FROM LOGSTOWN TO VENANGO WITH
GEORGE WASHINGTON

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George Washington left Logstown, near the present site of Ambridge, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, November 30, 1753, and arrived at Venango, now Franklin, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, December 4. His route between these two points has been the subject of much speculation. Washington's biographers, from John Marshall, who blandly assumes that he went up the Allegheny River, to the late Douglas Southall Freeman, who traced his route through Branchton in Butler County, all adopt without comment the theory of a journey by a direct route from Logstown to Venango by way of Murderingtown. Dr. Freeman's recent and excellent volumes on "Young Washington" give present point to the inquiry.

The first-hand evidence on the trip of Washington to Fort Le Boeuf is of course in the diaries of Washington and of his companion, Christopher Gist, and the map of western Pennsylvania and Virginia believed to have been prepared by Washington himself and now lodged in the British Museum. The diary entries are brief and may be quoted in full.

Washington's diary entries concerning this part of his trip are:

[Nov.] 30th. We set out about 9 o'Clock with the Half-King, Jeskakake, White Thunder, and the Hunter; and travelled on the Road to Venango, where we arrived the 4th of December, without any Thing remarkable happening but a continued Series of bad Weather.
[Dec.] 4th. This is an old Indian Town, situated at the Mouth of French Creek on Ohio; and lies near N. about 60 Miles from the

1 An address delivered at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on November 17, 1953. The speaker, well known to the people of his city, county, and section, is President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Lawrence County, Pennsylvania. He wishes to acknowledge technical assistance from Mr. C. Leroy Shira, C. E., in preparing the address.—Ed.

2 For the versions of Washington's and Gist's diaries quoted below, see John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Diaries of George Washington, 1:54 (Boston and New York, 1925), and William M. Darlington, Christopher Gist's Journals, 81 (Pittsburgh, 1893). The reproduction of Washington's map accompanying this article is from a cut loaned by Judge Don Marshall Larrabee of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, who had used it to illustrate the 1929 and 1950 editions of his Report of the Journals of George Washington and His Guide, Christopher Gist. An earlier reproduction, based on the same copy of the original made especially for Darlington, appears in the latter's edition of Christopher Gist's Journals.
Loggs-Town, but more than 70 the way we were obliged to go.

Gist's diary is more explicit. He states that the party did not arrive at Venango until Tuesday, December 5.\(^3\) According to him the party stayed in camp on Sunday, December 2, while the Indians hunted. His account is as follows:

Friday 30.—We set out, and the Half-King and two old men and one young warrior with us. At night we encamped at the Murthering town, about fifteen miles, on a branch of Great Beaver Creek. Got some corn and dried meat.

Saturday 1 December—Set out, and at night encamped at the crossing of Beaver creek from the Kaskuskies to Venango about thirty miles. The next day rain; our Indians went out a hunting; they killed two bucks. Had rain all day.

Monday 3.—We set out and travelled all day. Encamped at night on one of the head branches of Great Beaver creek about twenty-two miles.

Tuesday 5.—Set out about fifteen miles, to the town of Venango, where we were kindly and complaisantly received by Monsieur Joncaire, the French interpreter for the Six Nations.

It is well to have in mind the geography of the region then and now. All of the action until the last day was in the basin of the Beaver River, which empties into the Ohio about twenty-five miles below Pittsburgh.\(^4\) It has three well defined tributaries: the Connoquenessing, the southeastern branch, which enters the Beaver just below Ellwood City; the western branch, the Mahoning, which comes down from northeastern Ohio, and joins the Shenango just below New Castle; and the Shenango itself, which flows down from Conneaut Lake, the Pymatuning Swamp, and the other marshes of the north. The Connoquenessing has a beautiful northern tributary known as Slippery Rock

\(^3\) According to the preceding sequence of week days and dates, and to the *World Almanac*'s "ready reference" calendar, Tuesday was the fourth, and Wednesday the fifth of December that year. In all likelihood the former was intended, and the "5" an error of the diarist, transcriber, or printer.

\(^4\) See the accompanying map of the Beaver River basin area, representing the relevant portion of one drawn by W. L. Wilson, Engr., and based on a stream map issued by the Sanitary Water Board of Pennsylvania. On it are superimposed the trails and Indian villages as shown in Charles A. Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1:384 (New York and London, 1911), and on other maps as indicated in the following list of numbered routes: (1) Washington's route to Murderingtown; (2) Old Pittsburgh Road through Allen's Mill; (3) Kuskuskies-Venango trail, from Lewis Evans' map of 1755; (4) Indian trail through Allen's Mill, shown in *Warrantee Atlas of Lawrence County*; (5) Old State Road through Allen's Mill; (6) Trail from Sawconk to Kuskuskies.
Creek, which also has a northern tributary, Wolf Creek. The Shenango has an eastern branch, Neshannock Creek, which above Mercer becomes Otter Creek and Coolspring Creek. All of these streams were known in Washington's day as the Beaver River, Beaver Creek, or the Great Beaver.

The most important Indian settlement in the area had been the Kuskuskies, a group of villages of the Six Nations about the double forks of the Beaver at modern New Castle. Logstown, originally a Shawnee village, had been founded prior to 1748, and thereafter it transcended the Kuskuskies. Murtherington, or Murderingtow, with the grisly name doubtless derived from some ancient outrage, was somewhere in the valley of the Connoquenessing, perhaps at Frisco and the present site of the Ellwood City Country Club, perhaps at Zelienople, and certainly at one of the fertile bottoms on the river. North of the Kuskuskies on the Shenango River and near the present West Middlesex was Shenango or Shenangotown, a town of the Wyandot Indians, and above it, near the great bend of the Shenango River, was Pymatuningtown. Venango (Franklin) of course was at the junction of French Creek with the Allegheny. Kittanning was the principal seat of the Delawares, and Chartier's Town (Tarentum), of the Shawnee. Shannopin's Town was a village of the Delawares near what is now Arsenal High School in Pittsburgh, and Sawconk was a town of Iroquois and Delawares at Sawconk (Beaver).

An entry in the diary of George Washington, under date of November 25, poses the main outlines of the problem of his route from Logstown to Fort Le Boeuf. He wrote that, when he finally met the Half-King and asked concerning the old chief's recent mission to the French commandant, and for "an account of the Ways and Distance," the Half-King reported that "the nearest and levellest Way was now impassable, by Reason of many large mirey Savannas; that we must be


obliged to go by Venango, and should not get to the near Fort under 5 or 6 Nights Sleep, good Travelling.”

The “nearest and levellest” route from Logstown (Ambridge) to Fort Le Boeuf (Waterford), then as now, is down the Ohio, up the Beaver, up the Shenango, and from the Pymatuning swamp area to French Creek. Modern Route 18 will carry one at Conneaut Lake to within ten miles of French Creek at Meadville. Where were the “large mirey Savannas” across this route? The Pymatuning swamps, the swamps about Conneaut Lake, and the swamps above the Keystone Ordnance Plant at Geneva are still there.

There had to be a detour, and the detour was by way of Venango (Franklin). This is conceded by all. But there was another detour and this on the road from Logstown to Venango. So much is apparent from Washington’s diary: Venango, he noted, “lies near N. about 60 Miles from the Loggs-Town, but more than 70 the way we were obliged to go.” The distances in Gist’s diary total eighty-two miles.

There were two common routes from the forks of the Ohio to Venango, both well known. One was a direct path from Logstown to Venango. It was shown on Lewis Evans’ map of 1755. In 1752 Madame Montour, then blind, rode from Logstown to Venango, a distance by the path of over sixty miles, in less than two days. The other path from Shannopin’s Town to Venango probably went through what is now Millvale, up Girty’s Run, and by way of the present sites of Evans City, Whitestown, Prospect, Isle, crossing Route 8 at the Old Stone House, and thence by way of Kiester, Harrisville, Barkesville, and Wesley to Franklin. George Croghan had warehouses at the mouth of Pine Creek (Etna), at Logstown, and at Venango. He was accustomed to trade at all these places and doubtless knew these paths.

Dr. Freeman assumes that Washington went by the path from Logstown to Venango and takes some pains to explain that neither Gist’s daily distances nor his observations on the watersheds were correct. If there were errors how did Gist come to make them? He had been at Logstown in 1750, when his mission was to explore the land. At Logst-

8 Fitzpatrick, Diaries of George Washington, 1:46-47.
9 Lawrence H. Gipson, Lewis Evans, appendix (Philadelphia, 1939).
10 Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 5:762 (Harrisburg, 1851).
11 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, 1:271.
town in 1752 he had represented the Ohio Company under commission from Governor Dinwiddie to examine the land. He had met and conferred with Croghan at various times. Barnaby Currin, another of Washington's party, had been at Kuskuskies in 1749 and had behind him a wide experience as a trader in this very area. Dr. Freeman points out that the well-known trader and interpreter John Davison, who knew the country well, was with the party. The Half-King and the other Indians knew the terrain like the backs of their hands.

This wealth of experience in Washington's party should gain a more respectful reception than Christopher Gist's diary with its directions and distances has been accorded. Dr. Freeman and many other writers assume that Washington went by way of the straight road from Logstown to Venango, but that Gist, in chronicling the events, mistook the distances, was wrong as to the trails, and erred in identification of the watersheds.

In order to demonstrate how arbitrarily Gist has been ridden down, it is only necessary to try and fit his data on the direct trail from Logstown to Venango.

Concerning the first day's travel, from Logstown to Murderingtown, there is not much controversy. The unknown factor is, of course, the location of Murderingtown. Frisco, just east of Ellwood City, Zelienople, and intermediate points are all a long fifteen miles from Ambridge. Murderingtown is the only point mentioned as common to Washington's journey north and his return south.

The difficulty begins with the second day's journey. Gist says they went thirty miles to the crossing of Beaver Creek from Kuskuskies to Venango. Reserving comment for the moment on the location of this crossing, it is apparent to one familiar with the country that thirty miles from the Connoquenessing valley is almost to Venango. Use either Frisco at the west end of the valley or Zelienople fifteen miles farther east as the pivot. Swing an arc of thirty miles from Frisco and you are just south of Mercer and just south of Clintonville. Swing the arc from Zelienople and you are at Mercer and at Wesley on Route 8.

Obviously, seven white men and four Indians did not travel as the crow flies, and modern roads furnish a far better standard of compari-

13 Darlington, Gist's Journals, 34, 234 ff.
son than the swinging of an arc. Go from Frisco up the Connoque-
nessing through Zelienople, back-track to Evans City (because there
are no good roads otherwise), then turn north through Whitestown,
Prospect, and Isle. Thirty miles will find you almost to the Old Stone
House south of Slippery Rock. Begin your journey of thirty miles at
Zelienople, and you are east of Slippery Rock and only about four miles
south of Harrisville. Go by the back roads from Frisco through Porters-
ville and Slippery Rock, and thirty miles will take you almost to Wesley.

The point where Route 8 crosses Slippery Rock Creek, near Branch-
ton, is suggested by Dr. Freeman as the stopping place for the second
night. This is an average conclusion for those who hold to the eastern
route. Passing once more the fact that no trail from Kuskuskes to
Venango ran anywhere near there, the difficulty with this route be-
comes apparent when the third day's journey is considered.

Gist says that on the third day they "set out and travelled all day.
Encamped at night on one of the head branches of Great Beaver creek
about twenty-two miles." But it is only about twenty-five miles from
the crossing at Branchton to Franklin. Twenty-two miles far overruns
the waters of the Beaver and you are in the basin of Sandy Creek, a
tributary of the Allegheny, known to Gist as the Lacomick Creek.

Assuming, as Gist says, that the party halted while the Indians
hunted on Sunday, December 2 (and of this, more later), the fifth
day's journey was fifteen miles from the headwaters of Beaver Creek to
Venango on the Allegheny. To try to fit this day's travel into the hy-
pothesis of a journey direct from Logstown to Venango is fatal. If one
honestly tries to allow for a thirty-mile ride on the second day and a
twenty-two mile ride on the third day, nothing is left for the final day.

To be sure the distances may be erroneous. The key to the problem
is found in Gist's landmark, recorded as the point reached at the end
of the second day's march of thirty miles. This is "the crossing of Beaver
creek from the Kuskuskes to Venango." This assumes a trail from
Kuskuskes to Venango and a point where that trail crossed the Beaver.
In the law of real estate, monuments on the ground are preferred to
courses and distances. Where did this trail run?

Passing Washington's own map for the moment, the map nearest
in point of time is Lewis Evans' map of 1755. This map, the material
for which is believed by many to have been obtained, in part at least,
from Christopher Gist himself, shows the trail running from the Kus-
kuskies up the Shenango River to the Indian town of Shenango (West Middlesex) and thence curving northeast to Venango.

Thomas Hutchins’ map of 1764 shows the trail Kuskuskies to Venango passing by way of Shenango and the other Indian village of Pymatuningtown. Lieutenant Hutchins was George Croghan’s assistant and a surveyor. He has left valuable descriptions of the country through which he passed. A portion of the account of his route from Salt Licks (Niles, Ohio) to Venango (Franklin) through Shenango (West Middlesex) may be quoted:

15 Miles further, through low Land, Timbered with Beach, is Shaningo Town [below Sharon], on Another [Shenango] branch of Beaver Creek 15 yards wide.

After crossing the Creek at a good Ford the Path leads through level Land, 6 Miles, to the partings of the Venango Road.

The left Hand Path goes about 3 Miles to Pemeytuning [at or near the mouth of Pymatuning Creek], situate on the same Creek: After crossing of which, takes through level Land, well Timbered, 8 miles, to the same [Shenango] Creek again, 8 yards wide; here is a good Ford and A Number of Indian Graves.

Then 9 Miles, along Level, Shrubby Land, to A Large Run [Otter Creek], 5 yards wide, very Swampy.

8 Miles further, through wet Land & Swampy in some places, to A Lake on the Right [Sandy Lake, in Mercer County], two Miles Long and half a Mile wide, the Head of Sandy Creek.16

The “Big Bend” of the Shenango River, which comes down in a wide arc toward the east from south of Greenville to east of Sharpsville, is well known to Mercer Countians. Pymatuningtown was on the southern side of the bend. Hutchins’ description of the “left Hand Path” indicates a route cutting across the Big Bend, passing some distances to the north, and thence over the upper reaches of Otter Creek (the northernmost branch of the Neshannock) to Sandy Lake. Unfortunately Hutchins does not describe where the right-hand path to Venango ran, and his map shows only that the path from Kuskuskies to Venango had a double crossing of the Big Bend. Perhaps the right-hand path ran by what is now Jackson Center; perhaps, since the “parting” was three miles south of Pymatuning, by way of Mercer. All known is that Washington’s party did not reach Sandy Lake at the end of the second day because it is not in the basin of the Great Beaver Creek, but in the basin of the Allegheny.

With this identification of the Kuskusies-Venango trail, the next inquiry is as to where it crossed the Beaver Creek. The crossing at Pymatuning may have been meant or the crossing at Shenango. Evans' map shows the trail running up the east side of the Shenango River to Shenangotown with no intermediate crossing. But a map in the Thomas Hutchins Manuscripts at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, believed to have been dated about 1761, shows the trail between the Kuskusies and Shenango crossing from east to west and back again. As the trail curved northeast from Shenango there were many crossings of smaller tributaries of the Great Beaver.

Return now to Murderingtown and test Gist's observations with the hypothesis that the crossing of the trail Kuskusies to Venango is up the Shenango River. Take Gist at his word. He traveled the width of Ohio and his courses and distances hold out; they are equally accurate here. Swing your arc of thirty miles from Murderingtown west to the Shenango River. If Murderingtown was near Ellwood City at the west end of the Connoquenessing valley, the arc will intersect the Shenango between Sharon and old Pymatuningtown. If the center is at Zelienople, the arc will cross the Shenango River at about West Middlesex, that is, old Shenangotown.

Thirty miles, by existing roads, from the Ellwood City Country Club up the Shenango valley, will take you to a point slightly above West Middlesex. Thirty miles from Zelienople will take you to a point between the Kings Chapel Church (near the Harbor) and Pulaski.

Here, notice must be taken of Washington's map. It traces his route from Logstown, passing down the Ohio and up the Beaver, leaving Mingotown (Rochester) on the left and Murderingtown on the right, and crossing some distance above the Kuskusies the easternmost of the streams which meet at that town. The crossing of this stream is the last point identified on the map until, after curving northeast, the route crossed the Lycomick (Sandy Creek) and reached Venango.

The map is a conventionalized thing and does not pretend to be exact. Some features are omitted. Slippery Rock Creek, the northern tributary of the Connoquenessing, is not shown, nor are the double forks at the Kuskusies (Mahoning-Shenango and Shenango-Neshannock). The map does, however, compel certain definite conclusions. It indicates that Washington's party crossed the Connoquenessing on its lower reaches and proceeded north, starting out parallel with the
Beaver and curving to the east to reach Venango. It demonstrates that Washington crossed one of the streams which unite at the Kuskuskies. Whether, therefore, it was the Shenango that was crossed or the Shenango's eastern tributary, the Neshannock, it is at least certain that he crossed Lawrence County proceeding to the northwest. The crossing of this stream at once eliminates the idea of a trip up east of the Slippery Rock and Wolf creeks, and, if the map is to be believed at all, eliminates the theory of a trip up the direct path from Logstown to Venango.

Because the topography of the area must be understood to grasp the problem, some observations concerning features better understood locally than by eminent biographers may be indulged in. The key to the area is a ford at Wurtemburg. A traveler up the east side of the Beaver River, from its junction with the Ohio north to Ellwood City, will find travel close to the river very hard. High hills tower over the winding Beaver, impressive now, doubly impressive two hundred years ago when vast forests covered all. As the present site of Ellwood City is reached, by roads well back from the river, a new obstacle is met. It is the deep chasm of the Connoquenessing; the stream in its rocky bed is one hundred feet below the bridge at Fifth Street. Slippery Rock Creek, which joins the Connoquenessing at the edge of Ellwood City, comes down from the north through a wild gorge of steep slopes, great rocks, and heavy timber. Together, the lower Connoquenessing and the Slippery Rock, running from northeast to southwest, formed a long and effective barrier to travel through the wilderness; they form a barrier now. From the mouth of the Connoquenessing to Rose Point, a dozen miles up the Slippery Rock, there is only one natural crossing. It is at Wurtemburg, a little village just northeast of Ellwood City, known in the early days as Allen's Mill. There, the hills draw back from the swift water. Where now a concrete bridge crosses the stream, in early days there was a ford. Near by, Ananias Allen built his mill.17

Where did Washington's party go after they crossed the ford at Wurtemburg? Three old roads fanned out to the north from this ford. While early roads of the white men do not necessarily connote roads on the routes of Indian travel, it must be remembered that life for the white man was not safe in this area until after the victory of Mad Anthony Wayne at Fallen Timbers in 1794, and that the interval of time

17 See route numbered one on the accompanying map of the Beaver River basin.
between trails and roads was therefore short.

The westernmost of these roads led west from the ford to the place on the Great Beaver now known as Wampum.\(^{18}\) In the early days it was known as Irish Ripple, and an important ford was there. This road is marked on the map of donation lands in Lawrence County, prepared by the late George W. Muse, Esq., as an "Indian Path."\(^{19}\) This was the trail apparently used by James Hillman, an early trader, from Pittsburgh to Cleveland and Sandusky.\(^{20}\) Washington did not take this trail beyond the point where the Slippery Rock Presbyterian Church (one of the oldest churches in Lawrence County) stands perched on its hilltop among the oak trees. He is not believed to have followed the trail to the Irish Ripple because the trails north from there, on either side of the Beaver, led directly to the Kuskuskies and Washington did not go there.\(^{21}\)

The easternmost of the roads leading north from the Wurtemburg ford proceeded north from the Slippery Rock Presbyterian Church along the course of the modern road from Ellwood City to New Castle (Route 88) as far as Energy, where it followed what is now Route 388, bearing east of Eastbrook, crossing the Neshannock at a solitary ford south of Volant (long since abandoned), and continuing by way of White Chapel and Indian Run to Mercer.\(^{22}\) This road was laid out pursuant to an Act of Assembly in 1809, to be the main road from Beaver to Mercer and Meadville.\(^{23}\) It was known in the youth of the writer as the "Old State Road." Washington may have followed it to the crossing of the Neshannock, but not as far as Mercer, because one cannot travel twenty-two miles toward Franklin from Mercer and still be in the basin of the Great Beaver.

The third road from the Wurtemburg ford left the other two at Slippery Rock church and led north, between the others, to New Castle.\(^{24}\) This road is known today as the "Old Pittsburgh Road," but its

18 Route 4 on the Beaver River basin map.
20 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, 1:349.
21 Route 6 on the Beaver River basin map.
22 Route 5 on the Beaver River basin map.
23 Act of April 4, 1809, in Laws of Pennsylvania, 11:387; Beaver County, Court of Quarter Sessions, 134, March Sessions, 1809; Mercer County, Court of Quarter Sessions, Road Docket A, 42.
24 Route 2 on the Beaver River basin map.
origins are surrounded in antiquity. In 1799 viewers were prayed for in Allegheny County to lay out a road from Pittsburgh, to Beaver, to Allen’s Mill (Wurtemburg), and thence to “Old Kuskusky Town on Big Beaver.” The road was laid out only to Allen’s Mill; to the north it disappears vaguely in the “Cuskusky Path.”25 It was finally laid out to New Castle by proceedings in Beaver County in 1804.26 Both the “Old State Road” and the “Old Pittsburgh Road” are shown on the old map of Hugh McCullough as crossing at the Wurtemburg ford. This map was adopted by the state in 1817; it appears in Bausman’s excellent history of Beaver County.27

An experience of Christian Frederick Post confirms the idea that Washington traveled by the trail which was the ancestor of the Old Pittsburgh Road. When Post made the first of his two memorable visits to the Kuskuskies in 1758, he came by way of the Connoquenessing valley where he found an “old Indian town.” This was doubtless the Murdertown of Washington’s trip in 1753. The distance from this town to the Kuskuskies, Post reported, was fifteen miles. He said he reached the Kuskuskies by coming down “a long valley” which is commonly believed to have been the valley of McKee Run, now known as Hogue Hollow or Hog Hollow.28 The village of the Kuskuskies which he reached was on the flats north of West Pittsburgh.29 Where the Old Pittsburgh Road crosses McKee Run, McKee School House once stood among groves of sugar trees. It is fifteen miles by the Old Pittsburgh Road and McKee Run from the Ellwood City Country Club in the valley of the Connoquenessing to the flats above West Pittsburgh. The inference is permissible that Post came to McKee Run by the ford at Wurtemburg and the Indian trail which a few years later became one of the earliest of the roads of the white men, and that Washington had already followed this route.

If Washington went by the way indicated why did he not stop at

25 Allegheny County, Court of Quarter Sessions, No. 4, September Term, 1797; No. 5, December Sessions, 1799.
26 Beaver County, Court of Quarter Sessions, No. 7, February Term, 1804.
28 Entries for August 12 and November 16, 1758, in Post’s “Journal” as reproduced in Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, 1:193, 249 (Cleveland, 1904).
29 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, 1:341.
the Kuskuskies? His map shows only that he crossed one of the streams of the Kuskuskies some distance above the town. The precise location of old Kuskuskies has been the subject of some controversy. The probabilities are that in 1753 the villages of the Kuskuskies were clustered about the lower forks of the Beaver, that is, the confluence of the Mahoning and Shenango. It was not until after the French took over in 1754 that the new village was constructed by them for the Delawares about the upper forks. Post saw the French at work there in 1758. The upper fork is three miles above the lower. Why did not Washington stop? Kuskuskies was the Iroquois capital in the Ohio country. The answer is that Washington and his party were engaged in a stern race with a northern winter. They knew that to stop meant endless palaver according to Indian protocol. Hence they by-passed the Kuskuskies, leaving it a few miles to their left.

One fundamental fact established by Washington’s map is a crossing of the Neshannock. Just where he crossed must always be a matter of conjecture. In New Castle the crossings of the Neshannock are easy, but the stream comes down from the north in a narrow valley between high and jutting cliffs. The next feasible crossing of the Neshannock to the north is above Eastbrook Station, four miles upstream. The crossing may have been at one of many points between Eastbrook Station and Neshannock Falls. It may have been at the solitary ford where the Old State Road from Beaver to Mercer crossed below Volant.

Our clues are not, however, limited to a crossing of the Slippery Rock at a point which must have been the ford at Wurtemburg or to a crossing of the Neshannock some distance above the Kuskuskies. A further clue is the Kuskuskies-Venango trail, which we know ran up the Shenango valley by way of Shenango and Pymatuningtown. If Washington’s party was heading direct for this trail their natural route would be up the Old Pittsburgh Road, over East Washington Street, the extension in New Castle of the Old Pittsburgh Road, and up the Shenango valley by way of the Pulaski Road. This road, as far north as Sankey’s Fording (the Harbor), was opened by proceedings begun in 1808. If Washington headed straight for the Big Bend country, it may

30 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, 1:340.
31 Entry for August 14, 1758, in Post’s “Journal,” Early Western Travels, 1:195.
32 Route 3 on the Beaver basin map.
have been by the route later followed by the New Castle-Big Bend Road, also laid out in 1809.\textsuperscript{33} It followed the present Route 18 to the intersection west of New Wilmington, where it continued north.

Just where the crossing of the Kuskuskies-Venango trail was is indeed a mystery, but here again there is a clue. It was at a point from which one could travel twenty-two miles toward Venango and still be in the basin of the Great Beaver. Our final clue fixes this last stopping point, “on one of the head branches of Great Beaver creek,” as fifteen miles from Venango.

No hypothesis accords so well with the known facts as the hypothesis of a second day’s journey of thirty miles ending near the Shenango River at some point between Pulaski and the Big Bend, and of a third day’s journey ending somewhere above Jackson Center.

It is white man’s reasoning that has led so many of Washington’s biographers to reject the idea that the second day’s journey lay west of Slippery Rock Creek. Because they know of no bridge washed out or concrete roadway under repair on the direct Logstown-Venango trail, they find lack of evidence of the western route outlined by Washington’s map and Gist’s journal and reject it. But Washington’s party was in Indian country, in Indian hands, and in the midst of an Indian crisis. We should say, not “the route Washington took,” but “the route the Half-King took”! We must look for Indian reasons for taking the route Gist says they took.

Viewed in this light it is apparent that the party took a main trail; the thirty miles traveled the second day was one of their best days. The trails from the Connoquenessing to the Kuskuskies, and from there to Venango, were main trails. Kuskuskies was the seat of the regency of the Six Nations in the Ohio country.\textsuperscript{34} Trails led thence up the Mahoning to Cuyahoga (Cleveland) and ultimately to Sandusky and Detroit.\textsuperscript{35} As a necessary corollary the trail from the Long House at Onondaga down the Allegheny to Venango, and ultimately to the Kuskuskies, was a life line of empire. Following the disastrous defeat of the Seneca by the French and Indians under Denonville in 1687, when the Seneca capital near Avon, New York, was burned, the Seneca fell back from

\textsuperscript{33} Mercer County, Court of Quarter Sessions, December, 1808, Road Docket A, p. 33; 1809, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{34} See the 1755 maps of Mitchell and Vaugondy cited above, note 5.
\textsuperscript{35} Archer B. Hulbert, \textit{Indian Thoroughfares}, vol. 2, \textit{Historic Highways of America}, maps, pp. 100, 104 (Cleveland, 1902).
the shores of Lake Ontario to the foot of Seneca Lake and the upper waters of the Genesee. The Genesee and the Allegheny rise in the same area, and the continuing menace of the French along the Great Lakes led to the cultivation of the inland way to the west through the Kuskuskes.

It may be that, even while the Half-King and his fellow chiefs led Washington's party north, runners from Onondaga were expected along the trail from Venango to Kuskuskes. The Half-King needed advice. The cold rain of the late Pennsylvania autumn was matched by the somber aspect of the affairs of the Six Nations on the Ohio. As late as 1748 they had been supreme. The diary of Conrad Weiser, covering the conference at Logstown in 1748, demonstrates how complete had been that supremacy. Every speech referred to the desire of the English to act in the Ohio country in the name and under the authority of the Six Nations. At George Croghan's conference at Logstown in 1751, following Celoron's expedition in 1749, again it was the Iroquois who led, and it was a chief of the Six Nations who made answer "very quick and sharp" to the French demands. Washington himself came to the Ohio with instructions to report first to the sachems of the Six Nations on the Ohio.

Now all was changed. The French held a string of forts right across the lines of communication between the Long House at Onondaga and the Ohio. The imperial domain of the Six Nations in the Ohio had become a vast salient apt to be cut off at any time. It was the twilight of the Gods. The Shawnee and Delawares, they of the petticoats, with whom the French had been intriguing for years, were sullen and insubordinate. Washington's escort, originally planned as a demonstration in force by all the tribes on the Ohio, had dwindled to three chiefs and a hunter, all Iroquois. The Delawares and Shawnee equivocated and evaded but did not send a man.

If the ominous nature of the picture seems overdrawn let it only be reflected that on August 8, 1756, the Marquis de Vaudreuil was able to report to his minister that almost all the Iroquois from the districts about Fort Duquesne (including the Kuskuskes) had been with-

36 Francis Parkman, Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV, 139-157 (Boston, 1877); J. S. Schenck, ed., History of Warren County, Pennsylvania, 57 (Syracuse, New York, 1887).

37 Entry for May 28, 1751, in George Croghan's "Journal," in Thwaites, Early Western Travels, 1:69.
drawn to Venango "on a belt of the Five Nations." Thirty-eight months after Washington's journey, Braddock was defeated. Ten years later Gysasuta, the young hunter with Washington, was leading the Seneca against the English at Bushy Run.

Prudence may have dictated the Half-King’s choice of the Kuskuskie-Venango trail. There were hostile Indians in the forests who had come down with the French. Washington reports that the Indian who shot at him on his return trip (December 27, 1753) was one of a party of French Indians. Gist says that the Indian had told them there were Ottawa lurking in the surrounding woods. The latter may have been fanning out from the Allegheny River and the western route may have been safer.

One final speculation may be indulged in, without definite foundation in the evidence and to be tolerated only because there has been so much speculation by eminent historians to prove that Gist did not go where Gist says he went. On the Shenango River above Kuskuskie there were two important Indian villages which have already been mentioned, Shenangotown at West Middlesex and Pymatuningtown near the Big Bend. Shenango was a town of Wyandot Indians believed to be members of the band of that Chief Nicholas who had raised the standard of revolt against the French at Sandusky in 1747, and who had taken sanctuary on the upper Shenango with the approval of the Six Nations.

Admitting the Wyandot to the fraternity of the satellites of the Six Nations on the Ohio was one of the subjects for discussion at Weiser’s conference in 1748. In 1753 the Half-King and his fellow chiefs may have desired to see how the Wyandot stood.

There is a blank day in Washington's diary entries. It was Sunday, December 2. Of this day Gist says only: "The next day rain; our Indians went out a hunting; they killed two bucks. Had rain all day."

38 Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent, eds., Wilderness Chronicles of Northwestern Pennsylvania, 95 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941).
39 Fitzpatrick, Diaries of George Washington, 1:64; Darlington, Christopher Gist’s Journals, 84-85.
40 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, 1:345.
Conceivably on this day the Indians hunted not only deer but allies. The Wyandot of Shenango and the Delawares of Pymatuning were in the area to which the known evidence indicates that Washington and his party went. Unjustifiable inference? Perhaps so, but at least an attempt to speculate from the Indian point of view.

The present contention for a westerly route from Logstown to Venango is not new. The George Washington atlas published in 1932 by the George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and edited by Lawrence Martin, chief of the division of maps in the Library of Congress, indicates a route running northwest to the Shenango River and not far east of the present site of New Castle, Pennsylvania. This is the conclusion formed by the people of Lawrence County who have always liked to believe that the feet of the hero passed this way. The completion in 1949 of one hundred years of Lawrence County's history, and now the arrival of the two hundredth anniversary of Washington's trip, have each provided fitting occasion for this restatement of the claim.
Legend

(1) Washington's Route to Murderingtown
(2) Old Pittsburgh Road through Allen's Mill
(3) Kuskuskie-Venango Trail (Lewis Evans Map 1755)
(4) Indian Trails from Warrantee Map
(5) Old State Road through Allen's Mill
(6) Trail Sawconk-Kuskuskie

W. L. Wilson, Engineer 1952

Washington's Probable Route from Logstown to Venango in 1753, as Indicated by the Lines Numbered 1, 2, and 3.