

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

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24. The later nineteenth century route directly out of Mount Savage

Wallace's 1965 book indicates that the Turkey Foot Road ran along Jennings Run all the way to the town of Mount Savage. To the best that can be determined, he was referring to roughly the circa 1880 to 1900 time period. Figures [0205](#), [0206](#), [0445](#), and [0446](#) show part of the route through town. This route is very different from the 1804 Bald Knob Road of Chapter 17.

Wallace obtained his local route information from Jack Pyle of Salisbury, Pennsylvania. Some of that information was based on a walk to Maryland that Pyle's father and grandfather took back when Pyle's father was still a child. The 1880 to 1900 estimate is based on Wallace's footnote concerning the Pyles that indicates that in the early 1880s the road was still open for use by wagons. Perhaps a more accurate date estimate could be established by tracking down the birth date of Pyle's father.

Jack Pyle's acquaintance Harry L. Ringler indicated that Mr. Pyle died in early 2010 in his 90s, and during his lifetime liked to talk to older people. According to the March 2, 2010 issue of the "**Daily American**", Salisbury resident Jack Darrell Pyle was born on January 24, 1917 at nearby Coal Run, died March 2, 2010 at age 93, was the son of Charles Aaron Pyle and wife Effie Jane (Williams) Pyle, was a member of the Springs Historical Society, and loved outdoor activities. Jack's obituary requested that "*Expressions of Sympathy*" be sent to the Springs Historical Society. This information is provided to help future researchers track down Charles' birth date.

On page 165 of his book, Wallace states:

...the Turkeyfoot path⁵⁶³ ran up the valley of Wills Creek to the mouth of Jennings Run at Corriganville. There it turned west and followed the run to the town of Mount Savage. Heading west-northwest, it ascended Big Savage, crossed it a little northeast of Sampson Rock, and entered Somerset County, Pennsylvania, about a mile and a half southeast of the town of Pocahontas. It crossed the heads of Piney Creek and, keeping a straight course paralleling the modern road, it passed about a quarter of a mile southwest of Pocahontas.

In his corresponding page 166 "*For the Motorist*" section, Wallace states:

Follow Wills Creek to the mouth of Jennings run at Corriganville. There turn left (west) and follow the run to the town of Mount Savage. From that point it is impossible for the motorist to follow the trail over Big Savage Mountain. He must content himself with a wide detour: continuing on 36 to Frostburg, there turning west on U.S. 40 again for 2½ miles, and then taking Md. 546 north through Finzel to join the Turkeyfoot road at the Pennsylvania border. About ½ mile north of Finzel, the road forks, the left fork following the old path rather closely to Pocahontas and 1 ½ miles beyond.

⁵⁶³ Wallace probably would have been more accurate if he had substituted the words "*Turkeyfoot Road*" for the words "*Turkeyfoot path*" in the quoted passage.

Wallace named the source for his Salisbury-to-Maryland route information in a footnote on page 168 that states:

*The course of the Turkeyfoot Road was shown to the present writer, walking and driving, November 4, 1962, by Jack Pyle of Salisbury. Mr. Pyle's father when a boy had walked it all the way, with **his** father, to Maryland for a cow. It was still open for Wagon Traffic in the early 1880's. At the present time it is for the most part out of use, but Jack Pyle has followed it on foot over most of its course.*

Analysis of Pyle's Mount Savage area route during the 1865 to 1898 time frame

The route that Pyle described to Wallace was something other than Bald Knob Road, because he describes the route as heading west-northwest from Mount Savage, which Bald Knob Road does not do. A road on the 1898 map of [Figure 0038](#) and the 1907 map of [Figure 0427](#) may match Wallace's description. It runs near, but south of⁵⁶⁴, Sampson Rock. This road is in the general location where local resident Mr. Francis Bridges said he thought the Turkey Foot Road was located when he talked to Mr. McKenzie in 2009. Simon J. Martenet's 1866 Map of Allegany County, Maryland ([Figure 0126](#)) and a circa 1895 military map ([Figure 0874](#)) also illustrate the same road heading northwest out of Mount Savage. A 1939 aerial photo of the area suggests that the route had shifted somewhat northward in the vicinity of Sampson Rock by 1939. The 1898 map lists the elevation at Sampson Rock as 2,942 feet. There is now a transmission tower of some sort in that vicinity.

Part of the 1898 route was apparently open as a road recently, because it is identified on current Google maps. It appears to have a newer alignment in the Sampson Rock area. Mr. McKenzie is somewhat familiar with the road because he and his friends used to bring their dirt bikes down that way from the railroad. There was an abandoned open-pit coalfield along it that made for great riding. The fact that Wallace says the road was closed or impassible in 1962, yet it is or was open after 1962, is confusing. It is almost certainly the route Wallace describes, because it runs near Sampson Rock; it served the same purpose as the route Wallace describes; and it was already open in 1865. The present-day alignment of this road terminates on Blank Road at a location between Dutch Hollow Road and Fireclay Mountain Road at Latitude 39.703182°, Longitude -78.895353° ([Figure 0930](#)) and terminates on Sampson Rock Road at Latitude 39.713470°, Longitude -78.935206°. In 2013, the eastern end was found to be gated at Blank Road, and the western end was gated before reaching the tower. The western end is known as Tower Road.

The 1842 Mount Savage Iron Works map

The 1842 Mount Savage Iron Works map ([Appendix 0043](#)) also shows a road that ran northwest from Mount Savage to the Pennsylvania line. This road would have served the same general overall travel route as the Turkey Foot Road. Except for passing south of Sampson Rock, it also corresponds well to Wallace's description of the Mount Savage area route. East of Sampson Rock, it is clearly not the route that is shown on the 1898 map of [Figure 0038](#), because it follows part of the valley of the "Workman's Run" that is shown on the 1842 map.

Along the west side of the horseshoe bend of the present-day New School Road, if you look up the hillside, you can clearly see an old road, just as shown on the 1842 map. The road ran past the three iron furnaces (not shown on the 1842 map) and on the opposite side of the stream from the company

⁵⁶⁴ This assumes that Sampson Rock is on the crest.

houses that are shown on the 1842 map. It is the road that can be seen running down to the present-day location of Route 36 on [Figure 0038](#).

The fording site near Jonathan Arnold's mill

Jonathan Arnold's "*Union of Tracts*" (Patented Certificate 2828, 1844) includes the words "...*the Road leading from Cumberland to and past Jonathan Arnold's Mill...*", and mentions a property boundary landmark "*on the East side of Jennings Run at the Fording near Jonathan Arnold's Mill...*" This is in reference to one of the fording sites that can be seen on the 1898 topographic map of [Figure 0052](#) near the Combs gristmill. A bit of nearby Mount Savage area trivia is shown in [Figure 0050](#): An 1878 rock carving of a muzzle loading rifle⁵⁶⁵ and accessories on an outcropping that overlooks Jennings Run, just east of the Carney family residence.

How soon was the route altered to come into Mount Savage?

In its mention of the "*old Turkeyfoot road*", an 1837 survey ([Appendix 0049](#)) may possibly suggest that the route directly into Mount Savage existed already by 1837. The first paragraph states:

...that the public interest would be promoted by opening a public road from the old Turkeyfoot road at or near Samuel Wilhelm's to intersect the road on Jennings run leading to Frost Town to intersect the same at or near the lower part of Waddles meadow...

The location of Wilhelm's place is described below. The location of Waddle's known property is just north of Frostburg, at Zihlman, as shown by [Figure 0410](#). The collage of [Figure 0411](#) proves that the 1837 survey pertains to the antecedent to the present-day Blank Road, Dutch Hollow Road, and (at Zihlman) Sugar Row Road. This route was the most difficult to decipher of all the routes studied in this book.

Identifying Wilhelm's house

Samuel Wilhelm's house (Figures [0067](#), [0068](#), [0069](#), and [0070](#)) is the one described as the "*Sam Blank Stone House*" on the Maryland "*Inventory of Historic Properties*" AL-V-A-063 building survey. The house is located northwest of the physical town of Mount Savage (but within the unincorporated town limits⁵⁶⁶), near the state line. [Figure 0066](#) is a 1939 aerial photo that shows the location of the house relative to Blank Road and Bear Camp Lane.

A title search published by the Maryland State Archives indicates that Samuel Wilhelm bought the property from Fredrick Rigert in 1828, and Samuel Blank purchased it from the heirs of Samuel Wilhelm in 1886. Since the date stone bears the initials "*FR*" and "*IF*" and the date 1817 ([Figure 0202](#)), the house is believed to have been built by Fredrick Rigert in 1817.

Elias Majors' resurvey of this property in 1794 ([Appendix 0052](#)) shows how and why Samuel Wilhelm's property was called "*Dry Level*" in Samuel Wilhelm's 1861 resurvey ([Figure 0071](#)). Our correspondent Don Hammon found the resurvey document when he was doing research to determine when Frederick Rigert owned the "*Sam Blank Stone House*". Don reports that in 1801, Frederick

⁵⁶⁵ Muzzle loading rifles were still manufactured in the area long after the advent of cartridge rifles. Lepley family tradition tells of a Southampton Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania Lepley gunsmith who was still drilling muzzle loading gun barrel bores in the early twentieth century using a primitive drilling method: Spinning the drill with a strap of leather. There were several generations of Lepley family members who were gunsmiths. [Figure 0771](#) shows two of many muzzle loading gun parts that were found on the Lepley farm in the early 1970s. [Figure 0778](#) shows the location of the farm where the Lepley gunsmiths operated.

⁵⁶⁶ Other references herein to Mount Savage refer to the physical town.

Rigert purchased lots 3367, 3368, and part of 4074 from John Arnold. The house is on lot 3367. Mr. Hammond has not found a deed transferring this property to Elias Majors, but he did find evidence that Majors transferred property to Anthony Arnold. The Land Office Military Lots Ledger ([Figure 0072](#)) indicates that Anthony was John Arnold's father. This makes it likely that John Arnold inherited the property. The Wilhelm place still shows up as such on the 1876 Beers map of Southampton Township, Pennsylvania ([Figure 0422](#)). That map, which is drawn from a Pennsylvania perspective, shows the Old Mount Savage Road continuing on to form the Wellersburg area Mineral Street, but does not show Maryland's Blank Road or Bald Knob Road. Edward Walker's 1860 map of Somerset County, Pennsylvania ([Figure 0448](#)) shows the same thing.

A possible interpretation of the 1837 survey

In the 1837 survey, the phrase "...*old Turkeyfoot road at or near Samuel Wilhelm's...*" must have been referencing the 1804 route that comprised the "*Old Mount Savage Road*" and the present-day Bald Knob Road. The term also might have encompassed the old road that we believe ran behind the "*Bittner Log and Frame House*", and then followed the north side of the Bear Camp tract.

If the main route already had switched to that shown on the 1842 Mount Savage Iron Works map ([Appendix 0043](#)), then the old alignment quite naturally would have been called the "*old Turkeyfoot Road*" in 1837⁵⁶⁷. This is mostly conjecture at this point, but the few available facts do fit the hypothesis.

Why was the route changed?

Once the town of Mount Savage was established, a route change would have been beneficial to its inhabitants, and to travelers. The inhabitants would have needed a route for their own local travel. The road would have delivered customers and supplies to the town, and would have distributed the products of the town to other places. The traveler would want to pass through the town to benefit from its lodging and food services. The farmer would have traveled to the town for business purposes, and to purchase manufactured goods.

Road superintendents were assigned in 1864

A road superintendent was assigned in 1864 to maintain the portion of the route between Barrelville and Mount Savage. According to Volume 1 of the 1865 book "**The Maryland Code**", Article I, Chapter 303 of the Public Local Laws provided that: "*The repairs, improvements and supervision of the Public County Road, leading from Barrallville through the villages of Mount Savage, Frostburg and Lonaconing to Westernport in Allegany county, are hereby placed under the charge and care of three superintendents of the same, to be appointed...*" by the Orphans' Court.

Chapter 303 was repealed April 5, 1878, and replaced by an act that stated: "*It shall be the duty of the County Commissioners for said county, annually, and in the month of April, in each and every year, to appoint three suitable persons, to act as superintendents, for the purpose of supervising and attending to the repairs and improvements of said road; one of said superintendents to be a resident of that portion of said county through which the road passes from Barrollville to Frostburg...*"

⁵⁶⁷ Part of the old alignment is still in use in 2012 as Bald Knob Road.

1937 Allegany County Board of County Commissioners meeting notes

A portion of the September 14, 1937 minutes ([Appendix 0068](#)) from a regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Allegany County, Maryland mentions the Turkey Foot Road. The minutes state:

There being no unfinished business to come to the attention of the Board, the following new business was transacted. Mr. Albert C. Dress (sic), District #13, whose post office address is Frostburg, Route #2, appeared in regard to repairs and reconditioning of a road known as "Turkey Foot Road" near Finzel. The County Commissioners assured Mr. Dress that if this is a county road they will cooperate in trying to arrange for a W.P.A. Project if possible, to put the road in condition, Mr. Dress to be notified as to the status of this road.

The request is also mentioned in an article titled "County is urged to hurry road repair" on page 11 of the September 14, 1937 issue of the "Evening Times".

We noticed a number of "Drees" property transactions along Sampson Rock Road, and contacted Gene Drees, who lives along Sampson Rock Road. Gene knew Albert as "Uncle Dutch", and believed that Albert was his grandfather's brother. Gene recalled that Albert had a place across from the present-day Finzel Fire Hall, and also had a farm along the present-day Sampson Rock Road. It is the farm that a McIntire⁵⁶⁸ bought circa 2005. It is identified on the lower right-hand corner of [Figure 0036](#). The farm is located at Latitude 39.720722°, Longitude -78.920760°.

The location of Mr. Drees' farm makes it difficult to understand which specific Turkey Foot Road he wanted repaired, because he lived on the old route to Bald Knob, and close to the route past Sampson Rock that ran directly into Mount Savage. He was probably referring to the latter route. Even if we do not know which specific road Mr. Drees was referring to, the meeting minutes indicate that a road in that area was still called the Turkey Foot Road in 1937.

An 1875 map shows an alternate route into Mount Savage

[Figure 0045](#) is an 1875 map of Allegany County, Maryland that has been annotated to identify some current and recent road names in the Barrelville and Mount Savage areas. It shows that circa 1875, the Old Mount Savage Road came directly into the town of Mount Savage via what is now known as Bald Knob Road and Mile Lane. As proven by Chapter 17, in 1804 the Bald Knob Road was a new alteration to the Turkey Foot Road.

The 1804 location of Archibald Arnold's residence is marked as location "6" on the 1898 map of [Figure 0038](#). Since Archibald Arnold's residence was clearly on the 1804 Turkey Foot Road, and is southeast of the current-day southwesterly fork in the road (Mile Lane at "12") that goes to Mount Savage, it is clear that what was referred to as the Turkey Foot Road in 1804 did not go to the location of present-day Mount Savage in 1804.

[Figure 0038](#) also shows a road "9" that extended down to the location of present-day Route 36 near Stony Hollow Road "13". Both of these roads are now abandoned. Clearly, the road at "9" extended the 1804 route of the Turkey Foot Road down to the Jennings Run valley in 1898, even though the primary route was at "12", and ran into the town of Mount Savage.

⁵⁶⁸ The surname spelling may not be correct.

