

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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16. Linking to the Bald Knob Road

Solving the long-standing mystery

[Figure 0039](#) is a long distance photo that shows an overview of the area north of present-day Mount Savage, Maryland. The basic route of the old Turkey Foot Road near Mount Savage has been a long-standing mystery. This chapter identifies the route that crossed over Savage Mountain between the Greenville Road and the Bald Knob Road, which is located in the northwest end of Arnold's Settlement. Using this chapter, anyone so inclined can follow the route with relative accuracy.

Part of the Old Mount Savage Road was the Turkey Foot Road

As described in more detail in Chapter 17, a now-abandoned part of today's Bald Knob Road west of Blank Road was called the Old Mount Savage Road. As also proven in Chapter 17, the present-day Bald Knob Road (with minor variations) and part of the Old Mount Savage Road were part of the route of the Turkey Foot Road in 1804. The "*Old Mount Savage Road*" and "*Bald Knob Road*" are identified on [Figure 0066](#), which is a markup of a 1939 USDA aerial photo. The Old Mount Savage Road is illustrated on a 1908 topographic map, but does not appear on a 1950 topographic map.

Nineteenth century maps show the general path of the Turkey Foot Road

Edward Walker's 1860 map of Somerset County, Pennsylvania ([Figure 0448](#)), Simon J. Martenet's 1866 Map of Allegany County, Maryland ([Figure 0126](#)), Walling and Gray's 1872 "**New Topographical Atlas of the State of Pennsylvania**" ([Figure 0545](#)), and the county map in the 1876 Beers "**County Atlas of Somerset Pennsylvania**" ([Figure 0649](#)) show the old portion of the Turkey Foot Road that connected from the vicinity of the present-day Greenville Road to the present-day Bald Knob Road via a portion of what was later called the Old Mount Savage Road. The 1826 Melish map of Pennsylvania ([Figure 0431](#)) appears to show the same route, albeit more schematically. [Figure 0037](#) is an 1898 topographic map that also shows the route. The now-abandoned section of the Turkey Foot Road went east to where the present-day Bald Knob Road ends on Blank Road, at the 1817 Fredrick Rigert stone house in Arnold's Settlement.

A plurality of roadbeds across Little Savage Mountain

The location where the Turkey Foot Road crosses the state line into Maryland at a southwest angle on the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map ([Figure 0083](#)) has been confusing. [Figure 0316](#) shows the route just west of the Greenville Road. The red dot in the lower right-hand corner shows approximately where the straight line representation on the 1785 Henry Haines survey ([Figure 0449](#)) crosses the Greenville Road.

[Figure 0036](#) has been marked up from a 1939 USDA aerial photo of the area northwest of Mount Savage, Maryland at the state line. More recently, the area has been logged several times, and traces of various logging roads now also exist⁴⁰⁹. [Figure 0036](#) shows the route over Little Savage

⁴⁰⁹ In 2010, Dennis Lashley (President of the Mount Savage Historical Society) e-mailed the following to me in regard to the aerial photo: "*In the many years of traveling that section, several logging operations have taken place. When I first*

Mountain, which takes advantage of a low spot in the mountain. A little farther east, the route crosses over Big Savage Mountain to the known location of the 1804 Turkey Foot Road in Maryland.

The colored dashed lines on [Figure 0036](#) identify a maze of what appear to be primitive roadbeds that left the Greenville Road, and cross over Little Savage Mountain. This maze of roadbeds follows the general route of the road that is shown on several nineteenth century maps. Clearly, the route of the Turkey Foot Road across Little Savage Mountain was used by people traveling both the Greenville Road and the Turkey Foot Road. This concept of serving travelers of both roads is further illustrated in [Figure 0676](#), which is an annotated enlargement of an 1898 topographical map. By 1898, the mapmaker only illustrated a remnant of the Turkey Foot Road being used as a driveway west of the Greenville Road. The 1939 aerial photo of [Figure 0316](#) shows a route across the Henry Haines survey that still may have been in use between Hemlock Lane and Greenville Road.

The sheer quantity of roadbeds in [Figure 0036](#), all heading in the same direction, suggests heavy usage. Look closely, and you can see even more roadbeds that are not highlighted. It seems obvious that as one primitive roadbed became impassable, an alternate route was created to take its place.

The Turkey Foot Road was a drover's road

As described in Chapter 9, Colonel George Morgan, Purchasing Commissary for the Western Department, had the Turkey Foot Road cut, and used it to move beef and other supplies to Fort Pitt during the Revolutionary War.

Wallace's 1965 book provides a quote from Salisbury, Pennsylvania resident Jack Pyle that indicates that the Turkey Foot Road was used as a drover's road. According to Pyle, the National Road was paved with cobblestones circa 1820; subsequently, according to Pyle, drovers from Pittsburgh and the Ohio used the unpaved Turkeyfoot path to move their herds toward Winchester and Baltimore to save the hooves of the cattle. Such usage would lead to heavy wear of a primitive road, and would help to explain the various routes that are visible in [Figure 0036](#). 1820 is close to the 1818⁴¹⁰ quasi-completion date of the "Cumberland Road" portion of the National Road, so Pyle may have been referring to the stone used during the original construction of the National Road. Wallace states:

This route is said to have been used as a drover's road "After the National Road (the Braddock Road) was cobblestoned about 1820." says Jack Pyle of Salisbury, "drovers from Pittsburgh and the Ohio on their way to Baltimore and Winchester brought their herds over the Turkeyfoot trail to save their hooves."

The Turkey Foot Road connected with another drover's road – the Mud Pike – at Normalville, in Fayette County. Volume II, pages 215 and 216, of the 1906 book "**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**" suggests another reason that some of the drover traffic on the National Road may have shifted to the Turkey Foot Road:

went up there (1967), only one trail was to be found and passable. Over the years more passable trail could be found due to the loggers." This reported logging activity occurred long after the 1939 aerial photo was taken.

⁴¹⁰ According to the 1904 book "**Hart's history and directory of the three towns...**", Uniontown's August 8, 1818 "**Genius of Liberty**" states: "*The stages have commenced running from Frederick Town, Maryland, to Wheeling, in Virginia, following the course of the National Road westward from Cumberland. This great road, truly an honor to the United States, will be finished from Cumberland to this place in a few months (some of the heavy masonry was not yet finished southeast of Uniontown) and from Brownsville to Wheeling, it is expected, in the course of next summer, leaving only a distance of 12 miles from Uniontown to Brownsville.*"

The “National Road,” in its earlier years, was not a toll road. ... The erection of toll gates on the road, which was about 1835, had the effect of taking off some of the great droves of cattle, sheep, and hogs which passed over the road while it was free...

According to a May 1, 1828 resolution recorded in Volume 168 of the “**Congressional Edition**”, the National Road west of Cumberland was then in a “*dilapidated condition*”. The National road was again covered with stone in 1835, according to the October 17, 1835 issue of “**Nile’s Register**”, which states: “...*the covering of stone lately put on the Cumberland road, is understood to be sufficiently packed to admit of traveling upon it at the ordinary speed—and that the road will every day become better.*” Jacob Brown’s 1896 book “**Brown’s Miscellaneous Writings..**” describes the stone that was put on the road in the 1830s as macadamizing, and describes the process as follows:

Limestone was quarried...then reduced by sledgehammers to the size of about three or four pounds, and after that broken down to an egg size by small round hammers in the hands of the laborers in sitting position... When the stone was thus broken...they were then spread with a horse rake over the whole bed. I believe the depth or thickness was nine inches... the road in time became packed and solidified...

This heavy application of broken stone would have also helped to divert herds from the National Road.

Other reasons for so many parallel roadbeds

In addition to general roadbed wear, other reasons for route variations probably were accelerated wear in wetter areas, and fallen timber.⁴¹¹ Pages three and eight of Wallace’s 1965 book describe the problem of windfalls. Fallen timber lasts for decades, is difficult to chop through and often impossible to cross. Imagine trying to pass through the bushy top of a large tree that is lying on its side across the roadway. In many cases, it would have been much easier for early travelers to simply go around, rather than chop through fallen trees. In the context of Indian paths, Wallace indicates that if the path of a trail could be graphed over the years, the result would be a wide blurry band of lines. That is the result the 1939 aerial photos convey.

North of the state line, across Big Savage Mountain

[Figure 0423](#) is a 1939 aerial photo that has been marked up to show the then-existing route from the state line, across Big Savage Mountain, to the railroad tracks. It is a reasonably close match to the route shown in the 1876 Beers atlas ([Figure 0422](#)) and is a nearly perfect match to the route that is shown in the 1898 topographical map of [Figure 0037](#).

The following chart provides GPS coordinates from the state line to the railroad tracks. The coordinates were established with USGS EarthExplorer software using traces that are visible today and appear to be in the same location as the 1939 traces.

⁴¹¹ Thaddeus Harris’ 1805 book “**Journal of a Tour...**” describes the problem of fallen timber on the road between Bedford and Mount Pleasant: “*Our road, which at best must be rugged and dreary, was now much obstructed by the trees which had fallen across it; and our journey rendered hazardous by those on each side which trembled to their fall.*”

Description	Latitude	Longitude
Crosses state line	39.72280952411926°	-78.92041683197021°
Enters pipeline right-of-way	39.723964799027264°	-78.91907572746277°
Exits pipeline right-of-way	39.72419997761952°	-78.91793310642242°
Beginning of long turn	39.7257884435965°	-78.91529381275177°
End of long turn	39.72637431012185°	-78.91314804553985°
Beginning of southeast turn	39.72659297733792°	-78.91143679618835°
End of southeast turn	39.726514587283624°	-78.91083329916°
Beginning northeast turn	39.7256543537269°	-78.9095002412796°
Start of switchback turn	39.72646507772969°	-78.90767499804497°
End of switchback turn	39.726377404474086°	-78.90737324953079°
Start of switchback turn	39.72614532767112°	-78.9073571562767°
End of switchback turn	39.72606281128624°	-78.90712380409241°
Start of minor turn	39.7268075180835°	-78.90594094991684°
Start of turn to the east	39.72724484907435°	-78.90484392642975°
Start of switchback turn	39.72745526205324°	-78.90164136886596°
End of switchback turn	39.72733561553615°	-78.90152871608734°
More recent deviation	Not applicable	Not applicable
Beginning of small turn	39.72725516345103°	-78.89871776103973°
End of small turn	39.727269603575785°	-78.89817595481872°
Crosses railroad	39.727096321879095°	-78.89741957187652°

[Figure 0046](#) shows the route from the railroad tracks to Blank Road along a portion of the Old Mount Savage Road. The Mount Savage Road is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

A tradition of a stagecoach route in the Mount Savage area

In 2009, Dennis Lashley, president of the Mount Savage Historical Society, mentioned “*a road going over Big Savage on the PA side from Bald Knob that runs along the present Gas Line*”⁴¹² as a possible candidate for having been the Turkey Foot Road, but also wrote, “*It is a mystery as to where it actually runs thru our area.*” Mr. Lashley also wrote that a “*... very old fellow used to live up there (Hutzel) told me it was a Stage coach road.*” Hutzel was evidently describing the general route of the plurality of abandoned roads that appears in the 1939 USDA aerial photos.

Francis Bridges reported that Russell Blank told him that he knew how to follow the old stagecoach route from Charlie Geary’s house to McKenzie Hollow Road. Geary’s house is the 1817 Fredrick Rigert house, known as the “*Sam Blank Stone House*”, located at Latitude 39.722222°, Longitude -78.886101°. Russell and others have told Francis that the old stagecoach road passed through a cut in the rocks that was not made with modern machinery. Francis says that where the old road crosses the modern-day Highlands Trail, it is blocked off with boards, apparently to block four-wheeler traffic. The location where the old road crosses the Highlands Trail is between the Big Savage tunnel ([Figure 0773](#)) and the state line. Francis also reported that Russell believed that the Turkey Foot Road came in past Sampson Rock (i.e., the route that Pyle described to Wallace). With this information, one can determine that Russell Blank’s understanding is that the stagecoach route followed the Old Mount Savage Road to McKenzie Hollow Road. Since part of the Old Mount

⁴¹² Mr. Lashley refers to the gas line that runs generally (but not exactly) along the Mason-Dixon line, and is readily visible on aerial and satellite photos.

Savage Road was the Turkey Foot Road, this is also a Turkey Foot Road stagecoach tradition. The railroad crossing location can be seen in [Figure 0046](#), and in fact, the old route of the Turkey Foot Road is still highly visible on present-day satellite imagery.

