

The Old Roads of Tredyffrin

Mike Bertram

Many of Tredyffrin's roads have 18th century origins. Some of these roads have been the subject of previous articles in the *Quarterly*. This article reviews all the old roads of Tredyffrin as well as summarizing the information from these previous articles. Information on the old roads has mainly been obtained from the road papers in the Chester County Archives. The routes of the roads have been plotted on the present (1960s) USGS map of the area. All the roads in the township with documentation prior to the first detailed road maps, which appeared around the middle of the 19th century, have been included in this study. Color versions of the maps can be viewed at the Society's web site: www.tehistory.org.

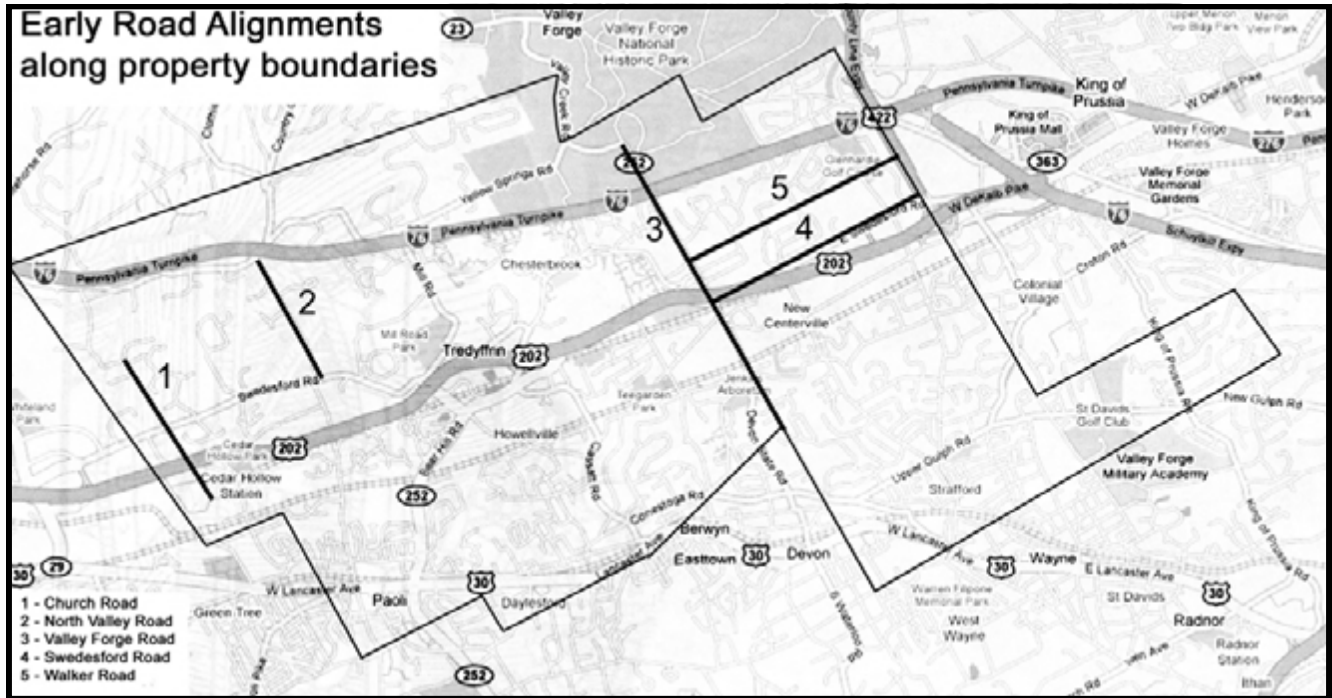
Roads and tracks (roads without official status) were important to the local communities from the arrival of the first settlers. They were used to take commodities to the markets, to get to places of worship, and to access the mills. Initially the tracks were informal and depended on the whim of the owners of the land over which they crossed. This is illustrated in the laying out of a road in 1719 (now Old Eagle School Road) which was needed to replace a route that had been used since 1705, but was no longer available due to a landowner's objections.

In 1699, the Pennsylvania Provincial Council passed a law authorizing the county courts to approve roads. Citizens petitioning the court initiated the defining of a new road. The court reviewed the petition, and a jury of six viewers, who were local neighbors, was appointed. These viewers were responsible for investigating the area of the proposed road and suggesting a route. It is likely that a surveyor was employed to measure the distances and directions of the proposed road segments.

The court then reviewed the viewers' report and normally approved the laying out of the road, unless there were objections. It is not clear how much effort was expended to 'build' the road. The ongoing maintenance became the responsibility of the township. Specifically, the Supervisor of Roads (an annual position held in rotation by men of the township who were landowners) was responsible for ensuring the roads were maintained. The first Supervisor of the Roads for Tredyffrin was Thomas David, who was appointed in 1719. David was also the first constable for the township, assuming the office in 1708.

A number of the roads followed property boundaries, in order to placate landowners who did not want their land divided by a road. Examples of this routing are shown in the next map. The NNW trend of the property boundaries originated from the earliest Pennsylvania land grants and predates the establishment of Tredyffrin Township.

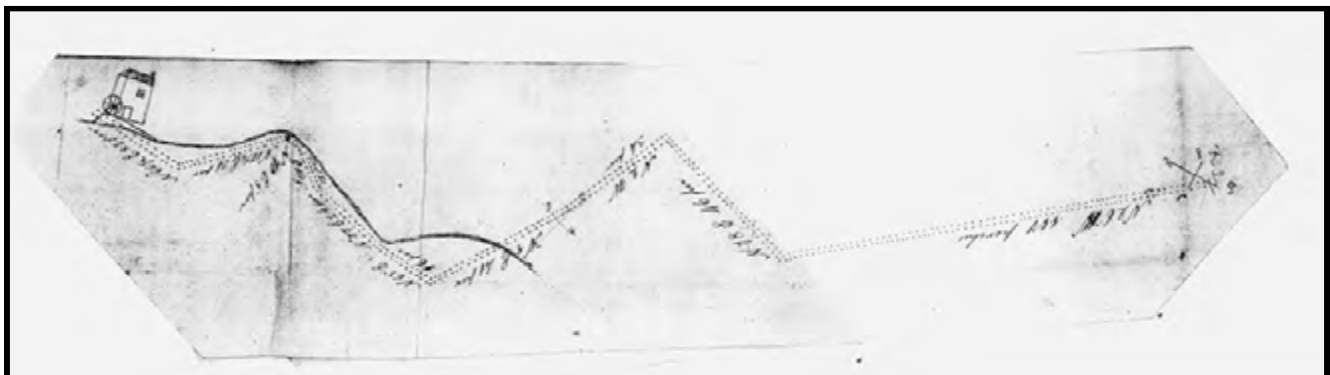
Most of the original land patents actually include an allowance for roads (usually 6%). For example you may find a property of 212 acres of which 12 acres was the allowance for roads. This allowance for roads meant that early landowners could not obtain restitution for roads through their lands, which was confirmed by a case that went to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Even so, this provision in the patents seemed to have been forgotten by the early 1800s when damages started to be assessed for roads that traversed properties.



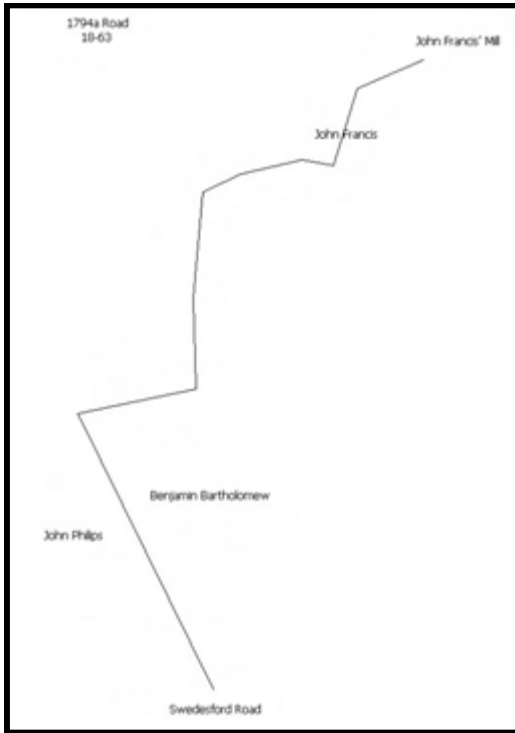
Roads did not have official names and the names used are not always helpful. For example, Swedesford Road is named in documents as the Provincial Road, State Road, Great Road, Swedes Road, Valley Road, Centreville Road, and simply, the Road. Road names have been the subject of a number of *Quarterly* articles.

Mapping the Roads

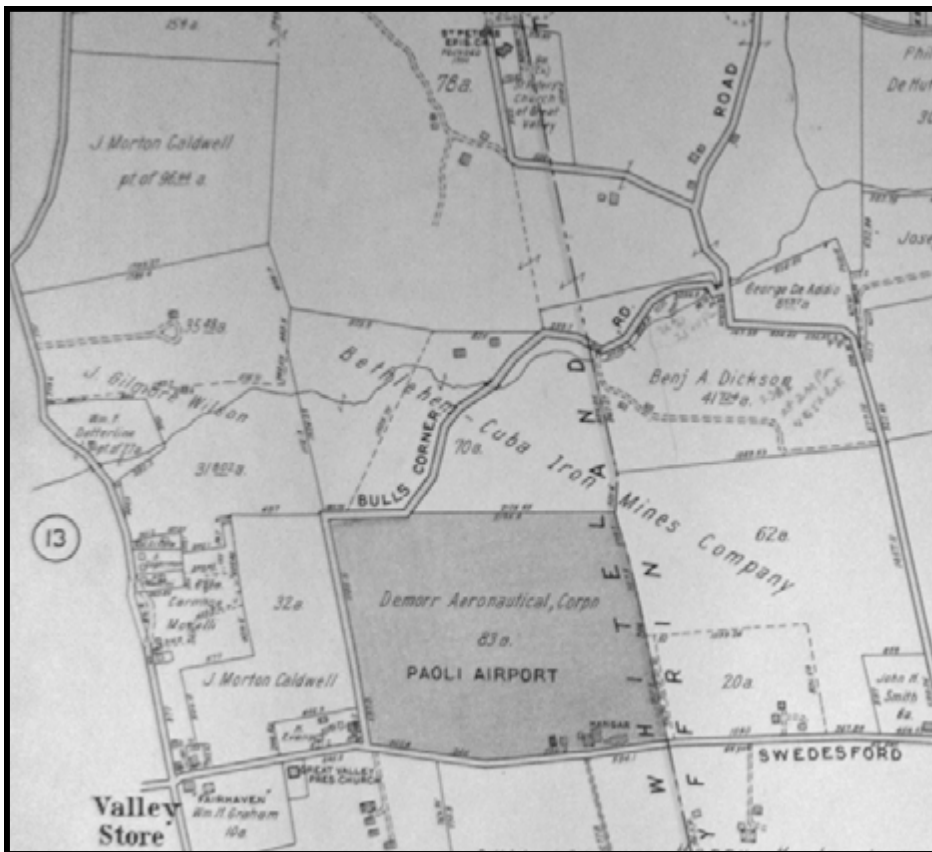
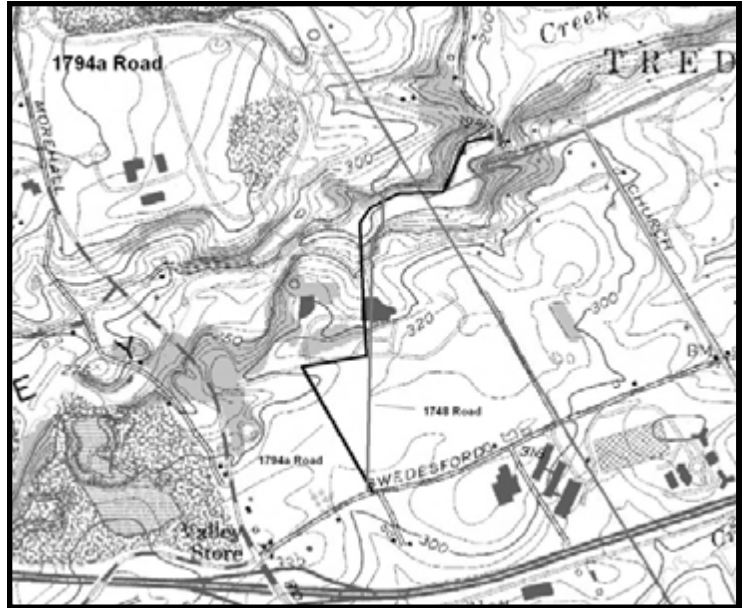
The amount of information available from the road papers differs from road to road, but the earlier road papers generally have less information. All the roads, except the first road laid out in the township, have distances and directions defined for each road segment. An example of a typical plan from the road papers is shown for a road from 1794:



In order to understand the true orientation of the road segments, the data of distances and directions from the plans, such as this one, was input by the author into a software package called Metes & Bounds. This package produces a correctly scaled and aligned plan of the road, as shown below left.



The land and mill ownership implies that the mill mentioned was the one located on Church Road. This road plan then was



drawn on top of the USGS map of the area, above right. This road was in existence for a century and a half and is shown on this 1950 map as Bulls Corner Road (right).

All the township roads described in this article were drawn using this process.

The Provincial and State Roads

Two early long distance roads passed through Tredyffrin: the Conestoga and Swedesford Roads. They both existed long before they were officially laid out. These roads were defined by order of the Provincial government, rather than the Chester County courts. Later in the 19th century, a State Road also passed through the township.

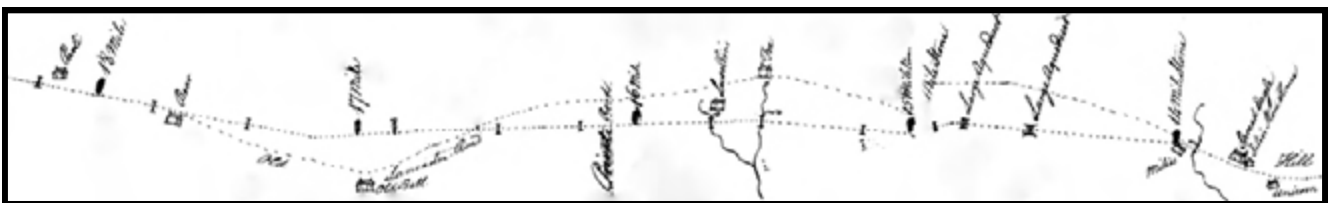
Conestoga Road / Lancaster Avenue

This road has been described in a number of articles in the *Quarterly*. Conestoga Road was originally an Indian path that ran from the Delaware River to the Indian area of Conestoga near the Susquehanna River. This path had a number of alternative routes. This road is mentioned in the local road papers of 1710 as the road leading from the Great Valley to Philadelphia. It became known as the King's Highway in 1721 and was laid out through Tredyffrin in 1741.

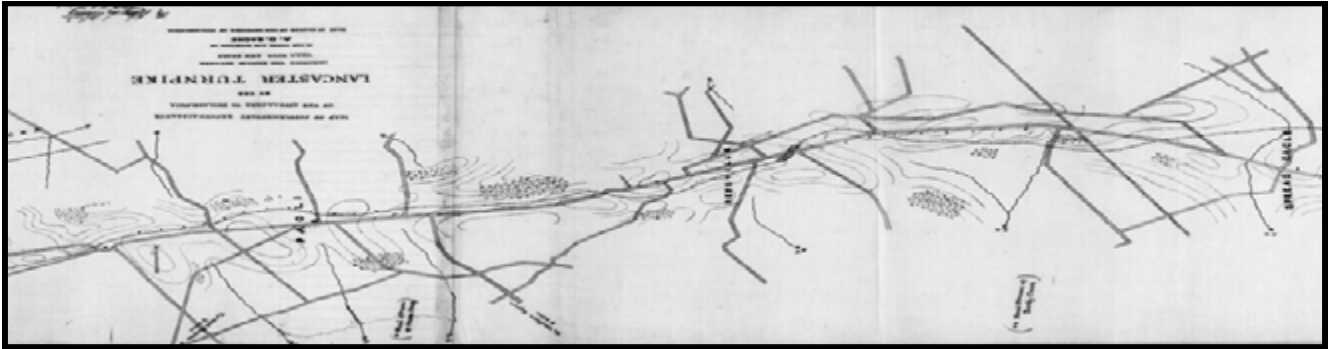
The road did not seem to follow the present Lancaster Avenue through Paoli but was further north, near to Central Avenue. It passed by William Evans' blacksmith's shop. This alignment is confirmed by the 1724 plan for Church Road, which ended at the Conestoga Road near the smith's shop. Overlaying this road on a present map also shows it ending near Central Avenue:



The Lancaster Turnpike was built in the 1790s and was the first road in the colonies that was constructed with crushed stone. The map below shows the route of the Turnpike. By the 1790s the road through Paoli had moved to its current alignment, south of the Paoli Inn. That hostelry was just west of today's railroad station and south of the railroad tracks. The Bear Inn was located by the present junction of Routes 30 and 252. East of the Bear Inn there was a southern loop that passed by the original Blue Ball Inn, located in Daylesford.

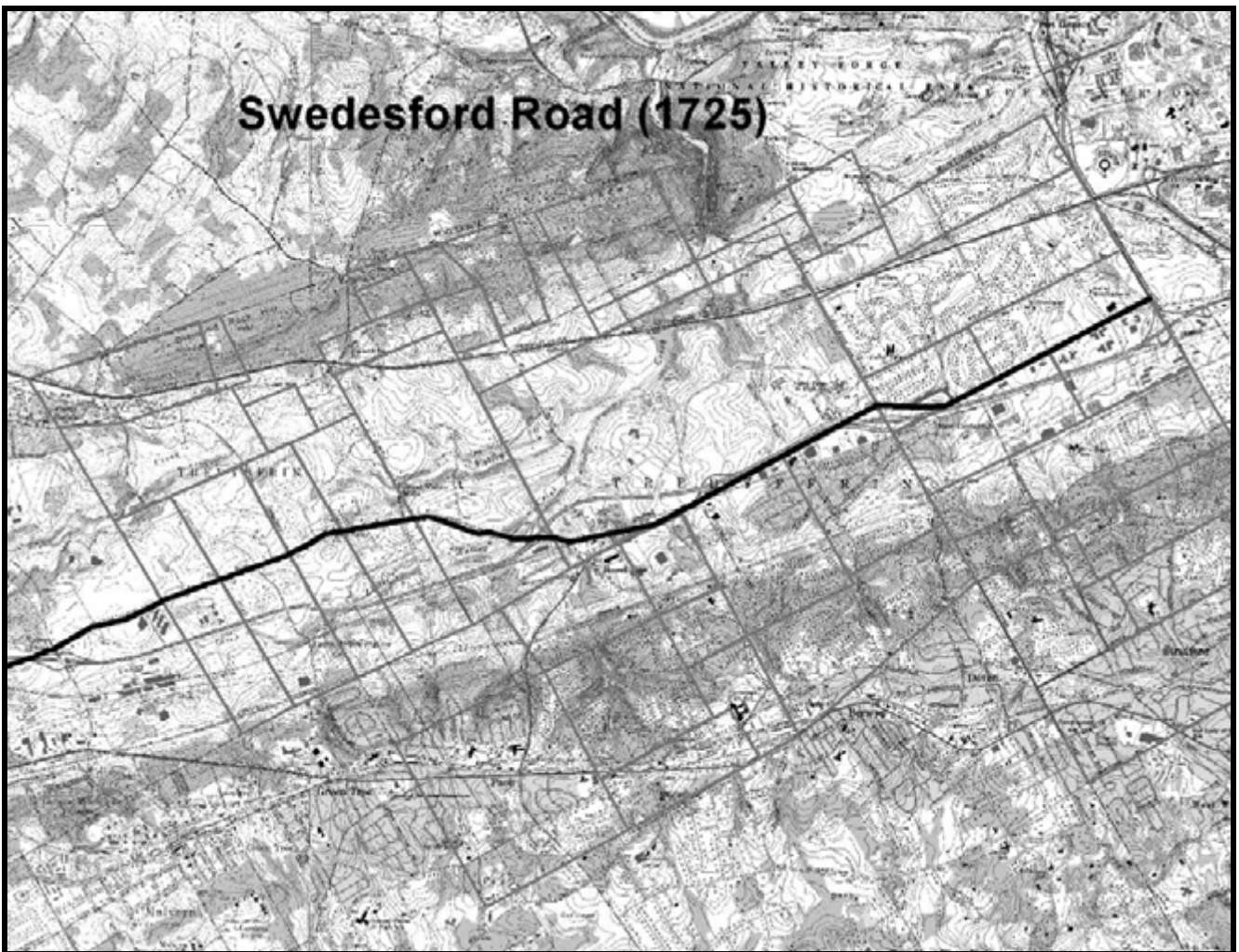


In the 1860s, the map below was drawn as part of the preparations for defending Philadelphia in the event of a civil war. The kink in the Conestoga road where it meets Old Lancaster Road, near Conestoga High School, was created in 1854. All the roads on this map still exist today. The map is displayed upside down for comparison with the previous maps.



Swedesford Road

The Swedes Ford, near present day Norristown, was a major crossing point of the Schuylkill in the 18th century. The road to and from the ford ran for many miles on both sides of the river. It was laid out in 1725.



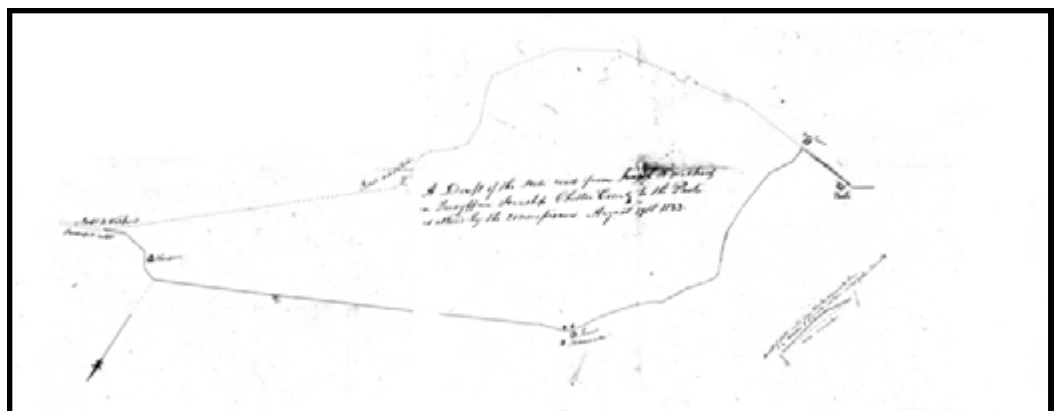
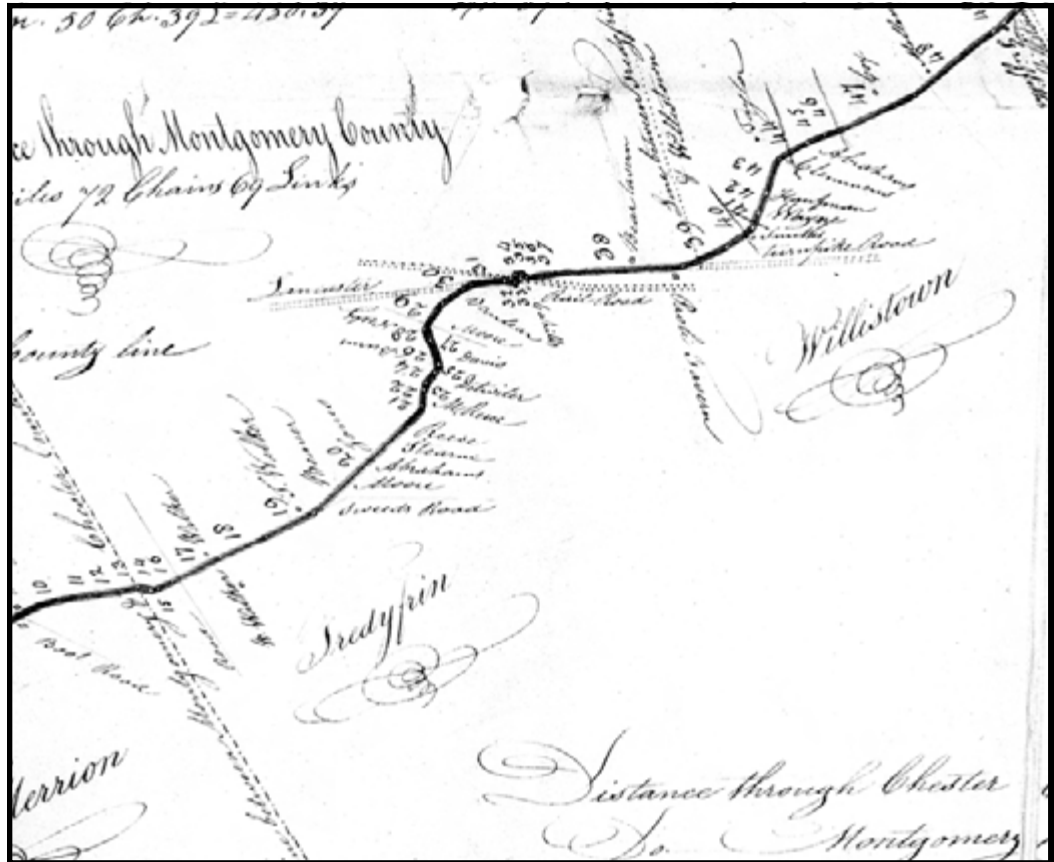
The eastern part of Swedesford Road through Tredyffrin was straight but had a kink in it due to property boundaries. The kink at New Centerville (where Rtes. 252 and 202 now intersect) was due to the misalignment of the southern edge of the David Meredith/Havard property with the John David/Kathleen Morgan properties to the east. The western end of Swedesford Road did not follow any property boundaries. We have no explanation for the alignment.

The 1832 Road

In 1832 a state road was laid out from New Hope to the Maryland border. The map below shows the original route as defined in an 1830 survey (north is down).

The road entered from Upper Merion township along Swedesford Road. It diverged from Swedesford Road just east of New Centerville and followed what is now known as Old State Road up to the Lancaster Turnpike. It then left the turnpike at Paoli Pike on its way to West Chester.

The original route lasted no time at all as it was rerouted in 1832, as shown in the following plan. The route went along Swedesford Road, passed William Thompson's Farmers and Mechanics Hotel in New Centerville and on to Howellville. There it passed by the Howellville Inn, run by William Lewis at the time, and then climbed up a newly created Bear Hill Road to the Lancaster Turnpike. Bear Hill Road was named



after the Black Bear Tavern that stood on the opposite, south side of the Turnpike. This road was eventually to become what we know today as Route 202. Originally the road's route south of West Chester did not go towards Delaware but went through Unionville and Oxford, entering Maryland in Lancaster County on its way to Baltimore.

Local Routes

The roads described below were created in Tredyffrin prior to 1855.

The Earliest Roads

Thomas Jarman's Mill Road – Howellville Road (1710)

The first county court papers concerning roads for Tredyffrin Township are for a road between Thomas Jarman's Mill and the road from Radnor to Philadelphia. The papers are dated 1710 and this is the earliest mention of the mill that was to become Great Valley Mill. Thomas Jarman had purchased 300 acres of land in 1701. The property was to the west of what is now North Valley Road. The original mill was to the west of the present building. [The spelling Thomas Jerman is frequently found in many sources. —Ed.]

The description of the road is not exact. There is no mention of distances and directions of the road, only a list of the owners of the property it traverses. From Howellville it seems to have followed today's Howellville Road. The road is mentioned in the laying out of Cassatt Avenue in 1738.

Old Eagle School Road (1719)

This road originally ran from the Valley Friends Quaker burial ground to the Great Road (Conestoga Road) and was laid out in 1719, essentially following the route of today's Old Eagle School Road. The burial ground was next to Lewis Walker's house. He was the earliest settler in Tredyffrin and purchased the land in 1702. The petition for a road includes the following statement:

... 'we hereto had a good road and much in use this 14 years without interruption, this road suits our convenience both for Philadelphia and Chester and it is the only way to the nearest & most convenient lime kiln ... this road is like to be stop^d.'

This road therefore replaced a road in use since 1705 which was going to be closed presumably due to the objections of one of the property owners en route.

Yellow Springs Road West (1724)

This road ran from Pickering Creek in Charlestown Township to Thomas Jarman's Mill. The end near the western township boundary followed the present route but then it cut southeast to go more directly to the mill than the present route.

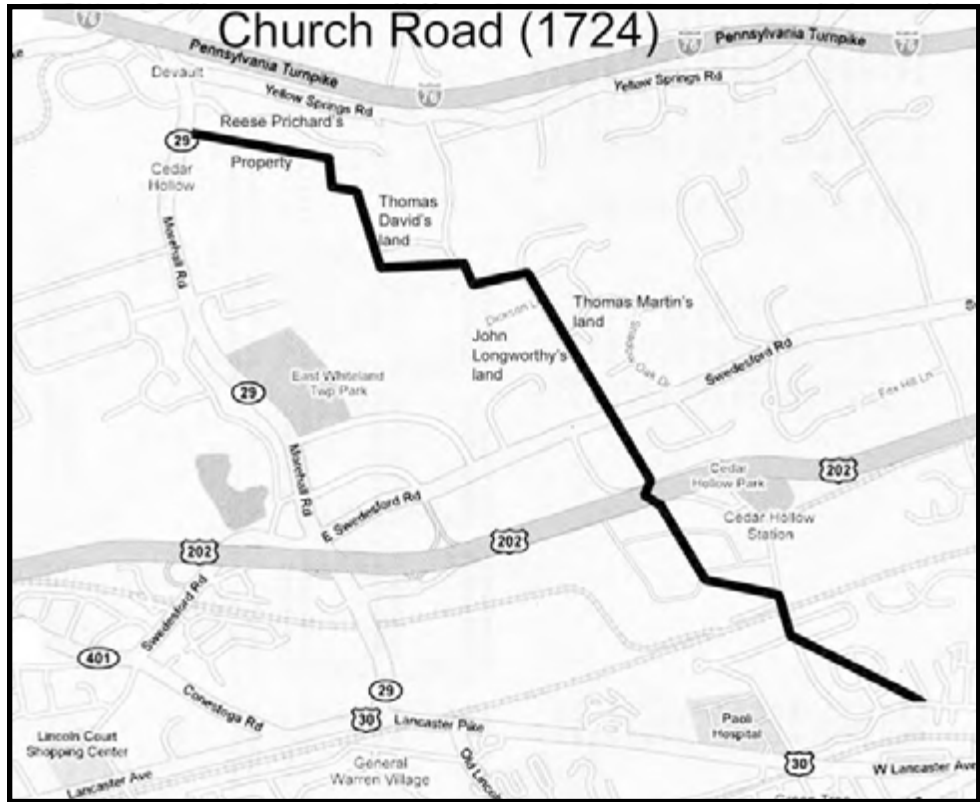


The Roads around Cedar Hollow & St. Peter's Church

Church Road (1724)

In 1723, a group of residents petitioned the Chester County Court for the laying out of a road between the road to Pickering's lots and the Conestoga Road. The court asked David Harry, Joseph Coleman, William Parchall, Isaac Malin, and Thomas Godfrey to survey a possible route. The proposed route of the road from their 1724 report is shown in this map:

Charles Pickering was granted 5,383 acres by William Penn along the creek where Pickering and his friend John Tinker, believed (mistakenly) that they had found silver. The two men dug a cave into the side of "Tinker Hill", thus creating the first non-Indian residence in the Charlestown Township. Drowned on a voyage back to England before 1700, Pickering willed his land to sixteen friends. These holdings were known as the Pickering Lots. The road to Pickering's lots became Morehall Road and now is approximately followed by Route 29.



The first course of the road to St. Peter's Church ran southeast through Rees Pritchard's land across a stream just below his meadow. His property was in the northeast corner of Whiteland Township that became the core of the Cedar Hollow quarry. Due to the quarry, neither the meadow nor the stream now exist.

After reaching the church, the road ran across Thomas David's land starting southeast down the same valley as the present road from the church, but ran on the south side rather than the present north side. The road then turned south and forded Valley Creek close to the present bridge. In order to climb the hill it then swung east along John Longworthy's property boundary before turning south again following the present course of Church Road to Swedesford Road between the properties of John Longworthy and Thomas Martin. John Griffith and Rees Rhythey patented these properties in 1686. These were two of the earliest patents in Tredyffrin Township, though there is no evidence that either man lived on their property.

Just upstream from where the road forded Valley Creek a mill was built. The date of the building is unknown but the first reference to it is in a document from 1739, when it was owned by Samuel Lilly and it operated as a fulling mill. Fullers were the cloth finishers and dry cleaners of the 18th century. They tightened up the weave of new cloth in the fulling mill. The mechanism of the mill consisted of a set of hammers that were water-powered and beat the cloth. The fullers also brushed, trimmed the nap of the cloth, and dyed it.

As well as handling new cloth, they cleaned and re-dyed worn clothes. Fuller's earth was used in conjunction with the beating of the clothes to remove stains.

After crossing Swedesford Road, the road continued in a straight line until it got to the slopes above Little Valley Creek where it jogged to the west in order to avoid a stony hill. Forging the creek it continued in a straight line along the property boundaries of David Evans and William Burge until it met the slopes of the South Valley Hills. The road then turned east in order to take advantage of the gentler slope of a gully in the hills which is still used today by Cedar Hollow Road.

The road ascended the gully and then turned east again to meet the Conestoga Road near William Evan's blacksmith shop. This part of Conestoga Road ran approximately along the present alignment of Central Avenue in Paoli. David and William Evans were part of the family that owned a substantial part of Paoli for many years. Their descendant, Joshua Evans, ran the Paoli Inn in the 18th century, giving the village its name.

The northern part of Church Road was laid out to meet Yellow Springs Road in 1802. It seemed to end further north than the present junction, adding weight to the idea that Yellow Springs Road ran further north than its present route near Cedar Hollow.

1748 Road

A second road to St Peter's Church was laid out in 1748. It tracked northeast from Swedesford Road in East Whiteland township (the original Whiteland Township was split in 1732). The 1748 route together with a 1794 variant are shown on the map on page 95.

The road went in almost a straight line traversing the intervening properties. After fording Valley Creek it snaked in order to climb the ridge between the stream and the church, and then followed the Tredyffrin – East Whiteland Township line to the church.

1794 Road

Another variant of Church Rd. was laid out in 1794. It had the same starting place on Swedesford Road as the 1748 road but ended at the mill on Valley Creek. It started along the property boundary between John Philips and Benjamin Bartholomew before following the line of the original road through Bartholomew's property to Valley Creek. Then, rather than fording the creek, it followed on the southern side to the mill that was owned by John Francis at that time and was operating as a grist and saw mill.

The third variant of the road is seen in Witmer's Atlas of 1873 as well as later atlases. It is named as Bulls Corner Road, as shown on the 1950 map on page 88. This road followed the route of the 1794 Road to Valley Creek. It then forded the creek and ran eastward alongside the creek to Church Road. It is the eastern end of the road along the creek that survives today (see front cover), the rest having been obliterated by the commercial development that is now owned by Siemens.

Howells Road (1796)

This road from Clothier Springs Road to Yellow Springs Road was named after Ezekiel Howell, a landowner on the route. This road and the next three roads discussed are shown on the 1847 map on page 95.

Church Road North (1802)

What we now know as Church Road, north of Valley Creek to Yellow Springs Road, was laid out in 1802. It was referred to as "Acker's Road", named after Samuel Acker who owned a farmhouse along the road.

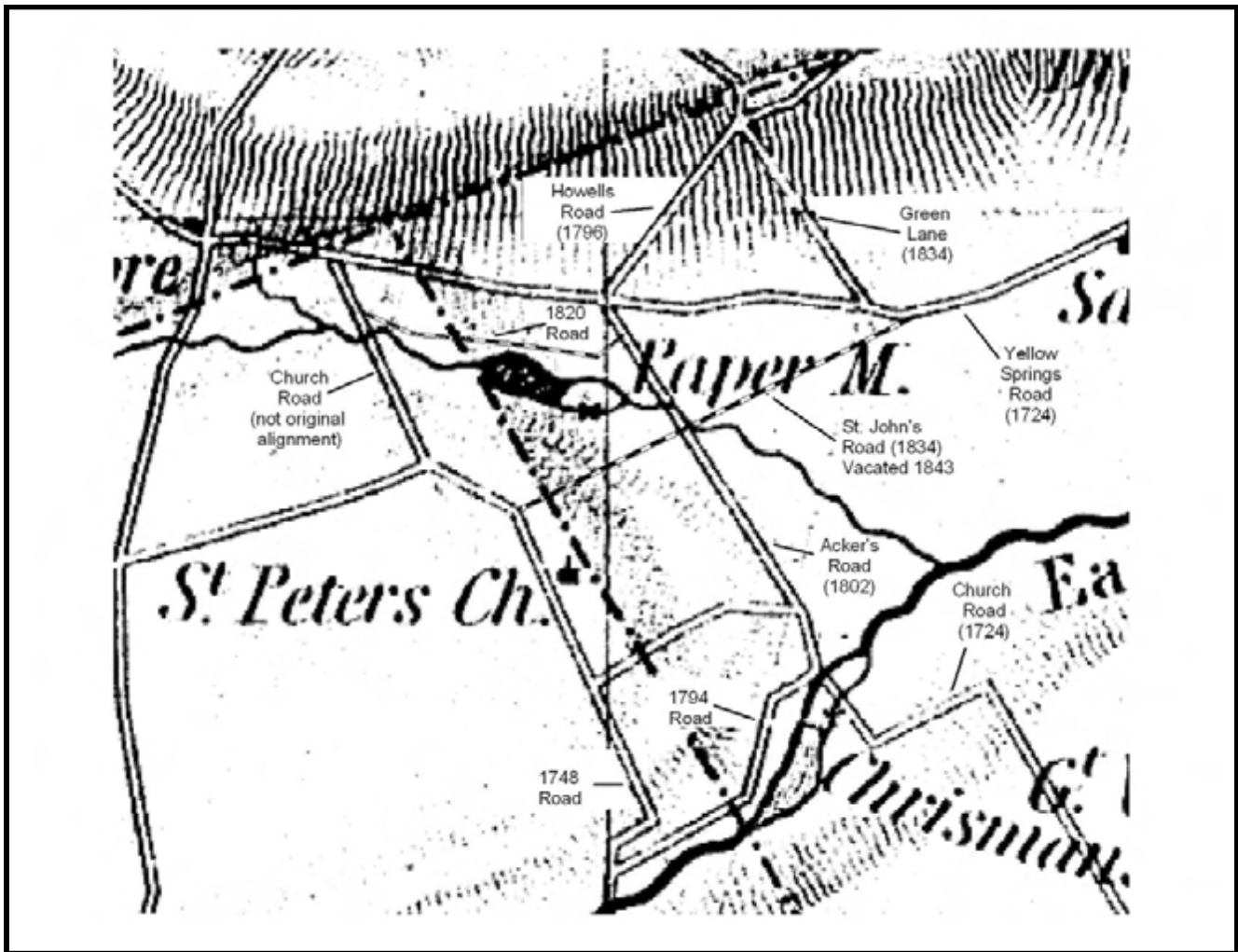
1820 Road

This road connected Acker's Road with the old alignment of Church Road. It was revised in 1850. For unknown reasons is not shown on the 1847 map.

St John's Road (1834)

This road originally went west from Yellow Springs Road across Acker's Road (now Church Road) until it met the old alignment of Church Road close to the township boundary. The road was straight since it ran down a property boundary. The road was vacated in 1843 and does not appear on the map of 1847. The eastern section appears in Witmer's Atlas of 1873 and later atlases but the date of reopening is not known.

Detail of 1847 map of Chester County with the 1820 and 1834 roads added.



Roads post-1724

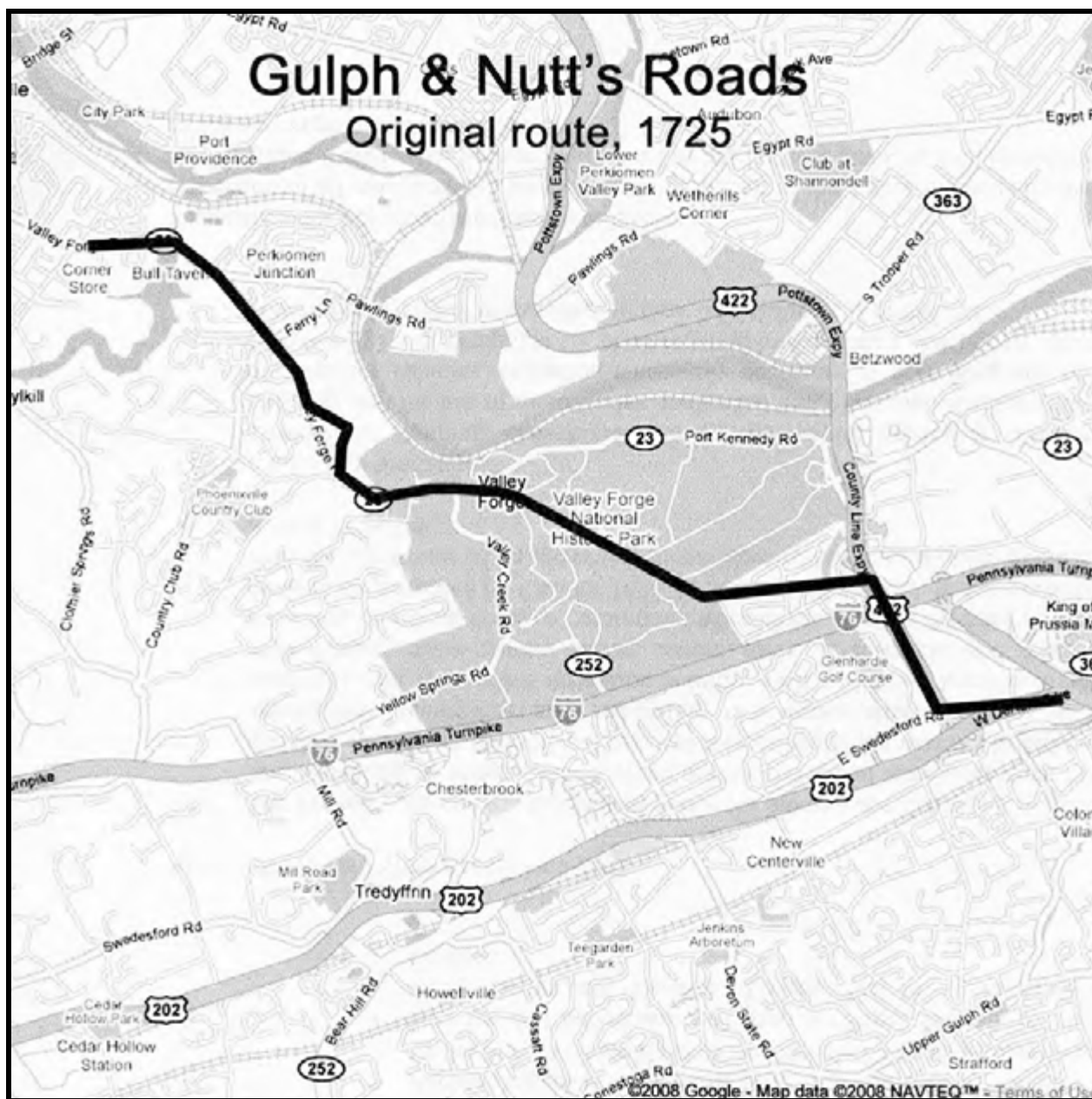
Gulph and Nutt's Roads (1725)

These roads were laid out in 1725, beginning at William Moore's land on the west side of Pickering Creek to a road that leads to Philadelphia (the actual terminus was King of Prussia, as it later became known). The route through Philadelphia (now Montgomery) County was not defined in the Chester County papers, which split the road description into western and eastern parts. The western part followed the present Route 23 except near the

Freedoms Foundation, where the road went toward the Schuylkill in order to ascend a hill. This section of road was not rerouted to its present path until the early 1900's.

The eastern portion of the route, now known as Gulph Road, was mainly in Tredyffrin Township. From the county boundary it did not follow the present direct route to King of Prussia, but rather went along the boundary and then joined Swedesford Road to King of Prussia.

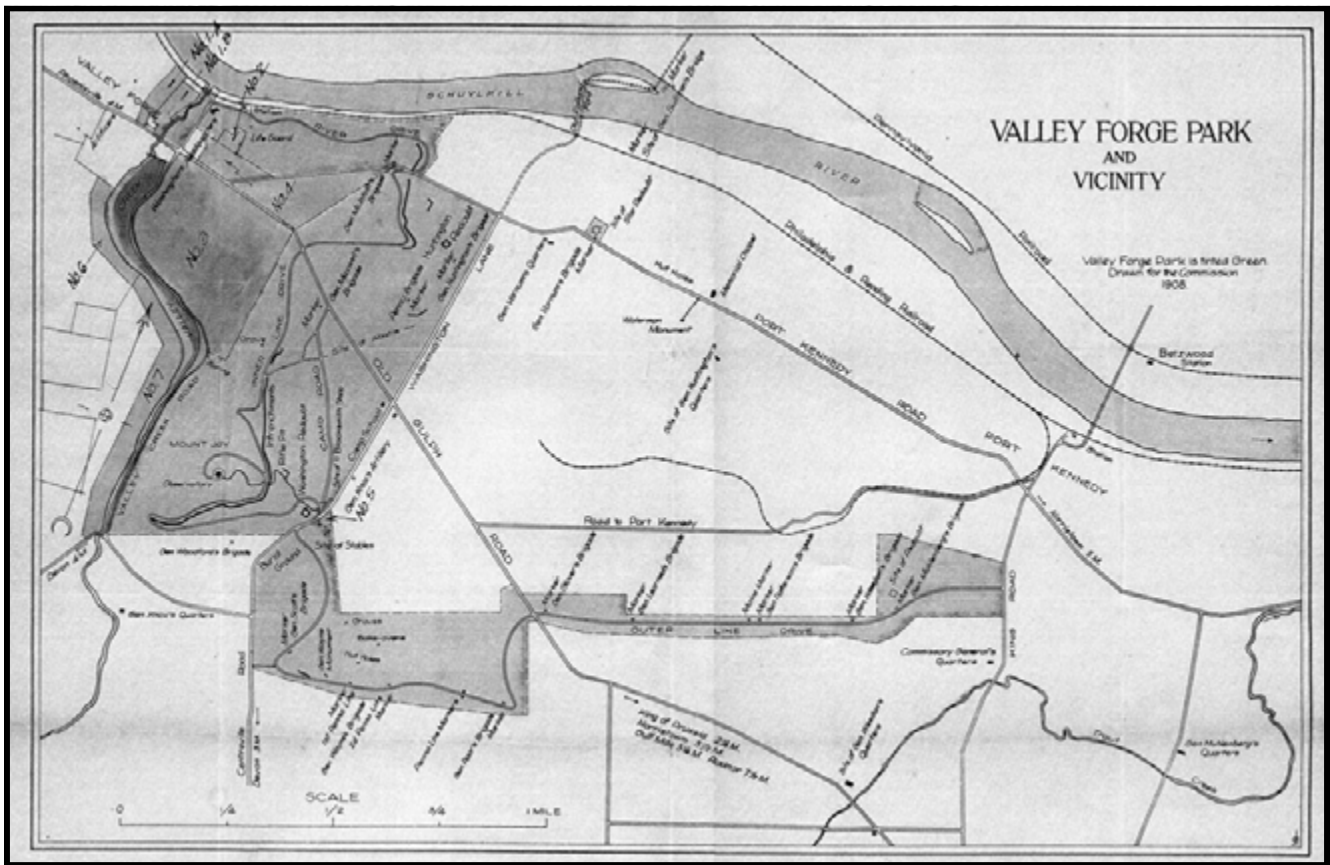
In 1807, the western segment of the road that ends at the Montgomery County line was altered to its present course. The owners of the land that the road passed through, Stephen Stephens and Waters Dewees, were awarded damages. These seem to be the first damages awarded to Tredyffrin residents. Waters Dewees got \$293.16, and Stephen Stephens \$418.50. They were initially awarded larger amounts but the amounts were reduced on appeal.



Baptist (Valley Forge) Road (1735)

This road went north from Conestoga Road in a straight line to the foot of Mount Joy. It then turned northeast and crossed what is now Valley Forge National Historical Park to Fatland Ford. The southern section was known as Baptist Road as the road passes the Baptist Church in the Great Valley, and as Fatland Ford Road at its north end. The straight-line section followed along property boundaries and was probably also one of the original survey lines for the Welsh Tract.

The section of the present road (Route 252) from the gully between Mounts Joy and Misery and the right angle turn was not laid out until 1840. The following map shows the road (with the appellations Centreville Road and Washington Lane) on a Valley Forge Park map of 1908:



This road was used by the British to move from their encampment on the South Valley Hills to raid Valley Forge in September 1777, and to cross the Schuylkill a few days later on their way to Philadelphia. In 1736 the road was extended south from Conestoga Road to St. James' Church in Radnor.

Cassatt Avenue (1738)

Of course this road was not called Cassatt Avenue until the 20th century. At one time it was called Reese's Road, either due to the Reese homestead that was at the northern end of the road, or because Berwyn was once called Reeseville.

This road was laid out in 1738 from Swedesford Road to Grubb Mill Road. The only part of the road in Tredyffrin that was new in 1738 was the northern portion from Swedesford Road to Howellville Road. In recent years, with the office development at the old Rennyson quarry property the north end of Cassatt Road has been moved to the west.

Upper Gulph Road (1759)

This road, for the most part, followed the present route of the road from the Conestoga Road eastwards to the township boundary. At its eastern end in the township (near where King of Prussia Road now runs) it ran slightly north of the present road.

1760 Road

This was a long road running from Pikeland Township to Swedesford Road near the Great Valley Presbyterian Church. Its route probably followed what is now Pickering Road, then Morehall Road entering Tredyffrin township via Church Road. After fording Valley Creek it diverged from Church Road, turning eastwards until it met the next property boundary and then running along the boundary to Swedesford Road. The Cedar Hollow spur of the Chester Valley Railroad later was routed down this property boundary and no signs of the road remain between Church Road and Swedesford road today.

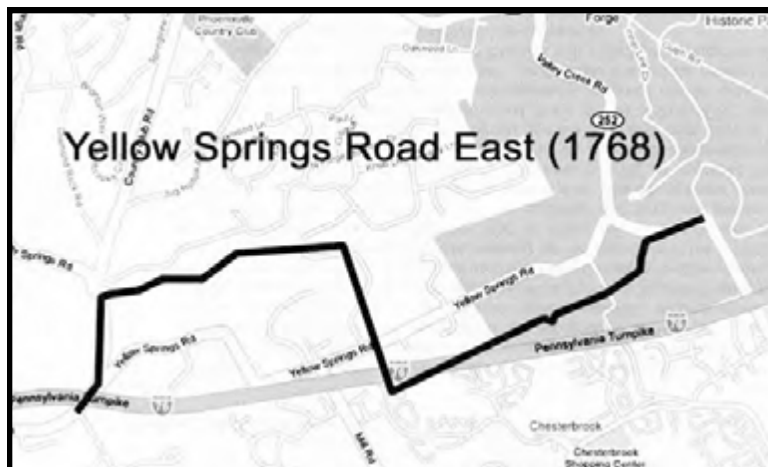
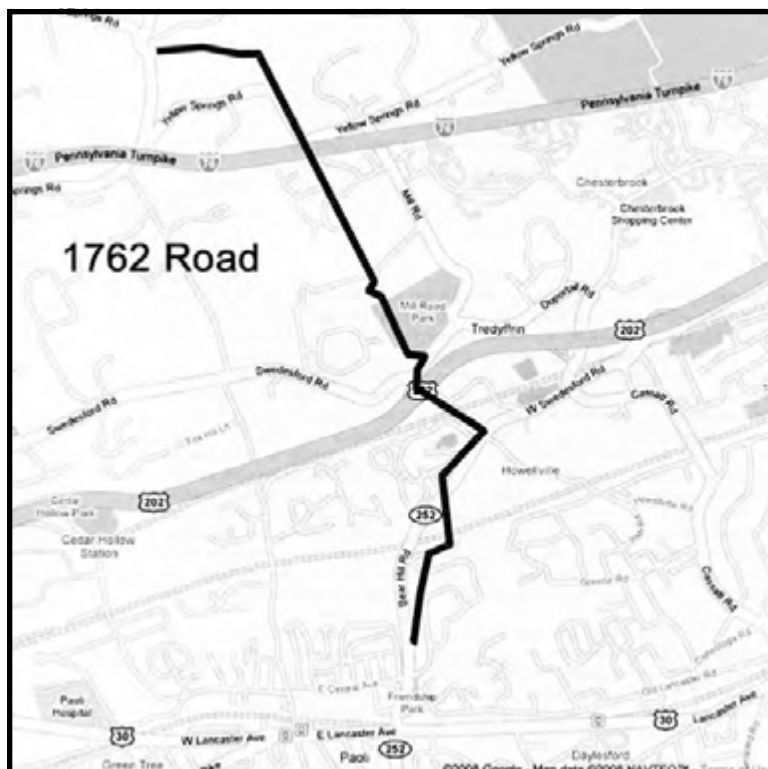
1762 Road

This road ran from near the top of Diamond Rock Hill through Howellville to Paoli. From Diamond Rock Hill the road went eastwards and then turned and went SSW along the western boundary of David Meredith's patent of 1706. The road then ran to Howellville from which it climbed Bear Hill Road to Paoli. The latter part of the route, the old Bear Hill Road, was vacated in 1835 after the state road (later know as Route 202) was laid out in 1832.

Yellow Springs Road East (1768)

This road has the peculiar distinction of not following its original route at all. The road was known as Long Lane, due to its long east-west section, and also Curry's (sic) Road. The latter name is probably due to the fact that the Reverend William Currie initiated the laying out of the road. He was one of the requestors and the road helped him to travel to the churches in his ministry.

The road did not run along its present route until 1873. The bridge over Valley Creek was built in 1851 as part of Wilson Road and Yellow Springs Road was realigned a few years later to eliminate the fording of Valley Creek. The first bridge was destroyed in a flood of 1865 and was rebuilt as a covered bridge.



1769 Roads

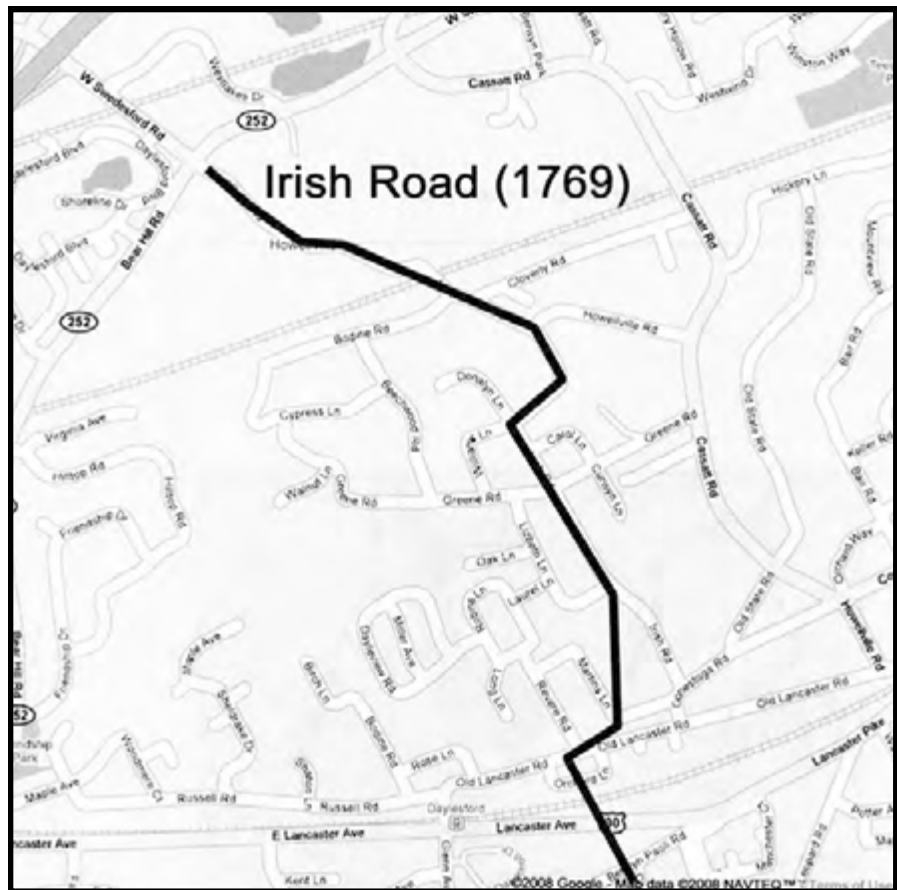
These two roads were in the area of the Great Valley and Chesterbrook Mill (the mill that was located on Mill Road). The first road connected the 1762 road with Chesterbrook Mill and then took a southeasterly track to Swedesford Road. In the winter, the trace of this road can still be seen where it crosses Dupontail Road just to the east of the Tredyffrin Township building.



The second road connected North Valley and Mill Roads and ran north of Valley Creek. It was vacated in 1791.

Irish Road (1769)

In 1769 a road was laid out from Easttown to Jacob Sharadin’s Mill at Howellville. It used Howellville Road, the present Irish Road, and a southern section that is no longer discernable. The southern section and Irish Road sections were vacated in 1821.



Croton Road (1770)

This road has had a checkered history. It was originally laid out in 1770 providing access to a sawmill from Upper Gulph Road. The road was then vacated in 1802, and restored in 1832.

West Valley Road (1782)

This road was laid out in 1782 from Swedesford Road to Upper Gulph Road. The northern part followed the route of today's road but the southern part tracked SSE along a property boundary. This was called Doctor's Road in some documents. The road was laid out again in 1818 following more or less exactly the same route as today's road.

Connecting Road between Old Lancaster Road and the County Boundary (1796)

This short road, laid out in 1796, ran down the Old Lancaster Road (Conestoga Road) and connected across the Lancaster Turnpike to the county boundary near Sugartown Road. The reason for the road is not clear and the owner of the land it crossed, Adam Siter, objected to it.

Connection between Church and Cedar Hollow Roads (1800)

This 1800 road seemed to run along the Tredyffrin – Willistown boundary connecting Church and Cedar Hollow Roads. There do not seem to be papers describing the laying out of Cedar Hollow Road. The original Church Road followed the route of Cedar Hollow Road up the South Valley Hills. This original route crossed the property of Jonathan Evans. Perhaps he or an earlier landowner had objected to the road crossing their property rather than taking the property boundaries.

Leopard Road – Route 252 (1802)

This section of road ran between Central Avenue and Darby Road. The present route of 252 follows the original alignment.

Richards Road (1805)

The road was set out between Thomas Road and the township boundary.

King of Prussia Road (1808)

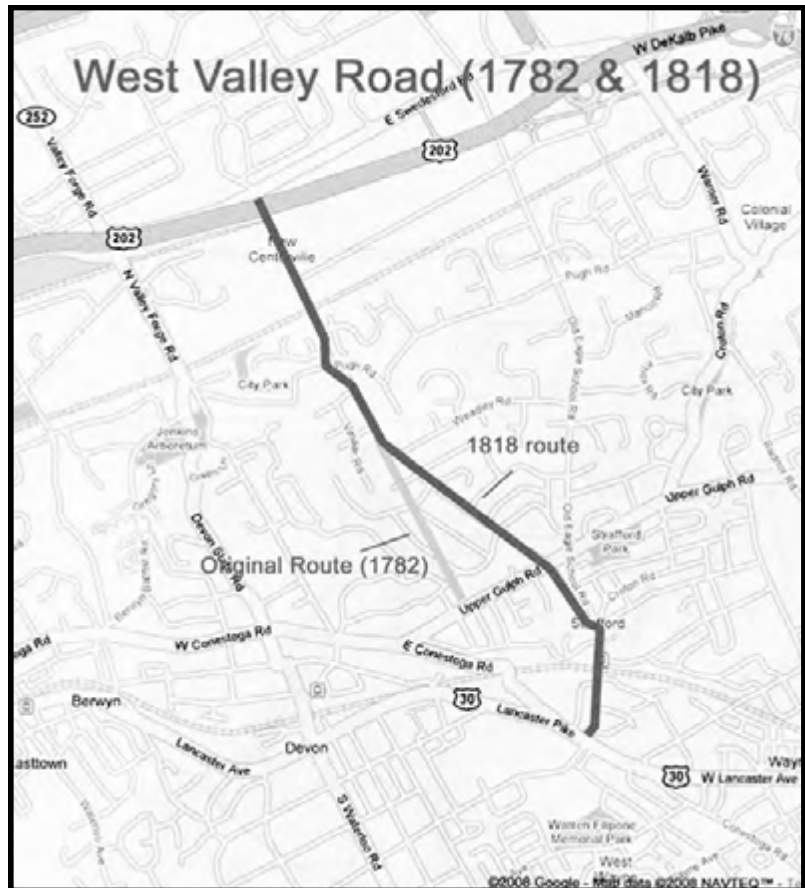
This was laid out through Tredyffrin in 1808 following the line of the present road. The road in Delaware County was called Street Road at the time.

County Line Road (1810)

Part of this road was laid out in 1810.

Berwyn Baptist Road (1810)

This road was laid out from the Springhouse Tavern on the Lancaster Turnpike in Easttown to the Baptist Road near the Baptist Meeting. It followed existing private roads for part of its route.



1830 Road

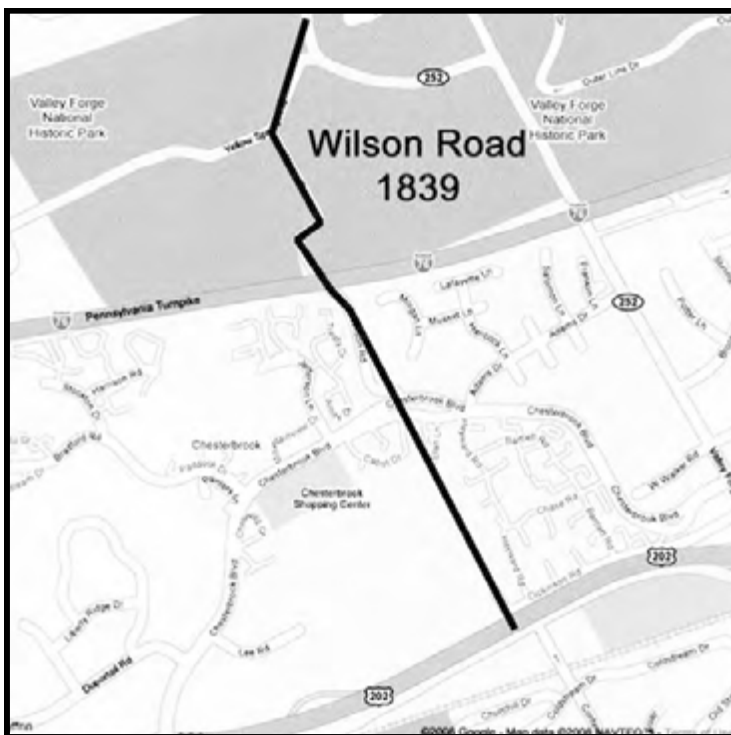
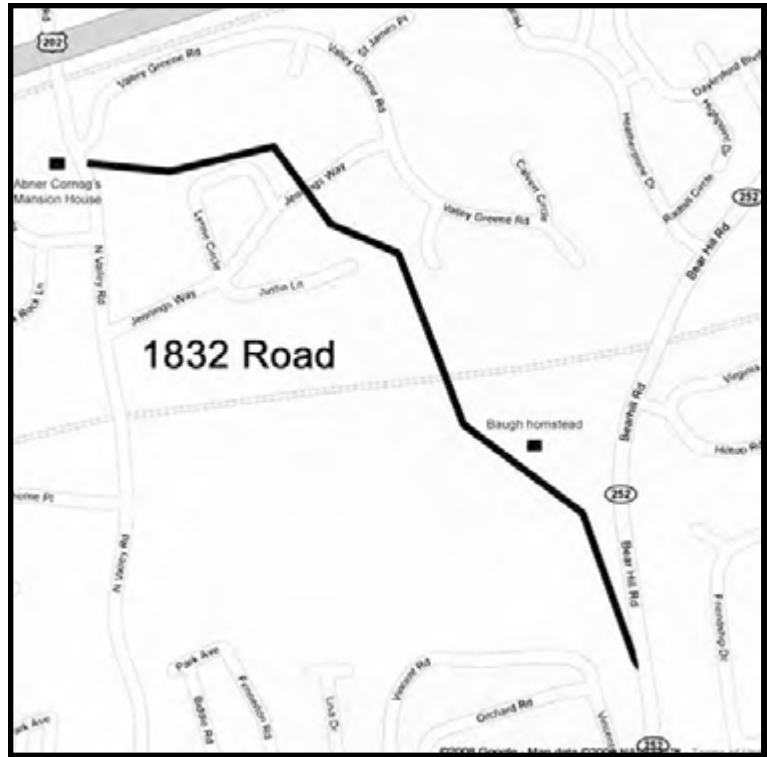
This road was an alternative route for the part of Church Road where, on its northerly route, it descends a steep hill to Valley Creek. There is no sign of this road today and its westernmost segment must have been very liable to flooding, being adjacent to Valley Creek and on the floodplain.

Berwyn-Paoli Road (1832)

The original road followed the course of the present road in its eastern section and then crossed the railroad to finish at the meeting of the Pennsylvania and Lancaster Turnpike (now Old Lancaster Road) and the State Road (now Conestoga Road). This junction was a little distance west of the present Old Lancaster Road and Conestoga Road junction.

1832 Road

This road connected Bear Hill Road (Route 252) with North Valley Road. The only visible remains of this road is a driveway off Bear Hill Road. It passed the Baugh homestead and finished opposite the Cornog home.



Wilson Road (1839)

This road ran from Valley Creek at the county boundary to Swedesford Road, passing close to the Wilson Farm. Initially it forded Valley Creek twice, once next to Lafayette's Quarters and once just north of where the Covered Bridge is now located. The northern segment of the road was merged with Yellow Springs Road in 1873. The middle section of the road still exists although it is closed to vehicle traffic where it goes underneath the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It is planned to use this section of the road as part of the Patriots Path, which will connect Valley Forge National Historical Park (the Joseph Plumb Martin trail) with the Paoli Battlefield via the Chester Valley Trail.

Hammer Hollow Road (1842)

Little sign of this road remains today that ran

from Conestoga Road to Pugh Road past the mills of Hammer Hollow.

Contention Lane (1853)

Although this road, in part or whole, existed since early days, it was a private road and it was not until 1853 that it was laid out as a public road. The northern section is now one way due to a narrow bridge over the former Trenton Cutoff railroad track.

Missing Roads

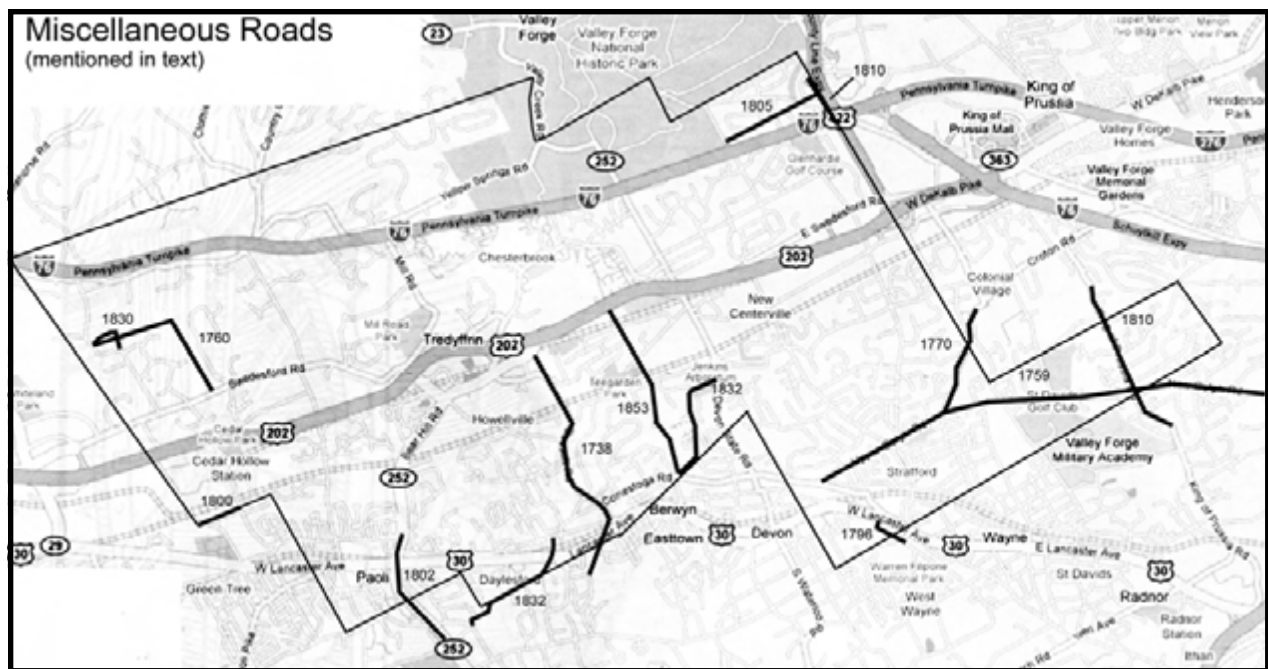
Many of the road docketts are missing some of the papers, especially the original petitions. A few roads do not appear in the road papers but were clearly in existence. These are Cedar Hollow Road and North Valley Road south of Swedesford Road.

Cedar Hollow Road

This road is also found in the papers for adjacent roads. The first time it appears in a road petition is in 1800 when a road was requested to connect it with Church Road.

North Valley Road

Road papers for North Valley Road between Swedesford Road and Paoli have not been found. A plan from 1838 shows the staggered junction at Swedesford Road but the date of the road creation remains a mystery at this time.



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Map images not otherwise credited below were compiled by Mike Bertram using Google™ Maps and other software.

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