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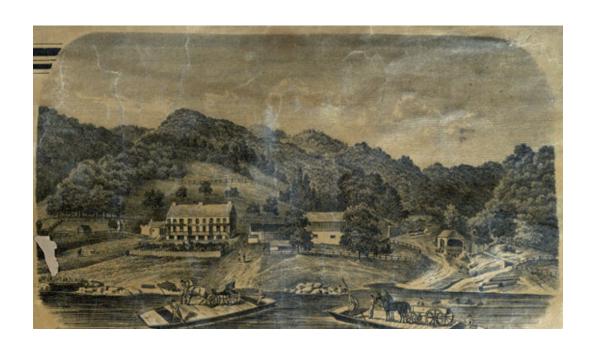
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POSTED BY JUNE LLOYD (HTTPS://YORKBLOG.COM/UNIVERSAL/AUTHOR/JUNE-LLOYD/) I NOVEMBER 7, 2012 (HTTPS://YORKBLOG.COM/UNIVERSAL/HOW-DID-THEY-GET-ACROSS-THE-WIDE-SUSQUEHANNA-WHEN-THERE-WERE-NO-BRIDGES/) I

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How did they get across the wide Susquehanna when there were no bridges?

4 COMMENTS





(https://yorkblog.com/universal/2012/11/07/how-did-they-get-across-the-wide-susquehanna-when-there-were-no-bridges/glatzferrysm-copy/)

Glatz (Accomac) Ferry, 1860

I have had several comments and questions already about my recent *York Sunday News* column on the 15 or more ferries that crossed the Susquehanna River at one time or another between York County and Lancaster County. Since there were so many, I could only fit in a couple of sentences on each to fit into the column space. There are further details on many of the ferries in my dozen pages of notes, so I will be sharing them in future blog posts.

The ferries are gone, but the names still linger on in place names or names of roads, such as Shenk's Ferry, McCall's Ferry and Simpson's Ferry. Those roads originally terminated, of course, at the river's edge.

For example: Columbia was originally known as Wright's Ferry, and our first Congressman, Thomas Hartley advocated placing the national capital here (https://yorkblog.com/universal /2008/03/16/why-thomas-hartley-advocated-w/). (A chunk of land around Georgetown, Maryland, was chosen instead, and we know how that worked out.) The Wright's Ferry Mansion in Columbia, a historic house museum still carries the name, as does the 1972 Wright's Ferry Bridge.

See below for the full column from the York Sunday News;

Ferry tales: How they used to cross the Susquehanna

Even though not officially open for settlement, people were living in present day York County in the 1720s. There was a sizable population by the time permission was given in the mid-1730s. Some settlers came up from Maryland, but most moved their families, goods and livestock across the often wide Susquehanna at some point in the over 50 miles of sometimes raging waters between the mouth of the Yellow Breeches Creek and the Maryland line.

The first bridges over the Susquehanna were Wrightsville-Columbia in 1814, McCall's Ferry in 1815 and Harrisburg in 1816. (McCall's Ferry bridge only stood a year or so before being destroyed by ice.) Some points were fordable, but only in low water, so for nearly a century flat bottomed ferry boats were usually poled across the river. Ferries were from a mile to five miles or so apart. Ferries continued to operate, some for another century, even after the far-apart bridges. Wright's Ferry and Shenk's Ferry, for example, ran up into the 1920s.

Members of Continental Congress, meeting in York during 1777-1778, mostly crossed at Wright's Ferry, with some crossing at McCall's. In December 1778 thousands of British and Hessian prisoners were crossed in large shallow boats at Wright's as they were moved from the Boston area to Virginia. (Many of these British prisoners ended up a few years later at Camp Security.)

Ferries were usually called by the name of their operator, carrying multiple identities over the years. The following information is from a variety of sources, not all of which agree. Ferries are listed going downstream:

The northernmost York County ferry, just south of New Market, was known as Postlewaite's, Chambers's, Chesney's or Simpson's. It was in

place by 1735 when George Washington crossed here in 1794 returning from the Whiskey Insurrection.

Noblitz's, Crouche's or Foot's, c.1762, was at the upper end of Middletown, near the northern end of Harrisburg International Airport. It may have also been known at Webb's and Kister's.

Hussey's, as early as 1736, was just below Middletown and above Goldsboro. Many Quaker's crossed here to settle northern York County. It seems to be the same as Middletown Ferry, which terminated at the mouth of the Swatara Creek. Etter's and Glancy's are also possible names.

One source says Daniel Elliot ran a ferry from the mouth of Lancaster County's Conewago Creek across his island [probably Three Mile Island] and Shelley Island to the York County shore. This would be just below Goldsboro.

Rankin's crossed from the foot of the Conewago Falls to York Haven, perhaps as early as 1737. At various times it may have been called Collins, Geiger or York Haven Ferry. James Rankin was a Loyalist whose land was confiscated during the Revolutionary War.

Lowe's, Logan's, Galbraith's or Wilken's ran from Bainbridge to below York Haven at the Gut. The lower island there, connected to Brunner's, is Lows Island. Board Road probably led to the ferry. Glancey may have run this ferry instead of Hussey's. Sometimes ferry operators moved from one site to another, so names might overlap.

Vinegar Ferry was probably named for early operator Christian Winiker. It was also Downe's Ferry, and John Lutz advertised that he was running Winnegar's Ferry in 1811. Vinegar Ferry Road on the eastern shore still leads to the site. A study done for Continental Congress in May 1778

says this might be the best place to cross an army's troops, artillery and baggage, if necessary.

Anderson's, Coyle's or Glatz's ferry crossed from Accomac to Marietta. A Keesey may have been a ferry operator here or at Vinegar Ferry. The ferry was patented in 1742, but crossing here might date back to 1725. It was said to be a better place to cross than Wright's during low water.

John Wright received his ferry patent in 1730. It was a busy crossing on the main road from Philadelphia through Lancaster to York and beyond. Some sources say patrons might line up for days to cross. It crossed south of the present Veterans' Memorial Bridge, just above Columbia's Locust Street. The town of Wright's Ferry became Columbia and the western end of the ferry, settled by John Wright, Jr., became Wrightsville.

Blue Rock Ferry ran from what is known as the Dritt mansion to Blue Rock Road in Lancaster County. Thomas Cresap received a Maryland patent for the ferry in the early 1730s, as this land was claimed by Maryland. It later became the Myers, and then Dritt Ferry.

Burkholder's was the upper of the two ferries between Safe Harbor Dam and York Furnace. The western terminus was 30 rods south of the Chanceford/Lower Chanceford line. It was established by 1762 and is probably the site of the later Shenk's Ferry.

Reed's Ferry was about a mile south, above the mouth of Otter Creek, crossing over to Pequea. It was also known as Fulton's. On his 1801 Susquehanna map, Benjamin Henry Latrobe clearly shows both Burkhalter's (Burkholder's) and Fulton's ferry houses. These two ferries are sometimes confused, possibly because a Burkholder may have also owned this one at one time. There is mention of a York Furnace Ferry; it is not clear if it is the same as Reed's/Fulton's Ferry or a separate one.

Ashmore's/Stevenson's/Nelson's/McMillen's/White's/McCall's Ferry was an important crossing in the lower end from about 1740. It was located at the end of McCall's Ferry Road and possibly stemmed from a Native American trail.

Orson's Ferry probably ran from the mouth of Muddy Creek to Drumore Township, possibly landing just south of the Muddy Run Reservoir.

Peach Bottom Ferry was running across the river by 1738 from what is now the Peach Bottom atomic power station to the village of Peach Bottom at Peter's Creek. Surveyors Mason and Dixon crossed here on November 7, 1765.

As outlined above, there were at least 15 ferries connecting York County with the opposite shore. Please feel free to contact me with any clarifying or additional information.

■ York poet Henry Lee Fisher's 1908 short election verse (https://yorkblog.com/universal /york-poet-henry-lee-fishers-1908-short-election-verse/)

Learning more about York County's last Native

American villages.

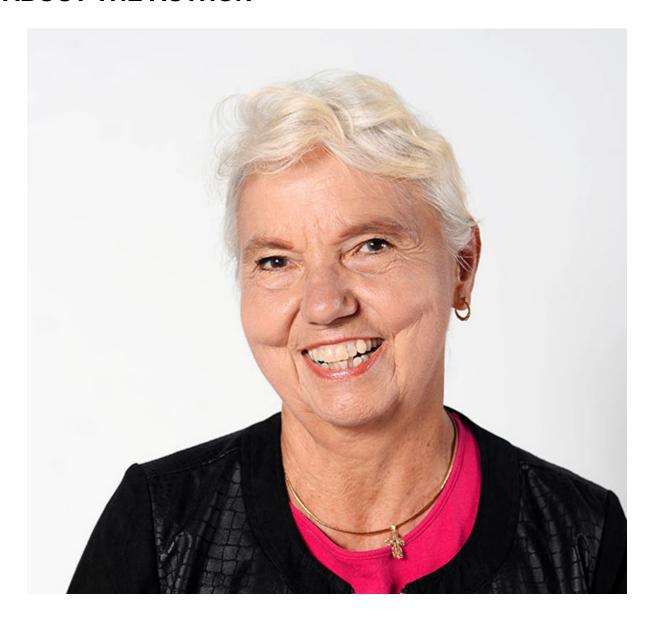
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR -



June Lloyd, Librarian Emerita at the York County History Center, sets out to connect just about everything in the Universe with York County History. Combining formal degrees in History and American Studies with York County roots going back to pre-Revolutionary times, no part of our rich local heritage escapes her interest.

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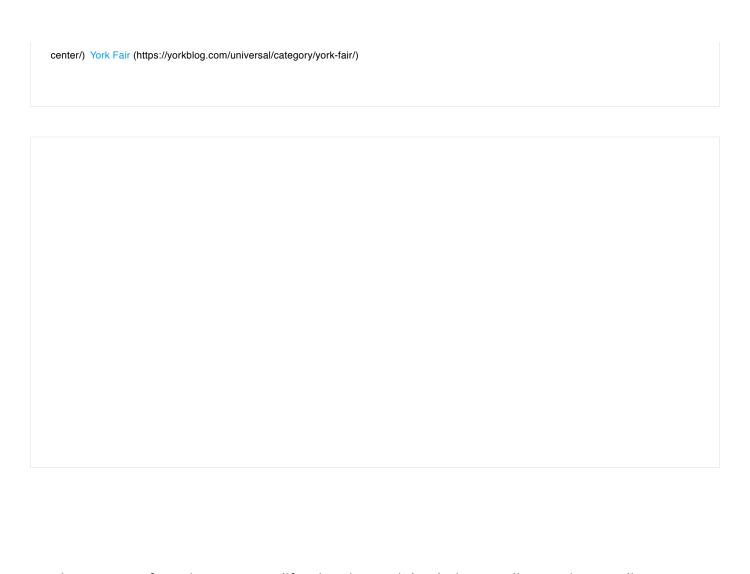
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