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**“The Nigh and Best Way”:  
The Early Development of Roads in Montgomery County**

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Montgomery County became a major pathway into the New River Valley during the early days of European settlement. The development of the early routes traveling southwest to the New River Valley had to overcome the obstacles of the Alleghany Divide and the New River itself. Early court documents, maps, and diaries allow us to trace the development of roads in the county during the settlement period. These sources make a strong case for the importance of Montgomery County as a thoroughfare to Southwest Virginia.

**Early Explorers Find Obstacles**

By following American Indian paths and influenced by topography, early European-American adventurers entered what is now Montgomery County with the goal of finding routes further west and surveying tracts on behalf of land companies. The earliest recorded trip into the region is thought to have been made by Abraham Wood in 1654. Abraham Wood was well placed to be at the forefront of westward exploration. He was captain at Fort Henry (located at the falls of the Appomattox River) and had entered the House of Burgesses in 1644. He served 22 years on the Privy Council and held a life appointment beginning in 1658 that gave him access to the highest levels of thinking and intelligence about the frontier within the colonial government. In 1671, Wood sponsored an exploring party led by Thomas Batte and Robert Hallom (often denoted as Batts and Fallam).<sup>1</sup> The explorers found that the first major obstacles to westward travel in Southwest Virginia were the steep, high slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains (the Alleghany Divide) that separated waters draining east into the Atlantic from those that drained west into the Ohio River and ultimately the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Once over the Blue Ridge, the wide, deep New River (named Wood’s River by Batte and Hallom) formed a second impediment to movement further west.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Promise of Opportunity**

Long hunters were the earliest long-term residents of European descent in what is now Montgomery County. These men, sometimes traveling in small groups, came into southwestern Virginia for long periods during the fall and winter to hunt and trap for profit. By the 1740s, these hunters were active in the region. Residing in small, temporary cabins, they came and went with the seasons and were part of a vibrant trade in furs and hides. Adam Harman, one of the area's early settlers, was also participating in the fur and hide trade. When his cabin was robbed in 1749, he lost 96 deer skins and three elk skins.<sup>3</sup> The availability of wild game is further evidenced in the diary of Dr. Thomas Walker, who recorded his notes in July 1750 at the end of his six-man party's four-month exploration through the area and into Kentucky:

We killed in the journey 13 Buffaloes, 8 Elks, 53 Bears, 20 Deer, 4 wild Geese, about 150 Turkeys, besides small game. We might have killed three times as much meat, if we had wanted it.<sup>4</sup>

The hunter's potential for profit is evident in a February 21, 1765, record made by Moravians in North Carolina. Their diary noted: "Yesterday two Virginia hunters, named Bleven, came to the store bringing 1600 lbs. of skins and furs." The hunters, who were probably Jack and William Blevins, were paid £80 in cash and goods by the Bethabara storekeeper.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to hides and furs, hunters also returned home with vivid reports of the excellence of lands to the west. These reports met with ready ears among two important groups: entrepreneurs looking to profit from the unsettled land and farmers looking for affordable, productive land. An organized settlement of the New River Valley began in 1745 with the Wood's River Grant (or Great Grant), issued to a company of men including James Patton, John Buchanan, and George Robinson. The grant included 100,000 selected acres on the New, Holston, and Clinch rivers. John Buchanan journeyed through the area in 1745 and mentioned three settlers known to be living in the area that became Montgomery County: Israel Lorton, Adam Harman, and Jacob Harman.<sup>6</sup>

## **The Easy Way**

Early reports of the frontier made it clear that significant obstacles lay between the eastern settlements and the western lands. Many travelers would need to cross not only the Blue Ridge, but also the James River, Roanoke River, and New River drainage basins as well as intermediate ridges.

These obstacles, the difficulty of travel, and the poor living conditions of the early settlers in the region are mentioned in the diary of Moravian missionaries Leonhard Schnell and John Brandmueller. From mid-October through mid-December 1749, the men journeyed from Pennsylvania to Virginia. Their diary records that the “manner of living [of the settlers] is rather poor in this district” and that “hunting is their chief occupation.” On November 18, the pair found travel through snow to be difficult:

Moreover, we had to cross the Catawba Creek and a branch of the Roanoke, more than thirty times. There was no house for the first twelve miles and then none for the next fifteen miles. But although we were in the water nearly the whole day, the Lord helped us through and brought us in the evening to an English house, where we enjoyed the comforts of a good fire.<sup>7</sup>

With all of these impediments, finding the easiest way west was very important indeed. In general, a combination of factors, including distance, grade, drainage, existing paths, landmarks, forage, and supplemental game, worked together to make a certain route “easy.” On foot or on horseback, leading a string of packhorses to carry provisions and equipment, early settlers generally preferred the shortest way, assuming other factors were equal.

Early routes into the region likely followed long-used animal trails, American Indian paths, and the topography itself. Existing large animal trails often followed shallow grades as the animals moved to and from grazing sites, water sources, stream crossings, and salt licks. American Indians followed and widened these paths over time as they hunted and traveled. The traveler in the climax forests of the region benefitted from the minimal undergrowth found in the shade of the tall trees. From late fall until early spring, the leafless trees made it easy to see 200 feet in most directions. The lay of the land and the general direction of trails and paths were clear. If looking from atop a high ridge or mountain, where growth is not as tall and dense, drainage basins and the network of stream courses could also be observed. With this in mind, one can envision how early explorers began to find the easiest routes. Historian Alan Briceland’s work, for example, places the Batte and Hallom party at Adney Gap near the western end of Poor Mountain (the junction of current Montgomery, Roanoke, Floyd, and Franklin counties) on September 8, 1671. From this height, the view westward encompasses the Roanoke River basin, the Alleghany Divide, and much of the lower New River drainage basin into West Virginia. This was significant since streams were commonly used landmarks for overland

travelers. Stream grades were often easy until they reached the headwaters. Once over the divide, another stream traced the way down to a larger stream or river. Thus, many trails followed major waterways from one drainage basin, across a divide, and into another.<sup>8</sup>

It was probably not until the late 1760s, 15 or 20 years after the initial settlement in Montgomery County, that portions of the “Great Road” became passable for wagons. The long hunters and earliest farmers alike used packhorses to carry their belongings to their new homes. A packhorse could typically carry up to 200 pounds of goods and travel about 20 miles a day. Teams of two-to-twelve horses were common. The weight of goods was a significant factor and meant that the grade became very important. Energy consumption during a steep ascent was considerable, and the descent could often be difficult and dangerous as well. Representative grades in Montgomery County are 11 percent on today’s three-lane road up Christiansburg Mountain (U.S. 460/11) between Shawsville and Christiansburg; 5 percent on the section of the Southwest Turnpike on Christiansburg Mountain, now known as Wayside Drive; and 3 percent or less for the county’s railroads, whose grades seldom exceed 3 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Drainage was an essential part of improved roads, keeping the road dry, solid, and usable. Often, roads would be laid out on high ground to facilitate drainage. Yet this meant that steep inclines had to be traversed. This situation is illustrated by the 1753 diary accounts made by a group of Moravian brethren travelling in Augusta County on the Great Road from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to their new settlement location in North Carolina:

At day-break we crossed the Runoke, which was very low . . . but full of slippery stones . . . . We had much difficulty in getting our sick horses across. A quarter of a mile beyond . . . our road turned to the left and became very narrow. A mile further we came to a steep hill, and the road sloped badly. We soon stuck in a ditch, and were in danger of breaking our axle. In another mile a rather high hill rose before us, and we had to unload half our things and carry them up on our backs, and even then we could hardly get the wagon up. The going down was also steep, we locked two wheels, hung a tree on behind, and all the brethren held back by it; and so we crossed this hill safely.<sup>10</sup>

The first part of this quotation illustrates the importance of good stream fords, which were often wide and shallow with firm bottoms for easy crossing during periods of low water. The greater width makes for a slow flow, particularly along straight sections. In curves, however, the outside of

the flow is faster and more aggressive, eroding and deepening the outside of the curve in a stream.<sup>11</sup>

The supply of food and water was also a consideration to the earliest travelers. With few places to acquire provisions, most essentials had to be packed and carried. Travelers often carried a knife, at least one ax, and a flint and steel for starting fires. Some travelers also carried a compass. A gun (.43–.52 caliber with powder and ball) was sometimes carried, but not every traveler owned one. Less than 50 percent of recorded estates between 1745 and 1769 in what would become Montgomery County listed a gun of any kind, according to Mary Kegley’s study of estate records. A hunter or traveler expecting a long journey would take canteen, cups, cornmeal, flour, a cooking pot, lard, salt, sewing needles, a small amount of extra clothing, and an oiled cloth or canvas. Occasionally, medical items and grain for the horses were also included, but horses were usually expected to forage overnight.<sup>12</sup>

### **Road Building**

During the colonial period, roads were marked, built, and maintained by “tithables,” any white male or slave<sup>13</sup> aged 16 and older. The county court heard petitions for new roads and road improvements, often sending overseers to “view” the road and make determinations about what was the “nighest and best way.” Road orders show that the road into Southwest Virginia ran southward through the Valley of Virginia to Looney’s Ferry over the James River (near present-day Buchanan) and continued southward via Looney’s Mill Creek to Howery Town (between present-day Trinity and Troutville), where the road divided. One branch of it continued southward and was known as the Carolina Road; the other traveled southwest up Catawba Creek to its headwaters and over a divide to the headwaters of the North Fork of the Roanoke River and continued southwest to Draper’s Meadows (modern-day Blacksburg). Another route began at the Carolina Road junction and followed the lower part of the North Fork of the Roanoke upstream to the South Fork of the Roanoke, then to the Alleghany Divide.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest of these approaches followed Catawba Creek to the North Fork of the Roanoke River southwestward towards Draper’s Meadows. This route is mentioned in the earliest reference to a road in the New River Valley, appearing in the Orange County Road Orders in May 1745:

James Patton and John Buchanon Gentl. having Viewed the way from Frederick County Line Through that Part of this County Called Augusta . . . [from] Tinklin Spring to Beverley Mannor line to Gilbt. Campbell’s Ford on the north branch of James River . . . to a ford at

the Cherry tree Bottom on James River . . . to Adam Harmon's on the New or Woods River and that Capt. George Robinson and James Campbell and Mark Evins and James Davison be Overseers the Same and that all the Inhabitants between James River and Woods River Clear the Same and that a Distinct Order be given to Every Gang to Clear the Same and that it be Cleared as it is already Blazed and laid of with Two Knotches and a Cross Given under our hands this 8th Day of April 1745 James Patton and John Buchannon<sup>15</sup>

Without the benefit of bridges or ferries, fords such as that at Adam Harman's farm were important, as were the roads leading to these fords. For example, the Augusta County court ordered on November 19, 1746,

that a road be cleared from Adam Harmons to the River and North branch of Roan Oak [Roanoke] and it is further Ordered that George Draper Israel Larton & son Adam and George Herman Thomas Looney Jacob Harman and three Sons Jacob Castle John Lane Valintine Harman Adrew Moser Humberston Lyon James Skaggs Humphrey Baker John Davis Frederick Hering & two Sons and all Other Persons Setling in the Precincts work on the sd [said] Road Under the sd Adam Harman who is hereby appointed Overseer of the sd Road with the sd Gang to Clear & keep the sd Road in repaire according to Law.<sup>16</sup>

Two additional orders on November 19, 1746, addressed the northern section of road along Catawba Creek and the South Fork of the Roanoke River in what would become Montgomery County:

Ordered that a road be Cleared from the Ridge above Tobias Brights that Parts the Waters of New river from the brances [branches] of roan Oak [Roanoke] to the Lower ford of Catabo Creek and it's further Ordered that William English and two Sons Thomas English and son Jacob Brown George Bright Benjamin Oyle Paul Garrison Elisha Isaac John Donalin Philip Smith Mathew English and the rest of the Tithables as Nominated by George Robinson and James Montgomerie Gent Work on the sd Road under Tobias Bright who is hereby appointed Overseer of the sd Road with the sd Gang to Clear and keep the same in repair according to Law.

Ordered that a Road be Cleared from the Ridge that Devides the Waters of New river from the waters of the South branch of Roan Oak to end in a road that heads Over the Blew ridge [Blue Ridge]. . . .<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the initial routes were laid out in May 1745, up Catawba Creek to the divide and then via the North Fork of the Roanoke and tributaries of the New River to the Draper’s Meadows settlement and on to the so-called horseshoe bend of the New River. A second approach followed the South Fork of the Roanoke River from Lafayette (Montgomery County) to Fort Vause (Shawsville), then over the divide (Christiansburg Mountain), joining a route ordered in November 1746 from Reed Creek (Wythe County) to Eagle Bottom (Ingles Ferry site).<sup>18</sup> A clue to where the earliest route traversed Christiansburg Mountain is found on the pen and ink draft of the *Map of Montgomery County, Virginia taken from actual survey made by topographical party in charge of Lieut. C. S. Dwight*. A Confederate engineer, Dwight made this map, now held by the Library of Congress, in June 1864, noting an “old road” from Montgomery Tunnel\* to the top of the ridge. From the top of Christiansburg Mountain, the route traveled through Hans Meadow (Christiansburg) westward to cross the New River at Ingles Ferry. It is the later route that moved more traffic toward the southwestern portion of Virginia along what was to become the “Great Road.”<sup>19</sup>

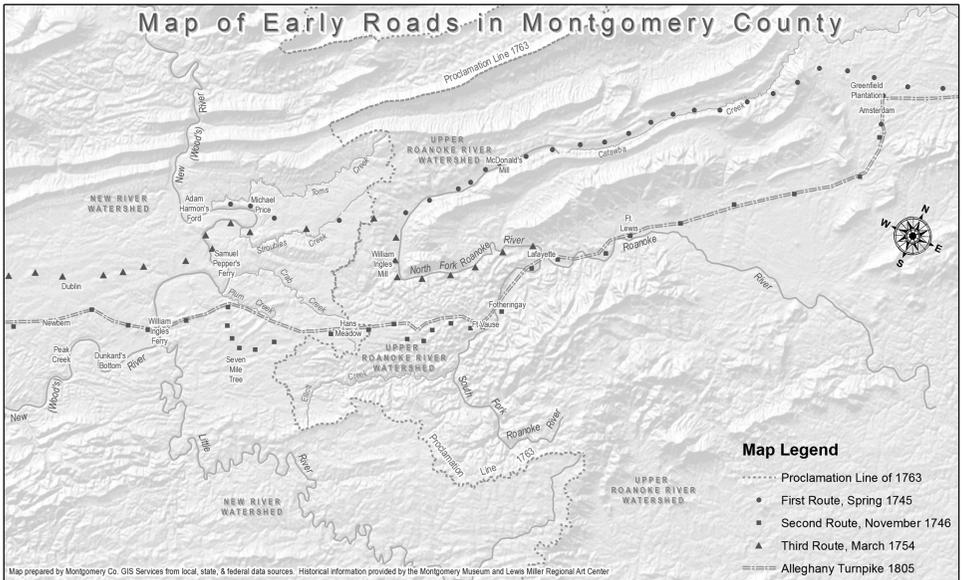


Figure 1: A study of county court road orders from Orange County and Augusta County reveals the ultimate development of two primary routes through Montgomery County before the construction of the Allegheny Turnpike in 1805. (Map by Bob Pearsall, Montgomery County GIS, with Jim Page)

\* The eastern terminus of the “old road” is about .4 mile southwest of the Norfolk Southern railroad’s west portal of the so-called Montgomery Tunnel on State Road 641 (Den Hill Road).

### The Necessity of New Lands

Two groups of settlers flooded into the American colonies in the early and mid-eighteenth century: Presbyterian Ulster Scots (Scotch-Irish) and Palatinate Germans who were members of the Lutheran, German Reformed, Moravian, German Anabaptist, and Baptist Brethren religious groups. All of these settlers were in search of religious freedom and economic opportunity. Their numbers created political pressures and high land prices in Pennsylvania and Maryland. By the 1720s and 1730s, they had established new settlements in the Valley of Virginia, and by the late 1740s, their settlements began to move further southwest into the New River Valley. The earliest permanent residents relied heavily on trade with coastal markets via the export of cattle, hemp, and whiskey. Livestock drovers were common.<sup>20</sup>

The earliest settlers in the area included the Harman family and, in 1745, a small group of brethren who had broken off from the Ephrata Society in Pennsylvania and settled at Dunkard's Bottom, a site now covered by Claytor Lake. The Draper's Meadows settlement on Strouble's Creek was founded in 1748 by Ulster Scots on land patented by James Patton. Dr. Thomas Walker noted the richness of these lands as he passed



Figure 2: Ruins of the William Christian House in Dunkard's Bottom. The house site was covered by water when Claytor Lake was constructed in 1939. (F. B. Kegley Photograph Collection, Kegley Library, Wytheville Community College)

through the New River Valley on his surveying trip for the Loyal Company. During the trip, he lodged at James Robinson's home on March 15, 1750, "the only place I could hear of," he wrote, "where they had corn to spare, notwithstanding the land is such that an industrious man might make 100 barrels a share in a Seasonable year."<sup>21</sup>

### **Tension and Conflict**

The settlement of Montgomery County was neither continuous nor undisputed. As settlers streamed into the area, tensions with both American Indians and the French increased. Skirmishes on the Holston River in 1754 culminated in an attack at Draper's Meadow on July 30, 1755, and the destruction of Fort Vause in 1756. William Preston recorded casualties from such attacks throughout western Virginia: 177 raids with 129 settlers killed, 22 wounded, and 153 taken prisoner. Panic ensued among settlers in the summer of 1755, and the exodus of settlers from the area was dramatic. The population of Augusta County dropped from 2,663 in 1754 to only 1,474 in 1758 despite the 17 forts in Virginia serving as the British front line during the French and Indian War (1754–1763). John Madison, clerk of the Augusta County Court, expressed the point of view of the settlers in 1755 when he wrote:

Four families on their flight from a branch of New River this minute passed my house. . . . 'Tis shocking to think of the calamity of the poor wretches who live on the Holston and New Rivers, who for upwards of a hundred miles have left their habitations, lost their crops, and vast numbers of stock.<sup>22</sup>

The hostilities of the French and Indian War helped to bring about the construction of the first road through the area for wagons. When Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson prepared the first map showing western Virginia in detail in 1751, their map noted: "The Great Road from the Yadkin River, North Carolina thro Virginia to Pennsylvania 435 miles." The word "wagon" is not included in this label, and likely there were few roads suitable for a wagon in southwestern Virginia at this time. A map drawn by Thomas Hutchins shows the home of Samuel Stalnaker, which was probably located west of present-day Marion, to be the furthest extent of settlement in 1755, with no indication of a wagon road.<sup>23</sup>

In 1760–1761, a campaign was planned to relieve Fort Loudoun (in eastern Tennessee) and to attack the Cherokee who were waging war against settlers in South Carolina and Virginia. To execute the plan, about

700 militiamen were assembled near present-day Salem, Virginia, and the Virginia Assembly made arrangements to supply the troops. Records show that William Davis went into business on August 19, 1760, with Augusta County Sheriff William Preston to ship supplies from Staunton, Virginia, to the Long Island of the Holston (present-day Kingsport, Tennessee). The Preston-Davis operation used four wagons and at least 16 horses. Merchant Samuel Cowden, another Staunton businessman, used 12 wagons to ship supplies at least as far as Fort Chiswell, a significant fortification constructed by Col. William Byrd III in the fall and winter of 1760–1761. Col. Adam Stephen, who replaced Col. Byrd as commander of the expedition to the Great Island of Holston (Kingsport), wrote his superiors in 1761 that he and his men had “opened a wagon Road to the Big Island” suitable for military wagons. Additionally, requests for reimbursement were made by Samuel Cowden and Company in Augusta County Court in 1761 to cover costs of ferrying his 12 wagons over the New River twice, in addition to ferrying people and horses multiple times. This evidence strongly suggests that a ferry was in operation by William Ingles at the Ingles Ferry site, at least for military use, as early as the fall of 1760 to accommodate freight traffic to the so-called “Cherokee War.” This use preceded the ferry’s legislative approval in November 1762.<sup>24</sup>

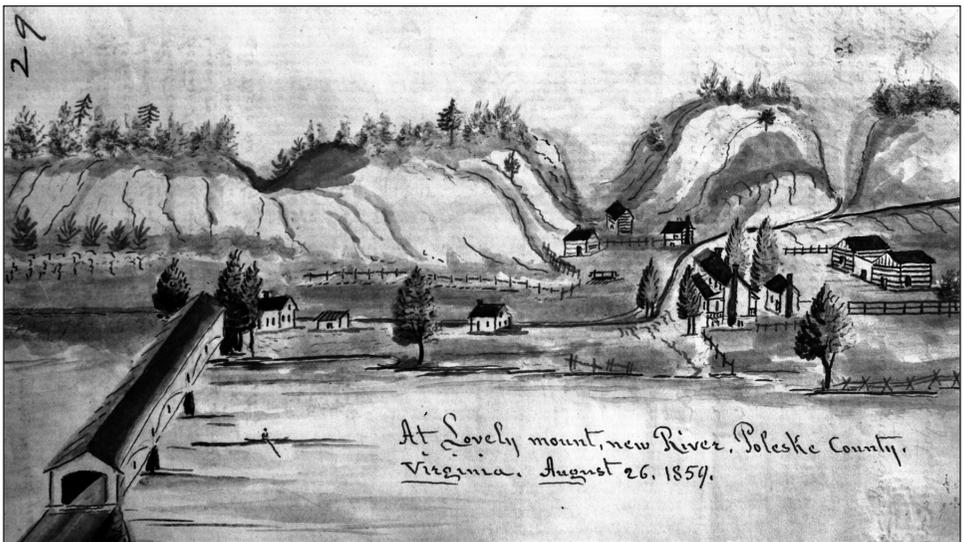


Figure 3: Ingles Bridge over the New River as sketched by Lewis Miller in 1859, showing Ingles Tavern on the Pulaski County (far) side of the river. This view was near the site of Ingles Ferry. (Montgomery Museum & Lewis Miller Regional Art Center)

Evidence for dating Ingles Ferry is supported by the probable movements of William Ingles. Historical documentation places him in the area about 1746, and he was certainly operating a gristmill on a small tributary of the North Fork of the Roanoke River (probably Mill Creek) since Thomas Walker encountered him on March 16, 1749/50.<sup>25</sup> Ingles married Mary Draper in February 1754, and the couple lived on 255 acres in Draper's Meadows.<sup>26</sup> With this early residency in the area, it is reasonable to expect that William Ingles had explored many parts of the New River and was aware of the site where he eventually operated Ingles Ferry, which was about 13 miles from Draper's Meadows. The ferry site would probably have been well known as a ford; that particular ford was composed of eons of debris dumped by the Little River into the New River. The November 1762 official authorization of Ingles Ferry set fees at 3P (pence) for man or horse.<sup>27</sup>

Before supply wagons could arrive at the Ingles Ferry site in the fall of 1760, an improved route or wagon road would have to be in place. The preferred route west ran along the South Fork of the Roanoke, ascended the Christiansburg Mountain dividing ridge, probably followed the ridge west with little altitude gain or loss, and then crossed the New River at a ford at Eagle Bottom (Ingles Ferry) and continued into present-day Pulaski County by Reed Creek. It was likely the route that the militiamen and wagoners used. The preference for this route was codified in a petition to the Augusta County court on March 18, 1767, by 18 men "for a Road from Vauses by Ingleses ferry to Peak Creek on the North side of the New River." The first mention of the Great Road in the New River Valley would not come until 1769.<sup>28</sup>

### **Stability and Settlement**

Although the Proclamation of 1763 at the end of the French and Indian War made it impossible to claim legal title to land west of the Allegheny Divide, several important milestones for settlement had already occurred: the construction of Fort Chiswell, the opening of the military wagon road by Byrd's men, and the establishment of Ingles Ferry. Men and women intent on finding land in the New River Valley and the western waters were not going to be put aside easily.

The opening of the road to wagons was a significant improvement over packhorses. Although not much faster than a pack horse, the Conestoga wagons favored by settlers could carry 10 tons of goods when pulled by a full team of six horses. However, most settlers chose to carry lighter loads with a smaller team of horses or oxen. The Virginia freight wagon was of a design similar to the Conestoga wagon; measuring 15 feet long at the top and 11 feet long at the bottom, it was 40 inches wide with sides about 2 feet high.<sup>29</sup>

Firsthand accounts provide a sense of travel during the 1790s. Governor John Sevier left his home in East Tennessee on May 19, 1790. After six days of travel, he “[d]ined at McCraigs [John Craig’s tavern at Hans Meadows] pd. 4- Lodged at Col. I. Robertsons [possibly James Robinson near Elliston]. . . .” Sevier traveled about 20 to 30 miles a day.<sup>30</sup>

A petition submitted to the Montgomery Court on May 31, 1794, by 30 tithables living near the North Fork of the Roanoke River describes the conditions of roads and the effort to keep them open. The petition reads:

[The Montgomery County Court did] . . . Impose on us so far, as to work on a road on North Fork Ron Oak [Roanoke] . . . which is known to be a Very Public road and of the greatest use to the Community in general. . . . [I]t may be observ’d that as many as thirty hand wrought Steady on that road every Saturday during the course of three Summers past, and at this time a man on a Single Horse is in danger to be Injured. . . . [W]e rest in hopes your goodness will not Suffer us to be Wretchedly Imposed on. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Another traveler was Louis Phillipe, Duke of Orleans and later king of the French, who visited the United States with his brothers in 1797. Locals advised them to take the road via Ingles Ferry rather than Pepper’s Ferry (authorized by the Virginia Legislature in 1779), a choice they soon discovered to be popular as Louis Phillipe noted large groups of settlers at the site. “Every man has his own way of traveling and travelers are mutually annoying,” he wrote. Louis Philippe attributed the difficulty of the ascent of Christiansburg Mountain to poor road-building, writing: “The one we followed crossed over the tallest of the rounded hills.” He did not consider that a ridge route avoided soft and wet bottomland. Arriving in Christiansburg, Louis Philippe found the fledgling county seat to be “a tiny village of about ten houses.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Prosperity and Turnpikes**

After the Revolutionary War, settlers continued to flock west into the newly opened Kentucky frontier. Travelers made their way over the Cumberland Gap via the Wilderness Road, a path marked by Daniel Boone’s party in 1775. However, the first wagon did not cross the gap until 1796. The Great Road running through Montgomery County was an important thoroughfare for travelers moving west or east. For example, the well-known explorer William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame) made at least five documented trips through the New River Valley between 1801 and 1820.

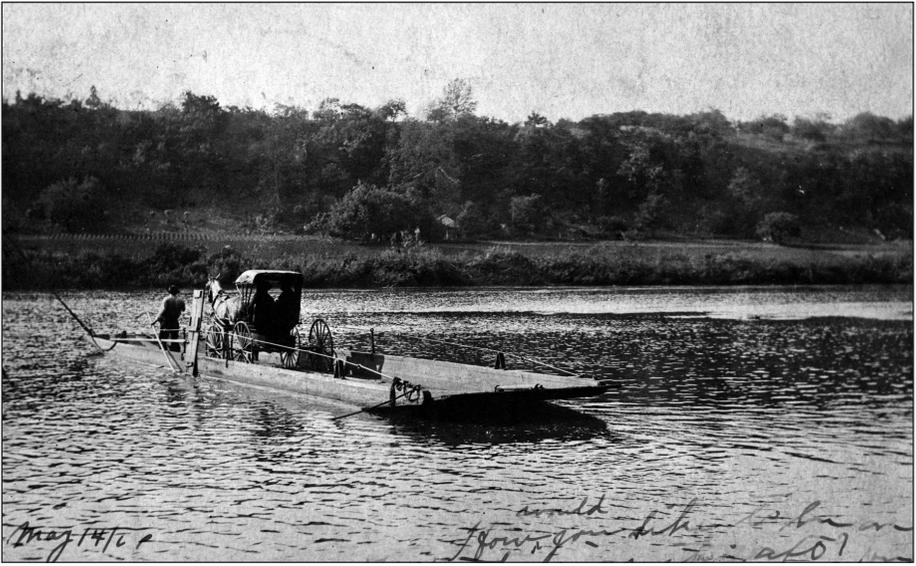


Figure 4: Ingles Ferry as it appeared circa 1906. (D. D. Lester Collection, Montgomery Museum & Lewis Miller Regional Art Center)

In 1807, Clark spent two months traveling from St. Louis through Illinois, Indiana, across the Cumberland Gap, and northeast on the Great Road to reach Fincastle, where he would marry Julia Hancock in 1808. In 1809, William and Julia and their infant son journeyed for 39 days on the same route from Lexington, Kentucky, to Fincastle.<sup>33</sup>

The roads in the first decade of the nineteenth century were decidedly better than the simple foot and horse trails of the 1740s–1760s. Over time, roads were slowly upgraded from trails to “cut” trails, where stumps in the road were cut down to less than 12 inches high to accommodate wagons. Simple grading was first done at fords to reduce steep stream banks to a shallower grade into and out of the streams. This work was followed by more efforts to fill low spots and to remove large rocks. Ferries were authorized, and lastly, the county court ordered the building of bridges.<sup>34</sup>

These improvements were still modest, however, and private turnpike companies became common during the early nineteenth century. In 1805, for example, sections of the old road that followed the South Fork of the Roanoke up Christiansburg Mountain became part of the Alleghany Turnpike. Sections of this same route were later included in the larger Southwest Turnpike of 1845.<sup>35</sup>

The route through the Shenandoah and New River Valleys of Virginia has been important since animal paths were first followed and expanded by American Indians traveling to homes and hunting grounds. As Europeans flooded into the region, these routes and paths shifted, changed, and improved to carry the ever-increasing numbers on narrow horse trails, then on the Great Road, and later still on the turnpikes and the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in 1854. In the twentieth century, these same paths were incorporated into Lee Highway (U.S. 11) and now into Interstate 81, carrying millions of vehicles every year. The culture and economy of Montgomery County is in many ways closely bound to this transportation route—ever changing and improving, yet still carrying travelers seeking to enrich their lives.

### Endnotes

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