

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

36. Backpedaling through history

Introduction

This chapter is the main reason there was a second edition of this book. The material in this chapter was formerly a section titled “*Three Forks of the Yohiogain at today’s West Newton*” within the chapter titled “*Re-Evaluating Ohio Company History*”.⁷⁵¹ That section began with analysis of a British map from the French and Indian War (Figures [0012](#), [0438](#)) and concluded that the location marked “*Three forks of Yohiogain*” was West Newton, rather than Confluence. Based on new information, that analysis, which seemed so compelling, has been determined to be incorrect. The West Newton conclusion is therefore retracted. This does not impact the overall conclusion of the chapter on Ohio Company history; i.e., the Ohio Company did not cut the Turkey Foot Road.

The foundation of the now-retracted conclusion was built on these three facts:

- As noted previously, Doctor Wellford describes the Youghiogheny River in the West Newton area as “*the forks of Yough*” in a 1794 travel journal.
- On the map (Figures [0012](#), [0438](#)), the curve in the Youghiogheny River at the location marked “*Three forks of Yohiogain*” resembles West Newton, and does not resemble Confluence.
- An Indian naming convention dubs the juncture of two rivers, to form a third, “*three forks*”.

In the second and third editions of this book, the now-retracted conclusion was “*held in suspension as a precautionary measure, leaving interpretation of the map to another day.*” That day finally came on February 22, 2013 with the discovery of the matching “*Mr. Armstrong’s rough draft of the country to the west of Susquehanna*” ([Figure 0787](#)). John Armstrong’s map proves that the “*Three forks of Yohiogain*” on the British map is the present-day Confluence region, as described near the end of this chapter.

The information that led to the initial suspension of the conclusion

After publication of the first edition, Mr. Dietle asked Cumberland road historian Steve Colby questions concerning the location of Braddock’s road relative to Braddock Run in Pennsylvania. Mr. Colby in turn queried Braddock’s road historian Bob Bantz, who replied with copies and analysis of six colonial maps that depict the route of Braddock’s road near the Youghiogheny River. Although the question and answer are not relevant to the topic of this book, several of the maps are.

Of the six maps, two⁷⁵² depict the shape of the waterways at Confluence with surprising accuracy. Gist’s ([Figure 0468](#)), Orme’s ([Figure 0469](#)), and Gordon’s⁷⁵³ ([Figure 0470](#)) maps, however, show the confluence of the waterways in a manner that resembles the French and Indian War map of

⁷⁵¹ The chapter is now titled “*Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Ohio Company did not cut the Turkey Foot Road*”.

⁷⁵² Shippen’s 1759 map, and a map of Braddock’s road from the British Museum.

⁷⁵³ According to Hanna’s 1911 book “**The Wilderness Trail**”, Harry Gordon was an engineer associated with Braddock’s campaign.

Figures [0012](#) and [0438](#). The Confluence area is referred to as “*Turkeyfoot*” on Gist’s map, “*Three Forks*” on Orme’s map, and “*Turkey’s Foot*” on Gordon’s map.

Given the similarities among the waterway representations on these three maps, as well as on the British map of Figures [0012](#) and [0438](#), it was reasonable to wonder if the river illustration on one of them influenced the others. Based on the illustration similarities, it was thought that the map shown by Figures [0012](#) and [0438](#) may very well represent the Confluence area, rather than West Newton. Based on this information, it was prudent to suspend the conclusion that the map shown by Figures [0012](#) and [0438](#) represents West Newton.

Map observations from the first edition that clearly remain valid

The copy of the map in [Figure 0012](#) is from Archer Butler Hulbert’s 1903 book “**The Old Glade (Forbes’s) road (Pennsylvania state road)**” ([Appendix 0022](#)). In his 1893 book “**Christopher Gist’s journals: with historical, geographical and ethnological notes**”. Darlington dates his copy ([Figure 0438](#)) as a 1755 map.

Hulbert’s title for the map is “*Forbes’s Road to Raystown (1757) [the dotted line to the Youghiogheny shows the line of Burd’s Road] (From the original in the British Museum)*”. Hulbert describes the basis of the confusing title of his Forbes Road book as follows:

The “Old Glade Road,”⁷⁵⁴ the old-time name of the Youghiogheny division (Burd’s or the “Turkey Foot” Road) of this thoroughfare, has been selected as the title of this volume...

The Turkeyfoot reference seems to be based on the fact that Burd intended the road to go to Turkeyfoot. Hulbert uses the map to illustrate the route of Forbes’ road east of Raystown. Inexplicably, Hulbert’s estimated 1757 map date is after Burd’s road building activities during Braddock’s disastrous 1755 campaign, and before Forbes’ successful occupation of Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh) began on November 25, 1758. The true date of the map is now believed to be 1755. The route west of Raystown cannot be Forbes’ 1758 road, because Forbes’ road did not cross the Youghiogheny River.⁷⁵⁵

Identifiable locations on the British map

The “*Great Crossing*” is where Braddock’s road crossed the Youghiogheny River. “*Rae’s Town*” is an alternate spelling of “*Ray’s Town*”, which is the antecedent to Bedford, Pennsylvania. A present-day historical marker memorializes the “*Shawnese Cabbins*” location. The marker is located along U.S. Route 30, just west of Schellsburg Pennsylvania at Latitude 40.048700°, Longitude -78.647900°. This is about five miles west of where present-day Route 31 branches southward from Route 30, and about three miles due north of Route 31. The marker states:

A village site nearby on the Raystown Path. Named for a group of Shawnee Indians who halted here on their retreat from the Potomac to the lower Allegheny valley in the early 18th century.

According to Wallace’s book, “*Shawnee Cabins*” was located about one-half mile south of Schellsburg.

⁷⁵⁴ As with many place names in this study, there is more than one “*Glade Road*”.

⁷⁵⁵ In a September 6, 1758 letter, Forbes wrote the following to Pitt: “*In my last I had the honour to acquaint you, of my proceedings in the new road across the Alleganey mountains and over Laurell Hill, (leaving the Rivers Yohioganey and Monongahela to my left hand) strait to the Ohio, by which I have saved a great deal of way, and prevented the misfortunes that the overflowing of those rivers might occasion.*”

Hulbert misapplies a Maryland record

Hulbert implies that the road on the map was once known as the Turkey Foot Road, which in turn implies that the road passed through Turkeyfoot. Hulbert's only recorded basis for his "*Turkey Foot*" assertion is an inexplicable misapplication of a Maryland road survey. On page 33, he states: "*This branch was also known as the Turkey Foot Road*" (internal quotations omitted). In a footnote to the quoted sentence, he references the "*Land Records of Allegheny County, Maryland, Liber D. fol. 225.*" That particular record ([Figure 0047](#)) is an 1804 survey that actually shows the Turkey Foot Road at the location of present-day Barrelville, Maryland. That Turkey Foot Road, which is the primary subject of this book, is clearly not the "*Youghiogheny division (Burd's or the 'Turkey Foot' Road)*" that Hulbert references. Hulbert was apparently as confused by the multiple Turkey Foot roads as other historians. Nevertheless, it is extremely surprising that he misapplied a Maryland survey to a road that was only located in Pennsylvania.

Hulbert was an enthusiastic researcher of early transportation routes. According to a 10-page 1928 bibliography⁷⁵⁶ that was compiled by the Vermont Historical Commission, Hulbert wrote approximately 100 items comprising books, magazine contributions, and pamphlets. With Hulbert having so many proverbial irons in the fire, it seems extremely doubtful that he was an expert on the subject of the Turkey Foot roads. He was an admirably talented writer, but not infallible.

In a general sense, the routes on the British map contemplate one of the roads to Turkeyfoot that eventually ran from Somerset and Berlin to Uniontown (Chapter 35). These roads did branch from the Glade Road. In the main, Hulbert was right, even though his reference to the 1804 Maryland record is a mistake.

The route on the British map is described as crossing "*a branch of the South Branch of Yohiogain*", which means that it crossed some tributary of the Casselman River.

Was the map Burd's?

The Commission for Burd's roadwork

Burd began cutting a road to Turkeyfoot during the French and Indian War, but aborted the project when he heard of Braddock's defeat. The authorization for Burd's roadwork is contained in Volume 6 of the "**Colonial Records of Pennsylvania**". On February 18, 1755, the council records state:

...the Council judged it would be absolutely necessary to open a Road from Shippensburg to intercept the Road of the Army from Wills' Creek to Fort Dusquesne thro' Ray's Town...it was agreed that the Governor should issue forth with a Commission...to reconnoiter and explore the Country lying between the Kittochtinney Hills, the Great Meadows, and Wills' Creek...

This indicates that two roads were intended from Shippensburg; one to the Great Meadows and one to Fort Cumberland. Lieutenant Governor Morris' commission was made out to George Croghan, John Armstrong, James Burd, William Buchannan, and Adam Hoops, and includes the statement:

Whereas, Application has been made.....to cause a Road and Communication to be opened from the present Roads and settled Parts of this Province to a Branch of Monongahila called Yohiogain, and to the Camp at the mouth of Wills' Creek, as well for the march of troops as for the Carriage of Provisions; and it having been represented to me that a good Wagon Road may be opened from

⁷⁵⁶ "**Bibliography of the Writings of Archer Butler Hulbert**" by Harrison J. Conant, 1928.

the Great Road leading thro' Carlisle and Shippensburg to the Yohiogain aforesaid and to the Camp at Wills' Creek. ... You are...to lay out such Roads as You shall judge most direct and commodious to answer the Purposes aforesaid...and...report to me your Proceedings in the Premises, with fair Draughts of the Courses and Distances of such Roads... Together with an Account of your charges of executing this Commission and a fair Estimate of the Charge and Expense of opening and clearing such Roads...

Burd followed an existing path

The “**Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania**” include “*A letter from the “Commis^{rs} for running the Road” (George Croghan, James Burd, Joⁿ Armstrong, Wm. Buchanan, and Ad^m. Hoops), dated “Fort Cumberland, April 16th, 1755”. The letter indicates that progress had been rapid because they were following an existing route. The letter was read at the Provincial Council at the request of the Governor. It begins as follows:*

In pursuance of your commission, we set out on the road from Carlisle on the 29th of March, and with the greatest industry reached the waters of Youghiogheny on the 11th inst. We stopped at about eighteen miles on this side of the Three Forks, and would have proceeded farther, had we not had certain intelligence of great numbers of French and Indians hunting, and scouting, &c. Our Indians all fled from us, some at Ray's Town and some on the Allegheny Hills, save one Delaware.

We were very fortunate in finding a good road all the way, and particularly through the Allegheny hills, considering how mountainous that country is.

The “*reached the waters of Youghiogheny*” statement seems to reference reaching a tributary of the Youghiogheny River, rather than the river itself, since they stopped “*about eighteen miles on this side of the Three Forks*” The reference to finding a good road through the Allegheny hills indicates that they were following an existing path.

Burd sent a map to Governor Morris

Burd wrote the following to Pennsylvania Governor Morris on April 29, 1755:

We have viewed and layed out the roads from hence to the Yohiogain and the camp at Will's Creek, and enclosed You have the Draughts thereof...

The [Figure 0012](#) map may be the map that Burd sent to Governor Morris, based on the identical spelling of “Yohiogain” in the letter and on the map. John Armstrong used the identical spelling in a letter he sent to Richard Peters on May 3, 1755. It is also the spelling used by Morris in their commission. Armstrong's letter includes the statement:

We have sent a Draught of the Road, both to the Waters of the Yohiogain and to the Camp, by Mr. William Frankling, with all the principal Places marked that occurred to us...

Morris cancels the road to Wills Creek

A council attended by Lieutenant Governor Morris was held at Philadelphia on June 2, 1755. The minutes indicate that Burd's road was intended to go to Turkeyfoot:

And Whereas Two Roads were ordered to be cut when they should come to Ray's Town, One to go to Wills' Creek and the other to the Crow Foot of the Ohio-gany, he desired they might not

proceed on the Road to Wills' Creek, as it would be of no Use after the Army should leave the Place, and the other Road of Communication should be opened...

This passage implies that Burd's orders were to cut a road directly from Raystown to Fort Cumberland; however, the commission provided latitude to "*lay out such Roads as You shall judge most direct and commodious to answer the Purposes aforesaid*". Neither Armstrong's map ([Figure 0787](#)) nor the British map ([Figure 0012](#)) illustrate a direct route. The British map does show several projected routes, including a southerly one from "*a branch of the South Branch of Yohiogain*" to a point on Virginia Road (Braddock's road) that was west of Fort Cumberland. The rationale for this particular route is unknown.

Morris requests route clarification

Governor Morris wrote a letter to James Burd on July 3, 1755, quoted in Volume Six of the "**Minutes of the Provincial council of Pennsylvania**", that states:

I have by this Post the Honour of a Letter from General Braddock, who desires that as it is not perfectly understood in what Part your Road is to communicate with that thro' which he is now proceeding to Fort Du Quesne, this may be immediately settled by Me, and an Express sent after him with the most exact Description of it that there may be no Mistake in a Matter of such Importance.

I cou'd have wished the General had enquired this of You by a special Messenger, but as he has thought proper to write to Me upon the Subject I must refer him to your Judgment, not being able to form any of my own for want of Information.

I took it for granted by the Report that the Commissioner made on their Return from examining the Country and laying out a Road to Mohongalo in the most convenient places that the Waters or Mountains wou'd admit, that such Road must pass the Turkey Foot or Three Forks of Ohiogany, and that there cou'd be no Road got to the Northward. If I am right in this, then it shou'd seem to Me that as the General's Road passes thro' the great Crossings of Ohiogany, which is but Three Miles from the Junction of the Three Branches, that from the Turkey Foot the Place where the Two Roads can best meet is at the great Crossings, And that you must open and clear your Road so far as that. But if I am mistaken, and your own Experience with all the Persons of Judgment along with You, You are to Name some other Place to the General, and give him a Draught and exact Description of it, and send it to him by Express, for which purpose I have wrote a Letter to Captain Hog to dispatch away one of his Officers, who may at the same Time give a verbal Account to the General, and explain all Matters that may remain doubtfull or want Explanation. ...

Pray consult together immediately, and let the General be inform'd by Express with all possible Expedition of the Place where yon will enter into his Road, with Draughts and an exact Description, and be sure mention the Time when you think you shall be there to the General.

It is clear from his letter that Morris was referring to the "*Turkey Foot or Three Forks*" that was near the Great Crossings.

On July 17, 1755, before hearing of Braddock's defeat, Burd wrote a letter "*From our Camp at the Top of the Allegheny Mountains...*" that includes the following statement:

I have the Honour of yours of the 5th curr^t and for Answer. When we went out to view the Road we went ab^t 15 Miles a head of the Camp where we now lay, tho, we intended at that Time to go as far

as the three Forks of Youghyogain or the Turkey Foot, Yet we were obliged to return on Account of the certain Intelligence I received from Capⁿ Rutherford from Fort Cumberland of a Party of Thirty French, into whose Hands we must have undoubtedly fallen had we attempted to proceed, as said Party was laying between Us and the Forks. Mr. Croghan assured us there was no manner of doubt of a fine Road from the Place where we left off to the Turkey Foot.

I receiv'd a Letter from Mr. Peters, dated 27th May, wherein he lets me know he had consulted with the General, and ordered me to proceed immediately with the utmost Expedition to the Turkey Foot...At present I can't form any Judgment where I shall cut the General's Road, further than I know our Course leads us to the Turkey Foot, By the Information of Mr. Croghan when we run the Road first. Mr. Croghan assured me he wou'd be on the Road with me in order to pilott from the Place where we left off blaizeing. Instead of that he has never been here, nor is there one Man in my Company that ever was out this Way to the Turkey Foot, But the Party I send will discover the Place where we shall cut the Road and inform the General, and upon their return I will order 'em to blaize⁷⁵⁷ back to me.

Hulbert describes Burd's actions after Braddock's defeat as follows:

Burd reported to Morris from Shippensburg July 25, that his party had retreated to Fort Cumberland from the top of Allegheny Mountain July 17; "St Clair told Me," he added, tentatively, "that I had done my Duty."

Burd's statement "...the Party I send will discover the Place where we shall cut the Road and inform the General, and upon their return I will order 'em to blaize back to me" suggests that Burd was departing from the existing path. The letter shows that Burd's original intention was to go through the present-day Confluence area on his way to Braddock's road at the Great Crossings. James Smith's memoir confirms this intended destination:

In May, 1755, the province of Pennsylvania agreed to send out three hundred men, in order to cut a wagon road from fort Loudon, to Join Braddock's road, near the Turkey Foot, or three forks of Yohogania. My brother-in-law, William Smith, Esq. of Conococheague, was appointed commissioner, to have the oversight of these road-cutters.

The 15-mile distance from the top of the Allegheny Mountain would seem to put Burd about nine miles west of Berlin, which would also be about 18 miles from Turkeyfoot. While Burd intended to swing his supply road south to the Confluence area to join the route of Braddock's march, the Glade Road that was eventually cut westward from some point on Burd's road went to West Newton. As described in the previous chapter, Ellis plausibly claims that Burd's abandoned route was eventually extended to Uniontown via Turkeyfoot. The 1755 Evans map ([Figure 0003](#)) shows Burd's road to the top of the Allegheny Mountain, and then shows a route continuing through the Berlin area.

A July 31, 1755 letter from the Lieutenant Governor Morris to Thomas Penn includes the statement:

...the new Road that is open'd to the Allegheny Mountains, and along which any forces that shall be raised for the Ohio Service must go, that road being already carry'd within about fifteen or twenty Miles of the Road that the General took, and is much better than that round by Fort Cumberland.

⁷⁵⁷ A footnote in Volume II of the 1840 book "**The Writings of George Washington**" states: "*The Indians and first settlers mark a path through the woods by cutting the bark from the trees. This is called blazing.*"

Armstrong's map confirms the destination of the map in Hulbert's book

As revealed by the material above, John Armstrong was one of the commissioners of Burd's road. The route to "*Three Forks*" on Armstrong's map ([Figure 0787](#)) matches the route to the "*Three forks of Yohiogain*" on the map in Hulbert's book ([Figure 0012](#)).⁷⁵⁸ This ties the map in Hulbert's book to the construction of Burd's road. The contemporaneous military correspondence indicates that Burd's road was intended to reach Braddock's road near Confluence. Taking the maps of Gist ([Figure 0468](#)), Orme ([Figure 0469](#)), Gordon ([Figure 0470](#)), and Armstrong ([Figure 0787](#)) into consideration, along with contemporaneous military correspondence, the place marked "*Three forks of Yohiogain*" on Hulbert's map ([Figure 0012](#), [Figure 0438](#)) is the present-day location of Confluence. As a result, it is now apparent that the first edition conclusion that the "*Three forks of Yohiogain*" on Hulbert's map is West Newton is wrong. The intended Confluence destination of the illustrated route is now clear, even though the distorted, out-of-scale nature of the map is certainly confusing.

Here are examples of distortion: If the "*Three forks of Yohiogain*" on the map in Hulbert's book is intended to represent the Confluence area, then why is it illustrated as being 20 miles north of Great Crossings? If the route from "*Rea's Town*" to the "*Three forks of Yohiogain*" really ran southwest to Confluence, then why is it illustrated as changing course and angling slightly to the north as it approaches the "*Three forks of Yohiogain*"? The illustrated route certainly bears a striking resemblance to the old Glade Road, which went to West Newton. This, and the 20-mile distance from the Great Crossings, are merely artifacts of the distorted, out-of-scale nature of the map.

Armstrong's map estimates the distance between Three Forks and Fort Duquesne as "*N 65 W 50 M. by Estimation*". The actual distance is more like north 48 miles, west 35 miles. Nevertheless, the estimated distance helps to rule out West Newton, because the distance from West Newton to Pittsburgh is roughly north 16 miles, west 12 miles.

Darlington's copy ([Figure 0438](#)) of the map in Hulbert's book shows three possible routes from Raystown to Turkeyfoot. One goes to the Great Crossings, one goes to the Youghiogheny River midway between the Great Crossings and the forks, and one passes through the forks and continues on to Fort Duquesne. Assuming for the moment that the map is Burd's April 29, 1755 draught, the three projected routes may reflect the uncertainty he still felt two and a half months later when he wrote the July 17, 1755 letter.

⁷⁵⁸ Nicholas Scull's 1759 map ([Figure 0788](#)) also shows the route, and is a good match to Armstrong's map in the region between Ray's Town and the Allegheny Mountain. The map shows the road extending as far as a "*Branch of Yohiogeni R.*"

