

Chapter One. Introduction

The early settlement of the United States of America began in 1606 when King James I of England issued a charter authorizing a group of investors, known as the Virginia Company of London, to send colonists to North America. King James and the group of investors profited from the enterprise by collecting fees for passage to the colony from the settlers and the subsequent crops that the settlers produced. A council was selected by King James to operate the enterprise from England. A second council of settlers were formed to direct daily activities in the colony. The first group of one hundred and four settlers arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, on May 14, 1607 (Salmon, 1994). The town of Jamestown struggled during the first three years, due to the lack of support by the Virginia Company of London and the environment. The colonists were accustomed to a much cooler environment in England, as opposed to the hot and humid conditions during the summer in Jamestown. During the first summer more than fifty percent of the first group of settlers died from the environmental conditions and fever. In 1609 James I, issued a charter to provide a governor and military forces in the new settlement. Because of changes in the Virginia Company of London, investors financed more expeditions. During the years 1614 to 1622 the population of the settlers grew quickly. The Virginia Company of London encouraged the colonists to produce other products like glass, silk, and iron, but the colonists kept growing tobacco.

The land in the new settlement quickly became very valuable due to the popularity of tobacco in England. The Virginia Company of London subdivided the James River frontage to its stockholders, each receiving 100 acres per share. This division of land led to the formation of self-sufficient tobacco plantations. Thousands of indentured servants and slaves arrived in the colony because of the demand for labor on the plantations between the years 1614 to 1622 (Salmon, 1994). Indentured servants were asked to work for seven years to repay their passage. Free settlers were offered 50 acres of land if they

traveled to Virginia at their own expense or if they paid another person's passage. To further increase the colony's population, the Virginia Company of London also provided each settler 100 acres after seven years' residence in Virginia (Salmon, 1994).

Because of the population increase, the colony's area of settlement continued to grow. In 1634, the area north of the Potomac River became Maryland. In 1665, the area south of the Currituck Inlet became known as the "Carolina" (Salmon, 1994). During the 1700's, Spain, France, and Virginia claimed unexplored land west to the Mississippi River. In 1783, after the American Revolution, the Treaty of Paris stated that the Mississippi River defined the western boundary of the United States.

Exploration of the area east of the Mississippi River was difficult. The only means of travel for early settlers was by foot, horse, or horse-drawn wagons. The early north-south route through Virginia was known as the Great Philadelphia Road (see Figure 1.1). This road began in Philadelphia and continued south through Big Lick, later named Roanoke, Virginia, and into North and South Carolina, and was the main road of travel during early settlement in the south and to the west.

By 1765, most of the Great Philadelphia Road provided a clear passage for horse-drawn wagons. "Overseers" were hired by the county courts to maintain the roads. Wagoneers, packhorse drivers, drovers (persons driving livestock to market), ferrymen, and indentured white servants traveled along the Great Philadelphia Road (Rouse, 1995, 95). In 1776, Virginia made Kentucky a large county, with Fincastle its county seat. The road to Kentucky became very popular to pioneers, resulting in more travelers through the Valley of Virginia, the area between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Allegheny Mountains.

The Wilderness Road, connecting with the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road in Big Lick, headed more directly westward through the Allegheny Mountains. Originally formed by

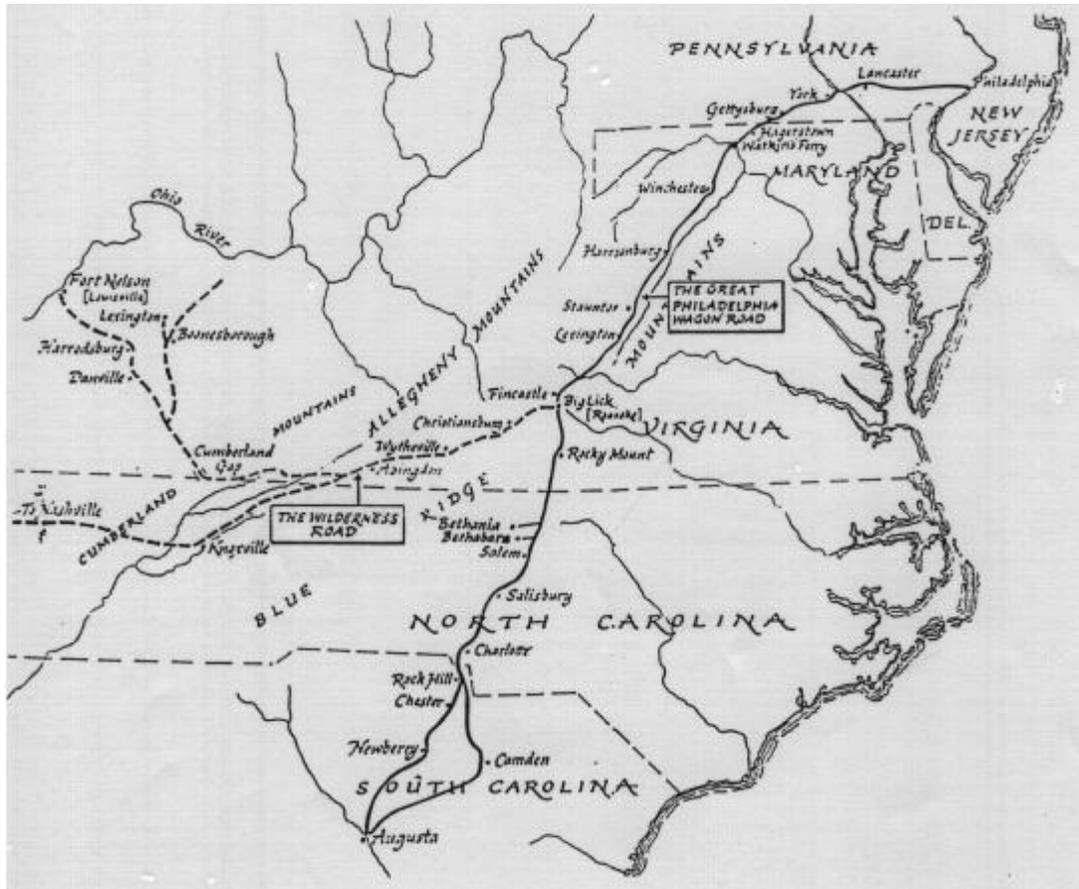


Figure 1.1 Routes of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road and Wilderness Road, provided by Parke Rouse, Jr., author of The Great Wagon Road. Permission was granted by the Trust Company of Virginia.

Indians making their way from Pennsylvania to the Carolinas, the Wilderness Road roughly followed what is Route 11 today. Before 1772, more than 50,000 families are reported to have traveled westward on the Wilderness Road in one year (Givens, 1981). Montgomery County, Virginia, being the first county on the Wilderness Road after leaving Big Lick, meant that many travelers passed through the area.

After leaving Big Lick, Christiansburg, Virginia, was the first town on the Wilderness Road. Christiansburg, the county seat of Montgomery County, was founded on December 7, 1776, with most of its residents being of Scottish or Irish decent. Population growth for the area was somewhat slow to develop as is evidenced in the Virginia census report. The report stated that 9,026 were residents of Montgomery County in the year 1810, while in the year 1830 the number had increased to only 12,304 (Douthat, 1985). The New River, thought to be the oldest river in America, runs through Montgomery County. Though the New River was not large enough to contain large boats, the river was deep enough for flat boats to be used to carry travelers to the Kanawha and the Ohio rivers (see Figure 1.2). From these rivers travelers were able to connect to the Mississippi River and down to New Orleans, Louisiana.

In December of 1805, the General Assembly passed an act to establish a turnpike on the Wilderness Road from the head of the Roanoke River in the northeastern section of Montgomery County, across the Alleghany Mountains (see Figure 1.3). The turnpike led to the town of Christiansburg. The bill to finance the turnpike was sponsored in the House of Delegates by delegates John Ingles and Andrew Lewis, who were residents of Montgomery County. Because the cost to the county for maintaining the Wilderness Road was considered to be a financial burden, the General Assembly required a schedule of tolls, enforced by toll collectors, in order to maintain the road in good order. A group of commissioners were appointed to receive bids to build the turnpike. The contractor selected was required to place a \$20,000 bond for the completion of the road in four years. The lowest bidder was George Hancock, a local plantation owner.

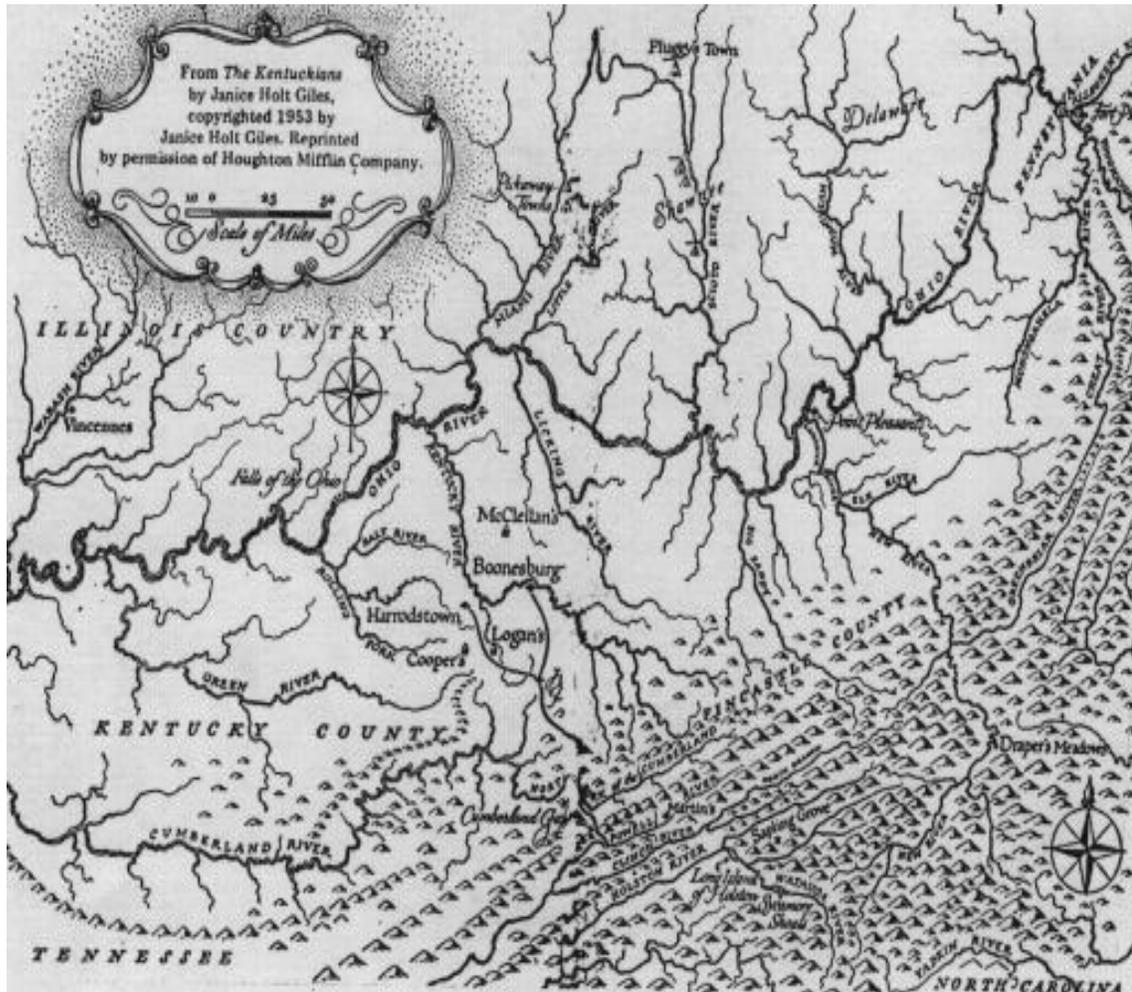


Figure 1.2. Map of the New, Kanawha, and Ohio rivers provided by Lula Porterfield Givens, author of Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Virginia – In the heart of the Alleghenies. Permission granted from Houghton Mifflin Company.

George Hancock began construction on this seven-mile section that would create eliminating a lengthy, difficult section of the Wilderness Road. The turnpike was twenty-five feet wide, and made of gravel and stone (Wood, 1970, 57). The toll collectors were also responsible for expediting traffic and fines. Revenue collected from the various fines were given to aid the poor residents of Montgomery County. The following is the schedule of tolls:

Each horse carrying a rider	6 ¼ cents
Each horse without a rider	3 cents
Each four-wheeled carriage for the conveyance of commodities	37 ½ cents
Each four-wheeled carriage for the conveyance of persons	75 cents
Each two-wheeled carriage for the conveyance of commodities	17 cents
Each two-wheeled carriage for the conveyance of persons	25 cents

Mules and asses were to be charged the same as horses and all things not enumerated were to pass toll free (Wood, 1970, 58). The Alleghany Turnpike serviced travelers for the next 38 years, until the year 1847.

In Christiansburg, a turn off from the Wilderness Road led to Draper's Meadow, presently the town of Blacksburg. After leaving the town of Christiansburg, the Wilderness Road led west to Ingles Ferry, which transported travelers across the New River toward Kentucky. By 1772, as many as thirty-six wagons in one day might have waited for passage at Ingles Ferry as they headed westward along the Wilderness Road (Givens, 1981). Around 1760, Ingles Ferry Tavern was built in order to accommodate travelers.

The popularity of the new frontier known as Kentucky provided a demand for lodgings for the travelers along the Wilderness Road. The different types of accommodations were known generally as public houses, but also known by the various names of ordinaries,

taverns, and houses of entertainment. There was no clear distinction between ordinaries, taverns, and houses of entertainment. A study conducted at the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia, in 1964, by James W. Hosier, III, addressed the problem of a lack of a definition by using the term public house in reference to all three types of establishments (Hosier, 1964). However, a review of Court Order descriptions, tax rate distinctions, and historic literature, reveals some consistency in use of terms.

The earliest term for travel accommodations was an ordinary or house of entertainment. Ordinaries provided food and overnight sleeping accommodations typically within a person's home. These establishments were regulated by the State setting rates for liquor, food, and sleeping accommodations, and proprietors were required to obtain an operating license. A house of entertainment was also a private home that provided accommodations to travelers, but the rates for liquor, food, and sleeping accommodations were not State regulated. A license for an ordinary cost considerably more than a house of entertainment license.

Over time taverns and inns began to replace ordinaries and houses of entertainment (Van Hoesen, 1897). Rather than being an extension of a private home, a tavern was typically a structure built specifically for the purpose of providing a public place for drink, entertainment, and community meetings, as well as occasionally providing overnight accommodations. An inn was a place in which there was less alcohol consumption, but rooms were provided for overnight guests.

Early travel accommodations have been noted by several authors especially those in the northern region of the United States (Guillet, 1956, Sincock, 1992, Van Hoesen, 1976, and Yoder, 1969). In Virginia, a thorough study of accommodations available in Richmond, between the years 1775 to 1810 was conducted by Anne-Rachael Hedges in 1993 (Hedges, 1993). The author identified all the major taverns located in Richmond, and documented the importance of these establishments to the early history of the capital

city. Architectural aspects, food and entertainment offered, and the personal history of the tavern keepers and their contributions to the community were also addressed. Other studies have been published on early travel accommodations in Virginia, specifically Northern Virginia and Williamsburg, Virginia (Foley, 1998; Hosier, 1964; Rouse, 1995; Wiffen, 1958). However, there is little known concerning the public houses located in the Southwest region of the Commonwealth of Virginia, in particular, little has been written about what was available along the Wilderness Road. Montgomery County, being strategically located where the Wilderness Road breaks off from the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, would be the point to begin a study of public houses in this region. Documentation of public houses in southwest Virginia would add an important component to the history of Virginia's early travel facilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge concerning public houses located in Virginia during early settlement years. More specifically, this study sought to document if, and where, public houses might have been established in Montgomery County, Virginia. The time period for this study is limited to the first fifty years of the founding of Montgomery County, from the years 1773 to 1823. This study was to determine if there was evidence of public houses, and what was the design of the structures, interior plan, and typical furnishings. This study sought to determine where public houses were located and how did they compared to public houses to have existed in Richmond, Virginia. The county and the town of Christiansburg are important to completing a history of public houses in Virginia, because southwest Virginia had previously been an unexamined region of the state. Montgomery County was considered representative of other regions in Southwest Virginia along the trail.

The number and type of lodgings, location of establishments, operation practices, and floor plans were reported to provide a representation of common travel accommodations.

A comparison of public houses in Montgomery County, Virginia, a rural area, to other areas of Virginia, in particular early lodging accommodations in Richmond, Virginia, Virginia would add an important component toward completing the history of public houses in southwest Virginia.

A definition of terms, was used for this study and are the following:

Ordinary. A state regulated establishment, typically within a person's home, that provided liquor, food, and sleeping accommodations. The proprietors of the ordinaries were required to obtain an operating license.

Houses of Entertainment. Not a state regulated establishment, typically within a person's home, that provided liquor, food, and sleeping accommodations. The proprietors of the houses of entertainment were required to obtain an operating license.

Tavern. A public state regulated establishment that provided liquor, food, and occasionally overnight accommodations. The proprietors of the taverns were required to obtain an operating license.

Public House. An establishment, typically within a person's home, that provided dining, beverages, and sleeping accommodations. The proprietors of the public houses were required to obtain an operating license. It is a general term that would refer to one or all of the above.

Research Questions

1. Are there existing structures located within Montgomery County, established as public houses between 1773 to 1823, that could have provided travel accommodations?

2. What would have been the typical floor plan and interior furnishings of a travel establishment located in Montgomery County between 1773 to 1823?
3. Where were public houses located within Montgomery County in relation to the Wilderness Road between 1773 to 1823?
4. What were the operating practices of public houses in Montgomery County, Virginia between 1773 to 1823?
5. How did public houses in Montgomery County, Virginia, compare to establishments in the capital city of Richmond, Virginia?

Justification

A number of books have documented the early history of taverns and ordinaries in the United States of America (Van Hoesen, 1976, Guillet, 1956, and Yoder, 1969). Within the Commonwealth of Virginia travel accommodations in the areas of Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Williamsburg have been studied and reported (Hedges, 1993, and Hosier, 1964). However, research has not been conducted concerning public houses in the region of Southwest Virginia.

Public houses in Montgomery County, located at the beginning of the Wilderness Road, and Christiansburg, the first stop within Montgomery County, were selected for this study as an area representative of what might have been available in the southwestern region of Virginia. The time period for this study was limited to the first fifty years of the founding of Montgomery County, 1773 to 1823. Because these facilities offered essential food and shelter to travelers, public houses served a vital role in the westward movement.

Documentation of lodgings in Montgomery County, complemented research previously done for northern and eastern regions of the Commonwealth of Virginia, thus serving to complete a more comprehensive history of early southwest Virginia public houses. An investigation of public houses in Montgomery County, between the years 1773 to 1823, provided documentation of the number and types of public houses available, possible design and spatial organization of the structures, and a comparison of how these

establishments compared to those in other parts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Much like the study by Anne-Racheal Hedges on Richmond taverns, this study documented where possible the (1) operating practices, (2) architectural aspects, (3) personal history of the license holders, and (4) the importance of these establishments to the county.