

The Steubenville Road

Did you ever wonder why Guernsey County had two Federal highways coming into it from the east, but only one leaving the county on the west?

It all began during the French and Indian War, with the British attempts to capture the French post at the Forks of the Ohio (Pittsburg now, then called by the French, Fort DuQuesne.) Two expeditions were launched against the French, the first in 1755 led by Gen. Edward Braddock ending disastrously on the banks of the Monongahela, and the second in 1758 led by Gen. John Forbes, ending in success for the British. The French post was captured and re-named Fort Pitt for the English statesman.

The reason that these expeditions are important to the history of Guernsey County is because of the routes used by these expeditions to reach Fort DuQuesne. Gen. Braddock approached the fort from the southeast, departing from the advanced British post at Wills Creek (now Cumberland, Md.) and passing close by present-day Uniontown, Pa., whereas Gen. Forbes approached the fort more directly from the east, passing through Harris' Ferry (now Harrisburg), Carlisle and Bedford. In order to transport supplies and artillery, a road had to be literally carved out of the forest, and these roads were later used for many years by settlers emigrating to the west.

Gradually, a westerly diversion was made from Braddock's Road at Uniontown, passing through present-day Brownsville and Washington, Pa., and ending at Wheeling. Travelers from the east thus had two principal routes through the mountains to choose from in approaching the Ohio country, both having their origins in military roads of the French and Indian War period, Forbes Road to Pittsburg, and Braddock's Road and its diversion to Wheeling.

From Pittsburg, a road was soon constructed to Charles Town on the Ohio river. This was a "flourishing" town on the Virginia side of the river at the site of present-day Wellsburg. In those days Charles Town was a very important place along the river.

When Ohio was opened up for settlement, lands in the

Seven Ranges (which included Londonderry, Oxford, and Millwood Townships in Guernsey County) were put up for sale in 1787, first in New York, then Philadelphia and Pittsburg, and finally, in 1800, a Land Office was established in Steubenville, then a very small community. (Charles Town was still a much more important town at that time.) Travelers into the Ohio country and wanting to purchase land in the Seven Ranges could travel by road from the east through Pittsburg to Charles Town, purchase the land at Steubenville, and then head into the interior, at first from Charles Town, (an early road was constructed from opposite Charles Town to Cadiz), and later from Steubenville to Cadiz. In 1802, this road was extended from Cadiz to the ferry crossing that had been established where Zane's Trace crossed Wills Creek (Cambridge). This road from Charles Town to Cadiz to Cambridge is designated on the early plats of Guernsey County as the Charles Town Road (not the Steubenville Road). Later, however, as Steubenville grew into a prosperous town, and since there already was a road from Cadiz to Steubenville, the entire road became thought of as the Steubenville Road rather than the Charles Town Road. Henry Howe, the distinguished Ohio historian, says that this road was probably the most heavily-used road into Ohio until the establishment of the National Road, for travelers from the heavily populated Northeast would have used Forbes Road, while travelers from Maryland and Virginia would have used Braddock's Road. After the National Road was established, however, it gradually declined in importance. Because it did decline in importance, however, fewer improvements were made by way of filling, cutting, and straightening, and with all of its curves and hills it more nearly remains the road of old than does the National Road, later U. S. 40, and now Interstate 70.

These two major roads coming into Guernsey County from the east and intersecting at the ferry crossing of Wills Creek can thus legitimately be thought of as extensions of the military roads of Forbes and Braddock. Once having joined, only one road was necessary to proceed further west, and Zane's Trace was that road.

The Historical Development of the Steubenville Road

1. Braddock's Road and Forbes' Road constructed during the French and Indian War.
2. Both roads extended to the Ohio River.
3. Zane's Trace a further extension of Braddock's Road and the Charles Town-Cadiz road was a further extension of the Forbe's Road.
4. The Charles Town Road was further extended from Cadiz to the ferry crossing of Zane's Trace at Will's Creek. (There was no town of Cambridge at that time. Just the ferry and probably a tavern or two.)
5. As Steubenville grew in size and importance, the Charles Town Road from Cambridge began to be thought of as the Steubenville Road.

