THE VENANGO PATH
AS THOMAS HUTCHINS KNEW IT

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PART II

FROM VENANGO TO PRESQU’ ISLE

In the preceding installment we followed the Venango Path, as described by Lieutenant Thomas Hutchins, from Fort Pitt, across the several branches of Beaver Creek (branches of Connoquenessing and Slippery Rock Creeks), across Sandy Creek to Venango (modern Franklin) at the confluence of French Creek with the Allegheny River.

From Venango northward, it is apparent from contemporary maps and journals that several variations in traveled paths existed. It is equally apparent, from an examination of all the existing evidence, that the path described by Hutchins in the manuscript herewith printed was the most practicable one during the period 1760-1764. It was the marching route of the several units of Colonel Henry Bouquet’s detachment, in the summer of 1760, to establish Fort Presqu’ Isle on the British communication between Fort Niagara and Detroit. Two practically identical versions of Hutchins’ journal of this march have been published. The road description herewith presented, however, expands greatly upon the bare facts contained in the journal by characterizing the trail itself, the soil, the country through which it passed, the topographical and physical features of the terrain, the woods and vegetation. It also contains internal evidence of having been written subsequent to the capture and destruction of the forts by the Indians during Pontiac’s uprising in 1763. This and other road descriptions Hutchins kept during his journeys over much of the country east of the Mississippi were useful to him when he later (1778) compiled his A Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina.

Three times during the Revolution, the Venango Path suddenly burst into prominence in the official correspondence and orders of both American and British army headquarters. Although there were no great military movements over the old trail, only reconnaissances going to and fro, yet the urgency of the moment focused the eyes of the strategic planners of both supreme commanders upon this back-
woods communication. The incidents must have kindled nostalgic memories in the mind of the mature General Washington with recollections of the scenes of first military service rendered by the youthful Virginia officer twenty-seven years before. One of the incidents involved implications of the little known and far reaching spy and espionage system employed by Washington during the War for Independence.37

In September of 1779, Sir Frederick Haldimand, military governor of Canada, wrote to General Sir Henry Clinton, British commander in chief, that he was convinced that Sullivan's campaign against the Iroquois towns of Upper New York and Brodhead's expedition on the Upper Allegheny would ultimately be directed against Fort Niagara, because the American forces had penetrated to Venango and Le Boeuf, thus forcing him to take precautionary measures.38

In the early part of 1781, Washington received intelligence “by a good channel, from New York” that the notorious Lieutenant Colonel John Connolly, having been released by exchange after nearly five years of imprisonment, had gone to New York and thence to Quebec with plans to join with Sir John Johnson, raise a large body (reported to be three thousand) of Tories and Indians and march to attack Fort Pitt by way of the Lakes, Niagara, Presqu' Isle and Venango.39

Brodhead had simultaneously discovered a plot to rouse the Loyalists who had lately moved into the area of Western Pennsylvania and to receive aid from the British post at Detroit. The plot was revealed through the finding of a letter within a powder horn. The writer of the letter was found, tried by court martial and sentenced to be hanged.40 It is interesting that Washington disapproved the sentence and ordered his release on grounds of “some particular Information respecting him.” 41 In order to gain intelligence of possible approaching danger by way of the Venango Trail, scouting parties were kept out “as far as the Carrying place [Le Boeuf].” 42 as well as along the Allegheny River. The anticipated British attack on the Upper Ohio was a principal reason for the failure of General George Rogers Clark to raise troops in Western Pennsylvania for his projected expedition against Detroit.43 Even though Connolly's plot failed through his own serious illness,44 it served to pin down American efforts in the western country for an indefinite period.45

A third time the British commander in chief turned his eyes toward that historic thoroughfare of approach from Canada to Fort Pitt. While laying plan after plan before a council of war composed of the chief general officers of the British army and navy, at New York,
for the purpose of saving Lord Cornwallis' army, then besieged by Washington's and Rochambeau's armies at Yorktown, Virginia, General Clinton wrote: "Sir Henry hopes that his Excellency General Haldimand will be able to spare 2000 men to make a diversion by way of Niagara, Lake Erie, and Presqu' Isle toward Fort Pitt and the Ohio River . . . ." The plan called for strong fortifications to be built at Presqu' Isle and Venango that would resist all attacks by superior forces. This all tied into an elaborate plan carried to Haldimand by General Riedesel, the Brunswick-German commander, that Vermont (through the Allens, Ethan and Ira) was to join the British cause and, if Cornwallis were to be successful, all communication between the northern and southern states would be obstructed, except that through the Presqu' Isle-Fort Pitt route. With the Venango Path and Allegheny River soon to be under control, "the Commander in Chief was then fully persuaded that rebellion in America was at its last gasp." Of course, things did not happen that way, but the Venango Path played an important part in the high level planning of both commands throughout the grim years of the American Revolution.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge our indebtedness to several repositories of historical treasures and to their staff members who have aided materially in furthering the present project. To the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, through its Director, Mr. Henry Cadwalader, and the staff of the Manuscript Division, we are indebted for the manuscript printed herewith, also for making available the Hutchins Papers for research and reference, from which we were able to obtain copies of maps and letters. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau of Research, Publications and Records, through its Director, Mr. Donald H. Kent, and its Historian Mrs. Autumn L. Leonard, has shown constructive interest in and given encouragement to the work. The staff members of the Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs, Bureau of Land Records, have been untiring in their aid in searching hundreds of early warrants and surveys over which the Path crossed, through the Director, Mr. A. G. Reese. To the William L. Clements Library, through its Director, Mr. Howard H. Peckham, we are grateful for copies of numerous manuscript maps in their collection, from the Gage and the Harmar Papers. The New York Public Library kindly permitted perusal of George Croghan's Journal, in the Lenox Collection, as well as the map we have identified as the Patterson-Hutchins map of 1759. The Library of Congress was helpful in the search for manuscript material and in furnishing photostatic copies of manuscript maps in its collection. In Pitts-
burgh, the Darlington Memorial Library, through its Librarian, Miss Ruth Salisbury, allowed study of maps and source materials for reference. The staff of the Pennsylvania Room and the General Reference Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh cheerfully rendered invaluable aid in finding the bibliographical minutiae that bind the notes of drab research together. Then there are the corps of assistants in the Prothonotaries' and Clerks of Courts' offices in Butler, Venango, Crawford and Erie Counties, who courteously aided in the search of Court Orders, Road Dockets, Wills and Deeds in their keeping. Private citizens, too numerous to mention, offered willing information. For all of these courtesies and pleasant associations we are grateful. It may well be another step toward learning "what those roads have known." 49

[The Hutchins Manuscript continues]
The Rout by Land from Fort Pitt to Venango — and from thence to
LeBeauf and Presqu' Isle
by Thomas Hutchins

PART II
VENANGO TO LE BOEUF AND PRESQU' ISLE

The Path about 3/4 of a Mile North of Venango crosses French Creek a 100 yards over, and communicates with the River Allegheny about half a Mile to the Eastward of the crossing. 50 For near a Mile after passing this Creek the Path goes through low ground then ascends a Steep Hill at the North West foot of which is a small Brook, from whence it is 2 1/2 Miles through a low Rich Bottom to Sugar Creek 10 yards over, and five miles from Venango. 51

This Bottom continues a Mile further and is full of Brooks: at the end of this distance the Path ascends another steep Hill, and alternately Traverses little Hills and low Bottoms for 4 Miles through woods open and very young, the Lowland timber better than on the other side of French Creek. 52 The Path continues through low Ground near to the bank of French Creek — brooks at the end of one, two and three Miles and at 5 Miles from Sugar Creek is a Rivulet 12 yards wide 53 — 2 miles further is a high sidling Hill opposite Custalogas Town, 54
The course of the Venango Path from Venango (Franklin) to Presqu' Isle (Erie) c. 1760, as described by Thomas Hutchins. (Courtesy of Rand McNally & Company)
Lieutenant Thomas Hutchins' own map of the marching route of Colonel Henry Bouquet's Royal Americans and Virginians, also Colonel Hugh Mercer's Pennsylvanians, in July of 1760. (Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)
which is situated on the southwest side of French Creek.

In the year 1760 this Town which was inhabited by Delaware Indians, consisted of about 80 Warriors. It is since abandoned. Two miles further stood formerly three Mingo Hutts and about a mile beyond them the Path takes through remarkable rich Meadows, quite clear, more than two miles in length and a half a mile broad with one or two mirey Brooks running across them. At the end of these Meadows were formerly three more Mingo Hutts.

Here the food [i.e., forage] is Excellent and Country covered with fine open Woods free from underwood. The Path from this place leads through very rich bottoms commonly called Swamps crossing brooks at every two or three mile to French Creek distant 11 miles. The Country well timbered and free from underwood. After crossing of this Ford which is shallow and 80 yards wide, the Path leads over about a half a mile of pretty high open Woods, then passes through a Swamp 2½ miles in width full of very large Cypress Trees with two small Rivulets running through it to a Mirey Creek 20 yards over. All these waters direct their course Eastward and fall into French Creek which is but a small distance to the right of the Path.

After crossing the last mentioned Creek the Path takes up a pretty steep ascent and continues upon very high ground, though very swampy, for 6 miles (in which is neither Water nor Encamping Ground.) The Path then crosses a Branch of French Creek 25 yards wide into a fine Meadow near a Mile Square, from whence there is a good Waggon Road about two Miles through flat open Woods to Le Beauf on a Commanding Ground, which was situated on the north side of a small Branch of French Creek over which there was formerly a good bridge. This Creek, half a mile below, runs through a Lake a mile over — but is itself not ten yards wide.

The Fort at Le Boeuf

The French built a Fort at this place in the year 1754 [1753], which they abandoned in 1759, soon after they deserted the Post at Venango. This Post was advantageously situated as well to support the Communication from Presqu' Isle to Venango and Fort Du Quesne, as a deposit for Stores and Provisions destined for those Posts. & as French Creek from this place is navigable for Battoes and the current favourable on descended [sic], Transportation on that account was expeditious cheap and easy.

A common building without Defences, erroneously called a Block-house, was erected here by the British in 1760 and with nearly the same
views which induced the French to Establish themselves etc. is at this place. This House, with another nearer the Landing called a Store were attacked by upwards of 50 Warriors of the Six Nations nearly about the time the Post at Venango was destroyed, but the Fate of their Garrisons were very different. The Garrison of Le Boeuf, consisting of one Subaltern and a Non-Commissioned Officer and 10 privates of the 60th or Royal American Regiment.

This Officer, Ensign Price, who from his being a Native of America had an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of the Indians and of the Woods which is their native Element. Though they had surrounded his Post his vigilance eluded their utmost caution and circumspection. The certainty of success they had promised themselves from their superior numbers and the impossibility as they imagined of the Garrison Escaping induced them instead of Watching to take their natural rest at night. When all seemed quiet he marched out with his little Party, directed his course through the Woods for Fort Pitt where they arrived safe all excepting two men one of which took ill a few Miles from Fort Pitt and the other was left to take care of him.

This relation is only mentioned to show how absolutely necessary it is for every officer commanding a Post or Party in the back Parts of America to make himself acquainted with the Geography of the Country as well as to inform himself of the customs of the Indians.

**Le Boeuf to Presqu' Isle**

From Le Boeuf to Presqu' Isle is 15 computed miles. It is a continued chesnuef bottom swamp except for about one mile from the former and two miles from the later and the Road between the two places for nine miles, is made with logs and laid upon the Swamp, but much out of repair.

In the Year 1754 the French built a Fort at Presqu' Isle. They had no doubt many reasons for establishing a Post here, but the most obvious Intent to be for the purposes of keeping up the communication with Le Boeuf, Venango and Fort Du Quesne and as well with Sandusky, De Troit and Niagara. The evacuation of this place by the French was in 1759, and in 1760 the British built on the Ruins of the French Fort the most Defensible Block house then in North America.

On the commencement of the Indian War in 1763, it shared the same Fate with the other Posts on this Communication, it was taken
by the Indians and burnt, part of the Garrison put to death, and those that were saved taken to De Troit and exchanged for Indians then Prisoners of the British.

The Usual communication from Presqu’ Isle to Sandusky and to Niagara is by water, coasting it along Shore in Canoes or Battoes and Landing every night. From Presqu’ Isle it is 126 Miles to Niagara, but to Fort Erie Situated at the N. East end of Lake Erie it is about 90 miles. The Distance to Sandusky has been already mentioned in the Rout from Fort Pitt to that place.64

There is communication by Water from Fort Pitt to Le Boeeuf a distance of 225 miles which may be performed with Loaded Battoes in about 12 or 14 Days, but to return the same distance it may take about 8 Days [downstream].

[The Manuscript ends.]

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Addendum to note 29, Part I:

Subsequent to General Irvine’s trip (1785) and the building of Fort Franklin (1787), also the conversion of the Venango Path to accommodate wheeled vehicles (1787-1810), the Franklin Road gradually changed to the location of present Route 538 to meet Routes 8 and 173. Crossing present Route 8, the early Franklin Road followed what is now County T 455 to cross Slippery Rock Creek at Keister’s Mill. This is shown on the Whiteside Map (1817) in the Bureau of Land Records, Harrisburg. At the meeting of these roads, this map shows the name of Brown. In 1822, John Brown built the Stone House Tavern, recently restored and now under the custodianship of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. See History of Butler County (R. C. Brown & Co., 1895), 618. Nearby on Route 528, is the Nature showplace of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Blazing Star Prairie.

Route 8 formerly ran over Dougherty’s Mill bridge at the falls into Slippery Rock borough and to Adams Corners. The present Route 8 was built in 1940.

Correction of error in Part I, p. 17, note 32, date 1793 should read 1759.

34 Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XLIX, 1-18.
36 Refer to the Introduction to Part I of this article, WPHM, XLIX, 5, and 14, note 18.
37 Morton Pennypacker, General Washington’s Spies (Brooklyn, 1939), 1-18.
38 Louise P. Kellogg, Frontier Retreat on the Upper Ohio, 1779-1781 (Madison, 1917), 78; hereinafter cited as Kellogg, Frontier Retreat.
40 Brodhead to Washington, March 27, 1781, Jared Sparks, ed., *Correspondence of the American Revolution, Being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington* (4 vols., Boston, 1853), III, 273; hereinafter cited as Sparks, *Correspondence of the Revolution*.

41 Was he one of Washington's spies whom he could not characterize as such? See letter, October 27, 1781, of Washington to General Philip Schuyler that the death sentence of Myndert Fisher would not be confirmed and that he would be released from confinement; also letter same to General William Irvine, November 1, 1781, Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of Washington*, XXIII, 280, 316.

42 Ensign James Morrison of the 9th Virginia Regiment is known to have scouted both the Venango Trail and the Allegheny River during May and June, 1781, Kellogg, *Frontier Retreat*, 402, 406; *PA* (1), IX, 201.


45 Scouts were kept upon the trail as far as Presqu' Isle throughout the summer of 1781. Brodhead to Washington, August 29, 1781, Sparks, *Correspondence of the Revolution*, III, 397.

46 William B. Willcox, *The American Revolution, Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782* (New York, 1954), 574-575. Clinton to Haldimand, "A Narrative of the ideas of General Sir Henry Clinton of a diversification from Canada, in cooperation with an Expedition which that general is intending to make by the head of Chesapeake Bay, ascending the Potomac and Susquehanna Rivers as far as possible, which the general has communicated in confidence to Major General Riedesel with (an) order to communicate it to his excellency General Haldimand." (Clinton's original message in French, translation by E.G.W.)

47 Ibid., 292-293.

48 See *WPHM*, XLIX, 13-14, note 17.

49 Refer to *WPHM*, XLIX, 1 (first line of Introduction).

50 The French Creek crossing, if 3/4 mile north of the old British Fort Venango, would have been about the foot of 12th Street in Franklin. The creek bed is rocky and the water shallow for some distance above this spot for most of the year. Major Heart's Fort Franklin (built 1787) stood upon the high and very steep bank just above 13th Street to guard this ford. Some distance downstream at the water's edge, connected with the main works by a deep ditch for a "covered way," was a redoubt mounting two small cannon, better to command this ford with such latitude. See Andrew Ellicott's Report to Governor Thomas Mifflin, December 30, 1794, *PA* (2), 847; Major Ebenezer Denny's Journal, *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, VII, 319; William Brady, "Venango Fords and Trails," *WPHM*, XXVIII, 135; *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, II, 596.

51 Hutchins states that for nearly a mile after crossing French Creek the Path traverses bottom land before it climbs the steep hill. He did not give the distance across the hill, but by deduction (from a total of 5 miles to Sugar Creek, which is given as 2 1/2 miles from a small run at the western base of the hill, 3/4 mile and 1 mile just accounted for to the beginning of the hill) 3/4 mile remains for the distance across the hill. This can only be accomplished by rising over the toe of the hill, from Missouri Street in Franklin's Third Ward, not over the highest crest, descending to Patchel Run at its mouth. The hill is much too broad at any other place, and it formerly extended clear to the very water's edge of French Creek with a precipitous front, necessitating the climb and descent. See *WPHM*, XXVIII, 134, in which we concur in the overhill path location; but we
cannot agree that it followed the bank of French Creek to Sugar Creek. The distance from Patchel Run to Sugar Creek is only one mile, even today too swampy to support a road. The only possible way that 2½ miles could have been consumed (Hutchins' distance) would have been to detour up Patchel Run to present U.S. Route 322, following which to the road into Sugar Creek borough to crossing near the present bridge. This distance measures exactly 2½ miles. All of the journals cited, Gist, Hutchins, Patterson-Hutchins, agree that Sugar Creek crossing was 5 miles from Venango.

52 From this crossing, the Path must have run up the west side of the creek for a mile, then ascended the hill before reaching Warden Run (Hutchins does not mention crossing it) to meet the present road, Legislative Route 60077, locally called Buttermilk Hill Road. The Path proceeded with this ridge route across Route 964, above Utica, after which 60077 becomes a graded dirt road until it meets old U.S. 322, above Carlton. French Creek is within easy view nearly all of the way from the 964 crossover and near at hand all of the way from Carlton to Cochranont. Hutchins' notes are a little ambiguous, and he has underestimated distances, causing us to conjecture whether Hutchins was being cautious due to Bouquet's having called him to task and having reported to General Monckton Hutchins' error of overstating the distance as far as Venango. Bouquet to Monckton, July 13, 1760, Wilderness Chronicles, 180.

53 The language of the manuscript is here very ambiguous. Hutchins used the same expressions in the journal. PMHB, II, 152; Wilderness Chronicles, 178 (July 17). The only stream worth noting since the crossing of (Big) Sugar Creek is the stream now called Little Sugar Creek, entering French Creek at Cochranont. If we add the given numbers, 1, 2, 3 and 5, we have 11, just the number of miles scaled from the Sugar Creek crossing to Cochranont. This was quite evidently Hutchins' intended meaning.

54 Custaloga's Town was undoubtedly located at the mouth of Conneaut Outlet, on the western side of French Creek. The high sideling hill described by Hutchins is an eminence on the side of which runs U.S. 322 over 150 feet above the creek. Refer to the U.S. Topographical map, Meadville Quadrangle (contours 20-foot intervals). This location agrees with that stated in Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier (publication of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), 152. All of the journals, Patterson-Hutchins, Croghan, Hutchins, each referred to above, express the distance from Venango as from 16 to 18 miles. Col. Jehu Eyre estimated it as 20 miles. PMHB, III, 305. The count of houses varies from 20 to 25 and the number of warriors from 40 to 80.

The White (Newton) History of Venango County (Columbus, O., 1879), 72-74, placed Custaloga's Town at the mouth of Deer Creek, on the Heyrick farm, only 12 miles from Venango. All later histories of the area have transcribed this account verbatim, without question. The Indian graves at this place have been shown to have belonged to a much later time, and that claimed as Kiasota's proven erroneous, since he was buried elsewhere; also, the whole story has been shown to rest upon mistaken hearsay. See Donald H. Kent and Merle H. Deardorff, John Adlum on the Allegheny (reprinted from PMHB, LXXXIV, Publications of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), 305 n 93.

55 Custaloga (or Kustalogo) was chief of the Wolf clan of the Delaware Nation. He was one of the Indians who conducted Washington and Gist from Venango to Fort Le Boeuf, in 1753, and was thereafter in the French interest. He accompanied Bouquet on his march, in 1760; and, following the British takeover of this section of the country, Custaloga removed to the Muskingum (Walhonding Branch) in Ohio, where he was prominent in the negotiations with Bouquet, in 1764. See Dr. William Smith, An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians Under the Command of Henry Bouquet, Esq., in 1764 (London, 1766), 14, 16. By
1773, Custaloga and his followers had moved on to the Wabash. E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1857), VIII, 395-396, Sir William Johnson to Lord Dartmouth, September 22, 1773. In that year he was succeeded as chief of the clan by Captain Pipe. Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat* (Chapel Hill, 1959), 293.

56 The "Mingo Hutts" which Hutchins mentions, at the end of the very rich meadows are usually assumed to have been Cussewago, visited by Washington and Gist, in 1753, and even then an old Indian town. Darlington, *Christopher Gist's Journals*, 82. Conceivably these three huts were all that remained of the old town. By every measurement of distances stated by contemporary accounts, these Mingo huts were located at the very south end of present Meadville, at the point where the hill narrows down the plain occupied by the railroad yard. These distances were scaled and measured by speedometer readings from opposite to Custaloga's Town also backtracking from the next crossing of French Creek (note 57). The question arises whether the Mingo Cabins and Cussewago were identical. If they were not, would Hutchins not have mentioned having passed Cussewago? Although early writings have made reference to David Mead's settlement at Cussewago, in all such cases the name has attached to the surrounding area. The name persisted at least as late as 1800. Denny's Journal, 388; Paul A. W. Wallace, ed., *Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder* (Pittsburgh, 1958), 376.

57 This ford Hutchins repeatedly emphasizes as 80 yards wide. His map in Smith's *An Historical Account . . . 1764*, his journal and this manuscript description, all contain this notation. It was 11 miles above the Mingo Cabins, and we have noted that Hutchins was underestimating distances, apparently intentionally, at least consistently. Near the present Venango, Crawford County, is the likely location of this French Creek crossing, at the mouth of a small run just above the village. This is in agreement with *Wilderness Chronicles*, 178 n 16, and matches the description of the subsequent creek crossings flowing easterly into French Creek. The creek here mentioned prominently was the Conneauttee and the smaller runs would have been Boles Run and the Little Conneauttee. See *Ibid.*, 178 n 17.

58 No present day road follows the course of the Path from its French Creek crossing to Indian Head at the confluence of French Creek (the East Branch) and Le Boeuf Creek. It necessarily ran an approximate air line course, as none other could have accomplished the distance within the limits of the mileage designated by Hutchins and Croghan. The manuscript in hand furnishes the clue that the Path passed the large "Mirey Creek 20 yards over" near the junction of its two branches, the Conneauttee and Little Conneauttee, all flowing eastward. Six miles of swamp and upland, a high plateau with little more than twenty feet change of elevation in its entire length, plus the mile of low ground, in all seven miles, brings us to the Le Boeuf Creek crossing into the "fine Meadow near a Mile Square."

An effort has been made by the Works Progress Administration, Report of the Frontier Forts and Trails Survey, in 1941, p. 49, to identify this section of the Path (between Venango and Indian Head) with U.S. Route 19. Our manuscript offers evidence that the trail, at least in the 1760's, kept to the higher, more level land west of that modern thoroughfare, following a straight line route and bypassing Cambridge Springs.

59 Having crossed Le Boeuf Creek at Indian Head, the low water head of navigation on French Creek, Hutchins' route (the route of Bouquet's little army) passed up the east side of Le Boeuf Creek, through the "fine Meadow near a Mile Square." This perfectly level, very fertile mile square tract was noted in the Patterson-Hutchins Journal of 1759, two sides of which are formed by Le Boeuf and French Creeks. Thence, it is two miles through low and swampy land to Waterford. The Path would have passed the point where U.S. 19 and Route 97 now meet and crossed.
Le Boeuf Creek again nearly with the present highway bridge, just below the site of the old fort. Compare plan of Fort Le Boeuf in the Hutchins Papers, Vol. I, in HSP, with U.S. Topographical Map, Cambridge Springs Quadrangle.

60 Fort Le Boeuf (built 1753 by the Sieur de Marin) stood at the present intersection of High and Water Streets in Waterford. Here the youthful Washington and his companion, Christopher Gist, delivered Governor Dinwiddie's demand that the French leave British-claimed land west of the mountains. The British built their fort (1760) on the same site, and Major Ebenezer Denny built the Pennsylvania fort there in 1794, during the serious threat of Indian resistance to the survey of the Erie Triangle. Kent, *The French Invasion of Western Pennsylvania*, 32-33; Fitzpatrick, *The Diaries of George Washington, I*, 58-59; *Wilderness Chronicles*, 192, 202; Denny's Journal, *Memoirs of the HSP*, VII, 390-391; *PA* (2), VI, 861. Andrew Ellicott wrote in his Report to Governor Mifflin, Dec. 30, 1794: "The Situation [of Le Boeuf] is certainly one of the best in this State, being at the head of the navigation of French Creek, and where the carrying place to Presqu' Isle must commence." *PA* (2), VI, 848.

61 The road of Bouquet's little army from Le Boeuf to Presqu' Isle, Hutchins has emphasized, was 15 miles. A perfectly straight line, drawn between the two points on the U.S. Topographical Map scales 14½ miles, making it clear that the marching road was, as nearly as possible, a straight line. Our map (more about which later) delineates a swing northeastward of approximately two miles before taking off in a direct line for Fort Presqu' Isle. This is almost exactly the line of Route 97, after passing northward via Cherry Street, Waterford. Autumn L. Leonard, "The Presqu' Isle Portage and the Venango Trail," *Pennsylvania Archeologist*, XV, 7.

We must note, however, that the earliest testimony indicates and specifically mentions a 20-mile road. The first official English party, in contra-distinction to traders, to pass over the lake and land route from Niagara to Fort Pitt was led by Captain Charles Lee, in September of 1759. The journal recorded: "... we marched over the Carrying Place, and Procee'd to Fort au Bauf 21 Miles off from Presqu' Isle the Road for 2 Miles is Pretty dry and good, but for about 17 Miles a Continual Swamp, Bridged over by Logs, at Present Pretty much out of Repair," *Bouquet Papers*, 21644, f, 431, p. 137; also printed in *Wilderness Chronicles*, 171-173. A young American, named Stephen Coffen, captured by the French, joined their service, deserted and made deposition, in 1764, before Sir William Johnson: "As soon as the fort [Presqu' Isle] was finished, they marched Southward cutting a Waggon Road through a fine level country, twenty one Miles to the River aux Boeufs," *PA* (2), VI, 196: *Docs. Rel. to the Col. Hist. of N.Y.* (London Documents), VI, 835; also in *Wilderness Chronicles*, 46.

All of the succeeding journalists who have left their eyewitness accounts have agreed that the distance was 15 miles and that much of it was very swampy, although estimates of how many miles were "bridged (corduroyed)" with logs varied. Captain Thomas Bull, Indian spy, son of the noted Chief Teedyuskung, reported to Colonel Hugh Mercer in March, 1759: "The Road is broad and good from Wenango to La Buf, and from thence to Priscile about half a Day's Journey is very Low and Swampy and Bridged Almost [the] whole way," *Colonial Records*, VIII, 311-313. Colonel Mercer wrote to General Stanwix, August 20, 1759: "... from thence [Le Boeuf] 15 miles almost one Continued Bridge to Presqu' Isle." Jehu Eyer, boat carpenter, later to be a colonel in the Revolution, headed toward Presqu' Isle, in 1760, recorded: "It is about 15 miles from fort to fort. There is a bridge on the road 10 miles long." *PMHB*, III, 306. Patterson-Hutchins, Croghan, and Hutchins, all cited above, agree that 15 miles is the correct distance. The French engineer,
de Lery, actually measured the road with a pole (perche) eighteen feet in length and found the distance to be "53\frac{1}{2} liguës, 1 arpent, 1 perche, et 8 pieds" (15 miles 49 feet). The *Journal of Chaussegros de Lery* (Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent, N.W. Penna. Hist. Series) entry for July 24, 1754; see also *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 29 n.

The key to harmonizing these seemingly divergent statistics is explained. Colonel Henry Bouquet, writing to General Monckton on August 11, 1760, added: "P.S. Our scouts have just discovered a new Road to Le Boeuf cut by the French, much better than the others, it is on the right hand in coming here." Thirty-four years later Major Ebenezer Denny was to rediscover this same road, as inscribed in his journal of 1794, thus: "Went by what is called the grubbed road. It seems that after the French had opened the Indian path from Presqu’ Isle to Le Boeuf, and wagoned considerably upon it, they found that it was some miles about . . . that it would take more labor to keep it in repair than would open one upon a straight line, not withstanding near five miles was cross-way’d, and no road can be had from the lake to French creek with less. However, the direct course was found . . . there has been a vast deal of digging. The course being straight, the way led up and down every little precipice that presented, but all these were leveled . . . ." Denny’s Journal, *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, VII, 403. All of the foregoing is confirmed by Andrew Ellicott, the noted surveyor of state lines and Federal City planner, who added that the road was "carried on almost a direct line to Le Boeuf." Report to Governor Mifflin, December 30, 1794, *PA* (2), VI, 848.

Further to clarify the picture: Reading Howell’s Map of Pennsylvania (1791) depicts two roads from Presqu’ Isle to Le Boeuf, one curving appreciably to the west and longer, the other a straight line. This straight road confirms Bouquet’s and Denny’s "discoveries." Ellicott observed: "The expense and exertions of the French and British in that part of the country is one among the many proofs of the great value and importance it was thought to be of to those nations." *Ibid.*, VI, 848-849.

The contemporary map printed herewith is undoubtedly the work of Hutchins, from comparison with his 1762 and 1778 maps. It was obtained from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Department of Archives, and carries the notation on the reverse, "The Road to Le Boeuf from Hutchins’ Journal." It is presumed to be a copy from the British Museum Add. MSS, 21638, accompanying f. 103. The map corresponds in every detail with the Venango Path delineated in the 1760 journal and particularized in this manuscript description. The scale is accurate and dependable in pinpointing locations and measuring distances. The road swings to the right after leaving Le Boeuf, before veering northwest by north in a long line aimed at its destination. A mile and a half from the fort at Presqu’ Isle the Path again veered left, just as it does today after joining Parade Street.

If this itinerary is at variance with the very confused (W.P.A.) Frontier Forts and Trails Survey (1940) of this trail, it is because they chose to ignore this map, which they had in their possession according to their stamp on the photo. There is no attempt in the present writing to disprove that work, but only to point out that theirs was the more circuitous route, which crossed west of Route 19, and would necessarily have been a longer road. Yet they would have us believe that 77,182.06 feet or 14.6 miles (their survey total between fort sites, p. 18) could be a correct measurement of an admittedly circuitous route, when we have demonstrated that the straightest line possible scales 14.75 miles.

62 Strange as it may seem, the French Fort Presqu’ Isle was at first called Duquesne, but the Marquis preferred to have the larger fortress, to be built the year following at the Forks of the Ohio, to bear his name. Hunter, *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, 63, 71; *PA* (1), 11, 124. The French abandoned and burned their fort in 1759, and the British built their strong
blockhouse on the same ground just west of Mill Creek (now sewered) on an eminence east of Parade Street, at the foot of Sobieski Street, at East Front Street, Erie. The elevation has been cut away by former brick plant operations and grading for railroad tracks. The lakeshore of the harbor has been pushed far out by filling. See Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, II, 537, 544-550. Kent, The French Invasion of Western Pennsylvania, 31.

In 1795, the Pennsylvania troops guarding the survey of the Erie triangle and the laying out of Erie built a stockade fort on Garrison Hill, corresponding knot east of Mill Creek, about in line with the old French location. There General Anthony Wayne died, in 1796, and was temporarily buried at the foot of the flagstaff. New fortifications were built during the War of 1812, burned in 1853, and the present blockhouse reconstruction placed on Garrison Hill in 1879. For the present annotation, it serves as a landmark and point of reference to visualize the former situation of the French and British strongholds. Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, II, 558-561; Charles J. Stile, Major General Anthony Wayne and the Pennsylvania Line (Philadelphia, 1893), 343-344.

63 Engineer Captain Harry Gordon also thought this a very well planned work defensively. In his report on the Present State of Fort Pitt and Posts Depending (dated, Philadelphia, Dec. 24, 1760), he set forth: "At Prisquisle is a Blockhouse 56 Ft. square and 16 high in which are 8 large Rooms and Chimneys, besides four Rooms for Officers in the Bastions that cover the Angles, and into which is a passage from the Body of the House. These Bastions are one Story high and afford a very good Defence both to the Body of the House and different Fires at a Distance round the Blockhouse is a Retrenchment with four Bastions frased." Wilderness Chronicles, 202.

64 "The Rout from Fort Pitt to Sandusky, and thence to Detroit," from the Hutchins' Papers in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is printed in full in Hanna, The Wilderness Trail, II, 202-207. This note is significant in that it demonstrates, in this cross reference, that Hutchins intended to relate his road descriptions in a composite form at a later date.

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MAPS

In the course of preparation of this paper, a group of interesting and highly informative maps was studied, photocopies procured from repositories, or taken down from our shelves. A list of the more useful follows:

Thomas Hutchins, A Topographical Description of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina (London, 1778), published with large fold-in map 35¼ x 42¾ inches. Copy from the original in the Library of Congress.

Same, Reprint from the original. Edited with biographical sketch by Frederick C. Hicks (Cleveland, 1904).

Thomas Hutchins, photocopy, "The Road to Presqu' Isle from Hutchins' Journal." From Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Archives Division.


Thomas Hutchins, Plan of "Venango Fort" [Fort Machault], dated 1759. From the Public Archives of Canada, courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and

Thomas Hutchins, plan of Fort Le Boeuf, made in 1759. From the Hutchins Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Guy Johnson, A Sketch of the Several Indian roads leading from Fort Pitt to Sioto, Lake Erie, etc. Taken from a Draft thro yt Country in 1762, by Mr. Hutchins . . . . Guy Johnson. Copy of Ms. Map in the William L. Clements Library.

From the Hutchins Papers in HSP.


Same, Map of the Country adjacent (sic) to Fort [Franklin] on French Creek. From the Harmar Papers in the William L. Clements Library.


Reading Howell, Map of Pennsylvania, 1791.

John Hills (presumed), Map of the road from Forts Cumberland, Pitt, and Venango. Darlington Memorial Library.

Lloyd A. Brown (completion of the work begun by the late Howard N. Eavenson), Early Maps of the Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh, 1959). Use was made of this fine collection, although the reproductions are small for field work of the nature carried on for this project; yet, the notes were valuable for reference.

A fitting tribute to the worth of Thomas Hutchins was paid by his commander:

COLONEL BOUQUET TO GENERAL MONCTON, PRESQU' ISLE

July 18, 1760.

". . . . It was happy for us to have Hutchins, or we would have been in danger of loosing our Way, with those drunken Guides . . . . You will permit me to recommend to you Hutchins and Patterson, who have been of very great service in this March and deserve to be rewarded." Mass. Hist. Colls. (4th ser.), IX, 271-274.