

The Davis-Armstrong-Sparks Map

Mike Bertram



Map D: Davis-Armstrong-Sparks Map

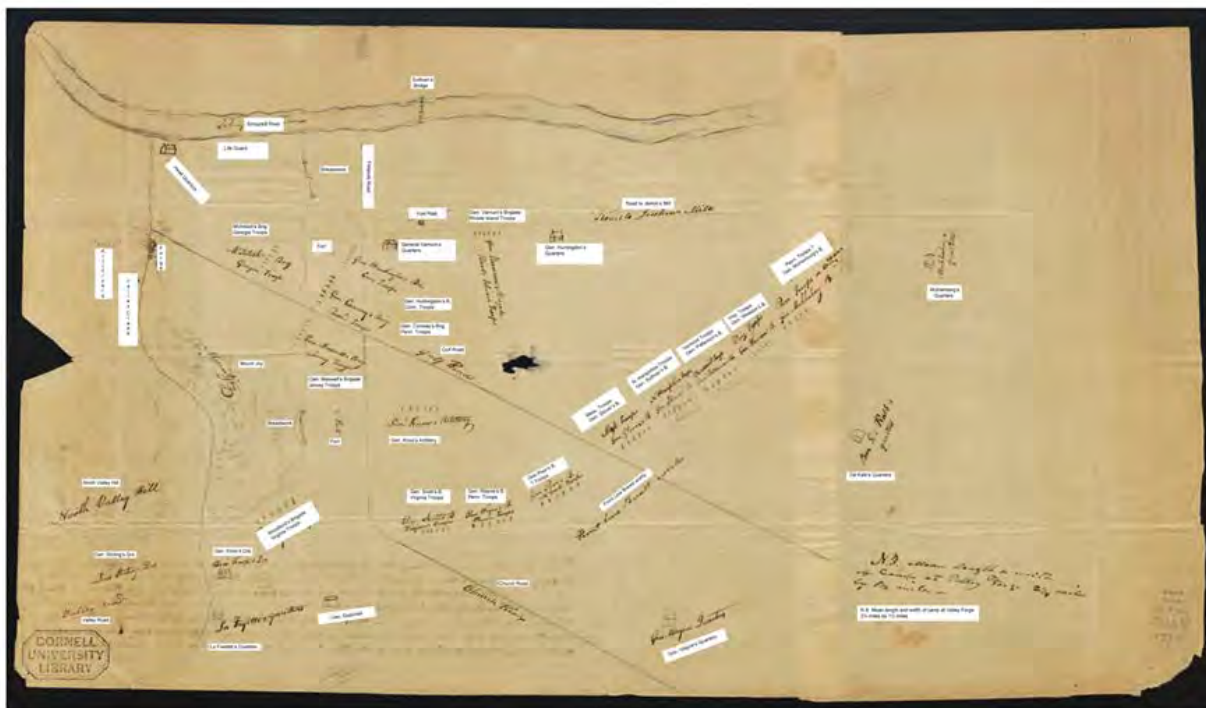
Rare Map 3701 S323 V3 1777

Courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections
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This map of 1833 (or perhaps a little previous) is the earliest map showing the location of the Generals' Quarters at the Revolutionary War encampment at Valley Forge. It shows the quarters of ten of the Generals: Washington, Stirling, Knox, Lafayette, Duportail, Wayne, DeKalb, Muhlenberg, Huntington, and Varnum. The position of the various Brigades is also shown. The map was created by William Davis (1763 – 1848), a Tredyffrin farmer.

The labels on the map are difficult to make out. The notes on the reverse side also bleed through in the bottom left corner. The following version of the map is annotated to improve readability:



Davis-Armstrong-Sparks Map

The notes with the map say: "... enclosed [is] a rough draft of Valley Forge, with the positions of the different Brigades comprising the army which wintered there in '77-8. . . The present was obtained through Mr. Wayne, son of the Gen. of that name from Wm. David, Esq. . . who resided within the limits of the Camp during its continuance there . . .". There is no William David on the Valley Forge muster rolls but a number of William Davis' including two privates in Pennsylvania Regiments. One of these soldiers may have been the author of the map. The map was presented to Jared Sparks by Revolutionary General John Armstrong in 1833. Sparks, who was Professor of History and later President of Harvard, collected maps and Revolutionary War material. His map collection was purchased by Cornell University in 1872.

William Davis

The parentage of William Davis is unclear. There were many branches of the Davis family in Chester County at the time. There are at least two William Davises from Chester County in the Revolutionary War military records. His time and knowledge of the Valley Forge encampment originates in his enlistment as a drummer boy in the Continental Army.¹

In 1789, he married Mary Havard, the only child of John Havard, Junior. It is not clear where he was living prior to the marriage, or how he met Mary. They had seven or eight children. William and Mary's initials are on the Federal Barn at Duportail's Quarters, along with the construction date of 1792. In 1796, he purchased a farm of 50 acres that straddled Tredyffrin and Upper Merion, and was in what is now Valley Forge National Historical Park. Later purchases expanded the size of this farm, which was located in the area between the Memorial Arch and Wayne's Woods.

John Havard died in 1797. His will seems to be contradictory, as he gives the Duportail estate to his grandson John Havard Davis when he reaches the age of 21, but also to his daughter in her lifetime. The result seems to be that the estate is listed in William Davis' name (as Mary's husband). John Havard Davis got into financial difficulties in 1819, and then died in 1821 at a young age.²

In 1799, William was appointed a Justice of the Peace. He died intestate in 1848, and his properties were inherited by his children. After a number of their deaths it was solely inherited by William Davis, Junior. The



farms can be seen in the adjacent extract from Witmer's Atlas of 1873.

The Map

The encampment map was passed to a son of Anthony Wayne, and then to General John Armstrong, a Militia General in the Revolutionary War. After the war, Armstrong became a politician and was a Senator for New York and Secretary for War (1813 – 1814). He also had a strong interest in history. Armstrong gave the map to Jared Sparks, Professor of History and later President of Harvard University. He wrote a note to Sparks on the back of the map that reads:

Dear Sir,

You will find enclosed a rough draught of Valley Forge, with the positions of the different Brigades comprising the army which wintered there in 77 – 8. There is little accordance between the latter [3 undecipherable words] & that furnished by Capt. Markland lately transmitted to you.

The present was obtained thro' M. Wayne, son of the Gen. of that name – from William Davis Esq. a remarkably active & intelligent man – who resided within the limits of the Camp during its continuance. There Mr. Wayne adds "I know of no living person who is so likely to fulfill the intentions of the enquiry, as this gentleman." Whose recollection of the most minute occurrences of the period, are entirely unaffected by age. I am yet unapprised of your having received the packet sent to you thro' the Messrs. Higgenson of New York. Very respectfully & sincerely, yours J. Armstrong

23 Sept. 1833

The Sparks map collection was acquired by Cornell University in 1872.

Notes

1. "Three Pre-Revolutionary War Houses with a Family Connection" by Nancy Pusey, *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 2004).
2. "Spiritualism and a Contested Will" by Mark Tunnell and Bob Goshorn, *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (October 1982).