

# WASHINGTON'S STOCKADE AT FORT NECESSITY

BY FREDERICK TILBERG

## 1. THE BUILDING OF THE FORT

ON THE morning of July 3, 1754, Colonel George Washington's small band of Virginia and South Carolina militia were busy finishing their entrenchments at Fort Necessity when a strong force of French and Indians opened fire from the fringe of woodland to the west of the fort. The shots were the first volleys of a day-long action which culminated in the capitulation of Washington after nightfall. Terms having been agreed upon, Washington's troops, on the following morning, marched for their base at Wills Creek. Soon only the smoldering ruins of their little stockade at Great Meadows remained.

Over the years, ground evidence at the site of Fort Necessity had become nearly obliterated and the actual size and shape of the original stockade became a matter of conjecture. In the spring of 1953, however, nearly two hundred years after the momentous event at the fort, through the discovery of new documentary evidence and the employment of the exacting methods of archaeology, the actual location and dimensions of the stockade, as well as the outlines of the entrenchments used by Washington's men, were definitely established.

Early accounts indicated clearly the manner of constructing stockades and entrenchments of that period, and in particular those at Fort Necessity. Colonel Washington, at the time of the campaign against Fort Duquesne, was probably well acquainted with the method of stockade construction, as he had occasion to examine closely this type of fort on his expedition to the French in 1753-1754. On this mission to the French commandant at Fort Le Boeuf, December 13, 1753, while French officials had retired from his presence to discuss matters connected with their conference, Washington took advantage of that opportunity to ex-

amine the plan of the French fort. The fort was more than a temporary structure; it was built substantially, four houses composing the sides. "The Bastions," Washington observed, were "made of Piles driven into the ground, standing more than 12 feet above it, and sharp at Top; With Post-Holes cut for Cannon and Loop-Holes for the small arms to fire through."<sup>1</sup>

Another stockade with which Washington was familiar was the fort at Wills Creek. This small fort, built early in 1754, and named Fort Cumberland in the following year, was Washington's point of departure in his campaign against Fort Duquesne in April of that year. It was described at that time as "a small, square fort."<sup>2</sup> The height of the stockade and the depth of the logs in the ground were not indicated. In the following year, however, when the fort was enlarged to accommodate Gen. Edward Braddock's army, it is noted that the expanded stockade was "built of logs driven into the ground, and about 12 feet above it, with embrasures for 12 guns, and 10 mounted, 4 pounders, besides stocks for swivels, and loopholes for small arms."<sup>3</sup> The original small square fort now formed the west end of a larger rectangular stockade.<sup>4</sup> In the year following the Fort Necessity action, the attitude of the British Government, apparently based on the experiences of Washington, was expressed in the instructions given Braddock by the Duke of Cumberland which stated that "You ought not to build considerable forts. . . . His Royal Highness thinks that stockaded forts, with pallisadoes and a good ditch, capable of containing 200 men or 400 upon emergency, will be sufficient for the present."<sup>5</sup>

In a consideration of the type of defense post constructed by Washington at Fort Necessity, it is important to review his plan of attack on Fort Duquesne. Washington arrived at Wills Creek April 24 and, after consultation with his fellow officers, decided at once to proceed westward, widen the Indian path, build bridges, and construct a fort on the Monongahela River. In support of

<sup>1</sup> *Old South Leaflets*, No. 187, VIII, p. 217

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of a Naval Officer*, 373, quoted in F. Nichols, *Braddock Expedition* (Cambridge, 1947). Microfilm copy in Library of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Map in A. B. Hulbert, *Braddock's Road*, Vol. IV, *Historic Highways of America* (Cleveland, 1903), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

his decision to build a fort on the river near Redstone Creek, he stated that "1st. the mouth of Red-Stone is the first convenient place on the River Monongahela; 2nd. The stores are already built at that place for the provisions of the Company, wherein our ammuniion may be laid up, our great guns may be also sent by water whenever we think it convenient to attack the Fort [Duquesne]." <sup>6</sup> Washington had in mind, therefore, a fort location which would enable him to use water transportation for guns and supplies in his attack on Fort Duquense. His advance force was to be the vanguard of the expedition, part of which was still to be assembled at Wills Creek; and apparently the only fort planned at the beginning of the march was at Redstone Creek (now Brownsville), 25 miles beyond Great Meadows.

Hoping to take advantage of water transportation as early as possible in his expedition, Washington and a small party, on reaching the Youghiogheny River, made their way by canoe down the river, hoping to find water passage to the Monongahela. Passing Turkey Foot (now Confluence), which he marked for a fort location, he found, just beyond, that rapids prohibited movement by that stream. Returning to camp, his force continued westward overland to Great Meadows.

Events now developed speedily. Washington noted on May 24 that his force arrived at Great Meadows. Learning from a trader that a strong detachment of French and Indians was on the march from Fort Duquesne, he "placed troops behind two natural Intrenchments, and had our wagons put there also." <sup>7</sup> Washington soon received a second message, this time from the Half King, that the French were at the "X-ing of the Yaughyaughgan [near present Connellsville] ab't 10 miles. I hereupon hurried to this place [Great Meadows] as a convenient spott. We have, with Nature's assistance, made a good Intrenchment, and by clearing ye Bushes out of these Meadows, prepar'd a charming field for an Encounter." <sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> J. M. Toner, *Journal of Col. George Washington, 1754* (Albany, 1893), p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Toner, *Journal, 1754*, p. 72; *Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, I, 85. Published by the Mt. Vernon Ladies Assoc. of the Union, 1925.

<sup>8</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, Lt. Gov. of the Colony of Virginia, 1751-1758. Printed from MSS. in the Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, introduction by R. A. Brock; published by the Society, Rich-

Thus, as Washington's expedition moved westward, Great Meadows was selected as a suitable place for an encampment and as an outpost to serve as a defense position in case of need. Apparently the natural entrenchments to which Washington referred were the banks of Great Meadows Run and Indian Run, which form a juncture a few yards to the northeast of the fort soon to be erected.

On May 29, Washington wrote Governor Dinwiddie from the camp at Great Meadows, after first relating his account of the Jumonville incident of the preceding day, that "we have already begun a Palisado'd Fort, and hope we can have it up tomorrow. . . ." <sup>9</sup>

On May 30, Washington noted in his journal, "Fearing that as soon as the news of this defeat [the Jumonville action of May 28] should reach the French we might be attacked by considerable forces, I began to raise a fort with a little palisade." <sup>10</sup>

From his camp at Great Meadows, Washington wrote his brother Augustine on May 31 that "We expect every hour to be attacked by a superior force, but, if they forbear one day longer, we shall be prepared for them. We have already got entrenchments, and are about a pallisado which I hope will be finished today. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

On June 1, Washington noted in his Journal that "we are finishing our Fort." <sup>12</sup>

On June 3, he again wrote Governor Dinwiddie that "We have

mond, 1883, Vol. I, 175; also *Writings of Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor, 1931, Vol. I, 54. References to Washington's Journal are taken from the version which fell into the hands of the French after the capitulation at Fort Necessity. The Journal was translated into French and published in Paris in 1756 and was soon thereafter re-translated and reprinted in London and New York. The original was lost.

<sup>9</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, I, 182; *Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, I, 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Papiers Contrecoeur*, V-V Box IV, Folio 367, Laval University Press, Quebec, 1952, p. 161. This version of the French translation of Washington's Journal was located in 1950 in the Archives of the University of Laval, Quebec. This copy was sent by the Marquis Duquesne, Governor of New France, to Contrecoeur, Commander at Fort Duquesne, a little more than two months after the battle at Fort Necessity. Although there are many differences in the texts of the two versions, the reference to the construction of the fort is essentially the same. A translation of the recently discovered version entitled, "George Washington's Journal for 1754" appeared in *Pennsylvania History*, XIX, No. 1 (January, 1952).

<sup>11</sup> *Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, I, 70.

<sup>12</sup> "George Washington's Journal for 1754," *Pennsylvania History*, XIX, No. 1 (January, 1952), p. 23.

just finished a small palisado'd Fort, in which, with my small numbers, I shall not fear the attack of 500 men."<sup>13</sup>

In his letter of June 12 to Governor Dinwiddie concerning preparedness for possible attack, Washington states, "I guarded against all casualties that might happen to the camp, and ordered Colonel Muse to repair into the fort, and erect the small swivels for the defense of the place, which he could do in an hour's time."<sup>14</sup>

Receiving reports from scouts who had discovered a party of French, Washington decided to advance with part of his force, and on June 12 "gave orders to Colonel Muse, to put away all our baggage and ammunition, and to place them in the Fort, and to set a good guard there till my return."<sup>15</sup>

In a letter to Washington, believed to have been written June 17, although the letter is undated, Dinwiddie states that ". . . I am glad you have finished y'r Pallisadoed Fort, and hope the Independ't Compa. from So. Car. will join you this night. . . ."<sup>16</sup>

An indication of the emergency use for which the fort was constructed is contained in the note from Governor Dinwiddie to the Lords of Trade, dated June 18, in which he states that in order to resist French attack "our Forces have erected a Stockade Fort near the Monongahela for a retreat on occasion. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

As a battle became imminent, Washington constantly sought to establish better relations with the Indians. The Half King, on one occasion, spoke of Washington as "a good-natured man but [who] had no experience . . . that he lay at one place from one full moon to another and made no fortifications at all, but that little thing upon the Meadow, where he thought the French would come up to him in open field. . . ."<sup>18</sup> In his efforts to obtain through George Croghan the aid of Indians, he was told that the Indians doubted the ability of the small force of English to defeat the French, and they refused to join him. It appears that Washington made a final effort, on June 25, to secure Indian aid when he de-

<sup>13</sup> *Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, I, 73.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 78.

<sup>15</sup> *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (New York, 1925), I, 92.

<sup>16</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, I, 229-230.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 206.

<sup>18</sup> Weiser's *Journal*, 1754, quoted in *Writings of George Washington*, collected and edited by W. C. Ford (New York, 1889), I, 124.

cided "to send Captain Montour to Fort Necessity in order to try if he could persuade the Indians to come to us."<sup>19</sup> It may be of interest to note that this is the first mention by Washington of the term Fort Necessity.

With the note in Washington's diary, on June 27, stating that he had detached Captain Lewis, Lieutenant Waggoner, Ensign Mercer and 60 men to endeavor to clear a road to the mouth of Redstone Creek, Washington's diary, an important source of information, ends. The road construction continued until June 28, when it was decided to call in all working parties at Gist's plantation and to fortify against a strong force reported by Washington's scouts to be marching from Fort Duquesne. Further information concerning the advancing force led to another council which decided upon retreat to Wills Creek. As the force reached Great Meadows, July 1, the troops were too exhausted to continue further, and it was determined to make a stand at Fort Necessity. The works were strengthened, and, on the morning of July 3, the French opened fire on the fort.<sup>20</sup>

Governor Dinwiddie's report to the Lords of Trade, dated July 24, states that, on July 3, Washington learned that the French had received reinforcements of seven hundred men to attack Washington's "small camp," which then consisted of a little more than three hundred men and officers. On receipt of this information concerning the French plans, Washington's force "immediately . . . prepared to make the best Defense their small numbers w'd admit of, by throwing up a small Intrenchm't, which they had not time to compleat, before their out Centry gave the Alarm, by firing his Gun, of the approach of the enemy."<sup>21</sup>

As Washington was hurriedly finishing his defense works on the morning of July 3, a French force under Coulon de Villiers, seeking revenge for the death of his brother, Jumonville, a month earlier, was marching cautiously toward the little fort at Great Meadows. They left the camp at Gist's at daybreak and, following Nemacolin's Path, they soon arrived in the vicinity of the British fort. The weather was rainy, de Villiers notes, but he realized "the necessity of hindering the enemy in whatever works he might

<sup>19</sup> Toner, *Journal*, 1754, p. 127; also *Diaries*, I, 101.

<sup>20</sup> *Diaries of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, I, 102, notes.

<sup>21</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, I, 239-241.

undertake. [He] even hoped that he would be less watchful during such bad weather.”<sup>22</sup> By mid-forenoon, the French and Indians moved to attack, but, unacquainted with the locality, they approached with their flank toward the fort “from which they began to fire their cannons at us. Almost at the same time I noticed the English who were coming toward us in battle array on the right. The savages as well as ourselves shouted the battle cry, and we advanced toward them, but they did not give us time to shoot before they retreated to an entrenchment which belonged to their fort. Then we used all our efforts to surround the fort. It was situated rather advantageously in a meadow with woods within gunshot. We approached as closely as possible so as not to expose his Majesty’s subjects needlessly. The shooting was very lively here and there, and I went to the place which seemed best for a sortie. We succeeded in extinguishing, so to speak, the fire from their cannon with our musket fire.”<sup>23</sup> De Villiers notes that “It is true that the zeal of our Canadians and soldiers worried me because I saw that we would shortly be without ammunition.”<sup>24</sup>

As evening approached, le Mercier proposed that fascines be built to strengthen their positions and also that “we . . . should pen the English up in their fort during the night and prevent their coming out at all.”<sup>25</sup> At eight o’clock, the action subsided and the French leader proposed a parley. “. . . we had endured rain all day long and the detachment was very tired,” de Villiers noted in his Journal. “. . . Since the savages were making known that their departure was set for the next day, and since it was reported that drum-beating and cannon shot could be heard in the distance . . . ,”<sup>26</sup> the French commander apparently decided to take the initiative in requesting a cessation of hostilities.

Washington states that at the beginning of the action his men “were drawn up in good order to receive them before their Intrenchm’ts, but did not return their First Fire, reserving it until they came nigher.”<sup>27</sup> Failing to draw Washington’s force from

<sup>22</sup> *Papiers Contrecoeur*, V-V, Box IV, Folio, 367, p. 199.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, I, 239-241.

their entrenchments, the French shifted to the right where "they advanced irregularly within 60 yards of our [Washington's] Forces, and y'n made a second discharge, and observing they did not intend to attack them in the open Field, they retir'd within their Trenches, and reserv'd their Fire, thinking from their Numbers, they w'd force their Trenches."<sup>28</sup> Washington's own account of the action states that the sentinel at the outpost gave the alarm about eleven o'clock, and that the French began to fire immediately, at first about six hundred yards distance, and later shifting around to a point of woods sixty yards from the fort.<sup>29</sup> Finding that the French would not make an attempt against the British forces in the trenches, Washington ordered his troops to fire. "We continued this unequal Fight," he relates, "with an Enemy sheltered behind the Trees, ourselves without Shelter, in Trenches full of Water, in a settled Rain, and the Enemy galling us on all Sides incessantly from the Woods, till 8 o'Clock at Night when the French called for Parley: . . ."<sup>30</sup> Governor Dinwiddie, referring to the battle, states that "the officers declare y's Engagement continue [d] from 11 o'clock until 8 o'clock at Night, they being without shelter, rainy weather, and their Trenches to the knee in Water, whereas the French were shelter'd all around our Camp by trees; from thence they gall'd our People all the Time as above."<sup>31</sup>

John B. W. Shaw, a member of the Virginia regiment, stated in a deposition about three months after the action at Fort Necessity, that "in the morning before the Engagem't, they [Washington's force] Endeavor'd to throw up a little Intrenchm't round them about two feet deep. But could not finish it, as the French appeared betwixt nine and ten in the morning. We had Centinels placed out to Give Notice of the Approach of the French; one of which fired his Piece, and immediately after the French Began to Fire, but being still at a considerable Distance, and did us no hurt. Our men were drawn up before the French, but did not fire. The French still keeping at a Distance; They then turned off to a Point of Wood that lay very near our Men,

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, July 19, 1754.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, A Communication to the Lords of Trade*, July 24, 1754, I, 239-241.



Upon Which Our Men went into their little Intrenchment, Upon which the French made a Second General Discharge But our Men having kept up their fire, their Indians were thereby Encouraged to Advance out of the Wood and Show themselves pretty near where our Men lay, upon which Coll Washington Gave the Word to fire which was accordingly done, and many of the Indians were killed, Our people having two Swivel Guns which were discharged at the same time. After this neither French nor Indians appeared any more but kept behind Trees firing at our Men the best part of the Day, as our People did at them."<sup>32</sup>

Shaw's description of developments during the Fort Necessity action ties in closely with Washington's account. Shaw's observations, however, extend beyond the course of fighting and give a realistic picture of the fort as a defense position. "There was at this Place," he relates, "a Small Stocado Fort made in a Circular form round a Small House that Stood in the Middle of it to keep our Provisions and Ammunition in, And was cover'd with Bark and some Skins, and might be about fourteen feet Square, and the Walls of the Fort might be eight feet Distance from the said House all Round. The French were at that time so near that severall of our People were wounded by the Splinters beat off by the Bullets from the said House."<sup>33</sup> Shaw relates further that Washington's men, upon leaving the fort on the following morning, were "Obliged to leave behind our Swivel Guns and some Arms which soon after were destroyed and broke to pieces by their Indians. Some of our Men That were in that little Fort having Broke the Heads of the Powder Barrells and Strewn it about that it might be of no service to the French."<sup>34</sup>

Washington's statement concerning the end of the engagement at the fort reveals that about 8 o'clock at night the French called for a truce and this was soon agreed upon. The capitulation arranged, a party of French came on the following morning and took

<sup>32</sup> Deposition of John B. W. Shaw before Gov. James Glen of South Carolina, from the third day of September, 1754, to the first day of January, 1755, pp. 13-18. The complete journal manuscripts were originally sent to London. Photo copies were recently obtained by the South Carolina Historical Commission to complete a duplicate set, many items of which had been lost or destroyed. The Shaw deposition was among the documents duplicated. A transcript was at once furnished the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

possession of the encampment, the survivors of Washington's force leaving the stockade. With French and Indians alike killing their horses and cattle, and pilfering their baggage, they finally reached their base at Wills Creek sixty miles away. This source estimates three hundred of the French and Indian force were killed, and of their own number thirty killed and seventy wounded.<sup>35</sup> The enemy losses must have been considerable, as they were "busy all Night in burying their Dead, and yet many remained the next Day."<sup>36</sup> A prisoner taken by the French who was released after the capitulation reported that he "saw great Numbers much wounded and carried off upon Litters."<sup>37</sup>

The French commander, de Villiers, states that, as the British left the fort, the Indians claimed the right to plunder but that he opposed it. The British being frightened, he relates, "left their standard and one of their flags. I demolished their fort, and M. le Mercier had their cannons broken up including the one which was granted them in the surrender. . . ."<sup>38</sup> This statement is partially corroborated by that of Colonel Innes at Wills Creek, which notes that "after the capitulation the French demolished the works."<sup>39</sup>

## 2. SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS

In the two centuries that have elapsed since Washington's capitulation and the immediate demolition of Fort Necessity by de Villiers, a number of attempts have been made to fix its exact location and to describe its construction in detail. Destruction of the stockade by the French, erosion of the surface, and other disturbances of the soil made this a difficult task, and one that has resulted in varying accounts of the stockade. Until more recent years most of the sources describing the fort, which have been cited previously, were unavailable to those who made the surveys and excavations.

<sup>35</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, July 19, 1754.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* Another version of Washington's account, which varies somewhat in phraseology but not in content, appeared in the *South Carolina Gazette*, August 22, 1754.

<sup>38</sup> *Papiers Contrecoeur*, V-V, Box. IV, Folio 367, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st Series (Philadelphia, 1856), XII, 421, a reference which may have been directed to the stockade, to the mounds on the outside, or to both.

Maps of early western Pennsylvania offer some inconclusive evidence by showing Fort Necessity as a small square. A map of Braddock's expedition of 1755 suggests that it had a bastion at each corner. The repetition of the same, or very similar, symbol for many fort locations implies, however, that it was a conventional sign for a fortification, and was not meant to portray its actual lines.

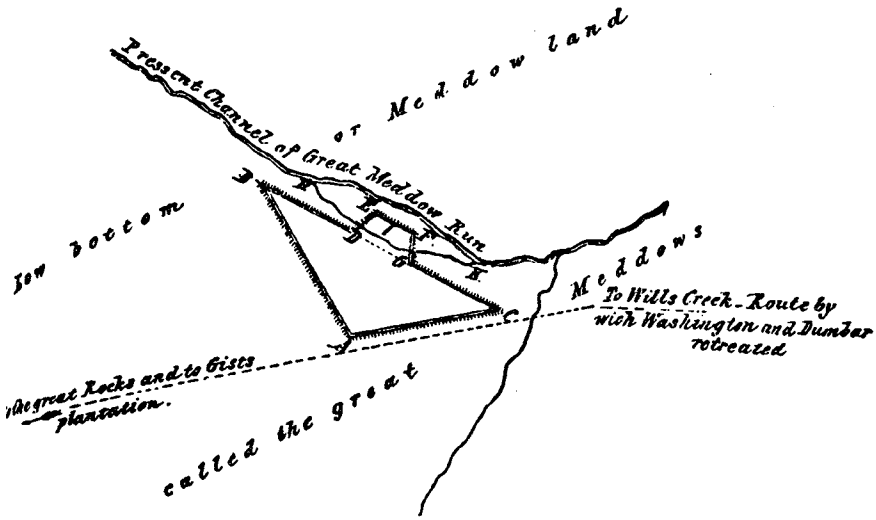
While maps of the early period offer only fragmentary evidence on the fort, observers who traveled over Braddock Road and saw the fort remains have contributed more substantial evidence. After the disastrous termination of General Braddock's expedition, the Fort Necessity region became a wilderness unoccupied by settlers. In 1759, however, with the intention of opening a new road from Laurel Mountain to the Monongahela, Colonel James Burd, with a force of two hundred men, was sent by Colonel Henry Bouquet, commanding the garrison at Carlisle, to open a road to the junction of Redstone Creek and the Monongahela River, the present location of Brownsville. In his diary, under date of September 10, Colonel Burd wrote: "Saw Col. Washington's fort, which was called Fort Necessity. It is a small circular stockade, with a small house in the center; on the outside there is a small ditch goes around it about 8 yards from the stockade. It is situate in a narrow part of the meadows commanded by three points of woods. There is a small run of water just by it. We saw two iron swivels."<sup>40</sup>

It is possible, in view of the fact that the French demolished the stockade, that Colonel Burd based his statement partly on his observation of the mounds and partly on hearsay from a settler who actually saw the fort. It is of importance to note, however, that certain observations made by Colonel Burd corroborate the testimony of the eye witness, John Shaw, contained in his deposition of 1754.

The first recorded survey of Fort Necessity was made by Freeman Lewis in 1816.<sup>41</sup> Here the fort is pictured triangular in shape, with its base line on Great Meadow Run, its total area being about one-third of an acre. In 1816 the embankments were three feet

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Sherman Day, *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1843), pp. 335-336. The original document has not been located.

<sup>41</sup> See James Veech, *The Monongahela of Old* (Pittsburgh, 1910), pp. 15-16.



## SURVEY OF FORT NECESSITY

Made by Freeman Lewis, 1816, and first printed in Will H. Lowdermilk's *HISTORY OF CUMBERLAND, MD.* (1878). Shows the fort triangular in shape, with an extension to the creek. The survey is in error in placing the Braddock Road so close to the stockade. The Braddock Road passes actually a hundred yards south of the fort.

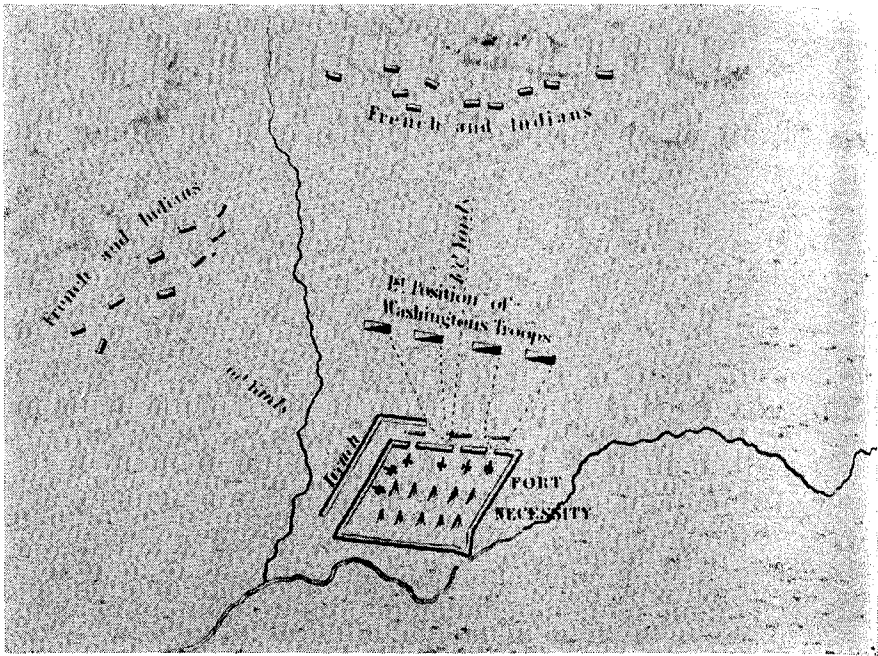
above the level of the surrounding meadow, and investigation indicated that there had been an outer and inner series of trenches.

A second account of the stockade was made in 1830 by the historian, Jared Sparks. In Sparks' word, ". . . The fort itself was an irregular square, each side measuring thirty-five yards, with a trench partly finished on two sides. The entrances were guarded by three bastions."<sup>42</sup> Sparks made a drawing which showed entrances to the stockade on the west side, with embankments guarding the sides. The French had made their first attack on the entrance side, and it was from this quarter that Washington's men had retired in defeat. A supply of water being vital to the fort, the northeast corner was shown by Sparks to bulge outward in order to bring it onto the stream.

Seventy years passed before another effort was made to determine the appearance of the fort. Robert McCracken, a civil engineer, made a survey in 1901, an account of which appears in A. B. Hulbert's *Washington's Road*.<sup>43</sup> Aided by the findings de-

<sup>42</sup> Jared Sparks, *Writings of Washington* (Boston, 1855), I, 54.

<sup>43</sup> *Historic Highways of America*, III, 179.



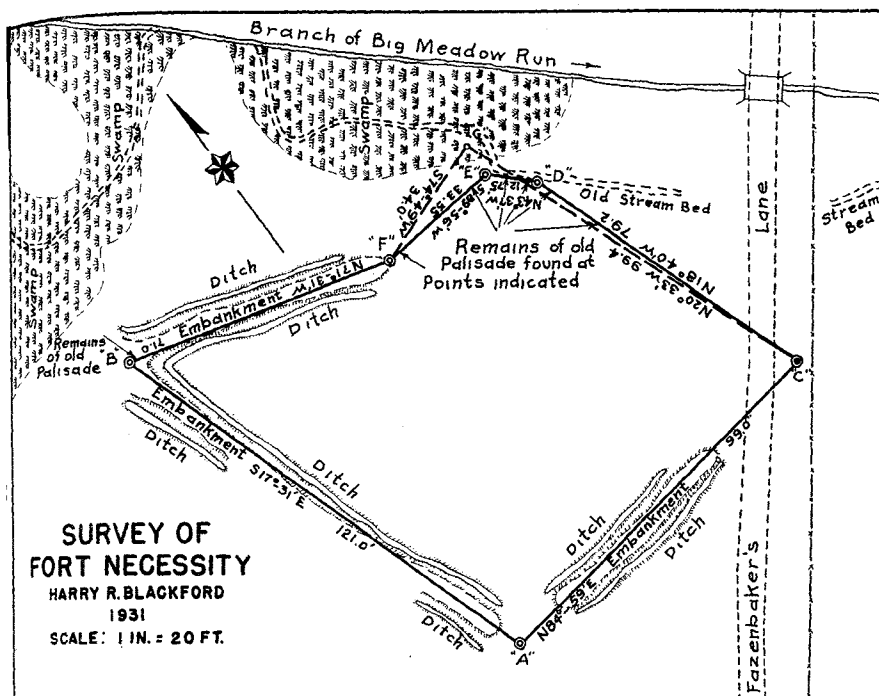
#### SKETCH OF FORT NECESSITY STOCKADE

Made by Jared Sparks on his visit to the site, 1830. Shows the stockade as a four-sided enclosure, with the northeast corner extending to the stream, indicating also the embankments on the south and southwest sides of the fort, and the directions and distances from which the French and Indians directed their attacks on the fort.

Reproduced from Sparks, *Writings of Washington*, II, 56.

scribed in Veech's *The Monongahela of Old*, supplemented by his own survey and excavations, this being the first archaeological approach to the problem, McCracken believed the fort to have had four nearly equal sides, with a projection extending to the stream bed, covering about a third of an acre. Diggings made near a mound on low ground, beyond the northwest side of the stockade, unearthed a quantity of oak bark at a depth of four and a half feet. This was believed to have come from the palisades thrown down and burned by the French. The survival of the oak bark at this late date was explained by wood experts who stated that bark resists decay more effectively than wood.

Excavation work was undertaken in 1931 by Harry R. Blackford, a civil engineer of Uniontown, Pennsylvania. On the basis of his survey and excavations the Fort Necessity Memorial Association constructed the existing stockade. Blackford located



## BLACKFORD SURVEY, 1931

*On the basis of surface evidence and of excavation, the existing stockade, indicated by solid lines, was constructed.*

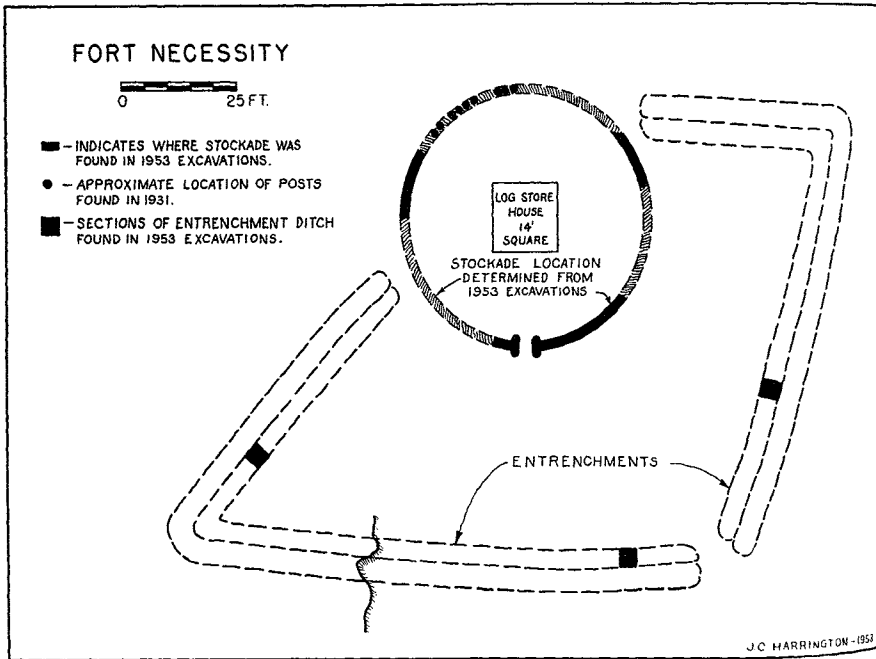
remnants of the original palisades three feet below the surface near the northern and northeastern embankments and adjacent to the creek bed. The post ends ranged from six inches to seventeen inches in thickness and their tops showed signs of having been burnt and exposed to the action of time and water. The position and alignment of the buried post remains, and remnants of the original entrenchments, the outlines of which could readily be followed, determined the reconstruction of the stockade as it now appears.

### 3. EXCAVATIONS OF 1952 AND 1953

Faced with the problem of replacing stockade posts, many of which had become badly deteriorated since the erection of the stockade in 1932, the National Park Service in 1952 projected first of all a restudy of all available records bearing on the location and shape of the original fort and trenches; and, secondly, a thorough archaeological analysis of ground evidence, the results of which

might establish definitely the type of fort and the kind as well as the location of trenches constructed by Washington's force in 1754.

On the basis of documentary evidence, Archeologist J. C. Harrington of the National Park Service undertook during August and September, 1952, excavations for the purpose of establishing the location of the "outer trenches" to which the Washington and Shaw accounts refer. A trench, eighty feet long, was excavated southeastward of, and at right angles to, the southeast side of the stockade. A second trench, seventy feet long, was run southwestward, also at right angles, from the southwest side of the stockade. A third trench, thirty feet in length, was extended eastward from a point near the southeastern corner of the stockade. Each of these trenches was five feet wide and was carried well down into natural ground. After careful examination of the 1932 fill and earlier layers of soil, Archeologist Harrington found no conclusive evidence that the trenches occupied by the South Caro-



#### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EXCAVATIONS, 1952-53

*Sketch of the original circular stockade and entrenchments based upon archaeological excavation undertaken by Archaeologist J. C. Harrington in 1952 and 1953. The diameter of the stockade is approximately 54 feet.*

lina troops lay beyond the mounds of the existing fort outlines. The main disturbance of the soil on the southeast and east sides of the stockade was the evidence of Fazenbaker Lane, a farm road in use during the latter part of the 19th century, and also of a small road probably used in connection with the 1932 stockade reconstruction.

Two trenches, thirty and seventy feet in length and five feet in width, were excavated on the interior of the stockade. In neither of these trenches were remains of the pre-1932 period encountered. The original grade was established, showing the depth of the 1932 level to be eight to twelve inches. The important result of these interior trenches, since they were cut through the long base of the triangular fort outlined by the Lewis survey of 1816, is that the absence of an embankment in this location clearly disproves the existence of the long side of the Lewis fort. Among the rather limited number of artifacts found in the interior trenches were three lead musket balls, two small iron balls, three gun flints, and a brass military button.

On the premise that the original fort was a small circular stockade as indicated in the statements of John Shaw and Colonel Burd, and that the reconstructed stockade is located approximately on the line of the original entrenchments, excavation work was carried on by Harrington during April, 1953. As Colonel Burd had referred to a stream near the stockade and since pieces of the stockade had been discovered in the excavations of 1932 in the northern area of the existing stockade near the stream, trenches were sunk in this area at an angle which would bisect a circular line of approximately fifty feet in diameter. Within two days, the three-foot-deep trench on the western perimeter of the hypothetical line revealed one large piece of wood, identified as one of the posts of the original stockade. A trench on the south revealed a line of post ends, approximately three feet below the present ground level, in a circular position. The earth adjacent to the posts is clearly the back-fill of soil for the support of the posts after they had been placed in position. The course of the original trench could be readily followed. A third trench, on the eastern perimeter of the circle, revealed additional post ends in position about three feet under the present ground level.

Portions of the stockade were therefore uncovered in three





#### POST ENDS OF ORIGINAL STOCKADE, APRIL, 1953

*View of trench on the southern perimeter of the original stockade, showing pieces of the stockade about three feet below the present ground level. A section of the existing stockade appears in the background.*

Photograph by F. Tilberg

separate sections, totaling 67 lineal feet. A sufficient number of post stubs were found in their original position, Harrington states, to determine the construction details. These stubs represent the portion of the posts that stood below the ground water level and were, therefore, continuously wet.

The entrance to the stockade was located on the western sector of the perimeter. There was a large round post at each side of the entrance, which was 3.5 feet wide, and the large posts were flanked by a smaller post on either side. Excepting a large iron bolt, no gate hardware was found.

The original stockade, Harrington found, was almost a perfect circle, measuring fifty-three to fifty-four feet in diameter. The overall perimeter was 168 feet, and of this length sixty-seven feet were uncovered in this year's excavations. Approximately thirty-eight feet of the circle was excavated in 1931, and about sixty-three feet remain to be uncovered.

Although trenches were sunk on the interior of the circle in order to obtain evidence of the small building which Shaw states was located there, no indications of the building were found.

With the shape and location of the original stockade established, exploratory trenches were dug across the presumed location of the original outer entrenchments at three points. Even though the ground had been considerably disturbed in earlier excavations, Harrington states that good cross-sections of the original trench on the back, or inner, side of the breastworks were secured. Sufficient information is available, therefore, to restore these earthworks.

The discovery of artifacts in the 1953 excavations include approximately sixty lead musket balls, mostly of French calibre, several gun flints, clay tobacco pipe fragments, the brass tip of a sword scabbard, and the large iron bolt.

Thus, on the basis of documentary evidence and the application of archaeological methods, the outlines of the original stockade as well as the actual location of the trenches used by Washington's men in the action at Fort Necessity nearly two hundred years ago have been determined. The National Park Service hopes to accomplish an authentic restoration in readiness for the observance of the bicentennial of the action at Fort Necessity in July, 1954.