mountain.