WASHINGTON'S WESTERN JOURNEYS AND THEIR RELATION TO PITTSBURGH

By

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“Great men are the Ambassadors of Providence, sent to reveal to their fellowmen their unknown selves.” This statement is credited to Vice President-elect Coolidge in a recent address in New York City. It contains food for thought, but doubly so when he continues. “There is something about them better than they do or say. They come and go. They leave no successor. Their heritage of greatness descends to the people.”

The truth of these statements is verified in the life and influence of George Washington, the statesman and patriot. The things that he did, and the things that he said, have been indelibly stamped upon the heart of the nation, but the past, more than a century has exemplified that his greatness has descended to the people, and working through them to the nations of the world.

When President John Adams issued his proclamation recommending that “the people of the United States assemble on the 22nd day of February in such numbers and manner as may be convenient, publicly to testify their grief for the death of General George Washington by suitable eulogies, orations and discourses, or by public prayer, “the heart of the Nation was touched and it responded with an outburst of sentiment such as had never before been seen.” Master minds, then, and since, have delivered fitting eulogies and orations, and nothing that I might say could either add to or detract from his greatness. It is the purpose of this paper to point out some facts and incidents showing the influence which he had in the development of what in early times was known as the Western Country.

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In 1753 it was reported to Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia that the French were making encroachments on what was deemed to be British territory beyond the Alleghany Mountains, and he thought it to be his duty to watch the movements of the French and defend British claims against unwarranted encroachment. Young George Washington, not yet twenty-two years of age, was selected as an emissary to the officer in charge of the suspected hostile movements, to ascertain his designs, and make such observations as his opportunities would allow. His known knowledge of Indians, his acquaintance with modes of living and travelling in the woods, which had been acquired in surveying expeditions, as well as the marked traits of character that he had already displayed, no doubt commended him for this delicate and important mission.

"Faith, you’re a brave lad" was Dinwiddie's parting word as Washington left Williamsburg, Virginia, on October 31st, with Jacob Van Braam, as French interpreter, Christopher Gist, as guide, and four attendants. We are told in his journal that he reached Mr. Frazier's, an Indian trader, at the mouth of Turtle Creek, just above the present town of Braddock, on Thursday, November 22nd, and that the waters were impassable without swimming their horses; that they were obliged to get the loan of a canoe from Frazier and send their baggage down the Monongahela to meet them at the "forks of the Ohio."

In this manner he approached the spot that became Fort Duquesne, later Fort Pitt, and still later, Pittsburgh. It would be difficult to imagine his feelings upon entering this wilderness and unsettled country. He entered it no doubt, burdened with the importance, dangers and responsibility of his mission; yet faithfully noting the conditions as they came under his observation when travelling through rugged and pathless mountains and through lonely and cheerless wildernesses, where civilization had not yet appeared.

He made his way from Frazier's to the forks and says:

"As I got down before the canoe I spent some time in viewing the rivers and the land at the fork which I think extremely well situated for a fort, as it has absolute command of both rivers. The land at the point is twenty five feet above the common surface of the water,
and a considerable bottom of flat, well timbered land all around it very convenient for building. The rivers are each a quarter of a mile more or less across, and run here very nearly at right angles, Allegheny bearing northeast and Monongahela southeast. The former of these two is a very rapid and swift running water, the other deep and still without any perceptible fall.”

It appears that the Ohio Company in order to protect its interest, had in contemplation the erection of a fort at, or near what is now McKees Rocks, and Washington examined this proposed location and records his judgment as follows:

“About two miles from this on the southeast side of the river at the place where the Ohio company intend to build a fort, lives Shingiss, King of the Delawares. We called upon him to invite him to a council at Logstown. As I had taken a good deal of notice yesterday to the situation at the fork, my curiosity led me to examine this more particularly, and I think it greatly inferior, either for defence or advantages, especially the latter. For a fort at the fork would be equally well situated on the Ohio, and have the entire command of the Monongahela, which runs up our settlement, and is extremely well designed for water carriage as it is of a deep, still nature, besides, a fort at the fork might be built at much less expense than at the other place”.

Here we have the clear headed, practical engineer, even at the age of twenty-two years differentiating between the practical and impractical in big things. The Ohio Company had evidently chosen this site for water defence, but Washington saw that there were other methods of attack to be guarded against and goes on to say:

“Nature has well contrived this lower place for water defence, but the hill whereon it must stand being about a quarter of a mile in length, and then descending on the land side, will render it difficult and very expensive to make a sufficient fortification there. The whole flat upon the hill must be taken in, the side next the descent made extremely high or else the hill itself cut away, otherwise the enemy may raise batteries within the distance without being exposed to a single shot from the fort”.

Shingiss accompanied the expedition to Logstown, at
which place they arrived between sun setting and dark. This point has been definitely located on the Ohio about fourteen miles below Pittsburgh. Here conferences were held with Indian chiefs and plans perfected for the journey to Fort LeBouf and Presque Isle where the City of Erie now stands. We will not follow this company further on the outward journey nor upon the return all of which was amid dangers, and in which Washington narrowly escaped death at the hands of a hostile Indian, but pick him up, so to speak, as he approached the Allegheny River, but of this he shall speak in the words of his journal.

"The next day we continued travelling until quite dark and got to the river about two miles above Shannopins. We expected to have found the river frozen, but it was not, only about fifty yards from each shore. The ice I suppose had broken up above, for it was driving in vast quantities. There was no way for our getting over but on a raft, which we set about, with but one poor hatchet, and finished just after sun setting. This was a whole days work; we next got it launched, then went on board of it and set off, but before we were half way over we were jammed in the ice in such a manner that we expected every moment our raft to sink and ourselves perish. I put out my setting pole to try to stop the raft that the ice might pass by, when the rapidity of the stream threw it with so much violence that it jerked me out into ten feet of water, but I fortunately saved myself by catching hold of one of the logs on the raft. Notwithstanding all our efforts we could not get to either shore, but were obliged as we were near an island to quit our raft and make to it. The cold was so severe that Mr. Gist had all his fingers and some of his toes frozen, and the water was shut up so hard that we found no difficulty in getting off the island on the ice in the morning and went to Frazier's.

The island to which reference is made is believed to have been what is now known as Wainwrights Island opposite the foot of 48th Street Pittsburgh, and Shannopins was a Delaware town about two miles up the Allegheny.

The date of this incident was December 26th, and is one of the events in history, of his marvellous protection from harm that he might yet serve mankind and his country.
While preparations were being made for Washington's return to Virginia, from Frazier's house, he made a visit to Queen Allequippa, who lived at the forks of the Youghiogheny and Monongahela, the site of Reynoldston opposite McKeesport, she having expressed great concern at having been passed by on his trip to the forks on November 22nd. Her favor was regained for he says "I made her a present of a watch-coat and a bottle of rum, which latter was thought much the better present of the two."

On Tuesday, January 1, 1754, the journey from Frazier's to Williamsburg began. The party arrived at Gist's on the Monongahela the next day. On the sixth day they met seventeen horses loaded with materials and stores for a fort at the forks of the Ohio, and the following day they met some families on their way to settle. Upon arriving at Wills Creek—the site of the present Cumberland, Maryland, apparently out of the wilderness. Washington sums up the difficulties of the trip in these words.

"This day we arrived at Wills Creek after as fatiguing a journey as it is possible to conceive, rendered so by excessive bad weather. From the 1st day of December to the 15th there was but one day on which it did not rain or snow incessantly, and throughout the whole journey we met with nothing but one continued series of cold, wet weather which occasioned very uncomfortable lodgings especially after we had quitted our tent which was some screen from the inclemency of it."

The sagacious eye of this emissary had selected the Forks as the commanding one for the whole disputed territory and upon his report having been made to Governor Dinwiddie, and the letter of the French Commander of which Washington was the bearer, having proved evasive and unsatisfactory—it was at once decided to send troops and occupy this site. To accomplish this was not an easy task. The Virginia Legislature hesitated to grant the necessary funds. They could not grasp the vision that Washington had, and could not believe that the people of Virginia could ever possibly have any interest in what might go on behind the Alleghany Mountains. In time, however, three hundred troops were raised and placed under command of Col. Joshua Fry with Washington second in command as a lieutenant colonel. In the meantime the French had struck the threat-
ened blow, took possession of the fort, drove away the garrison, finished the fort at the forks and named it Fort Duquesne.

On April 29, 1754, Washington again started for the Western country, his objective being "the forks" of the Ohio. It was a difficult task to transport the artillery by hand drawn methods over the mountains and upon reaching Great Crossings the Army lay there for several days while Washington, Lieutenant West, three soldiers and an Indian descended the river in a canoe to ascertain if it was navigable for transportation of the artillery. They were doomed to disappointment upon reaching Ohio Pyle Falls, a distance of approximately thirty miles from Great Crossings. With a small force he reached Great Meadows on May 26th and had his first military skirmish, losing one man killed and three wounded. Of the French ten were killed, including Jumonville, one wounded and twenty-one captured. A few days later in a letter to a brother Washington is alleged to have remarked "I heard the bullets whistle and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound". Being asked in later years if he had made such a remark he replied "If I said so it was when I was young". The building of Fort Necessity as a retreat in case of disaster followed, for real warfare confronted the expedition. The death of Col. Fry left Washington—a youth of twenty two years in supreme command. The objective of this expedition was not obtained for the defeat of Fort Necessity and the most honorable surrender on July 4, 1754 followed, due to shortage of provisions and being outnumbered four to one.

His conduct of this expedition was considered brilliant, even though defeated, and called forth a vote of thanks from the Legislature of Virginia.

This expedition ended, its commander resigned from the Army and turned his attention to agricultural pursuits. This was not long to continue for he was in the next year called to again invade the Western country. This time not in chief command, but as a part of the Braddock Expedition. General Braddock was selected by the British Ministry as general in chief and intrusted with extensive military operations in America looking to the dispossessing of the French from the disputed territory, and was to lead in person the enterprise
that was to drive them from the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia and recover the valley of the Ohio. Alexandria, Virginia, was selected as the place where the British troops were to debark and encamp. This brought military activity to the very portals of Mount Vernon and it is not surprising if the blood of Washington tingled with excitement and the military part of his nature came in the ascendant; it is not surprising that his personal merits, his knowledge of the country and his frontier service were brought to the attention of General Braddock. Neither is it cause for wonder that prompt acceptance followed an invitation to join the staff of the brave and intrepid general, even though the position is said to have been without emolument or command, but attended with expense and the sacrifice of private interests.

In this manner his third call to the "Forks of the Ohio" came to the man who first stood there in November, 1753, but we can only touch on the events of this expedition which in itself would furnish material for volumes.

Braddock's unfamiliarity with the character of the country ahead of him, his lack of knowledge of Indian customs and wild bush fighting were his undoing. The youthful staff officer, who knew conditions only too well, appreciated the difficulties and modestly tried to impress these difficulties upon his chief, only to be rebuffed, for this experienced general did not until later on come to the point of counselling with his young aid.

"Washington had looked with wonder and dismay at the huge paraphernalia of war and the world of superfluities to be transported across the mountains". When he recollected his own experiences, he said "If our march is to be regulated by the slow movements of the train, it will be tedious, very tedious indeed". The result of this suggestion was a sarcastic smile from Braddock as betraying the limited notions of a young provincial officer, little acquainted with the march of armies. It seems that Franklin who was also with the expedition called his attention to the danger of ambushes, with the result as stated by him. "He, Braddock, smiled at my ignorance and replied, 'These savages may indeed be a formidable enemy to American militia, but upon the King's regular and disciplined troops, sir, it is impossible they should
make an impression;’ and Franklin continues, ‘I was conscious of an impropriety in my disputing with a military man in matters of his profession and said no more’.

The march over the mountain proved the predictions of Washington, and by the time Little Meadows had been reached on June 16th, ‘General Braddock had become aware of the difference between campaigning in a new country, and, on the old well beaten battle grounds of Europe.’

He now, of his own accord, turned to Washington for advice, though it must have been a sore trial to his pride to seek it of so young a man; but he had by this time sufficient proof of his sagacity, and his knowledge of the frontier. He was soon to learn also what an impression Indian warfare could make upon ‘the King’s regular and disciplined troops.’

Now too he accepted the advice of his young aide, and divided his forces, leaving the baggage train, and advanced with the choicest troops, lightened of all superfluous equipment. This action had been urged without success much earlier, and now Washington was buoyed up with hopes of rapid advancement across the mountains. In this he was doomed to disappointment, for, says he, ‘I found that instead of pushing on with vigor without regarding a little rough road, they were halting to level every molehill, and to erect bridges over every brook, by which means we were four days in getting twelve miles’. These delays must have been a sore trial to him, but a still worse one befell, for about June 24th, illness had overtaken him and he was obliged to remain with his friend Dr. Craik at Great Crossing until the arrival of the baggage train under command of Col. Dunbar.

Braddock slowly advanced and encountered the usual difficulties. On July 3rd Washington having partially recovered continued his journey with a convoy of provisions. He was not able to mount his horse and therefore travelled in a cargo wagon, until he joined the advanced camp on July 8th on the east side of the Monongahela river and about fifteen miles from Fort Duquesne. This camp was on the Pittsburgh side of the river and was somewhere near the city of McKeesport but the army crossed the Monongahela by a ford opposite the camp, and then recrossed to the eastern side at the mouth of Turtle Creek, at Frazier’s place. Then followed the exciting and tragic events that are a matter of history,
events in which our subject was the foremost figure, un-
mindful of his personal danger, in his effort to rally the
distracted forces. A few days later he wrote to his mother,
"I luckily escaped without a wound, though I had four bullets
through my coat and two horses shot under me."

He now returned in broken health to Mount Vernon on
July 26th but amid the approbation of his friends and
countrymen.

That he had gained the confidence of Governor Dinwid-
die is shown in a letter dated July 26 1755 in which he says:
"Dear Washington: The dismal defeat of our forces by such
a handful of men gives me very grave concern * * . How-
ever I was glad to receive your letter and that you came
safe off without any wounds after your gallant behavior on
which I congratulate you". He then asks about the possi-
bility of renewing action against the French before the win-
ter months and concluding says: "Pray write me your opin-
ion thereon" and signs himself "Sir your very humble ser-
vant." This from the great Governor of Virginia to the
youth of twenty four years.

As said by Irving "the early popularity of Washington
was not the result of brilliant achievements, on the other
hand it rose among trials and reverses and may almost be
said to have been the fruits of defeat". An instance of this
high appreciation of his merits occurs in a sermon preached
on the 17th of August by the Rev. Samuel Davis wherein
he cites him as "That heroic youth Colonel Washington,
whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved
in so signal a manner for some important service to his
country". When we recall that he was shot at by an Indian
on his return from Venango, that he marvellously escaped
while crossing the Allegheny, and most remarkable of all
that he escaped injury at Fort Necessity and at Braddock's
Field, taken with the great service he was permitted to ren-
der to his country in after years, these words appear almost
prophetic.

We pass over the turmoil of the times that elapsed be-
tween Braddock's defeat and the events of 1758 which con-
cern us in the consideration of the journeys of Washington.
Brigadier General Forbes was placed in charge of the middle
and southern colonies, and was to undertake the reduction of
Fort Duquesne. Washington was commander in chief of the Virginia troops consisting of two regiments of one thousand men each, one led by himself, the other by Colonel Byrd, the whole of which was destined to become a part of the army of General Forbes in his expedition against Fort Duquesne.

With memories of Fort Necessity, the scene of his first and only surrender, and of the disaster at Braddock’s Field, rankling within him, we can safely assume that this, his fourth call to the western country sounded like music to his ears.

Our limitations prevent us from describing this expedition further than to say that a decided difference arose between Col. Washington and Col. Bouquet as to the route to be followed. A new road was cut through the wilderness known as the Forbes Road against the protest of Washington. He asserted, and no doubt he was right, that the expedition could have reached its objective and accomplished the reduction of Fort Duquesne many months earlier had the Braddock road been followed. However like the good soldier he was, his energies were thrown into the work of cutting through the well known and established Trail and the army moved on its tedious journey. The story of the advance party being sent out and of the battle of Grant’s Hill, near where the Court House now stands is one of the thrilling incidents of the expedition. An incident is told of the rout at Grant’s Hill by Thurston in his “Allegheny County’s Hundred Years” that as Major Lewis was advancing with his men he met a Scotch Highlander under full flight and on inquiring of him how the battle was going, the battle stricken soldier replied “They were a’ beaten and he had seen Donald McDonald up to his hunkers in mud, and a’ the skin off his heed.”

As the main body neared its destination we are told that it crossed Turtle Creek where Murrysville now stands and encamped for the night on the hill near the present town of Pitcairn, and that from this point the smoke was seen following the blowing up of the magazine at Fort Duquesne that was followed by its evacuation by the French. One writer tells us that Col. Washington mounted the British flag on the remains of the fortress on the 25th day of November, 1758. Whether this be literally true or not, it is
however undisputed that he reached Fort Duquesne and from Camp at Fort Duquesne November 28, 1758, wrote to Gov. Farquieur who had succeeded Gov. Dinwiddie in these words. "I have the pleasure to inform you that Fort Duquesne, or the ground upon which it stood, was possessed by his majesty's troops on the 25th inst." and adds "This fortunate, and indeed, unexpected success of our arms will be attended with happy effects." When this was written he no doubt was filled with joy when he recalled Fort Necessity and Braddock's defeat in 1758 and his disappointment in the campaign of 1754.

The fifth call to the western country came to him in 1770. It was primarily to inspect and mark out bounty lands on the Ohio for the men of his Virginia Regiment, but later developments justify the belief that the great question of inland water ways was burdening his mind at the time.

He left Mount Vernon on October 5th, in company with Dr. Craik, three servants and a led horse carrying baggage. We are told that on the 14th he was at Captain Crawford's at Stewart's Crossing (Connellsville) all day, and that he went to see a coal mine, not far from Crawford's house, on the bank of the river, and that the coal seemed of the very best kind, burning freely and abundance of it.

On October 17, 1770, for the third time he reached Pittsburgh. It is interesting to note that Col. Burd had opened a road to Redstone Creek, and in his journal we are told that near Dunbar's camp in Fayette County, he marked two trees at the place of beginning thus "The road to Redstone Col. J. Burd 1759, The road to Pittsburgh 1759." From this it would appear that Fort Pitt was at that early date known as Pittsburgh, although there were, by best accounts, only a few bark and log cabins scattered about the fort.

In his journal of this trip Washington says: "Lodged in what is called the town, distant about three hundred yards from the fort at one Mr. Semple's who keeps a very good house of entertainment." We are told that this house was at the present Ferry and Water Streets, built in 1764 by Col. George Morgan and that it was the first shingle roofed house and also that it was in this house that Aaron Burr stopped on his way to Blennerhasset Island. On the 18th the narrative continued, "Dined in the fort with Col. Croghan and
officers of the garrison; supped there also, meeting with
great civility from the gentlemen, and engaged to dine with
Col. Croghan the next day at his seat about four miles up
the Allegheny.” We are told by Craig in his recollection of
the location of this place that it was “on the east side of the
Allegheny River nearly opposite to where Mr. McCand-
less is now residing. To be more precise, it was on the lot
which is on our right when we first reach the Allegheny,
when going from Lawrenceville up towards Sharpsburg.”
To him at that time it may have been precise, but after the
lapse of years, it is an explanation that does not explain.

At this place on the 19th through an appointment made
with Col. Croghan he was met at eleven o’clock by White
Mingo and other chiefs, and after the customary gift of a
string of wampum was addressed, in part, as follows, ac-
cording to the journal. “That I was a person whom some
of them remember to have seen when I was sent on an em-
bassy to the French, and most of them have heard of, they
were come to bid me welcome to this country, and desire that
the people of Virginia would consider them as friends and
brothers, and further stated their fears that we did not look
upon them with so friendly an eye as they could wish.”

Washington answered this address in his customary
tactful manner, in which he gave assurance of Virginia’s
desire for friendship with them and that he would convey
their desires to the Governor.

After dining with Col. Croghan, he returned with his
party, including his host, to Pittsburgh, no doubt to Sem-
ple’s tavern and completed arrangements for his journey
down the Ohio. On the 20th he embarked in a large canoe
as he tells us

“With sufficient stores of provisions and necessar-
ies, and the following person besides Dr. Craik and my-
self, to wit; Captain Crawford, Joseph Nicholson, Robert
Bell, William Harrison, Charles Morgan and Daniel
Rendon, a boy of Captain Crawford’s and the Indians
who were in a canoe by themselves. From Fort Pitt we
sent our horses and boys back to Captain Crawford’s
with orders to meet us there again on the 14th day of
November. Colonel Croghan Lieutenant Hamilton and
Magee (evidently McKee) set out with us. At two we
dined at Magee’s and encamped ten miles below and
four miles above Logstown. We passed several large islands which appeared to be very good, as the bottoms, also did on each side of the river alternately; the hills on one side being opposite the bottoms on the other, which seem generally to be about three or four hundred yards wide, and so vice versa.”

This description fits accurately the topography of the hills and bottoms as we see them today as we descend that part of the Ohio of which he was writing. It is another evidence of the accurate and comprehensive observations that he made in his several journeys to the western country.

We left Washington at Logstown, in describing his expedition in 1753, so we now leave him in the vicinity of the same town, without undertaking to describe his interesting trip to the lower Ohio and tributaries but content ourselves by picking him up, so to speak, as he reached Fort Pitt, November 21st, upon his return. He tells us again, quoting from his journal.

“22nd. Stayed at Pittsburgh all day. Invited the officers and some other gentlemen to dinner with me at Semple’s”; and of the next day he says, “After settling with the Indians and the people that attended us down the river, and defraying the sundry expenses accruing at Pittsburgh I set off on my return home; and after dining at the widow Mier’s on Turtle Creek reached Mr. John Stephenson’s in the night”.

The rest of the trip was made without special incident and ended on December 1, 1770.

We have thus far engaged your attention by an outline of the several expeditions of the young man who was soon to be called into a field of service that has rendered his name immortal, and to some of the incidents of the several journeys. These trips are of interest from an historical standpoint. We hope to show that they were of interest and had a strong influence upon subsequent commercial activities of this section of the country.

That he had great confidence in the possibilities of this new and hitherto undeveloped country, there can be no reasonable doubt; that he realized the importance of an adequate inland waterway system as most effective in such development is equally certain; and that he did more than any other
man of his day in centralizing the attention of others as to the great possibilities is equally true.

His marked interest in navigation and transportation is shown to us in his writings immediately after the Revolutionary War, some of which, at least, are preserved to us. To Richard Henry Lee, he writes from Philadelphia on July 19, 1797. "I have been of opinion that the policy of the Atlantic States, instead of contending prematurely for the free navigation of that river— (one of those on the Eastern coast)—— would be to open and improve natural communications with the western country through which the produce of it might be transported to our markets."

He says to Thomas Jefferson in a letter of January 1, 1788.

"I received your favor of the 14th of August and am sorry that it is not in my power to give any further information relative to the practicability of opening a communication between Lake Erie and the Ohio, than you are already possessed of. I have made frequent inquiries since the time of your writing at Annapolis, but could never collect anything that was decided or satisfactory, and flatter myself with better prospects.

The accounts generally agree as to its being a flat country between the waters of Lake Erie and the Big Beaver, but differ much with respect to the distance between their sources, their navigation, and the inconvenience which would attend the cutting of a canal between them." We might observe, at this point, that were we to consult those who have been making an heroic struggle for a ship canal from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie, in recent years, we would undoubtedly learn that opinions still differ. The letter continues. "From the best information I have been able to obtain of that country, the source of the Muskingum and Cayahoga approach nearer to each other than the Big Beaver, but a communication through the Muskingum would be more circuitous and difficult * * *. The distance between the Lake Erie and the Ohio through the Big Beaver is however so much less than the route through the Muskingum, that it would in my opinion operate more strongly in favor of opening a canal between the sources of the nearest water of Lake Erie and the Big Beaver, although the distance between them should be
much greater and the operation more difficult than to Muskingum, as it is the direct line to the nearest shipping port on the Atlantic”.

Another letter to Jefferson dated February 13, 1789, dwells on the same subject and refers to the fact that his utmost endeavors had failed to produce, as he says, “precise information respecting the nearest and best communication between the Ohio and Lake Erie” but the determination within the man to procure the desired information, from reasonably authentic sources is best shown in a letter to Richard Butler written from Mt. Vernon and bearing date of January 10, 1788 in which he says:

“As you have had opportunities of gaining extensive knowledge and information respecting the western territory, its situation, rivers, and the face of the country, I must beg the favor of you, my dear sir, to resolve the following queries, either from your knowledge or certain information, as well to gratify my own curiosity, as to enable me to satisfy several gentlemen of distinction in other countries who have applied to me for information upon the subject.

“1. What is the face of the country between the sources of canoe navigation of the Cayahoga, which empties itself into Lake Erie, and the Big Beaver, and between the Cayahoga and the Muskingum?

“2. The distance between the waters of the Cayahoga to each of the two rivers above mentioned?

“3. Would it be practicable, and not very expensive, to cut a canal between the Cayahoga and either of the above rivers, so as to open a communication between the waters of Lake Erie and the Ohio?

“4. Whether there is any more direct, practicable, and easy communication than these between the waters of Lake Erie and those of the Ohio, by which the fur and peltry of the upper Ohio can be transported?”

We have outlined the several journeys made to the Western Country by this brave and farsighted youth. We have outlined his views with relation to the development of the territory at and adjacent to Pittsburgh.
It is worthy of note that the very first description of the forks of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers comes from his pen, and that from the same pen is given to the country, for the first time, the need and possibilities of improved waterways as a means of this development. What reply was received to his letter to Colonel Butler is not found in the records, but it is significant that in the early thirties his vision of this development was realized in the construction and operation for many years of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, the Erie Canal, opening up a channel of commerce from Lake Erie to the Big Beaver River, at the site of the present City of Beaver, and other canals, all of which contributed largely to Pittsburgh's greatness and advantage as a commercial center.

It is also worthy of note that in keeping the views of Washington, the construction of a ship canal from the Big Beaver River to Lake Erie, has in recent years, and is now, commanding with splendid prospects of consummation, the attention and energies of many of the most progressive men of the present day.

Following the events herein narrated, Washington was called to be chief magistrate of the nation, and it is fairly to be presumed that with this greater opportunity for service, he maintained his interests in the development of the territory so often referred to by him as the Western Country and contributed much to its accomplishment.

A study of the personality which he possessed, and of his activities in the interest of extended commerce, not only in this locality but elsewhere, followed by the results that have been achieved, leads us to accord to him preeminence as a nation-builder, and to the conclusion that in no small measure his greatness had descended to the people.