THE LAST TWO CAMPSITES OF FORBES' ARMY

Harold A. Thomas

The "Forbes Road" which formerly traversed Western Pennsylvania, approximately on the route opened in 1758 by General John Forbes, was the principal early line of communication between the eastern and western portions of the state. In some places the route of the old Forbes Road coincides with modern highways, while in other places it crosses woodlands or fields where its traces are wholly or partially obliterated. During the past fifty years several historians have made careful studies to determine details of the location of this old road. Some of these investigators were John Kennedy Lacock, George H. Rankin, L. C. Walkinshaw, David W. Rial, Edward G. Williams and Niles Anderson. Representatives of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission also have made studies of sections of the route in order to select suitable sites for historical markers.

For the purpose of re-discovering the location of the Forbes Road, three principal types of evidence are available: (1) plottings of the Forbes Road on early farm survey maps,1 (2) existing old road scars, (3) traditions of families who have occupied land on the route since early times. Documentary information on the actual marching route of Forbes' army can be gleaned from the following sources: (1) the Orderly Books or daily records of orders issued by General Forbes or his brigade commanders, (2) letters written by various officers during the campaign, and (3) an existing map of the entire marching route

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1 The Warrantee Atlas of Allegheny County (Harrisburg, 1914). Plates 10, 12, and 30 show some of the original surveys with the route of the Forbes Road laid down.
MAP No. 1

Map Showing Western Portion of FORBES' MARCHING ROUTE and the EARLY FORBES ROAD

Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5 mi.
THE LAST TWO CAMPSITES OF FORBES' ARMY

Key:

Modern Roads

Early Forbes Road

Marching Route of Forbes' Army

1. Camp Cross
2. Turtle Creek
3. MARCHING ROUTE OF FORBES’ ARMY (by Potts)
4. EARLY FORBES ROAD (Southern Branch)
5. Bushy Run Battlefield
6. Hamburg City
7. Four Redoubts Camp
8. Old Homestead

Route 286
Route 390
Sardis
Mammoth

Northern branch
Pittsburgh
Turnpike
Level Green
Ford
prepared by "J. Potts," presumably a member of Forbes' army.

It may not be generally realized that the early civilian road, locally known as the Forbes Road, as shown on the early farm maps or recognized by existing road scars, does not in all places coincide with the actual marching route of the army. The marching route tended to follow the traders' paths on the Indian trails which went over the hills and across ravines without much regard for steep grades or excessive rise-and-fall of the terrain. In the western part of the march the fear of lurking Indians and the ever-present danger of a repetition of Braddock's disaster hindered reconnaissance to select the best route for wagons. Moreover, on the advance from Ligonier to Pittsburgh, reconnaissance was prevented also by the need for haste. Thus, since the marching route of the army was far from being the best possible wagon route between the given termini, it received extensive relocations at a very early date. These revisions transformed the marching trail into the Forbes Road. Still later revisions transformed the latter into the modern roads over the same general route.

In future Allegheny County and western Westmoreland County, what has become known as the Forbes Road had two branches. As shown on Map No. 1, the northern branch, following approximately the army's marching route, passed through the sites of present Murrysville and Universal. The southern branch, opened the year after Forbes' campaign, passed through the sites of present Harrison City, Trafford and Turtle Creek. The southern route was apparently the more favored one in revolutionary times.

One aspect of historical research on the Forbes campaign has been an effort to re-discover the exact locations of the various campsites occupied by Forbes' army. The names of the campsites and the dates of their occupation are given in the Orderly Books, while their relative locations are shown on Potts' map by numbers indicating the ends of successive days' marches. In the extreme western portion of the march, between Chestnut Ridge and Pittsburgh, these camps are as follows:

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2 The steep climbs and descents indicated by the Potts map can be explained by the fact that the army took along only a few pieces of light artillery and a wagon or two for ammunition. Most of the supplies were carried by packhorses, each pack weighing about 150 pounds. The route sought the dividing ridges, or watersheds, to avoid ravines, marshy ground, and stream crossings.
3 John M. Boucher, Old and New Westmoreland (New York, 1918), I, 82.
4 Ibid., I, 83.
THE LAST TWO CAMPSITES OF FORBES’ ARMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Camp</th>
<th>Occupied, 1758</th>
<th>Potts’ Number</th>
<th>Nearest Modern Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dagworth’s</td>
<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Latrobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Redoubts</td>
<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hannastown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington’s Camp</td>
<td>Nov. 19-21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Newlonsburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Turtle Creek</td>
<td>Nov. 22*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Center (Trestle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouquet’s Camp</td>
<td>Nov. 22-24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Duquesne</td>
<td>Nov. 25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* by Washington’s brigade and Forbes’ personal escort.

In places where the marching route of the army does not coincide with the subsequent Forbes Road it is obvious that the campsites are to be associated with the former rather than the latter. Because of a lack of understanding that these two routes are quite far apart in some places, and because of lack of a good method for re-discovering the army’s actual marching route, the results of modern attempts to discover these campsites have not been satisfactory in all cases. This applies especially to the last two campsites of the march: “Camp Cross Turtle Creek” and “Bouquet’s Camp.” It is the purpose of this paper to throw light on the true location of these two campsites, on the basis of considerations pertaining to Potts’ map.

The original map by J. Potts, showing the entire marching route of Forbes’ army from Fort Loudon to Fort Duquesne, is preserved in the library of the Pennsylvania Historical Society at Philadelphia. Photostats are available at Pittsburgh in the Carnegie Library and the library of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The original is plotted on two large sheets of drawing paper to a scale of two miles per inch. History is silent on who J. Potts was or what was his status.


7 It is true that this J. Potts does not appear in the genealogy of the Potts family of ironmasters. Cf. Mrs. Thomas Potts James, Memorial of Thomas Potts, Jr. (Cambridge, 1874). A John Potts fitting into this kind of life was licensed as an Indian trader in 1744. Penna. Archives, 2nd ser., II, 531. As an unlicensed trader, he was at Paxtang and Harris’s Ferry in 1747 and 1748, also at Logstown in 1750, and at Pickawillany (Ohio), in February, 1751. Pennsylvania Colonial Records, V, 526; Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., II, 14, 50; Charles A. Hanna, The Wilderness Trail (New York, 1911), II, 338. He was one of the white captives freed from Indian captivity by Bouquet in 1764, William S. Ewing, Indian Captives Released by Colonel Bouquet, WPHM, XXXIX, 202, quoting British Museum Additional MSS, 21355, f. 296, Mimeographed transcription, Bouquet Papers, 21655, 250. This would seem to fit our J. Potts, as Forbes employed Indian traders as guides. Bouquet Papers, op. cit., II, 262.
in the army, but internal evidence of his map suggests that he was attached to the personal escort of General Forbes. The survey notes used in plotting Potts' map have disappeared, but it is clear that the map was plotted to scale from some kind of survey measurements, distances apparently being measured by timing the marching of the troops while bearings were taken by a hand compass.

While Forbes' army was encamped at Raystown (present Bedford) a scouting force under Captains Edward Ward, Asher Clayton, James Baker, James Patterson, and Lieutenant Charles Rhor\(^8\) was sent forward to explore and survey a route for a possible road to the Youghiogheny River. The field notes of this survey are still in existence and show that distances were estimated by recording marching times with a watch and bearings were taken by a compass graduated in "points" or eighths of a quadrant. It is to be presumed that Potts used similar survey methods, though the excellence of his later directional work suggests that he may have had a compass graduated in degrees, such as was used eight years earlier by Christopher Gist on his exploration of the Ohio country.

Map No. 1 is a small-scale representation of the region between Hannastown and Pittsburgh. The solid lines on this map show the north and south branches of the early Forbes Road, while the dash line shows the actual marching route of Forbes' army as reproduced from the Potts map. An interesting feature of the marching route is the long semicircular detour to the north which the army made while traveling from the site of present Universal to that of present Rodi. As will be explained in a subsequent paragraph, there is strong reason to believe that at least part of the army actually made this detour, although a straight route along the ridge west of Universal would certainly have been much shorter and more direct. Written history has provided no reason for the making of this detour. A plausible speculation is that the direct route may have been blocked by a windfall of trees blown down by a severe storm.\(^9\)

Map No. 2 is a larger-scale representation showing the routes of the early Forbes Road and the army's actual marching route in the


\(^9\) Paul A. W. Wallace, "Historic Indian Paths of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVI, 17, contains the following statement: "There were times when the traveler found that a hurricane had leveled the trees of a whole district, and the windfall constrained him to make such a wide turn to avoid it that he found himself in wholly unfamiliar country."
MAP No. 2, showing Marching Route of Forbes' Army and Early Forbes Road near sites of modern Center and Universal.

Scale: One mile
region near the sites of modern Center (Trestle) and Universal. This map shows the true locations of Camp Cross Turtle Creek and Bouquet’s Camp. At one place in the area covered by this map it is noted that the marching route is nearly a mile north of the early Forbes Road. The former is far more hilly and rugged than the latter.

It is not difficult to enlarge the Potts map on transparent paper to the scale of the modern U.S. Geological Survey maps, and, by superimposing the former on the latter, it is possible to study the general accuracy of the Potts map. There are enough definite topographical features along the route, such as stream crossings, ridges, etc., to render the results of such a study significant and reliable. This study brings out the surprising fact that in many instances the accuracy of Potts’ mapping increased greatly with the army's western progress. In the eastern portion of the march, from Fort Loudon to Raystown (Bedford), Potts’ survey data are extremely crude, errors as large as 20 per cent in distance and 10 degrees in direction being present. Between Raystown and Fort Ligonier, Potts’ measurements are still rather crude, errors of 5 per cent in distance being common. However, for the last 25 miles of the march, between Washington’s Camp and Fort Duquesne, there is an astonishing increase in the accuracy of Potts’ survey data. The figures in the following table are obtained by superimposing a tracing of the enlarged Potts map on the modern U.S. Geological Survey maps (scale: 1 inch equals 2000 feet). The distances given in this table start from Washington’s Camp where the breastwork is shown both on the Potts map and on an old map of the Hoey farm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Point</th>
<th>True Distance, Miles</th>
<th>Miles by Potts’ Map</th>
<th>Error, Miles</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington’s Camp</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Turtle Creek</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Haymaker’s Creek</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Aber’s Creek</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Thompson’s Run</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Sandy Creek</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td>14.92</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing of Shannopin’s Creek</td>
<td>21.20</td>
<td>21.40</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Duquesne</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>23.80</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen that many measurements of distance in this part of the march have an error of only about one per cent. However, the last hour’s march, from Shannopin’s Creek to Fort Duquesne, contains a
considerably larger error, and was probably made under conditions of great excitement. The bearing for this last hour's march also seems to contain an error larger than Potts' typical ones.

For investigating the accuracy of Potts' compass work in this portion of the march, several check places are available where the topography restricts the route within a narrow lateral range. Among these are: Washington's Camp (breastwork), ravine just south of Turtle Creek crossing at site of present Murrysville, notch in east bluff of Aber's Creek opposite mouth of Pierson's Run, mouth of valley opening on west side of site of modern large freight yard north of Universal, saddle in narrow ridge just north of Rodi, and Nine-mile Run where it emerges from the narrow valley now containing Franks-town Avenue at Sterrett. The closeness with which these check places on the U.S. Geological Survey maps line up with Potts' marching line on the transparent tracing indicates that Potts' compass work in this part of the march was excellent.

It is thus clear that Potts' skill in estimating distances and bearings increased greatly during the last few days of the army's march. This was a period in which generals were beginning to appreciate the advantages of accurate military surveys. A few years later, as in Bouquet's march into Ohio in 1764, accurate surveys with chain and compass were a standard feature of military expeditions. A speculation is that Potts improved his skill in measuring distances by checking his estimates of marching speed against the speed determined by counting revolutions of a wheel. At any rate, in the portion of the marching route west of Washington's Camp, Potts' work is seen to be so accurate that the actual marching path can now be recovered with an uncertainty of not more than a few rods in lateral location at any point.

It is to be realized that the marching line on Potts' map is essentially the plot of a "traverse" or connected series of straight lines whose lengths and bearings have been measured. From the nature of a traverse it follows that if any two points on an old traverse check the corresponding points on the precise modern maps with good accuracy, then all the intermediate points on the traverse must represent the true route with similar accuracy. This is the reason why we can know with confidence that Forbes' army (or at least the portion thereof to

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10 William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians, in the Year 1764 Under the Command of Colonel Henry Bouquet* (Francis Parkman's edition, Cincinnati, 1868), 40; WPHM, XLII, 10.
which Potts was attached) actually made the devious detour between the sites of present Universal and Rodi. Historians who are reluctant to believe that the entire army actually made this detour may indulge in the speculation that Potts had temporarily attached himself to a scouting or flanking party while making this portion of his survey.

On November 16, 1758, Forbes’ army was still at Fort Ligonier, oppressed by a grave potential shortage of provisions, due to possible breakdown of winter transportation across the mountains. On this day the General learned from a captured prisoner that the French garrison at Fort Duquesne had been greatly weakened by the departure of its Indian allies. These Indians, wards of the five Iroquois Nations, had just learned that the latter had decreed peace at the Treaty of Easton. Forbes decided to make a rapid advance to capture the fort, and for this purpose he divided his army into three brigades, commanded respectively by Bouquet, Montgomery and Washington. On November 19 the army arrived at Washington’s Camp (on the hill south of modern Newlonsburg). On November 21 Washington’s brigade was ordered forward to clear a road through the forest to an intersection with the “Old Traders’ Path” and then return to camp. An inference that this intersection was at the place marked “Camp Cross Turtle Creek” on Maps No. 1 and No. 2 may be drawn from the fact that the marching route, as delineated by Potts, here makes an abrupt change of direction from northwest to west, the Old Traders’ Path presumably running from east to west at this location. On November 22 Bouquet’s brigade and Montgomery’s brigade arrived at “Bouquet’s Camp” (see maps), while Washington’s brigade, encumbered by the army’s wagons, bullocks and artillery, travelled more slowly and spent the night of November 22 at Camp Cross Turtle Creek. General Forbes, sick and carried on a litter between two horses and escorted by a guard of thirty soldiers, also spent the same night at that camp. While there he wrote a letter to Colonel Bouquet, directing the latter to start next morning to take action to strengthen his position (Bouquet’s Camp). The inference that Potts was attached to Forbes’ personal staff is based on the fact that Potts gives number 12 to Camp Cross Turtle Creek and 13 to Bouquet’s Camp, though these places are only two miles apart. That Potts was not attached to Washington’s brigade may be inferred from the fact that Potts’ map includes the march from Fort Loudon to Raystown, on which Washington and his brigade were not present. The army spent November 23 and November 24 at Bouquet’s Camp, scouting the vicinity and the country
ahead and presumably building a breastwork or other defense as ordered by Forbes' letter. On the evening of November 24 Indian scouts brought word that the French had blown up and burned their fort and were departing from the region. After directing that the wagons, flour and bullocks be left behind at Bouquet's Camp, Forbes ordered his army to advance toward the ruin of Fort Duquesne, which was reached in the late afternoon of November 25.\footnote{The Orderly Books of the expedition detail this part of the march and the daily happenings in mid-November. The Orderly Books are (1) Bouquet's, found in the appendix to the \textit{Papers of Henry Bouquet, op. cit.}, volume II; (2) the Forbes (Washington's) Orderly Books in the Library of Congress; (3) the Joseph Shippen Orderly Book, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.}

As indicated on Map No. 2, the location of Camp Cross Turtle Creek is one-fourth mile due southwest of the McJunkin farmhouse, which is on the modern New Texas Road one-half mile south of the intersection of the latter with Route 380. Bouquet's Camp is located 100 feet west of the Pennsylvania Turnpike on the unimproved Davidson Road one-half mile south of the intersection of the latter with Route 380.

Some interesting questions arise regarding the location of the breastwork at Bouquet's Camp. The map of the patent of the Davidson farm shows "Bouquet's Breastwork" at the place indicated on Map No. 2 — a short distance south of the present historical marker on the Old Frankstown Road. The latter road here coincides with the early Forbes Road, which was presumably opened subsequent to this campaign. This spot is three-quarters of a mile south of the place indicated on Potts' map as "Col. Bouquet's Camp" and is on the south bank of the east branch of Thompson's Run. Musket balls and brass buttons have been found here but there is no sign today of an earthwork. Like other redoubts built by Forbes' army, Bouquet's Breastwork must have been made of logs. One surmises that Bouquet must have built this breastwork so far south of the main line of march in order to be assured of a liberal supply of water from a good-sized creek.

It is surprising that Bouquet's Breastwork does not appear on Potts' map. Since Potts was not attached to Bouquet's brigade, it is possible that he failed to make a personal visit to the breastwork. However, Potts' map shows a symbol for some kind of an enclosure in a totally different place — on the bank of Plum Creek one-half mile northeast of the center of Bouquet's Camp, slightly west of the site of the modern village of Center (Trestle). Potts' symbol for this en-
closure is not the same as the symbol he uses for redoubts or forts at the army's other camps. The latter symbols are four-pointed stars representing square structures with bastions on the corners, whereas the symbol for the enclosure northeast of Bouquet's Camp is a small circle surrounded by short radial lines. It seems likely that this symbol represents an abatis consisting of a circle of felled trees with branches pointing outward. A speculation is that this enclosure, on the bank of a sizable stream, was for the protection of the horses, wagons, flour and bullocks, left behind by Forbes' order during the final advance on Fort Duquesne. If this interpretation is correct, then the abatis must have been built by George Washington and his provincials who had charge of the wagons and bullocks.

On the advance from Fort Ligonier to Fort Duquesne, Forbes' army was not strung out along a single trail — a disposition which had brought disaster to Braddock — but it marched in three main divisions on roughly parallel courses. The woods were apparently sufficiently open to permit this. Flanking parties and parts of divisions were spread out through the woods on far-flung paths to protect each division. Prior to the arrival of the army at Bouquet's Camp, the northern division was commanded by Washington, the middle division by Montgomery and the southern one by Bouquet. Not many wheeled vehicles accompanied this hurried advance — just a few wagons and light-artillery units, all handled by Washington's brigade of provincials. No permanent road was constructed but just enough brush and fallen timber was cleared away to let the wheeled vehicles get through. However, this cleared trace presumably offered the best going for the two horses which carried the stretcher of the sick General Forbes. Since Potts accompanied the general, the line on his map represents this wagon trace, which lay in the northern third of the general strip of land traversed by the army. This manner of marching and disposition of the troops perhaps explains why Bouquet's Breastwork was so far south of the place designated on Potts' line as "13 Col. Bouquets," and why a fragment of the army made a detour to the north of the direct route between the sites of present Universal and Rodi.12