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(Area)

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BRADDOCK'S GRAVE

By

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October 22, 1937

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FROM:

TO:

## BRADDOCK'S GRAVE

Major General Edward Braddock was wounded on July 9, 1755, and died four days later. According to the so-called "Seaman's Journal," written by a participant in Braddock's expedition, Braddock was buried "decently but privately" the following morning.<sup>1</sup> Washington later told William Findley, at that time a Member of Congress, that he "buried General Braddock's corps in the middle of the road, making waggons and horses to pass over it, to conceal it from the Indians, designing at some future time to erect a monument to his memory."<sup>2</sup> Four years later, Colonel James Burd noted in his diary under date of September 11, the discovery of what he believed to be the grave two miles from the site of Fort Necessity and "about 20 yards from a little hollow in which there was a small stream of water, and over it a bridge." In 1764, however, Washington made "diligent search" for the grave, but "the road had been so much turned and the clear land so extended that it could not be found."<sup>3</sup> ?

*check*

*the 3 = 6*

*the 1 = 10*

*the 1 = 10*

It is said that some years later a party of laborers repairing the road found human bones a few yards from the highway, or, according to other versions, in the road itself. Military trappings found with the bones indicated that the remains of a British officer had been found. In the words of James Hadden, historian of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, it was assumed that "as General Braddock was known to have been buried at this camp the bones doubtless were his."<sup>4</sup>

*the 1 = 10*

*the 1 = 10*

Workers and bystanders appear to have taken a large proportion of the bones as relics. According to several versions of the incident, the rest of the bones were then reinterred "under the tree on the hill near the national road." Other versions relate that the reinterment occurred some years later at the time Abraham Stewart had succeeded in collecting the scattered relics. Still others claim Stewart sent the bones to Peale's Museum in Philadelphia. All agree, however, that a reinterment took place. The date of the discovery of the grave is uncertain; 1804, 1812, 1823, and other dates are given.<sup>5</sup>

The most complete account of the episode is that of Andrew Stewart, at one time a Member of Congress. Writing to William Montgomery, then in Congress, who had written Stewart of Sir Charles Mapien's proposal to erect a monument to Braddock, Stewart stated that the discovery occurred in the summer of 1804. Stewart, then a boy of 13, was with his father, Abraham Stewart, who was supervising the repair of the old Braddock Trail. Thomas Fossett, a well known local character famous for his widely believed boast that he was the man who had given Braddock his fatal wound, happened to pass and told the party of workers that they were over the grave of Braddock. "The bones," Stewart wrote, "were then taken up by some of the hands, while others prepared a new grave at the foot of a venerable oak . . . a few feet south of the old grave, and five or six rods north of the

present National Road." Abraham Stewart gave his son several bones  
to take home, and these, Stewart said, were sent to "the museum at  
Philadelphia."<sup>6</sup>

Reference?

The circumstances of this incident throw serious doubt on the allegation that the reinterred bones were those of Braddock. First, no clear description of the uniform said to have been found is extant. Second, there is a strong probability that Braddock was not the sole man to be buried at the encampment. Third, the difficulty, noted by Washington in 1754, of determining the precise locality in which the grave was located. Fourth, if Andrew Stewart's version is correct, the belief that the grave was that of Braddock rests partly upon the word of a boastful frontiersman, much given to the relation of yarns. Fifth, the contradictory nature of the different versions of the discovery and disposition of the bones. Sixth, there was, apparently, at the time no serious effort to verify the supposition that the bones were Braddock's.

Alvin P. Stauffer, Jr.

October 22, 1937.

## NOTES

1. Winthrop Sargent, History of and Expedition Against Fort Duquesne in 1755, 388.
2. Sherman Day, Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania, 336; Letter of William Findley in Niles' Weekly Register, XIV, 180.
3. Ibid.
4. James Hadden, Washington's Expedition and Braddock's Expedition, 100-101.
5. Day, op. cit., 334; John S. Ritenour, Old Tom Fossit, 116; Sargent, op. cit., 261.
6. Ritenour, op. cit., quoting Stewart's letter as published in the American Standard of Uniontown in 1858.