

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

33. From Harnedsville to the Fayette County line

An 1884 book describes a route through present-day Ursina

[Figure 0527](#) provides an overview of the route immediately north of Harnedsville using the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map. Page 557 of the 1884 book “**History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties...**” describes the Turkey Foot Road beyond Harnedsville as follows:

The colony which founded the Jersey Baptist church came from New Jersey to Turkey-Foot about 1774⁶⁷⁷. This colony consisted of fifteen or twenty families, more or less intimately connected by ties of relationship and intermarriage. The early settlers, aside from the New Jersey colony⁶⁷⁸, came mainly from Maryland and Virginia, following what was then a well-defined route of travel, the old Turkey-Foot road. This road came down White’s creek to the Casselman, which it crossed near Harnedsville, crossed the Hog Back⁶⁷⁹ where Ursina now is, thence onward across Laurel Hill creek where the old stockade stood, and up the Lick river to Stewart’s crossing⁶⁸⁰, near Connellsville.

As shown by [Figure 0379](#), “Laurel Hill Creek” is one of the three tributaries of the Youghiogheny River that join at Turkeyfoot. Since the route of Veech and Doctor Wellford did not go to Stewart’s Crossing, the 1884 book is clearly describing a route that eventually parted ways from the route they described. This is because the author of the 1884 book was describing a migration route of westward moving settlers, rather than specifically detailing the route of the original Turkey Foot Road to Fort Pitt. Other people besides Ellis have viewed the Turkey Foot Road as connecting with Connellsville, rather than Pittsburgh. For example, the 1970 book “**A History of Mill Run**” describes the destination of the Turkey Foot Road as going to Connellsville. One can certainly appreciate that the people of Connellsville might refer to such a route as the Turkey Foot Road, because that is where it went.

Lick River

The “Lick River” reference is confusing. It could be in reference to the “Salt Lick or Indian Creek” that appears on [Figure 0379](#). There is also “Lick Run”, which joins the Youghiogheny River at Bidwell, east of Ohiopyle. Nevertheless, the “Stewart’s Crossing” reference is clear.

⁶⁷⁷ The book “**Reflections: Ursina 1787 – 1994**” gives a slightly different date for the Jersey Settlers, stating they came into the area and settled during the spring of 1770. Oliver Drake, who is said to be one of the Jersey Settlers, is on the list of 1773 Brothersvalley Township, Bedford County taxables.

⁶⁷⁸ This passage does not indicate that the New Jersey colony came by a different route; instead, it simply acknowledges that the New Jersey colony did not hail from Maryland and Virginia.

⁶⁷⁹ As shown by [Figure 0713](#), Hog Back Ridge is the ridge just north of Harnedsville that lies between the Casselman River and Laurel Hill Creek.

⁶⁸⁰ Passage of Chapter CMLXXVII of the “**Pennsylvania Statutes at Large**” gave William Crawford the right to establish a ferry at Stewart’s Crossing. The act, which was passed April 13, 1782, was titled “*An act for establishing ferries on the rivers Monongahela and Youghiogheny*”.

Stewart's Crossing

According to a 2000 article by the Connellsville Area Historical Society, Stewart's Crossing is located slightly north of where Mounts Creek enters the Youghiogheny River⁶⁸¹. The place they have identified ([Figure 0841](#)) is now the site of the historical society's Yough River Park, which is located at Latitude 40.020557°, Longitude -79.599499°. A footnote on page 107 of Toner's 1893 book "**Journal of Colonel George Washington: commanding a detachment of Virginia Troops**" places the crossing at a slightly different location ([Appendix 0003](#)). It states: "*Stewart's Crossing of the Youghiogheny river was about one mile below the present town of Connellsville, in Fayette county, Pa. A ford at low water and a ferry at high water, it was on the line of the early Indian trail or path, and bore the name of Stewart's Crossing as early as, or before, 1753. It was at this ford, that Braddock's army crossed in 1755.*"⁶⁸² [Figure 0100](#) is a representation of Stewart's Crossing from a 1908 postcard. [Figure 0869](#) is a 1939 aerial photo that appears to show traces of a fording site in the river bottom at Stewart's Crossing.

Wallace's book states that there were two fords in the vicinity of Connellsville. One was "*Stewart's Crossing*", which he describes as being just upstream of the mouth of Mounts Creek. The other was "*Broad Ford*", which he locates about 1.5 miles farther downstream. A small town named Broad Ford is located there, at a sharp turn in Broadford road. 2013 satellite imagery reveals an active, highly visible fording site at Broad Ford. On the southwestern side of the river, the ford is located on a dirt extension of Michael Drive. It enters the river at Latitude 40.04331°, Longitude -79.607749°, crosses an island, and exits on the northeastern side of the river near the old distillery⁶⁸³ at the village of Broad Ford at Latitude 40.045288°, Longitude -79.607717° and enters a curved section of road. The satellite imagery shows that the dirt road extension of Michael Drive ([Figure 0885](#)) has recently been fenced off on the river bank to terminate vehicular use of the fording site. On the northeastern side of the river, the same curved road leading from the ford is visible on the 1939 aerial photo of [Figure 0870](#). The eastern end of the island, where the route crossed in 2013, is submerged in the 1939 photo. Whether this fording site is the historical Broad Ford is unknown. Ellis' 1882 book "**History of Fayette County...**" identifies an old Indian fort "*on the western bank of the Youghiogheny River, nearly opposite the Broad Ford...*".

A route that would have involved taking the Turkey Foot Road partway to Connellsville is depicted on the 1817 Melish-Whiteside map of Fayette County ([Figure 0382](#)). The traveler would have turned west (left) at what is now Normalville, using the road⁶⁸⁴ that the map identifies as running past White Horse Tavern⁶⁸⁵ in Somerset County. This road is the Mud Pike, which runs between Connellsville and the location of the White Horse Tavern via Berlin. East of Berlin, the current

⁶⁸¹ For a photo of the historical marker at Stewart's Crossing, see [Figure 0840](#).

⁶⁸² According to a nearby historical marker ([Figure 0412](#)), Braddock's army forded the Youghiogheny River at Stewart's Crossing on June 30, 1755.

⁶⁸³ According to Ellis' 1882 book "**History of Fayette County...**", "*The Overhold Distillery, located on the bank of the Youghiogheny at Broad Ford...was erected and put into operation by Abraham Overholt in the year 1853. ... In 1867 the present distillery building was erected.*"

⁶⁸⁴ An "Act to improve the state road leading from the top of the Allegheny mountain, at the White Horse Tavern in Somerset county, to Connellsville, in Fayette county" was approved on April 8, 1833. The act appropriated \$2,000 to road commissioners Joseph Rodgers and Solomon Kerns of Fayette County and George Gebhart of Somerset County.

⁶⁸⁵ See [Figure 0398](#) for the location of White Horse Tavern. The February 1960 issue of the "**Laurel Messenger**" identifies the location of the White Horse Tavern as follows: "*The White Horse tavern recalls many interesting incidents of ye olden time country in. Located, as it was, abruptly on the eastern crest of the Allegheny mountains (in Allegheny Twp., Somerset Co. , now on Route No. 31 east of Roxbury), the site was certainly bold, picturesque, romantic, and afforded a charming view.*"

alignment is known as the White Horse Road. The survey of Zachariah Connell ([Figure 0393](#)) shows where the road crossed the “*Youghiogeni River*” in 1794.

A family follows part of the Turkey Foot Road to Connellsville

Ruth E. Manley Miller’s 1978 publication “**Leonard History**”⁶⁸⁶ contains information about a pioneer family that traveled to Connellsville via part of the Turkey Foot Road, although it does not name the road. The information was collected by descendant Reverend Amos Leonard (a minister in Fayette and Westmoreland counties), who was born circa 1835 and died circa 1890.

Constantine Leonard intended to build a flat boat to take his family down the Ohio River, but died at Connellsville in 1792, while getting his flat boat ready. Leonard’s family traveled Braddock’s road from Fort Cumberland, using a wagon pulled by a pair of oxen. At Turkeyfoot, they took a shorter route to Connellsville that took them across Laurel Hill, through the Indian Creek Valley, and past the place where Normalville is located (the article refers to the Normalville location as Springfield). This clearly describes taking the Turkey Foot Road northward from the Turkeyfoot area in order to reach Connellsville.

Between Harnedsville and Ursina

William Nicholson’s 1786 survey (Book A-16, Page 285, [Figure 0635](#)) and Andrew Ream’s 1796 survey (Book C-177, Page 206, [Figure 0417](#)) show the route of the Turkey Foot Road between the sites of Harnedsville and Ursina. Nicholson’s survey labels the route “*The Turkeyfoot Road*”, and describes the property as “*Situate on the North Side of The Little Crossings of Youghiogeni River on the Turkeyfoot road in Turkeyfoot Township Bedford County...*” The route in this area is not illustrated on the Lower Turkeyfoot Township “*survey warrant*” map ([Figure 0295](#)). [Figure 0636](#) compares that map with an 1899 topographical map and the Nicholson survey. Hogback road is the closest equivalent present-day alignment.

The Cross Roads church

Page 333 of the 1940 book “**Pastors and People of Somerset Classis**” describes an intersection between the Turkey Foot Road and another road that was located south of Hog Back Ridge, about midway between the locations of Harnedsville and Ursina. A schoolhouse was located at this intersection on David Ream’s property. The location was known as the “*Cross Roads*”, and the school was known as the “*Cross Roads School*”. The Presbyterian and (Reformed) Lutheran churches bought an acre of ground that included the “*Cross Roads School*” from David Ream in 1800, and built a log church on the site. The execution of the deed was postponed until June 5, 1815, and the cost of the property was four pounds and ten shillings. The intersection and a church building are illustrated on the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map of Somerset County ([Figure 0527](#)), the 1822 Melish state map ([Figure 0642](#)), and the 1830 Melish county map ([Figure 0784](#)). The Reformed congregation eventually died out. The Cross Roads Cemetery ([Figure 0901](#)) is located at Latitude 39.808227°, Longitude -79.329888°, eight-tenths-mile north of Harnedsville on the east side of Hogback Road. The earliest burials there are Catherine White, who was born in 1775 and died May 25, 1802, and David Ream ([Figure 0902](#)), who was born in 1754 and died in 1803. Salisbury pioneer Solomon Glotfelty’s son Casper was one of the settlers in the vicinity of the “*Cross Roads*”.

⁶⁸⁶ Miller’s publication is available at the Somerset County Historical Center, Somerset, Pennsylvania.

The 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**” indicates that the Ursina Lutheran congregation was organized in 1866, and got its start at the Cross Roads schoolhouse. The 1915 map of [Figure 0780](#) shows a schoolhouse on the opposite side of the Turkey Foot Road, compared to where the church is illustrated on the 1818 map.

A railroad crossing accident

In 1893, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania heard appeals in the lawsuits of Christian Smith and Jeremiah Liston versus the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company (see Volume 27 of the “**Atlantic Reporter**”). On the afternoon of March 2, 1889, the two men were using Liston’s buggy to travel from Ursina to their respective homes in Listonburg. They were on the main road between Ursina and Harnedsville, and came to the angled railroad crossing on Hogback Road, about one-half-mile south of Ursina, which was about 80 yards west of the depot. Their view of the track was obstructed by items of the railroad company, and their conveyance was struck by a westbound freight train as they drove onto the main track. In the original Somerset County jury trial, Smith was awarded \$700, and Liston was awarded \$950. The Supreme Court upheld the ruling. The current railroad crossing ([Figure 0972](#)), which is believed to be located at or very near the 1889 crossing site, is located at Latitude 39.812797°, Longitude -79.328622°.

Ursina

What the surveys show

Andrew Ream’s 1796 survey (Book C-177, Page 206, [Figure 0417](#)) and the 1786 survey of Benjamin Pursell (Book C-172, Page 74, [Figure 0519](#)) show the Turkey Foot Road passing through the area that became the town of Ursina. [Figure 0525](#) identifies the approximate route through Ursina using a 1922 topographical map, matching the route shown on the Pursell and Ream surveys and the 1818 Melish-Whiteside map ([Figure 0527](#)). The route through Ursina is also shown on the 1939 W.P.A. Lower Turkeyfoot Township “survey warrant” map⁶⁸⁷, which is included as [Figure 0295](#). The location of the route correlates to Chestnut Street ([Figure 0856](#)); see the plat of Ursina in the 1876 Beers atlas ([Figure 0608](#)). Groff Road ([Figure 0857](#)) aligns with Chestnut Street. Surveys from 1786 and 1796 prove that Groff Road is the modern alignment of the old Turkey Foot Road.

Northwest of Pursell’s tract, the 1785 survey of Benjamin Jennings, Junior (Book C-89, Page 243) does not show the route. North of Pursell’s tract, William Rush’s 1785 survey (Book C-183, Page 54), John Skinner’s 1797 survey (Book C-220, Page 38), John Skinner’s 1785 survey (Book A-74, Page 118), Nathaniel Skinner’s⁶⁸⁸ 1785 survey (Book C-204, Page 127), James Skinner’s 1812 survey (Book C-204, Page 118), John Skinner’s 1813 survey (Book C-204, Page 117), and Reuben Skinner’s⁶⁸⁹ 1785 survey (Book C-202, Page 66) do not show the route; however, John Skinner’s 1813 survey mentions that it “includes an improvement first begun the 1st day of March 1779”. John Skinner began his improvement at about the same time the Turkey Foot Road was being cut through the area.

⁶⁸⁷ The W.P.A. warrant map was provided courtesy of Harry Ringler, Junior.

⁶⁸⁸ Nathaniel Skinner appears in the list of 1776 Turkeyfoot Township taxables.

⁶⁸⁹ Reuben Skinner appears in the list of 1779 Turkeyfoot Township property holders with 150 acres.

An 1871 description of Ursina and Confluence

An early description of Ursina is captured in the papers of the case of Cessna versus Meyers, relating to an October 1870 election. The papers, which are published in the 1871 book “**The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the house of Representatives**”, include a transcript of the January 7, 1871 oral testimony of H. B. Barnes, which states:

There are three stores in Ursina—Lichliten & Coder, John H. Benford & Co., and Isaac S. Jenkins. ... They have four hotels in the town; one is kept by Michael Hurley, an Irishman; Samuel Morrison keeps another...Joseph P. Miller keeps another...Ephriam Kregar keeps another... There are three doctors here—Harah, Crampton, and Berins. ... They have a saw mill here... There are three confectionaries and restaurants in Ursina. There is a foundry also, run by Stutsman & Keim. ... I suppose there are thirty or forty houses—residences and places of business. This town of Ursina, except four dwelling houses, has all been built within two years. Mr. William J. Baer, the original proprietor of the town, lives in Somerset. In Confluence, same township, there are, I think, about a dozen houses. They have been built within the last two years.

In 1874, Ursina built a new school building, as reported in J. B. Whipkey’s report on Somerset County Schools in the 1877 book “**Reports of the Heads of Departments**”:

The excellent new school building erected in Ursina in 1874, but not furnished, is now well supplied with the latest improved patent furniture and arrangement... The building was opened for school for the first time last fall. Two rooms were appropriated for this purpose.

An 1884 description of Ursina

As quoted above, page 557 of the 1884 book “**History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties...**” clearly describes the Turkey Foot Road as passing through Ursina. Page 561 of that book describes Ursina as follows:

Ursina, as is elsewhere stated, occupies the site of the Ream farm, and was the point of one of the earliest settlements in the Turkey-Foot region. Evidences of Indian occupation are abundant. Arrow and spear heads and other stone implements of the aboriginal race are frequently found, even at this day, in the soil along the river. There is a tradition that the settlers once had a sort of rude fortification on the bank of the stream near the lower end of the town, close beside the tree that bears the name of “The Fort Oak” .⁶⁹⁰ There is evidence that this was actually the case, a part of the works still being visible, while some of the logs, covered by the water of the river, are tolerably well-preserved. It is said that the old fort-house was connected with the river by a covered passageway, so that the occupants of the building could procure water without exposing themselves to danger from the Indians.⁶⁹¹

Ursina received its somewhat fanciful name from the fact that it was laid out by Hon. William J. Baer⁶⁹², now the president judge of this district, and who at that time owned the land on which the town was platted. The town was laid out in 1868, H. L. Baer and R. J. Botzer being the surveyors.

The first house was built by Ephriam Kreger, in 1868, and was occupied as a hotel for several years. It is now a private dwelling.

⁶⁹⁰ The book “**Reflections: Ursina 1787 – 1994**” includes a vintage photo of the Fort Oak. At the time of the photo, the tree had a circumference of 17 feet, and was believed to be the largest white oak in the state.

⁶⁹¹ The November 1972 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**” associates the stockade with the Ream family.

⁶⁹² A footnote in the 1906 book states: “*Ursus (Latin) signifies bear.*”

The first store was erected in 1868, by Isaac A. Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins still carries on the mercantile business. In 1881 he began the erection of a three-story frame addition to his store, 51 X 80 feet.

The first blacksmith-shop was built by Judge Baer, in 1868. John Anderson was the first blacksmith. The same year Judge Baer erected a sawmill, which was in operation for several years. A gristmill, which is still in operation, was added in 1871.

The first saddler was Amelius Hoffmeier; the first shoemaker, Norman Lichliter.

While the railroad was building, and for several years succeeding, the town grew quite rapidly, and many good and substantial buildings were erected.

In 1871 a stave factory was built and put in operation by Norman Lichliter. The building has recently been converted into a keg factory, owned by the Citizens' Oil Refining Company and operated by Edward Alcott.

The Ursina Branch railroad, built in 1871-2, was in operation for about three years, adding to the industries of this section the coal mines along its route.

A schoolhouse was erected in 1870, at a cost of about thirteen hundred dollars. The first teacher was John Griffith. In 1872 a two-story brick school-building, 34 X 44 feet, with a seating capacity of 300, was erected at a cost of between seven thousand and eight thousand dollars. There is no better school building in Somerset County.

Ursina was incorporated as a borough in 1872. In 1883 it had an estimated population of six hundred, and contained seven stores, one blacksmith-shop, two saddleryshops, three hotels, three shoeshops, two millinersshops, one keg factory, three churches and two physicians.

A 1906 description of Ursina

Volume II, page 623 of the 1906 book "**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**" describes Ursina as follows:

The site of Ursina is a farm that was improved by Andrew Ream, one of the first Jersey settlers. Arrows and spearheads and other evidences of Indian occupation are found here to this day. There is also evidence that a stockade for defense against the Indians was built on this farm.

The town was laid out in 1868 by Hon. William J. Baer⁶⁹³. The surveyor was R. J. Botzer, a civil engineer. Its name is a derivative of the word "bear" in Latin. The town is located in the narrow valley of the Laurel Hill creek, about two miles above its junction with Castleman's river. The town was platted on both sides of the stream, and on the original plat there are 1,464 lots and out-lots – enough for a fair-sized city. The town, however, never attained the size its projector had hoped for, although while the railroad was building and for several years thereafter the town grow [sic] quite rapidly.

The first house was built in 1868 by Ephriam S. Kregar as a hotel, known as the Sycamore House. The first store was also built and opened in 1868 by Isaac A. Jenkins. An extensive foundry was also built by Alexander Stutzman and Noah G. Keim, but only operated a few years. A gristmill was built in 1871, and the same year a stave factory was put in operation by Norman B. Lichtler; this was afterward converted into a keg or barrel factory. ...

⁶⁹³ Pages 426 to 428 of the same 1906 book provide a biography of William J. Baer.

A two story brick schoolhouse was built in 1872 at a cost of \$7,000, which at that time was probably the best in the county. The place has a thriving Odd Fellows' lodge and a Grand Army post. There are also two churches and one hotel. The town in recent years has had a very slow growth; its present population is estimated at 450.

The present residence of Noah Scott, in the northern outskirts of the borough, was the scene of the famous battle between Major Alexander Hanna and five of the McClintock boys, which took place at a mustering in 1828. Major Hanna was a man of prodigious strength. His assailants, all powerful men, but knowing they could not cope with him single-handed, all attacked him at the same time. During the fight John McClintock cut Hanna across the abdomen with a knife. With his bowels protruding so that he had to hold them in with one hand, he still beat off his five assailants until rescued by his friends, and eventually recovered from his injuries. Some of the McClintocks were arrested and imprisoned, while others fled the country.

Ursina was incorporated as a borough in 1872.

[Figure 0526](#) is a 1939 aerial view of Ursina, and [Figure 0995](#) is an image from a 1909 postcard. The 2004 book “**Greetings from Somerset County Pennsylvania**” by the Daily American has a number of early photos of Ursina and Confluence. For a 2011 photo of Ursina, see [Figure 0539](#).

A 1994 description of the traditional route of the Turkey Foot Road

The book “**Reflections: Ursina 1787 – 1994**” describes the route as passing by the Alcott house, and fording Laurel Hill Creek near what was once known as the Sycamore House, which was the Sara Younkin house in 1994. This traditional route is offset to the east from the route shown on Andrew Ream’s 1796 survey and the 1786 Benjamin Pursell survey.

The book claims that the route went to the fortification, where there were no embankments. Presumably, the lack of embankments ([Figure 0897](#)) facilitated fording the creek. The book also relates that George Bowser found stockade logs in the 1950s, while performing digging related to the construction of the house of Ralph VanSickle. VanSickle’s house was the Church of God parsonage in 1994.

Mr. Dietle stopped at the home of Ursina resident Saloma Blubaugh in 2013 to inquire about the location of the Alcott and Younkin houses, and the parsonage. As it turns out, she lives between the church and the parsonage, and could identify the location of all the structures referenced in the 1994 book. The Alcott house ([Figure 0896](#)) is located on the southwest side of the First Street/Hogback Road bridge, at Latitude 39.81496°, Longitude -79.329553°. The current parsonage ([Figure 0894](#)) is located at Latitude 39.815784°, Longitude -79.331184°, and was also serving as the parsonage in 1994. The Sycamore/Sara Younkin house ([Figure 0895](#)) is located next to and east of the parsonage, at Latitude 39.815896°, Longitude -79.330663°. Saloma indicated that the Sycamore house was once a hotel. Her statement is harmonious with Volume II, page 623 of the 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**”, which states that the Sycamore House “*was built in 1868 by Ephriam S. Kregar as a hotel*”.

The Turkey-Foot Baptist Church was known as the Jersey Church

The Jersey Baptist Church is located along the Jersey Hollow Road (SR 3003) at Latitude 39.841005°, Longitude -79.337524°, just south of a section of the Turkey Foot Road that has been proven by early surveys. The 1818 Melish-Whiteside map ([Figure 0527](#)) and its 1830 derivative

([Figure 0784](#)) illustrate the church along the Turkey Foot Road. [Figure 0524](#) is a 1939 aerial photo of the location of the church. [Figure 0543](#) provides 2011 views of the church and the newer cemetery, and [Figure 0544](#) shows the old cemetery.⁶⁹⁴

In Ursina, the secret to finding the Jersey Hollow Road is to take Groff Road, which is an older alignment of Route 281 that was replaced in 1930.⁶⁹⁵ In the area south of the Jersey Baptist Church, the valley ([Figure 0855](#)) that the Jersey Hollow Road follows is quite constricted in some places. In the constricted locations where the present-day road runs along the deepest part of the valley, the present-day road must surely have reasonably good fidelity to the old route. At the lower end of the valley, the present-day route is cut into the hillside, but it is conceivable that the older route may have been located down along the creek, to minimize the need for excavation.

Page 568 of the 1884 book “**History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties...**” describes the Jersey Baptist Church as follows:

Turkey-Foot Baptist Church—This organization, which is more commonly known as the Jersey Baptist church, is the oldest Baptist church west of the Allegheny mountains. It is the oldest church of any kind in Somerset county, and perhaps the oldest in Southwestern Pennsylvania. ... The Turkey-Foot church is the parent of all the Baptist churches included in a region hundreds of miles in extent. The following is an exact copy of page seven of the minute⁶⁹⁶ of the Turkey-Foot Baptist Church:

“The minutes of the proceedings of the church belonging to Turkey-Foot and Sandy Creek Glades. On Wednesday, the fourteenth day [of August], Anno Domini 1775, the Rev. Mr. Isaac Sutton and John Corbley met this church at the house of Moses Halls in Turkey-Foot, and after a sermon on the occasion they solemnly constituted a church in these places...”

... The first house was built in January, 1788. It was a two-story log structure with gallery, and was used as a church, schoolhouse, and, tradition says, at one time as a blockhouse. While attending, many of the early settlers brought their rifles, which stood in a corner until service was concluded. The second house, a frame building, was erected in 1838; the third, also a frame, was finished in 1877...

The founding of the church on August 14, 1775 proves that the Jersey settlers arrived before Morgan had the Turkey Foot Road cut in 1779. The church records are prima facie evidence that a path preceded the Turkey Foot Road.

Volume II, pages 487 and 488 of the 1906 book “**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**” also describes the church, from which this extract is drawn:

Turkeyfoot Baptist church, located in Lower Turkeyfoot township, is remarkable for several reasons. It is more commonly known as the “Jersey Baptist church,” as many of the early settlers who were among the first membership came from New Jersey, and were of the Roger Williams stripe of Baptists. It is without doubt the oldest Baptist church west of the Allegheny mountains, and is also the oldest of all the churches in Somerset county, and is believed to be the oldest of any in southwestern Pennsylvania. For many years after its organization Maryland and Virginia

⁶⁹⁴ Burials at the old cemetery are listed in the May 1983 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**”.

⁶⁹⁵ The 1930 road replacement date was provided by Ursina resident Saloma Blubaugh in 2013, based on her personal recollection of the road being replaced.

⁶⁹⁶ Some of the early minutes of the church are included in the August 1981 issue of the “**Laurel Messenger**”.

settlers were among its members, while Sandy Creek Glades, Virginia formed a portion of its parish. It is the parent of all the Baptist churches in this region. ...

The first church building was erected January, 1788. It was a two-story log structure with a gallery; was used as a school house, and tradition says as a blockhouse. Early settlers brought their rifles, and some stood guard at the corner of the church until service had ended.

The Baptist Church appears to be located on or near⁶⁹⁷ the Nathaniel Skinner survey (Book C-204, page 127), as can be seen by comparing [Figure 0522](#) to [Figure 0295](#). According to the February 1997 “**Laurel Messenger**”, this area was known as “*Skinner’s Row*” in the land records because of the concentration of Skinner properties. Nathaniel Skinner is buried at the Jersey Church. His tombstone reads “*THE BODY of NATHANIEL SKINNER Sen who was born in Woodbridge in New Jersey, lieth here He Departed this life October 1, 1801 aged 95 years*”.

The Royse and Melick surveys

John Melick’s 1814 survey (Book C-135, Page 172, [Figure 0520](#)) describes property “*Situate in Turkey foot Township, Somerset county, including both sides of the Turkey foot Road, on the waters of Flag Run...*”. A John Melick was baptized and received into the Turkeyfoot Baptist Church on June 7, 1789.

Aaron Royse’s 1785 survey (Book C-183, Page 42, [Figure 0521](#)) describes the adjacent property as being “*Situated on the headwaters of Oliver Drake’s Mill Run*”, and illustrates the Turkey Foot Road. When these two surveys are compared to modern property boundaries ([Figure 0522](#)), they prove that the section of the Jersey Hollow Road (SR3003) between Latitude 39.849683°, Longitude -79.341931° and Latitude 39.8759°, Longitude -79.353953° corresponds well to the route of the Turkey Foot Road that is shown on the surveys. Roughly speaking, this is the section of road in Lower Turkeyfoot Township that is located north of the crossroads formed with Conn Road and Covered Bridge Road, and south of the intersection with Back Road ([Figure 0854](#)). This section begins about six-tenths-mile north of the Jersey Baptist Church, and is shown in the 1939 aerial photo of [Figure 0523](#). Aaron Royce appears on the list of taxables for Turkeyfoot Township for 1776. He was already in the area before George Morgan had the 1779 road cut to Fort Pitt.

John Melick’s 1814 survey (Book C-135, Page 172, [Figure 0520](#)) shows that the James Tannehill property was located just to the south, where the “*Road to Somerset*” joined the Turkey Foot Road. That property is shown as the 1785 Reubin Skinner survey (Book C-202, Page 66) on the W.P.A. warrantee survey map of Lower Elk Lick Township ([Figure 0295](#)), and a small 1806 William Tannehill survey (Book C-207, Page 251) adjoins it. The Turkey Foot Road and the road to Somerset are not shown on the 1785 Reubin Skinner survey. An article by Zachariah L. Tannehill in the February 1963 “**Laurel Messenger**” states:

James, William and Samuel, Jr. sons of Samuel Tannehill of West Virginia, settled in the Turkeyfoot settlement about the year 1787. James and William bought the farm ... of one Abraham Boosemberk for two gallons of rum and one pair of buckskin breeches.

James Tannehill was a owner of slaves, he also kept a store and tavern. I have heard it said that there would be as many as fifty or seventy-five wagons in the yard over night. James Tannehill was

⁶⁹⁷ The February 1997 “**Laurel Messenger**” reportedly indicates the Skinner property is located *next* to the church property. The location of the stream on Figures 0522 and 0295 suggests the church property may have originally been a part of the Skinner property. The correct answer presumably could be determined with a property search.

a soldier in the War of 1812, he was in the cavalry service and when discharged brought his horse named "Apollo" home with him, and when it died at the age of 22 years, had him buried on the farm near the state road where his grave can yet be seen. ... William Tannehill kept a store near Paddytown on the farm now owned by William Elcher...

The state road reference appears to refer to either the Turkey Foot Road or the road to Somerset that merged on the Tannehill property. Whether the James Tannehill tavern was located along the Turkey Foot Road on the farm is unproven, but the place where the two roads merged seems to be a good place for a tavern. In any case, the Tannehill farm next to Melick's appears to be the farm that James and William purchased from Boosemberk. The 1899 book "**Biographical Review Containing Life Sketches of Leading Citizens of Somerset**" states that "*William Tannehill...settled in Somerset County as a pioneer, and is said to have purchased a farm near Draketown of a man named Hanna for two gallons of rum and a grubbing hoe.*" The alcohol based farm purchase tradition is also included in the 1906 book "**History of Bedford and Somerset Counties...**", which states:

William Tannehill⁶⁹⁸ located his land above where Draketown now is. It has always remained in the Tannehill family, and some of them are now living on it. Tradition has it that Tannehill found a settler or squatter on this land; in consideration of a gallon or two of whiskey and a grubbing hoe he consented to vacate it.

The statement "*above where Draketown now is*" fits the property adjoining the Melick survey. The farm purchase tradition is also included in the 1884 county history:

William Tannehill, one of the first settlers, was born in Preston County, West Virginia. About 1768 he came, a young man, to the farm now owned by Dr. Harah, near Draketown. The farm was first purchased by James Tannehill, brother of William, for two gallons of rum and a grubbing hoe. William Tannehill was a captain of militia in the war of 1812. For twenty years he served as constable; he was also a merchant and auctioneer. He died in 1825.

Brushtown School

The 1876 Beers map of Lower Turkeyfoot Township illustrates the Brushtown School as being located just west of the intersection of Jersey Hollow Road with Brushtown Road and Draketown Road, and identifies it as "*School No. 4*". The same location is identified as the Brushtown School on the 1922 and 1933 topographical maps of the area. A 1939 aerial photo shows a building in this location, but whether this building is the school is undetermined.

Robert Skinner's farm along the Turkey Foot Road

Robert Skinner reportedly had a farm three to four miles northwest of the Jersey Baptist Church before 1800, along the Turkey Foot Road. A 1943 map, by Harry Speer Rush, of land owned by the Rush and Skinner families, shows where Skinner's 1794 farm was located. [Figure 0289](#) is a topographic map that has been marked up to show the general location of the farm, relative to the Jersey Baptist Church. The farm would have been located approximately at Latitude 39.889686°, -79.368238°. The 1876 Beers map of Lower Turkeyfoot Township ([Figure 0353](#)) makes it more

⁶⁹⁸ A photo of William Tannehill's rude cabin is included in the book "**Draketown Past & Present**". The book also includes what appears to be a late nineteenth century photo of the Jersey Baptist Church.

obvious that the Jersey Church is along the same road as Robert Skinner's place; that road is now known as the Jersey Hollow Road.

Wayne and Olive Parker's 1972 book "**The Hammers Genealogy**" mentions a land record for a farm claimed by Cortland Skinner. The farm was reportedly located about three miles northwest of the Jersey Church on the Turkey Foot Road. This may be a reference to Robert Skinner's farm.

Like a key piece in a large puzzle, the 1794 "*Bullskin Township Fayette County*" survey of John Stewart identifies where Robert Skinner's property is located. Stewart's 1794 survey ([Figure 0557](#), Survey Book C-210, Page 164) shows a road heading west-northwest out of the westernmost part of Skinner's survey. Stewart's survey proves the Skinner tradition: Robert Skinner's place was indeed along the Turkey Foot Road in 1794. [Figure 0877](#) is a framed copy of Robert Skinner's 1803 survey of a small parcel of land obtained from Jeremiah Read. Part of the tract is described as "*Lying on the South side of the Turkeyfoot Road Joining said Skinner's other Land*".

John Stewart's property also appears on the W.P.A. warrantee survey map of Lower Elk Lick Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania ([Figure 0295](#)). That map indicates that the adjacent properties of John and David Stewart are located in Somerset County rather than Fayette County, and refers to the general area of the Robert Skinner property as the Josiah Tannehill survey ([Figure 0556](#), Book C-227, Page 274). The Tannehill survey, and the 1844 George Pringey survey (Book C-167, Page 61) beside it, do not mention the road. Royce, Melick, and Tannehill residences are shown along the Turkey Foot Road on the 1830 Melish map ([Figure 0784](#)).

Immediately west of the John Stewart survey, the 1794 David Stewart survey ([Figure 0569](#), Book C-210, Page 165) illustrates the route, and describes the property as "*Situate on little Glade Run and on the Turkeyfoot Road in Bullskin Township Fayette County...*".

John Lank's property is located between Aaron Royse's and Robert Skinner's properties. Lank's 1974 survey ([Figure 0565](#), Survey Book C-119, Page 59) also shows that Robert Skinner had what would later become the Josiah Tannehill property. [Figure 0579](#) precisely locates the Robert Skinner property along the present-day Jersey Hollow Road, and proves that as the Jersey Hollow Road exits Somerset County, it follows the 1794 route that is illustrated on the John and David Stewart surveys.

The 1818 Melish-Whiteside map

The 1818 Melish-Whiteside map shows an abrupt turn to the northeast in the area north of Back Road, making it appear that the then-existing main route may have swung around more to the north, rather than corresponding to the Jersey Hollow road. It is not known if this northeastern swing is accurately depicted, or if it did exist, was considered part of the Turkey Foot Road. This northern swing seems to correlate to the present-day Cranberry Road. As shown by the 1876 Beers map of Lower Turkeyfoot Township ([Figure 0528](#)), Cranberry Road already existed in 1876.

East of the Robert Skinner/Josiah Tannehill property, the 1857 William H. Koontz survey (Book C-111, Page 235)⁶⁹⁹ and the 1794 Isaac Wickoffe survey (Book D-6, Page 278) "*Situate on Cranberry Glade Run*" do not show or describe any roads. The road that is shown across these properties on the [Figure 0295](#) W.P.A. map is not shown on the actual surveys.

⁶⁹⁹ The March 26, 1793 Isaac Wickoffe survey (Book D-6, Page 278) indicates that the 1857 William H. Koontz property (Book C-111, Page 235) also belonged to Robert Skinner.

