

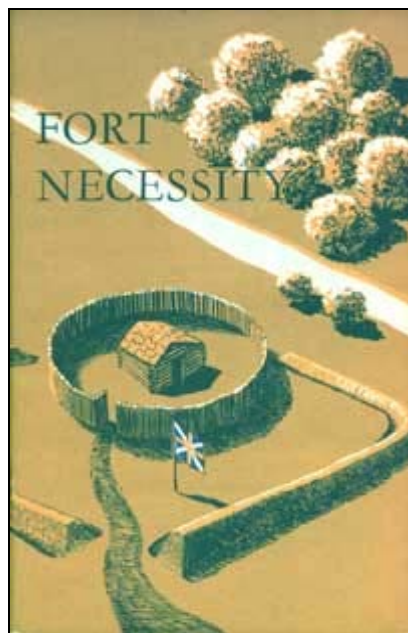


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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

experience
YOUR AMERICA



FORT NECESSITY

National Battlefield Site Pennsylvania

(now National Battlefield)

by
Frederick Tilberg



National Park Service
Historical Handbook Series No. 19
Washington, D.C.
1954

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For additional information, visit the Web site for
[Fort Necessity National Battlefield](http://www.nps.gov/fortnecessity)

Historical Handbook Number Nineteen
1954

This publication is one of a series of handbooks describing the historical and archeological areas in the National Park System administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. It is printed by the Government Printing Office and may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C. Price 25 cents

The National Park System, of which Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR

Stewart L. Udall, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



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Lt. Col. George Washington. From the painting by Charles Willson Peale. The original is owned by Washington and Lee University and hangs in Lee Chapel, Lexington, Va.

"A volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire."



SO HORACE WALPOLE a contemporary British statesman, described George Washington's attack on the French at Jumonville Glen and the

resulting action at Fort Necessity. With these two events occurring on May 28 and July 3, 1754, a war began that was soon to engulf Great Britain and France on the continent of Europe and throughout their colonies and was to change radically the balance of power in America. Here, too, Washington, a lieutenant colonel of Virginia militia at the age of 22, first commanded troops in action.

Known in America as the French and Indian War and in Europe as the Seven Years' War, the conflict was destined to establish a new world order. When formal peace was again restored in 1763, all of Canada and the whole area east of the Mississippi River, except New Orleans, became part of the British American domain. "The British victory," said the historian Francis Parkman, "crippled the commerce of her rivals, ruined France in two continents, and blighted her as a colonial power. It gave England control of the seas . . . made her the first of commercial nations, and prepared that vast colonial system that has planted new Englands in every quarter of the globe. And . . . it supplied to the United States the indispensable condition of their greatness, if not of their national existence."

The clash of imperial colonial policy which brought on the engagement at Fort Necessity produced at the same time one of the first instances of cooperation among the British colonies in America. Primarily concerned heretofore with their separate interests, colonial governors and assemblies were now awakening to the need of working together for their common interests and for concerted action against their common enemies.

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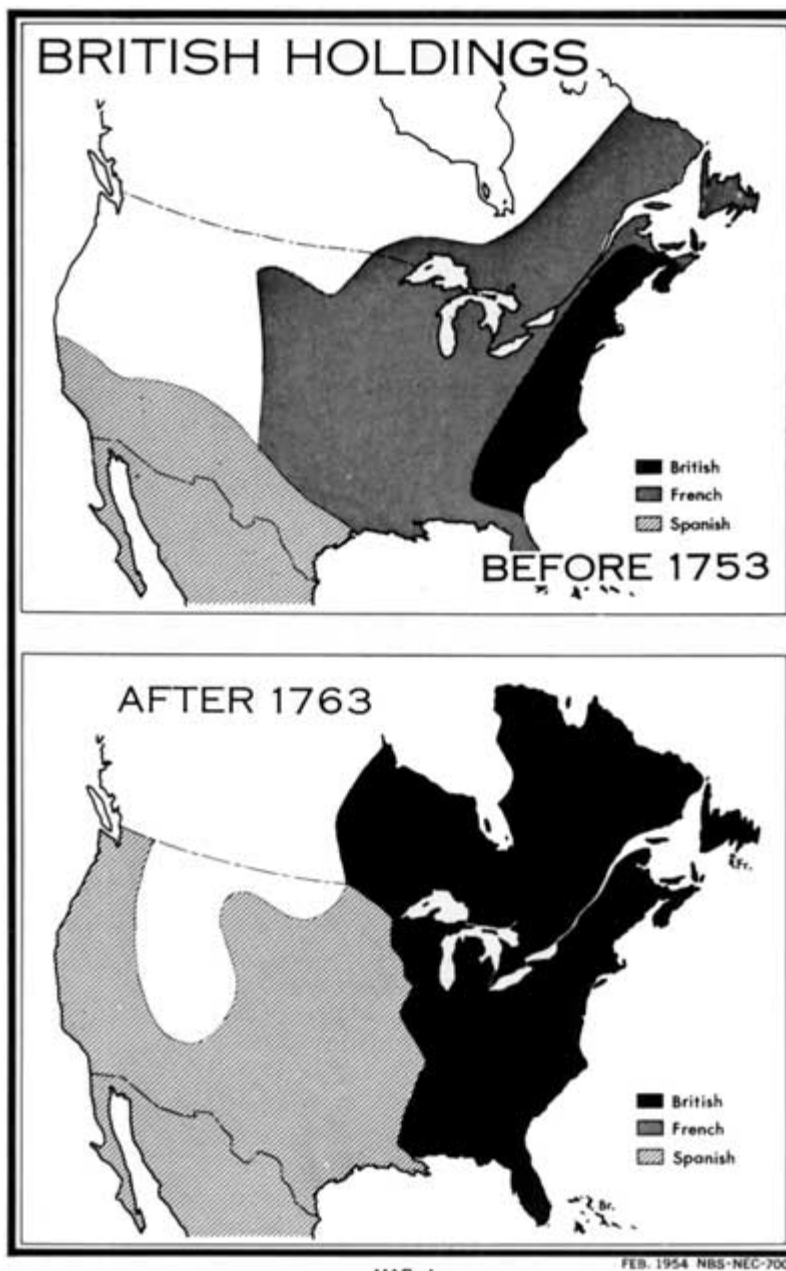




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MAP 1

FEB. 1954 NBS-NEC-7004

(click on image for an enlargement in a new window)

The Fort Necessity Campaign

RIVALRY OF FRANCE AND ENGLAND. In 1749, the Marquis de la Galissonière, Governor General of Canada, sent Pierre-Joseph Celoron de Blainville with about 215 Frenchmen and a force of Indians to take possession of the Ohio Valley for France. The expedition set out from La Chine, Canada, in birchbark canoes and eventually reached the

headwaters of the Allegheny River. At Lake Chautauqua, and along the Allegheny, Ohio, and Great Miami Rivers, Blainville posted notices on trees and buried lead plates graven with an inscription asserting that the adjacent lands belonged to the French Crown.

The British likewise had become interested in the fertile lands of the Ohio Valley. Several prominent Englishmen and Virginians, among them Lawrence and Augustine Washington, elder brothers of George, appreciating the potential value of the area and the possibilities for trading posts and settlements, organized the Ohio Company in 1748. The following year, the company obtained from the British Crown a grant of 200,000 acres on both sides of the Ohio between the Monongahela and Great Kanawha Rivers. An additional 300,000 acres was promised if 100 families were settled on the first tract within 7 years. Fearing the encroachment of Pennsylvania settlers, as well as the French, the Ohio Company established a base of operations at Wills Creek, now Cumberland, Md. The company directed the opening of a wagon road to the Monongahela River over a path blazed by Nemacolin, a friendly Delaware Indian. Christopher Gist, explorer and guide, was engaged to locate lands and to determine whether conditions on the extreme frontier were suitable for settlements.

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1754 led him to believe that only with aid from England could a Colonial force successfully deal with the French. The British Government, therefore, prepared an elaborate plan of attack. Four expeditions were projected against the French strongholds at Fort Duquesne, Fort Niagara, Fort St. Frederic (Crown Point), and Fort Beausejour, with the main thrust directed against Fort Duquesne.



The Duke of Cumberland.
From Cunningham, Lives of Eminent Englishmen.

The Duke of Cumberland, Captain General of the British Army and soldier son of the King (George II), now took the initiative in promoting the British campaign against the French. He appointed Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock, an officer of 45 years' service and a veteran of the Coldstream Guards, to be in command of the Fort Duquesne expedition as well as of all British troops in America. With the 44th regiment under Sir Peter Halkett and the 48th under Col. Thomas Dunbar, augmented by Colonials mainly from Virginia and Maryland, Braddock had assembled a formidable force. Lt. Col. George Washington accepted a place on Braddock's staff as one of the general's three aides-de-camp.

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Trace of the Braddock Road.

Surveys and Excavations of Fort Necessity

In the two centuries that have elapsed since Washington's capitulation and the subsequent destruction of Fort Necessity by Villiers, several attempts have been made to fix the exact location of the fort and to define its construction in detail. Destruction of the stockade by the French, erosion of the surface, and other disturbances of the soil made this a difficult task, and led to varying ideas concerning the original structure. Much of the source material relating to the fort was not available to those who undertook early surveys and excavations. Only in recent years have research studies produced documentary evidence bearing on the shape and size of the stockade and defenses. This evidence, forming the basis of archeological investigation early in 1953, led to the definite establishment of the stockade location and the outlines of the entrenchments built by Washington's men.

Maps of the period were generally diagrammatic and contained only fragmentary evidence. Although certain charts indicated the fort as a small square, the repetition of the same, or similar, symbols for many fort locations implies that this was a conventional sign for a fortification and was not intended to indicate actual fort lines. Therefore, investigators turned early to ground evidence in an effort to establish the fort entrenchments and the stockade.

Contemporary methods of stockade construction, particularly those at Fort Le Boeuf and at Wills Creek, were well known to Washington. In the

earlier attempts to locate the outlines of the fort, it was apparently assumed that the structure at Fort Necessity followed the general lines of contemporary forts with which Washington was acquainted.



Post ends of the original stockade of Fort Necessity.

The first known study of the ground surface was made by Freeman Lewis, a local surveyor, in 1816. In his attempt to locate the fort, he found clearly defined mounds, but the outlines were not sufficiently distinct to establish the original works. He concluded, on the basis of an examination of the 3-foot-high embankments on the southwest and southeast of Great Meadows Run, that the fort was triangular in shape. The existing mound led him to believe that the long side of the triangular fort was parallel to the stream bed and that a sector was projected to the creek to include a water supply within the fort bounds.

Jared Sparks, historian and traveler, visited the site in 1830. Observing closely the remnants of the embankments, Sparks concluded that the fort had four sides of nearly equal length, each approximately 35 yards long. For the clarification of his findings, Sparks prepared a sketch embodying his conclusions. Entrances were indicated on the southwest side, the direction from which the initial French attack developed. A supply of water being vital to occupants of the fort, Sparks indicated a bulge of the northeast corner to include the stream bed.

Seventy years passed before another effort was made to determine the appearance of the fort. In 1901, Robert McCracken, a civil engineer, made the first archeological approach to the problem. Aided by the findings of the Lewis survey and supplemented by his own study and excavations, McCracken believed the fort had four nearly equal sides and a projection to include the stream bed. Excavations undertaken near the creek unearthed a quantity of oak bark, believed to be remnants of the logs used in the original fort destroyed by the French. It was believed that the stockade had been implanted on the line of the entrenchments.



Relics of the Fort Necessity Battle.

Additional excavation work was undertaken in 1931 by Harry R. Blackford, also a civil engineer. Conducting further digging in the mounds near the stream bed, Blackford located remnants of the original palisade 3 feet below the surface near the northern and northeastern embankments and adjacent to the stream. The post ends varied considerably in thickness and the tops showed signs of having been exposed to the action of time and water. At various points in this area, according to Blackford, "pieces of charred wood and lumps of charcoal were excavated from a depth of about three feet, this giving evidence to support the statement that the stockade was burned." He concluded that the original stockade had been built on the entrenchments, the outlines of which could readily be followed. Therefore, the reconstructed stockade built in 1932 was placed upon the line of the restored entrenchments.

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Excavated trench showing post ends in place.

Discovery of the Original Fort

Faced with the problem of replacing posts, many of which had become badly deteriorated since the erection of the stockade in 1932, the National Park Service, in 1952, first made a restudy of all available records bearing on the location and shape of the original fort and trenches. Then, a thorough archeological analysis of ground evidence was made, the results of which might establish definitely the type of fort and the kind, as well as the location, of trenches constructed by Washington's force in 1754.

While it could be reasonably concluded, on the basis of Washington's several references to the fort and stockade during the process of construction, that the enclosure was small and could be defended from entrenchments built near it, two documents lend particular weight to the hypothesis that the stockade was small and round in shape. In 1952, a deposition by John B. W. Shaw, who saw action at Fort Necessity, was discovered. Shaw, a member of the Virginia regiment, described first the actual fighting and then gave a realistic picture of the fort as a defense position. "There was at this Place," he relates, "a Small Stocado Fort made in a Circular form round a Small House that Stood in the Middle of it to keep our Provisions and Ammunition in, And was cover'd with Bark and some Skins, and might be about fourteen feet Square, and the Walls of the Fort might be eight feet Distance from the said House all Round." Shaw's description of the action at Fort Necessity ties in closely with Washington's account.

Shaw's statement concerning the fort, which apparently was based on reasonably close examination, is supported by the observation of Col. James Burd 5 years later. In 1759, Colonel Burd, in charge of a road-clearing force of 200 men, preparing to open a new road from Chestnut Ridge to Redstone, noted in his diary of September 10, as he passed Fort Necessity, that he "Saw Col. Washington's fort, which was called Fort Necessity. It is a small circular stockade, with a small house in the center; on the outside there is a small ditch goes around it about 8 yards from the stockade. It is situate in a narrow part of the meadows commanded by three points of woods. There is a small run of water just by it." In view of the reference by Colonel Burd in 1759 to "a small circular stockade," it is possible that Burd based his statement partly on his observation of the existing mounds and partly on hearsay from settlers who had seen the stockade. It is of importance to note, however, that certain observations made by Burd corroborate the testimony of the eyewitness, John Shaw, contained in his deposition a few months after the battle.

On the basis of documentary evidence and previous explorations of the mounds, the National Park Service in the summer of 1952 made additional excavations to locate the "outer trenches" to which the Washington and Shaw accounts referred. After careful examination of the 1932 fill and earlier layers of soil, no evidence was found indicating that the trenches occupied by the South Carolina troops lay beyond the mounds of the existing fort outlines. Trenches were dug also on the interior of the stockade which, beyond indicating the original grade to be from 8 to 12 inches below the 1932 fill, disproved the existence of the long side of a triangular fort as advanced by the Lewis survey of 1816.

On the premise that the original fort was a small circular stockade, as indicated by the statements of John Shaw and Colonel Burd, and that the stockade constructed in 1932 was located approximately on the line of the original entrenchments, further excavation was undertaken during the spring and summer of 1953. As Burd had referred to a stream near the stockade and since pieces of the stockade had been discovered in the excavations of 1901 and 1932 near the stream in the northern area of the existing stockade, trenches were sunk in this area at an angle which would bisect a circle approximately 52 feet in diameter.

On the first day of excavating, the 3-foot-deep trench on the western perimeter of the hypothetical line revealed a large piece of wood, identified as one of the posts of the original stockade. The extension of the trench to the southern perimeter revealed a line of post ends, approximately 2 feet below the 1754 ground level, in a circular position. The earth adjacent to the posts was clearly the back-fill of soil for the support of the posts after they had been placed in position. Excavation along the course of the original trench, which could be readily followed, was extended eastward, revealing additional post ends in a circular outline. As the project neared completion, a sufficient number of post stubs had been found in their original position to determine definitely the construction details of the fort. The stubs represented the portion or the posts that stood below the ground-water level and were preserved because they had been continuously wet.

Archeological discoveries proved conclusively that the original stockade

was circular in shape, measuring 53 feet in diameter. The overall perimeter was 168 feet, and the entrance, located on the southwest sector of the stockade, was 3.5 feet wide.

With the shape and location of the original stockade established, exploratory trenches were dug across the presumed location of the original outer entrenchments. Clearly defined cross sections of the trench on the back, or inner, side of the earthworks were secured. Sufficient information was obtained, therefore, to make possible a faithful restoration of these defense mounds.

Artifacts discovered in the 1953 excavations were similar to those found in the explorations of 1901 and 1932. Of first importance in the more recent excavations were the preserved post ends. Other artifacts included numerous lead musket balls, mostly of French caliber (.69); gun flints; small iron balls; clay tobacco-pipe fragments; the brass tip of a sword scabbard; a large bolt, possibly belonging to the gate; and a brass button.

Although archeological evidence of a small house, known to have been situated near the center of the stockade, was not found, a small log structure typical of the period has been erected to complete the restoration.

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Toll House at Addison, Pa., on the Old National Pike.

Guide to the Area

This guide is planned to help you reach points of historical interest at Fort Necessity and immediate vicinity and learn of the principal events which took place at each point.

1. FORT NECESSITY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD SITE. Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site is administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. Two acres in extent, it is entirely surrounded by Fort Necessity State Park, a 311-acre recreational area including the 234-1/2-acre tract purchased by George Washington in 1769 and owned by him until the time of his death.

As you approach the fort by the footpath you will cross a small stream known as Indian Run. The junction of this stream and Great Meadows Run, to your right, was the location of the natural entrenchments to which Washington refers in one of his communications. Soon after



Schedule of rates on the Addison Toll House.

the initial fortifications were completed, the circular stockade and small house on the interior were built for the safekeeping of supplies and ammunition. The present stockade was constructed in the spring of 1954 of split logs of irregular length and shape. The palisades are in the exact location of the original stockade posts which formed a circle 53 feet in diameter. The gate to the stockade is in the southwest sector of the circle.

The embankments in the foreground are authentic restorations of those built by Washington's men as defense positions during the brief time between the return of the men to the fort on July 1 and the beginning of the French attack on the morning of July 3. The French approached from the hillside on your left (then a wooded area), then shifted eastward to the fringe of trees on the southeast (back of you), from the cover of which the French and Indians directed much of their fire at the English force in the fort.

2. BRADDOCK ROAD. First blazed for the Ohio Company about 1750 by Nemacolin, a Delaware Indian, working with Thomas Cresap, a noted frontiersman, this road was improved and used by Washington in the Fort Necessity campaign in 1754 and by Braddock the following year. Extending from Wills Creek (Cumberland, Md.) to the Monongahela River, the road subsequently became a highway of westward expansion. At various times in its history this avenue of travel was known as Nemacolin's Path, Gist's Trail, Washington's Road, and Braddock Road. By 1817, when the National Road had been completed as far as the Monongahela River, the Braddock Road was abandoned. Only traces of the road bed, such as this section in a woodland area where the ground has not been disturbed, are still in evidence.



Marker on the Old National Pike.

3. THE OLD NATIONAL PIKE. The road which replaced Braddock Road, variously known as the Old National Pike, the National Road, and the Cumberland Road, was the first step in the development of a national highway system. Conceived first in the mind of Washington, and later heartily advanced by Albert Gallatin and Henry Clay, the undertaking was given further impetus by the admission of Ohio into the Union in 1803. Three years later, Congress authorized the construction of a road from Cumberland, Md., to the State of Ohio, although actual construction did not begin until 1811.

The road commissioners pointed out in their report of 1808 that because of the "crooked and hilly course of the road [Braddock's] now traveled, the new route could not be made to occupy any part of it except an intersection on Wills Mountain, another at Jess Tomlinson's [Little Meadows], and a third near Big Youghioghana [Great Crossings], embracing not a mile of distance in the whole without unnecessary sacrifices of distance and expense." The

National Road followed generally the line of Braddock Road westward as far as Braddock Park, where Braddock Road veered northwestwardly to Fort Pitt (formerly Fort Duquesne). The National Road was extended westward and by 1819 had reached Wheeling, W. Va., where, due to prevailing economic conditions, work was suspended. In later years, construction of the road continued through Ohio and Indiana to central Illinois.



Mount Washington Tavern

4. MOUNT WASHINGTON TAVERN. As the National Road was developed, many taverns were built along the route to serve as stopping places for stage coaches. In 1818, about the time that the National Road was opened to traffic through the Fort Necessity area, Judge Nathaniel Ewing of Fayette County, then owner of the Great Meadows tract, erected a large house beside the new road and named it Mount Washington. One of the first substantial buildings on the road between Little Meadows and Uniontown, it was operated by successive owners as a tavern, and because of its size and comfortable accommodations it was designated a stage house.

The Tavern, now used as a museum, is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Relics of the Fort Necessity and Braddock expeditions, many of which were found on the site of Fort Necessity and other historic areas in the vicinity, are on exhibit in the museum.

5. BRADDOCK'S GRAVE AND OLD ORCHARD CAMP. Old Orchard Camp, scene of Braddock's ninth encampment on June 25, 1755, during the expedition against Fort Duquesne, is located near the National Road, 1 mile west of Fort Necessity. On July 13, less than 3 weeks later, Braddock died and was buried here, at the first bivouac of the British troops in their panic-stricken retreat from the battlefield at Turtle Creek.

When Braddock Road was being repaired in 1804, workmen came upon a human skeleton in the middle of the road near the east bank of Braddock Run. With the bones were found buttons and buckles which indicated that the body had probably been clothed in a uniform of a British officer of rank. Believing that the remains were those of General Braddock, they

were moved 100 yards southeast of the first grave and reinterred on a knoll which now overlooks the National Road.

In 1909, the citizens of Fayette County, Pa., organized the Braddock Park Association and acquired 23 acres of land, including a portion of the Old Orchard Camp site. Funds were raised for the erection of a monument, which was dedicated October 15, 1913. Held since 1931 by the Fort Necessity Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, the area was transferred in 1952 to the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters. The Braddock Road marker is located on the section of the road extending through Braddock Park.



Reconstructed Fort Necessity.

6. HALF KING'S ROCKS. This massive rock formation, located on the crest of Chestnut Ridge, was the place where the Mingo Chief, the Half King, and Washington joined forces on the night of May 27, 1754, just before attacking the French force in a deep ravine 2 miles northward, since known as Jumonville Glen. Half King's Rocks, 1 mile north of U. S. 40, is located at a point where old Braddock Road joins the modern road.

7. JUMONVILLE GLEN. This secluded ravine, fringed on its western bank by a massive rock formation, was the scene of Washington's attack on Jumonville's small party of Frenchmen early on the morning of May 28, 1754. The reaction of the French at Fort Duquesne to this engagement brought about the Coulon de Villiers expedition of revenge against Washington which culminated in the action at Fort Necessity.

Located 3 miles north of U. S. 40, on the crest of Chestnut Ridge, the site was acquired and held for many years by the Fort Necessity Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution. In recent years, the site and adjacent land have been owned by the Methodist Center of Pittsburgh and used as a Youth Recreational Camp.

8. DUNBAR'S CAMP. This site, situated a few hundred yards north of Jumonville Glen, was the encampment of Dunbar's regiment. This unit of Braddock's expedition, bearing the heavy arms and supplies, had reached this point when the ill-fated advance regiment led by Braddock was struck by the French and Indians at Turtle Creek on July 9, 1755. As the

remnants from that field reached this camp, immense quantities of ammunition and supplies, as well as cannon and wagons, were destroyed, and Dunbar began a hurried retreat toward Fort Cumberland.

Dunbar's Camp lies at the southern base of Dunbar's Knob, a lofty, treeless eminence which offers, on a clear day, a magnificent view of the rolling country westward.

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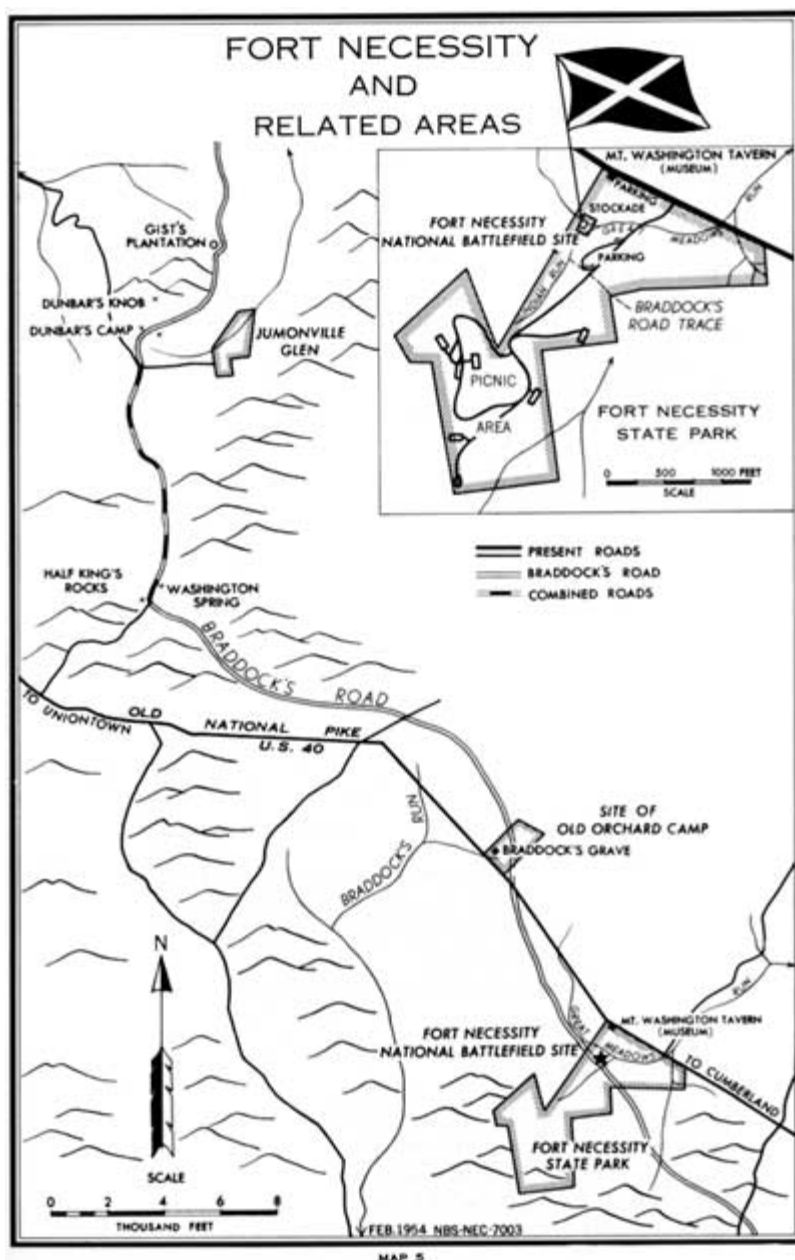




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FORT NECESSITY

National Battlefield



(click on image for an enlargement in a new window)

How to Reach Fort Necessity

Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site, located 11 miles east of Uniontown, Pa., may be reached over U. S. 40 from the west and east; from the Somerset interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike over State Route 53 to U. S. 40; from the Donegal interchange of the Turnpike over State Route 381 to U. S. 40; from Morgantown, W. Va., over U. S. 119 to U. S. 40 at Uniontown. U. S. 51 is a direct highway from Pittsburgh to U.

S. 40 at Uniontown. Blue Ridge Bus Lines operate over U. S. 40.

About Your Visit

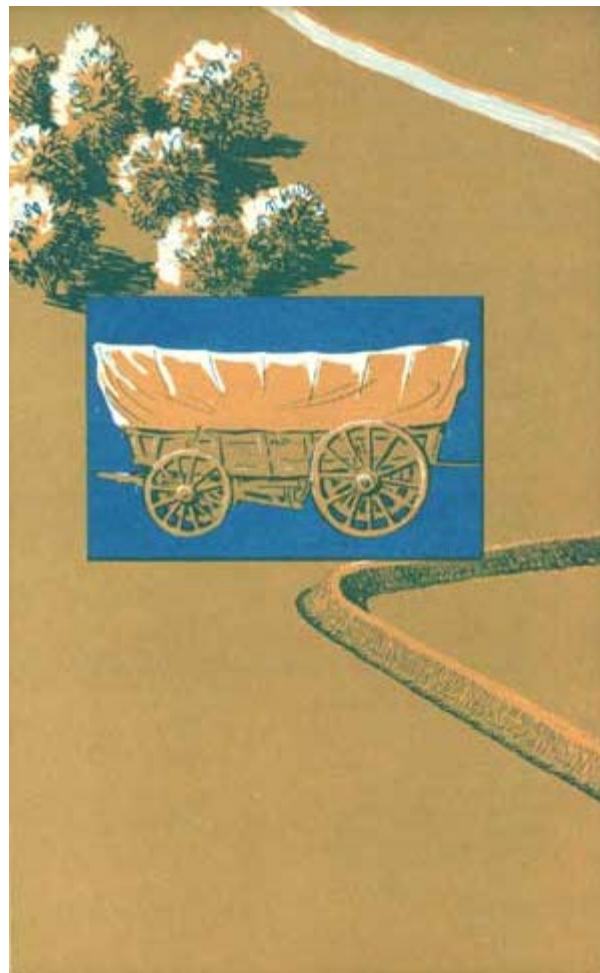
Information and free literature concerning the site may be obtained at the stockade. The services of the superintendent are available at the fort daily from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. During the summer months, a ranger historian is also on duty.

Parking facilities are available a short distance from the fort.

Administration

Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site was acquired by the War Department in 1931 and transferred to the National Park Service in 1933. It is under the immediate supervision of the superintendent.

Communications regarding the site should be addressed to the Superintendent, Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site, Farmington, Pa.



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