

**CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE:
A SKETCH OF THE
HISTORY OF VENANGO
COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

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Centennial Discourse: A Sketch of the History of Venango County, Pennsylvania by S. J. M. Eaton

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A SKETCH
OF THE
HISTORY OF
VENANGO COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA.

DELIVERED AT FRANKLIN, PA., JULY 4th, 1876,

BY S. J. M. EATON, D. D.

Illustrated by a Map of the Old French Fort and its Surroundings.

FRANKLIN, PA.:
VENANGO SPECTATOR JOB OFFICE.
1876.

1258-92

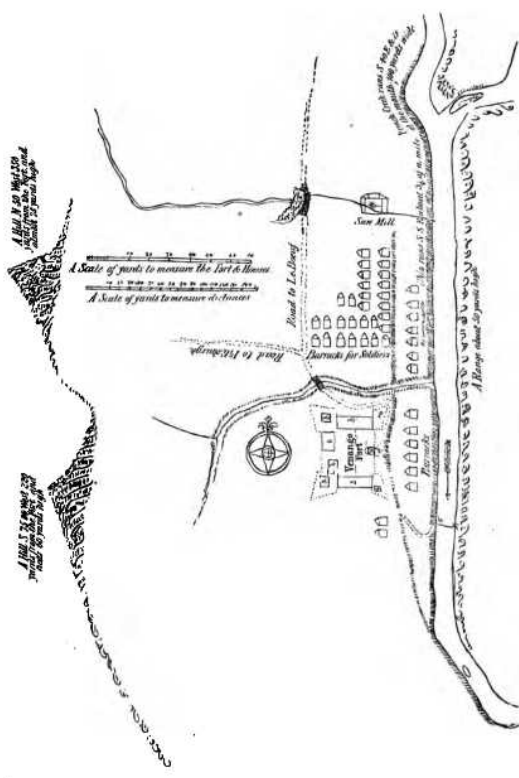
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1853, Sept. 12.

Wright Fund.

ERRATUM.

Miss BETSY BROADNER died May 11, 1897, and not in 1864, as printed on page 34.



A Hill 1000 Meters
A Hill 1500 Meters

A Scale of paces to measure the Fort & House
A Scale of paces to measure the Barracks
A Scale of paces to measure the River

Road to La Dange

New Mill

Barracks for Soldiers

Road to Pittsburgh

Vermejo

A Bridge about 20 paces long



EXPLANATION

OF THE MAP ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE.

- a.*—Magazine, three feet thick of earth.
b.—Barracks, two stories high, with stone chimneys.
c.—Door to a large cellar.
d.—The gate.
e.—Rising ground, that the Fort stands on, fifteen feet higher than the bank of the river.
f.—Bank of the river, twelve feet high.
g.—The landing.
h.—A good fording, 200 yards across the river.
i.—Bridge across a hollow.
k.—Hollow fifteen feet deep and sixty feet broad, with a small stream of water.

N. B.—Venango Fort is situated on a rising piece of ground on a rich bottom, abounding with clover, sixty yards west of the Ohio. The north and south Polygon, is forty-five yards; and the east and west Polygon thirty-seven yards. The Bastions are built of saplings eight inches thick, and thirteen feet in length, set stockade fashion. Part of the Curtains are of hewn timber, laid lengthways upon one another which also makes one side of the barracks.

NOTE.—The above is the exact description of the French Fort as given on the margin of the ancient map. The English Fort was located about fifty feet north of the French saw-mill.

HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF
VENANGO COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA.

VENANGO COUNTY, although organized at a later period than many of her sisters, has yet a history that is full of thrilling interest. In many of its features it borders on the romantic. The beginning of the century that is just closing found this region covered with its primeval forest. The Indian had his home here, and what little of civilization had been seen in earlier days under the French rule had vanished.

But we will find it interesting to go back a few years and notice some of the incidents connected with the movements of the French in their determination to hold possession of the Valley of the Mississippi. This will take us back to the year 1749. The French based their claims on the original discoveries of MARQUETTE and LA SALLE, together with their construction of the treaties of Ryswick, Utrecht and Aix la Chapelle. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, BANCROFT tells us that, "Not a fountain bubbled on the west of the Allegheny, but was claimed as belonging to the French Empire." Later they seem to have claimed all west of the Allegheny Mountains. In pursuance of this claim, in the year 1749, GALLISONIERE, Governor of Canada, sent CELERON to bury leaden plates at different points, along the line from Lake Erie to the Mississippi, as evidences of this claim. One of these plates was buried at this place, near the mouth of French creek. It bore an inscription in the French language, stating that they had "Buried this plate at the confluence of the To-ra-da-koin, this 20th July near the river Ohio, otherwise Beautiful River, as a monument of renewal of possession."

This plate was not permitted to remain long in its little bed, as it was stolen by the Indians and taken to the State of New York, that "the devilish writing," as they called it, might be interpreted to them.

It was then resolved to erect a line of Forts extending from Lake Erie to the lower Ohio. Fort Presque Isle was builded at Erie, Le Boeuf at Waterford, and Machault at this place. The two former were completed in 1753, the latter was commenced in the fall of that year and completed early in 1754. The Indians seem at first to have been unwilling to have a Fort erected here. To overcome their scruples a Frenchman by the name of JONCAIRE was sent to propitiate them. We find his name mentioned frequently in connection with this place. He was a wily, plausible and shrewd man, and would have made a good politician at the present day. He had been adopted by the Indians, won their confidence, and under the plea that the new building was to be a trading house for their convenience, was permitted to commence operations.

Undoubtedly the first white man who located in Venango County was JOHN FRAZIER, a Scotchman. He was a gunsmith and trader. In the year 1753, EDWARD SHIPPEN, of Lancaster, in writing to Governor JAMES HAMILTON, says of him and this place: "Wenango is the name of an Indian town on Ohio, where Mr. FRAZIER has had a gunsmith shop for many years. It is situate about eighty miles up the said river beyond Logstown."

When JONCAIRE came to commence the erection of the Fort here, he drove FRAZIER out of his house and took possession. It was at this house that GEORGE WASHINGTON had the famous interview with JONCAIRE in December, 1753. There is no evidence that the Fort here was occupied at the time of WASHINGTON's visit, for he speaks of finding the French colors raised over FRAZIER's house. We would like much to know now just where that was located, but its site is forgotten forever.

At that interview the Frenchman was thoroughly outgeneral-ed by the young American. Whisky was produced, with the intention of getting the Indians and the American youth under its influence. But the results were that while the Indians became drunken, WASHINGTON remained perfectly sober, and picked the brains of the half-drunken Frenchman of all their secrets. He found out the plans of the French without exciting the suspicions of the soldiers. The service commenced by GEORGE WASHINGTON in this region, at twenty-one years of age, was the beginning of his culture for the events of the Revolutionary War.

The Fort here seems to have been completed in April, 1754, under the superintendence of Captain JONCAIRE. It was not an elaborate work, but suited to the circumstances of the case. It was called Machault, after a celebrated French financier and politician. The name is not a familiar one here, but in every instance in which the Fort is spoken of by the French authorities, either here or in Canada,

it is called Machault. By the English it was usually called the French Fort at Venango. Although grave doubts existed until recently as to its exact location, yet facts have been brought to light recently, that fix the site beyond all controversy. Its exact location was on the bank of the Allegheny, about sixty rods south of the mouth of French creek. Elk street runs directly through it, and Sixth street nearly touches it on the south.

An ancient document describes it in this wise: "It is situated on a rising piece of ground, in a rich bottom abounding with clover, sixty yards west of the Ohio. The north and south polygon is forty-five yards, and the east and west polygon thirty-seven yards, in perimeter. The bastions are built of saplings eight inches thick and thirteen feet high, set stockade fashion. Parts of the curtains are of hewn timber, laid lengthwise upon one another, which also makes one side of the barracks." Inside the Fort were six ranges of barracks, two stories high, with stone chimneys. Outside were also long ranges of barracks for soldiers. The magazine within was cased with earth to the depth of three feet. On the little stream just below eighth street, where the English Fort was afterwards built, was a saw-mill, the machinery of which had been brought from Canada, if not from France.

The Fort was one hundred and five feet in length and seventy-five feet in breadth, exclusive of the bastions.

To this description all allusions in the French records correspond. Captain POUCHOT, Chief Engineer of the forces in Canada, says in a letter: "We have a small mean Fort on the Ohio." A French prisoner, STEPHEN CHAUVIGNERIE, taken in Eastern Pennsylvania, says: "Fort Machault is a wooden Fort filled up with earth," and further states that they had "six swivel-guns, or wall pieces," and that the whole ground embraced about two acres.

At this point there were sometimes as many as one thousand men. A large force had assembled here in July, 1759, to make an attack on Fort Pitt, to recover what they had lost in Fort Du Quesne, when intelligence came that Fort Niagara was besieged, and orders to evacuate and hasten thither to the rescue. The creek was too low to convey their effects by boat, and there was no transportation by land, beyond personal baggage. So, presents were distributed with a lavish hand to the Indians. Grim warriors were seen strutting about in laced coats and hats, without other clothing, and dusky maidens were rich with red blankets, worn shawlwise, and gandy with immense strings of beads. The property was collected into the Fort, set on fire, and all that would burn was reduced to ashes.— Thus, after a possession here of five and a half years, the French claim was abandoned forever.