

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURE OF FORT DU QUESNE—ERECTION OF
FORT BURD.

FROM July, 1755, when the French succeeded in expelling the English forces from the region of country west of the Alleghenies, the former held absolute possession of that territory for more than three years, as has already been mentioned. Not long after

¹ Freeman Lewis, the senior of the authors of "Monongahela of Old."

their victory on the Monongahela they reduced their force at Fort du Quesne, sending a part of it to Venango and other northern posts, and their Indian allies, or a great part of them, scattered and returned to their homes, being in a state of discontent and incipient disaffection, though still holding to their French allegiance.

At Fort du Quesne the French captain, Contre-cœur, remained in command till the early part of 1757. In that year, and not long after Contre-cœur's supersedure, the commandant at Fort Cumberland sent out a small party (probably the first which crossed the mountains from the east after Braddock's defeat) to penetrate as nearly as practicable to the Forks of the Ohio, and reconnoitre the country in the vicinity of the French fort.¹ It was composed of five soldiers from Fort Cumberland and fifteen Cherokee Indians, all under command of Lieutenant Baker. They advanced to a point on the head-waters of Turtle Creek, about twenty miles from the fort, where they fell in with a French party of three officers and seven men. In the fight which followed they killed five of the French and took one (an officer) prisoner. They then made their way back through what is now Fayette County, and arrived in safety at Fort Cumberland with their prisoner and with the information that the French fort was in command of Capt. de Ligneris, who had under him at that place a force of about six hundred French troops and two hundred Indians.

In 1758 the English ministry planned and sent forward an expedition much more formidable than that placed under Braddock, three years before, for the capture of Fort du Quesne. The command of this new expedition was given to General John Forbes. His force (of which the rendezvous was appointed at Raystown, now Bedford, Pa.) was composed of three hundred and fifty Royal American troops, twelve hundred Scotch Highlanders, sixteen hundred Virginians, and two thousand seven hundred Pennsylvania provincials,—a total of five thousand eight hundred and fifty effective men, besides one thousand wagoners. The Virginia troops were comprised in two regiments, commanded respectively by Col. George Washington and Col. James Burd, but both under the superior command of Washington as acting brigadier. Under him, in command of one of the

Virginia companies, was Capt. William Crawford, afterwards for many years a resident of Fayette County, at Stewart's Crossings. Gen. Forbes arrived at Raystown about the middle of September, but Col. Henry Bouquet had previously (in August) been ordered forward with an advanced column of two thousand men to the Loyalhanna to cut out roads. The main body, with Washington in advance, moved forward from Raystown in October. In the mean time Bouquet (perhaps thinking he could capture the fort with his advance division, before the arrival of the main body, and thus secure the principal honor) sent forward a reconnoissance in force, consisting of eight hundred men (mostly Highlanders) under Maj. William Grant. This force reached a point in the vicinity of the fort,² where, on the 14th of September, it was attacked by a body of about seven hundred French and a large number of savages, under command of a French officer named Aubry. Here Grant was defeated with much slaughter, the Indians committing terrible atrocities on the dead and wounded Highlanders. The French and Indians then advanced against Bouquet, and attacked his intrenched position at Fort Ligonier, but were finally (though with great difficulty) repulsed on the 12th of October, and forced to retreat to their fort.

Gen. Forbes with the main body of his army arrived at Loyalhanna early in November. A council of war was held, at which it was decided that on account of the lateness of the season and approach of winter (the ground being already covered with snow) it was "unadvisable, if not impracticable, to prosecute the campaign any further till the next season, and that a winter encampment among the mountains or a retreat to the frontier settlements was the only alternative that remained." But immediately afterwards a scouting-party brought in some prisoners, from whom it was learned that the garrison of Fort du Quesne was weak, and the Indian allies of the French considerably disaffected. Thereupon the decision of the council of war was reversed, and orders at once issued to move on to the assault of the fort.

The march was commenced immediately, the troops taking with them no tents or heavy baggage, and only a few pieces of light artillery. Washington with his command led the advance. When within about twelve miles of the fort word was brought to Forbes that it was being evacuated by the French, but he remembered the lesson taught by Braddock's rashness, and treated the report with suspicion, continuing the march with the greatest caution, and withholding from the troops the intelligence he had received. On the 25th of November, when they were marching with the provincials in front, they drew near the fort and came to a place where a great number of stakes had been

¹ An anecdote of another small reconnoitring-party that was sent towards Fort du Quesne a short time afterwards is found in Sparks (ii. 283), in one of Washington's letters, dated May, 1758, as follows: "An Indian named Ucalula was sent from Fort Loudon [Va.] with a party of six soldiers and thirty Indians, under command of Lieutenant Gist. After great fatigues and suffering, occasioned by the snows on the Allegheny Mountains, they reached the Monongahela River [at the mouth of Red-stone], where Lieutenant Gist, by a fall from a precipice, was rendered unable to proceed, and the party separated. Ucalula, with two other Indians, descended the Monongahela in a bark canoe till they came near Fort du Quesne. Here they left their canoe, and concealed themselves on the margin of the river till they had an opportunity of attacking two Frenchmen, whom they killed and scalped. These scalps were brought to Fort Loudon by Ucalula."

² This fight took place at "Grant's Hill," in the present city of Pittsburgh. The total loss of the English was 273 killed and 43 wounded more than one-third of Grant's entire force. The commander and Major Lewis were taken prisoners by the French and Indians.

planted, and on these were hanging the kilts of Highlanders slain on that spot in Grant's defeat two months before. When Forbes' Highlanders saw this they became infuriated with rage and rushed on, reckless of consequences and regardless of discipline in their eagerness to take bloody vengeance on the slayers of their countrymen. They were bent on the extermination of their foes and swore to give no quarter, but soon after, on arriving within sight of the fort, it was found to be indeed evacuated and in flames, and the last of the boats in which its garrison had embarked were seen in the distance passing Smoky Island on their way down the Ohio.

The fort was found to have been mined, but either the enemy had left in too much haste to fire the train or the fuse had become extinguished. The troops at once marched up to take possession, Washington with his command being the first on the ground. On the following day he wrote to the Governor of Virginia a report of the evacuation and capture of the post as follows :

"CAMP AT FORT DU QUESNE,
"28th November, 1758.

"TO GOV. FAUQUIER :

"SIR,—I have the pleasure to inform you that Fort Du Quesne, or the ground rather on which it stood, was possessed by his Majesty's troops on the 25th instant. The enemy, after letting us get within a day's march of the place, burned the fort and ran away by the light of it, at night going down the Ohio by water to the number of about five hundred men, according to our best information. This possession of the fort has been matter of surprise to the whole army, and we cannot attribute it to more probable causes than the weakness of the enemy, want of provisions, and the defection of the Indians. Of these circumstances we were luckily informed by three prisoners who providentially fell into our hands at Loyal Hanna, when we despaired of proceeding farther. A council of war had determined that it was not advisable to advance this season beyond that place; but the above information caused us to march on without tents or baggage, and with only a light train of artillery. We have thus happily succeeded. It would be tedious and I think unnecessary to relate every trivial circumstance that has happened since my last. . . . This fortunate and indeed unexpected success of our arms will be attended with happy effects. The Delawares are suing for peace, and I doubt not that other tribes on the Ohio are following their example. A trade free, open, and on equitable terms is what they seem much to desire, and I do not know so effectual a way of riveting them to our interest as by sending out goods immediately to this place for that purpose. . . ."

Thus, after repeated attempts, each ending in blood and-disaster, the English standard was firmly planted at the head of the Ohio, and the French power here overthrown forever. On the ruins of Fort du Quesne

another work was constructed—a weak and hastily-built stockade with a shallow ditch—and named "Fort Pitt," in honor of William Pitt, Earl Chatham. Two hundred men of Washington's command were left to garrison it, and the main army marched east. Gen. Forbes returned to Philadelphia, and died there in March, 1759.

The new Fort Pitt was commenced in August, 1759, and completed during the fall of that year by a force under command of Gen. Stanwix.

When the English had finally expelled the French, and obtained possession of the country at the head of the Ohio, in 1758, and had built and garrisoned the first Fort Pitt at that place, one of the first objects to be accomplished was the establishment of a route for transportation from the East, with defensive works and bases of supply at intermediate points. Under this necessity the route was adopted from Fort Cumberland to the Monongahela at or near the mouth of Redstone Creek, and thence down the river by water-carriage to Fort Pitt, this being identical with the route contemplated by the Ohio Company nearly five years earlier, when Capt. William Trent had been sent to build a fort for them at the forks of the Ohio.

In pursuance of this military plan, in the latter part of the summer of 1759, Col. Henry Bouquet, military commandant at Carlisle, Pa., ordered Col. James Burd to inspect the defenses and stores at Fort Cumberland; thence to march to the Monongahela, there to erect a fort and base of supply at a point proper and convenient for embarkation on the river. The substance of Col. Burd's orders, and his procedure under them, are explained in a journal kept by him at the time, which is found in the Pennsylvania Archives, and from which the following entries are extracted, viz. :

"Ordered in August, 1759, to march with two hundred men of my battalion to the mouth of Redstone Creek, where it empties itself into the river Monongahela, to cut a road somewhere from Gen. Braddock's road to that place, as I shall judge best, and on my arrival there to erect a fort in order to open a communication by the river Monongahela to Pittsburgh, for the more easy transportation of provisions, etc., from the provinces of Virginia and Maryland. Sent forward the detachment under the command of Lieut.-Col. Shippen, leaving one officer and thirty men to bring our five wagons. . . . When I have cut the road and finished the fort I am to leave one officer and twenty-five men as a garrison, and march with the remainder of my battalion to Pittsburgh. . . ."

"10th Sept.—Saw Col. Washington's fort, which was called Fort Necessity. It is a small circular stockade, with a small house in the centre; on the outside there is a small ditch goes round it about eight yards from the stockade. It is situate in a narrow part of the meadows, commanded by three points of woods. There is a small run of water just by it. We saw two iron swivels.

"11th Sept.—Marched this morning; two miles from hence we found Gen. Braddock's grave, about twenty yards from a little hollow, in which there was a small stream of water, and over it a bridge. We soon got to Laurel Hill; it had an easy ascent on this side, but on the other very steep. At the foot of the hill we found the path that went to Dunlap's place, that Col. Shippen and Capt. Gordon traveled last winter, and about a quarter of a mile from this we saw the big rock, so called. From hence we marched to Dunbar's camp, — miles, which is situated in a stony hollow [here follows the description of the camp, and their search for buried guns, etc., as before quoted]. We continued our march, and got to Guest's place; here are found a fine country.

"13th Sept.—Determined, if the hunters should not return before noon, to begin to open the road along some old blazes, which we take to be Col. Washington's.¹ At noon began to cut the road to Redstone; began a quarter of a mile from camp; the course N. N. W. The course of Gen. Braddock's road N. N. E., and turns much to y^e eastward. Opened this afternoon about half a mile. Marked two trees at the place of beginning thus:

"*The road to Redstone, Col. J. Burd, 1759.*

"*The road to Pittsburg, 1759.*"

"22d Oct.—This morning I went to the river Monongahela, reconnoitred Redstone, etc., and concluded upon the place for the post, being a hill in the fork of the river Monongahela and Nemocalling's Creek,² the best situation I could find, and returned in the evening to camp. The camp moved two miles, to Coal Run. This run is entirely paved in the bottom with fine stone-coal, and the hill on the south of it is a rock of the finest coal I ever saw. I burned about a bushel of it on my fire.

"23d Oct.—Continued working on the road. Had sermon to-day at 10 A.M. At noon moved the camp two and a half miles to the river Monongahela. No bateaux arrived.

"28th Oct.—Sunday. Continued on the works; had sermon in the fort."

The last entry in the journal is the following:

"4th Nov.—Sunday. Snowed to-day. No work. Sermon in the fort. Doctor Allison sets out for Philadelphia."

From the extracts given above from Burd's journal we gain a tolerably clear idea of the manner in which he conducted the expedition and built the fort at the mouth of Dunlap's Creek on the Monongahela, viz.: After concluding his inspection at Fort Cumberland, and having previously sent forward a small detachment under his chief engineer officer, Lieut.-Col. Shippen, he set out with the remainder of his force (leav-

ing his little wagon-train to follow) and passed over the same route taken by Braddock three years before, to and across the Youghiogeny at the Great Crossings; thence to Fort Necessity, to Braddock's grave, to Dunbar's camp, and to Gist's, now Mount Braddock. This was the end of his travel over the route pursued by the ill-fated expedition of 1755. At Gist's he ordered his men to commence work in opening a road thence northwestwardly towards the Monongahela, following the route which Captains Polson and Lewis had partially cut through for about eight miles from Gist's at the time when Washington was intrenching at that place in June, 1754.

Having thus set his men at work on the road from Gist's to the Redstone, Col. Burd, with Col. Thomas Cresap (who was with him as a guide, having previously explored this region to some extent), Col. Shippen, and probably Lieut. Grayson, of his command, rode forward through the woods to the Monongahela, striking the valley of Redstone Creek, and following it down to where it enters the river. It seems to have been in contemplation to build the fort at the mouth of this stream, where Capt. Trent's men had constructed the old "Hangard" store-house four years before, but the orders of Col. Burd left it in his discretion to select the site which he might regard as the most eligible. So, after viewing the ground at the mouth of the Redstone, and not finding it to suit his ideas as the site of a fortification, he proceeded up the river until he came to the mouth of Nemacolin's or Dunlap's Creek, about one and one-fourth miles farther up, and determined to erect his fort just below the mouth of that stream, on the high ground (now in the borough of Brownsville) commanding the Monongahela, the valley of the creek, and the country for some distance to the rear; this being, as he said in the journal, "the best situation I could find."

Having thus determined the site, he returned to his working-parties, who were progressing down the valley of the Redstone, and ordered the road which they were cutting to be deflected southward from the trail leading to the mouth of the Redstone. The point where the new road was made to diverge from the trail is described by Judge Veech as "a little northwest of where the Johnson or Hatfield stone tavern-house now (1869) stands." From that point the road was laid along the ridges to the mouth of Dunlap's Creek.

On the 23d of October, Col. Burd removed his camp to the river, and the building of the fort was commenced immediately afterwards. It was completed during the following month, but the precise time is not stated.³ It was still in process of construction at

¹ Meaning the track which was partially cut out by Capts. Lewis and Polson for a distance of about eight miles northwest of Gist's, just before Washington's retreat from that place to Fort Necessity, in June, 1754.

² The creek at the mouth of which lived the Indian Nemacolin, the same afterwards known as Dunlap's Creek.

³ The construction of the fort seems to have been delayed on account of scarcity of provisions. On the 26th of October, Col. Burd said in his journal, "I have kept the people constantly employed on the works since my arrival, although we have been for eight days past upon the small allowance of one pound of beef and half a pound of flour per man a day, and this day we begin upon one pound of beef, not having an ounce of flour left, and only three bullocks. I am therefore obliged to give over working until I receive some supplies."

the date of the last entry in the journal, November 4th. The "Doctor Allison" referred to in that entry as being about to set out for Philadelphia, and who had preached the sermons previously mentioned in the journal, was the Rev. Francis Allison, the chaplain of the expedition.

The fort when completed was named, in honor of the commander of the expedition, "Fort Burd." As a military work, it was far from being strong or formidable, though bastioned. It was built in the form of a square, except for the bastions at the four angles. The curtains were formed of palisades, set firmly in the earth and embanked. The bastions were constructed of hewed logs, laid horizontally one above another. In the centre of the fort was a large house also of hewed logs, and near this, within the inclosure, a well. The whole was surrounded by a broad ditch, crossed by a draw-bridge, communicating with a gateway in the centre of the curtain in the rear of the work.¹ The location of the fort, with reference to present landmarks in Brownsville, may be described as west of the property of N. B. Bowman, and nearly on the spot now occupied by the residence of J. W. Jeffries. South of the fort was the bullock-pen; and a short distance, in a direction a little south of east, from the centre of Fort Burd was the central mound of the prehistoric work once known as Red-stone Old Fort.

Upon the departure of Col. Burd with his command, after the completion of the fort, he left in it a garrison of twenty-five men, under command of a commissioned officer. Some accounts have it that this officer was Capt. Paull,² father of Col. James Paull, who lived for many years, and died in Fayette County. It is certain that Capt. Paull was *afterwards* in command at the fort for a long time. Nothing has been found showing how long Fort Burd continued to be held as a military post. "But it seems," says Judge Veech, "to have been under some kind of military possession in 1774. During Dunmore's war, and during the Revolution and contemporary Indian troubles, it was used as a store-house and a rallying-point for defense, supply, and observation by the early settlers and adventurers. It was never rendered famous by a siege or a sally. We know that the late Col. James Paull served a month's duty in a drafted militia com-

pany in guarding Continental stores here in 1778." It was doubtless discontinued as a military post soon after the close of the Revolution, and all traces of it were obliterated by the building of the town of Brownsville.

¹ In the Pennsylvania Archives (xii. 347) is a plan of the fort, made by Col. Shippen, the engineer. On this plan are given the dimensions of the work, as follows: "The curtain, 97½ feet; the flanks, 16 feet; the faces of the bastions, 30 feet; a ditch between the bastions, 24 feet wide; and opposite the faces, 12 feet. The log-house for a magazine, and to contain the women and children, 39 feet square. A gate 6 feet wide and 8 feet high, and a drawbridge [illegible, but apparently 10] feet wide." In Judge Veech's "Monongahela of Old" is given a diagram of Fort Burd, but it is not drawn in accordance with these dimensions, the curtains being made too short as compared with the size of the bastions.

² James L. Bowman, in a historical sketch furnished by him to the *American Pioneer*, and published in 1843, said with regard to this first garrisoning of Fort Burd, "The probability is that after the accomplishment of the object for which the commanding officer was sent he placed Capt. Paull in command and returned to report."

³ Judge Veech says ("Monongahela of Old," p. 26), "When the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania traders with the Indians on the Ohio began their operations, perhaps as early as 1740, they procured Indians to show them the best and easiest route, and this [the Nemacolin path to the Youghiogheny and Ohio] was the one they adopted." And he adds, "There is some evidence that Indian traders, both English and French, were in this country much earlier" than 1740.