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## HISTORY OF THE BUFFALO CREEK VALLEY

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### **The Importance of History**

Debate exists over the origin of the name “Buffalo” Creek, although some believe that the general area was named for an old buffalo trace passing through it, which later become part of the Historic National Road. Whatever the origin, it is clear that Buffalo Creek watershed has a diverse history, from its importance in supporting early North American travelers, to its role in the Revolutionary War, to its place along the earliest transcontinental road, and finally to its location as the birthplace of the largest religious movement originating in the United States. Throughout this time, the people of the watershed depended on its streams and wildlife resources for their livelihoods.

Members of the Buffalo Creek Watershed Association and Buffalo Valley Alliance feel that there is a need to continue exploring and documenting this history and its inextricable link to the natural resources in the area. The potential also exists to utilize this heritage to promote eco-tourism opportunities in the area. For this reason, the following section, much of which was developed using contributions of two local historians, discusses some notable historical events and sites leading to the settlement of the Buffalo Creek valley.

### **Earliest Human Travelers**

Archaeological evidence in and around the Buffalo Creek watershed suggests that this area had a role in supporting early North American civilizations. Only miles away from the watershed, in the town of Avella, is the Meadowcroft Rock Shelter, an archaeological site considered to be one of the first places of human habitation in the United States. The rock shelter was a stopping-off point for prehistoric nomadic peoples and was occupied since at least 12,000 B. C., until Native Americans abandoned it during the Revolutionary War. Archaeological evidence suggests that nomadic tribes stopped periodically in the Buffalo Creek watershed to the south, depending on resources along Buffalo Creek and its floodplain.

### **Europeans Settlers Arrive in Buffalo Creek Valley**

At the dawn of the historical period of Pennsylvania, various Native American tribes, including the Iroquois who owned almost all of the land, inhabited most of the eastern portion of the state. Other tribes, such as the Delaware and Shawnee, used the land by permission of the Iroquois. The western portion of Pennsylvania was used primarily as hunting grounds and as a highway for war parties, but was not permanently inhabited. This included the area between the Susquehanna Valley and the Ohio Valley.

William Penn and the Pennsylvania Assembly (formerly the Provincial Council) entered into numerous treaties with the Six Nations of the Iroquois to obtain land that would ultimately be settled by early European and English colonists. These treaties continuously forced the Delaware and Shawnee to migrate westward. By the 1720s, these peoples had permanent villages at places like Ambridge, New Castle, and Kittanning. However, there is no historical record or archaeological evidence that these native groups permanently lived in the Buffalo Creek watershed of Washington County.

The most important treaty was the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768. The treaty conveyed to Pennsylvania all land extending from the New York border, up to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, over to Kittanning, and as far south as the mouth of the Tennessee River. The Delaware and Shawnee did not agree with this sale of their hunting grounds by the Iroquois. For this purchase, Pennsylvania acquired parts of 18 counties and nine entire counties, including Washington County. Pennsylvania and Virginia both recognized claims for farms up to 400 acres on these lands, and land was offered as a reward for military service after the French and Indian War. Thousands of claims were filed.

The Buffalo Creek valley, similar to the rest of western Washington County, was devoid of mountains. However, it was rugged, hilly, and uneven with deeply forested valleys and irregular uplands that had the potential to be highly fertile and productive. Early settlers were faced with the challenge that this wilderness presented, as well as the challenge of facing the native peoples that had been pushed into the area. The first records of settlers on Buffalo Creek were in 1770 and 1771. Mr. James Caldwell is recorded as one of the earliest settlers. Most settlers were of English or Scotch-Irish descent, with names like McGurie, Carpenter, Williamson, Smith, Taylor, Wells, Carlson, and Doddridge. Germans settled along Dutch Fork Creek, with names like Ault, Wolff, Stricker, Hupp, Ricer, Winter, and Leffler. Thomas Clark was the first to settle Dutch Fork Creek in 1773.

## Revolutionary War Forts

During the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), Washington County (known as part of Westmoreland County until 1781), was one of the most exposed areas of frontier. The closest regular continental troops were at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), Fort McIntosh (Beaver), Fort Henry (Wheeling, WV), or Holiday's Cove (present day Weirton, WV). The settlers were compelled to defend themselves from attacks by British-allied Native Americans from across the Ohio River. Present day Washington County had approximately 40 frontier forts, making it one of the most heavily fortified counties in United States history. Most of these consisted of a "blockhouse" or some kind of fortified house. Of these 40 forts, at least eight were located in the Buffalo Creek watershed. These include Wolff, Stricker, Taylor, Williamson, Lamb, River, Miller, and Doddridge forts. Teeter's Fort in Independence Township and Reynold's Fort in Cross Creek Township were located near the watershed's northern boundary. A brief description of prominent forts found within the watershed follows:

Wolff's Fort: Located in Buffalo Township along Route 40, Jacob Wolff settled here on 200 acres in the 1770s. This large fort consisting of a stockade fence surrounding Wolff's cabin was well utilized by the frontiersmen and women during Native American raids.

Stricker's Blockhouse: Located in Buffalo Township approximately 1.5 miles south of Wolff's Fort and off of East Buffalo Church Road, this fort consisted of two blockhouses on a property of 369 acres.

Taylor's Fort: Located in Blaine Township about 1.5 miles north of Taylorstown on State Route 221, this fort overlooked Buffalo Creek and was adjacent to Walker Hill Bridge. Robert Taylor, a captain in the Pennsylvania militia, owned 331 acres adjacent to the fort side, which is the present day location of the village of Taylorstown.

Williamstown Station: Located in Blaine Township approximately four miles north of Taylorstown on Camp Buffalo Road, this fort consisted of a triple log cabin structure and a springhouse. Lt. Colonel David Williamson owned this fort, along with 376 acres. Williamson is probably one of the most significant figures to settle in the Buffalo Creek watershed and is best known as the leader of the famous Gnadenhutzen Expedition.

Lamb's Fort: Frederick Lamb erected this log structure, located in Independence Township on State Route 331, in 1774.

Rice's Fort: Around 1774 Jacob Rice settled a 400-acre tract of land currently located in Donegal Township on Lake Road. His fort consisted of three square log blockhouses connected to each other at different angles. Rice's Fort was a refuge for 12 families in the immediate area and was well used throughout the Revolutionary War. This fort was the last attack made by the British-allied Native

Americans during the Revolutionary War, when it successfully repelled attacks from over 70 Native Americans.

Miller's Blockhouse: Located on the site of the recently drained Dutch Fork Lake Reservoir, Jacob Miller settled 400 acres of land on this site in the 1770s. There is much documented action at this fort, which was used as a rendezvous point for scouts and rangers. A notable attack was the heroic defense of the blockhouse for over 24 hours by Ann Hupp after both her husband and father were killed by hostile Native Americans.

Doddridge's Fort: Located in Independence Township near the intersection of State Route 844 and Sugarcamp Run Road, this site was situated on a ridge dividing the Cross Creek and Buffalo Creek valleys. John Doddridge settled this area in 1773. This large, substantial fort provided refuge for 12 families and was still standing in 1913.

## **A Chronology of Events**

Numerous events during the 1700s led to the settlement of the Buffalo Creek valley. A brief chronology listing these events is provided below.

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| 1724 | Delaware tribes begin westward migration and settle in Kittanning.<br>Shawnee begin westward migration.   |
| 1754 | French advance down the Allegheny Valley, occupy the forks of the Ohio, and begin to erect Fort Dusquesne.<br>French and Indian War begins.     |
| 1756 | Pennsylvania declares war against the Delaware and Shawnee. Rewards given for Native American scalps.   |
| 1758 | French abandon Fort Dusquesne and British take possession (Fort Pitt).  |
| 1763 | Peace treaty ends French and Indian War.  |
| 1764 | Delaware and Shawnee submit; Pontiac's War ends.  |
| 1768 | Treaty of Fort Stanwix is signed and immigrants from eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia begin to legally occupy western Pennsylvania. |
| 1770 | First settlement appears in Buffalo Creek valley.   |
| 1771 | Two more settlements appear.  |
| 1772 | Jessie Martin settles in present day Hopewell Township on 405 acres in the Brush Run-Buffalo Creek area.  |

- Thomas Clark settles on Dutch Fork and James Caldwell settles on Buffalo Creek.
- 1773 John Doddridge erects fort on Sugarcamp Run in Buffalo Creek valley in Independence Township.  
Sam Buchman settles 300 acres on Buffalo Creek in Independence Township.  
Charles McRoberts settles on the mainstem of Buffalo Creek in Buffalo Township.
- 1774 William Smiley settles in Hopewell.  
Jacob Lefler settles in Donegal.  
Ezekial Boggs settles in present day Blaine Township.  
Frederic Lamb builds fort on Buffalo Creek in Independence Township.  
Rice's Fort is established on Dutch Fork Creek.  
Beginning and end of Lord Dunmore's War.  
Pioneers of the Buffalo Creek valley fortify themselves.
- 1775 American Revolutionary War begins.  
Thomas Chapman settles in Donegal on Dutch Fork Creek.  
British enlist Delaware, Shawnee, and other western tribes to attack along the frontier.  
Col. David Williamson erects fort on land he owns along Buffalo Creek (Blaine).  
8th Pennsylvania Regiment created to defend western frontier.
- 1777 8th Pennsylvania Regiment marches to join the Continental Army in the east, leaving the western frontier exposed to Native American attacks.  
British Army orders their allied Native Americans to attack the western frontier, and places bounties for Native American scalps.
- 1778 Native American attacks occur in counties surrounding Washington County, within the western frontier.  
8th Pennsylvania Regiment marches to defend western frontier.
- 1779 Native Americans attack Reynold's Fort, killing and scalping his wife and child.  
Native Americans outraged in Washington County.  
Robert Taylor purchases land and builds a fort near site of present day Taylorstown.

- 1780 Native Americans attack at Raccoon Creek, Chartiers Valley, Ten Mile Creek, West Findley, and Robinson Township.
- 1781 Native Americans attack Raccoon Creek.  
Attack at Jon Lin's cabin near West Alexander and the cabin of Presley Peake on Buffalo Creek; several pioneers killed and captured.  
Col. David Williamson leads Washington County Militia (many of whom reside in the Buffalo valley) on the infamous Gnadenhutten Massacre campaign.  
Miller's Blockhouse attacked at Dutch Fork.  
Priscilla Peake is scalped, escapes death, and makes her way to Wolff's Fort in Buffalo Township.  
Col. Williamson leads an orderly retreat of Washington County Militia after they are defeated by hostiles on the Sandusky Plains of Ohio. Col. William Crawford, commander, is brutally tortured and burned at the stake.
- 1783 Uprisings continue in Washington County.  
Revolutionary War ends.
- 1784 Inhabitants of Buffalo valley petition the Washington County court for, "A road from Washington to the state line, intersecting with the Wheeling Road."  
Native American raids continue in Washington County as post-Revolutionary War border warfare continues.  
Thomas Walker purchases land where present-day Claysville sits.  
Native American attacks in Washington County gradually end in the years leading up to 1795. Raids continue at a reduced rate in surrounding counties as the hostiles, U. S. Army, and militia battle in the lands of Ohio.  
Washington County court, in the December session, orders a road to be built from Valentine's Mill on Indian Camp Run, to the mouth of Buffalo Creek.
- 1795 William Taylor buys land from his father, upon which the plat for the new town New Brunswick (Taylorstown) is laid out.  
Buffalo Creek valley has not had a hostile incident since 1783. People settle into their lives as blacksmiths, carpenters, etc.  
James Martin and Samuel Gill purchase adjacent parcels of land at the present-day site of West Middletown.  
Western tribes capitulate and sign the Treaty of Greenville, signifying the end to all warfare in western Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley.

Sixty years (1775 to 1835) of border warfare endured by the pioneer settlers of the Buffalo Creek valley ends.

1796 Robert Humphreys purchases 400 acres in western Donegal Township near the West Virginia border. Here he lays out the site for a town he named West Alexander, in honor of his wife Martha Alexander.

## **Early History of Local Towns**

### **Claysville**

Claysville was a town that emerged to accommodate the needs of travelers on the National Road. Acreage in what is now the borough of Claysville was originally purchased by Thomas Walker in 1785. Walker sold his 400-acre parcel to John Purviance, and in 1800, Purviance opened a tavern in a large, two-story log cabin along the new Wheeling Road (predecessor of the National Pike Road, or U. S. Route 40). Purviance advertised lots in 1817, in anticipation of the construction of the National Road, and attracted numerous businesses. Among the first to settle in Claysville were Samuel Sherr, William Brownlee, and James Sawhill. Claysville became an incorporated borough on April 2, 1832.

### **Taylorstown**

In the spring of 1875, William Taylor purchased a tract of land from Robert Taylor, his father and builder of Taylor's Fort. Taylor sold lots on his land, which he named New Brunswick. After selling 214 acres to Thomas McKinstry in 1807, New Brunswick became known as Taylorstown. When oil was discovered in the 1800s, Taylorstown became the most prosperous town in Washington County.

### **West Middletown**

West Middletown, a portion of which lies within the watershed's borders, was one of the most important stations of the Underground Railroad preceding the Civil War. James Brown, the famous abolitionist, preached in the town and underground tunnels can still be found between some of the houses. The family of Robert Fulton, inventor of the steamboat, lived in Hopewell Township near West Middletown.

## **Religious Movements**

The Buffalo Creek valley is the birthplace of the restoration movement, the largest religious movement originating in the United States, which was the basis for the Disciples of Christ or Christian Church denomination. Several other church denominations have a long history in the watershed.

The restoration movement in the United States was initiated as a response to human-created doctrine and authority. It grew out of the joining of two Presbyterian ministers, Barton W. Stone and Thomas Campbell, individuals whose liberal views at the time included the right to serve communion to Christians of other denominations and the longing for a return to simple teachings of the scripture, with each person interpreting the bible for himself/herself. This denomination began with the establishment of the "Christian Association of Washington, PA" within the Buffalo Creek watershed on August 17, 1809 and the building of a worship house in the Brush Run valley.

<b>Historical Religious Events</b>	
1778	Reverend Matthew Henderson organizes a congregation under the name "Buffalo." Their creed: "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." This church was renamed "The North Buffalo United Presbyterian Church" in 1811.
1788	1. Lower Buffalo Presbyterian Church organized in Independence Township. 2. Presbyterian Church of West Alexander is formed.
1800	Zion Chapel of United Brethren Church forms in Donegal Township.
1809	Thomas Campbell forms "The Christian Church Association of Washington, PA" in Brush Run valley.
1811	1. South Buffalo Presbyterian Church forms. 2. First baptisms performed by the Campbells in a deep pool of Buffalo Creek.

Thomas Campbell's son, Alexander Campbell, is considered the principal founder of the movement, and its followers are often called "Campbellites." Baptisms, which are essential to the faith, were conducted on the David Bryant Farm in a deep pool of Buffalo Creek. This site is now located in proximity to the Green Cove Wetland Area owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

In 1818, Alexander Campbell opened his Buffalo Seminary, a school for young men to learn the teachings of the church. In 1840, he founded Bethany College, at nearby Bethany, West Virginia with the hopes of sending out advocates to spread the word of God. The denomination has split several times over the years into the Independent Christ Churches, Churches of Christ, and Disciples of Christ (Christian Church). The Christian Church has remained in the forefront of social activism, has a global network of missions coordinated by the Christian Missionary Society, and maintains two colleges, Bethany College and Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky. There are more than 800,000 members of the Christian Church in the United States and Canada. Bethany College is located in the West Virginia portion of Buffalo Creek watershed.

### **McGuffey Reader**

The McGuffey Reader is likely the best known series of school books in the history of American education. It is estimated that at least 120 copies of McGuffey's Readers were sold between 1836 and 1960. The author of the reader, William Holmes McGuffey, was born in 1800 near Claysville, Pennsylvania but moved to Youngstown, Ohio as a child. McGuffey was eventually appointed Professor of Languages at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and went on to hold a series of esteemed positions at other universities in the eastern portion of the U.S. In 1827, the Cincinnati firm Truman and Smith hired McGuffey to create the series of four graded Readers for primary level students. Harriet Beecher Stowe recommended him for the job. McGuffey High School bears the name of this notable original resident of the watershed.

### **Important People**

Among the most significant individuals in the history of the Buffalo Creek valley, many of whom have been recognized in this chapter, are Thomas and Alexander Campbell, John and Joseph Doddridge, Anne Hupp, the Honorable Hugh Brackenridge, Esq., Captain Robert Taylor, Captain Isaac Cox, John W. Garrett, Thomas and Matthew McKeever, General Wallace McWilliams, and Colonel David Williamson.

One of the most notable is David Williamson. David Williamson convinced his parents and family to relocate west to Blaine Township in 1773. Williamson was a true frontiersman with a military career spanning over 20 years. He fought the Shawnee in Dunmore's War in the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1774, was the colonel in the 1<sup>st</sup> Moravian Campaign to the Muskingum River towns in Ohio, and in 1782 led the famous Gnadenhutzen Massacre of Christian Delaware Native Americans. Later on in life, Williamson faced great difficulty. He was elected sheriff of Washington County in 1787. But, between 1790 and 1805 Williamson was in court for debt over two dozen times. He died in jail in 1809, after which he was buried with full military honors in the old Washington County Cemetery.

## National Historic Sites

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. There are nine National Historic Sites located within the boundaries of the Buffalo Creek watershed:

S-Bridge: Thought to have developed from an old Buffalo trace, the National Road was the first multi-state federally funded highway and is considered by many to be the most historic road in the United States. Exemplary of the stone masonry of its day, the S-Bridge carried travelers along the National Road and was located across from Kelly's S-Bridge Tavern. It was built in 1815.

Montgomery House: An exemplary Italianate house located along the National Road in Claysville, and built in 1880.

Margaret Derrow House: A historic gothic revival house along the National Road, built in 1855.

Valentine House: A dwelling that housed travelers on the National Road.

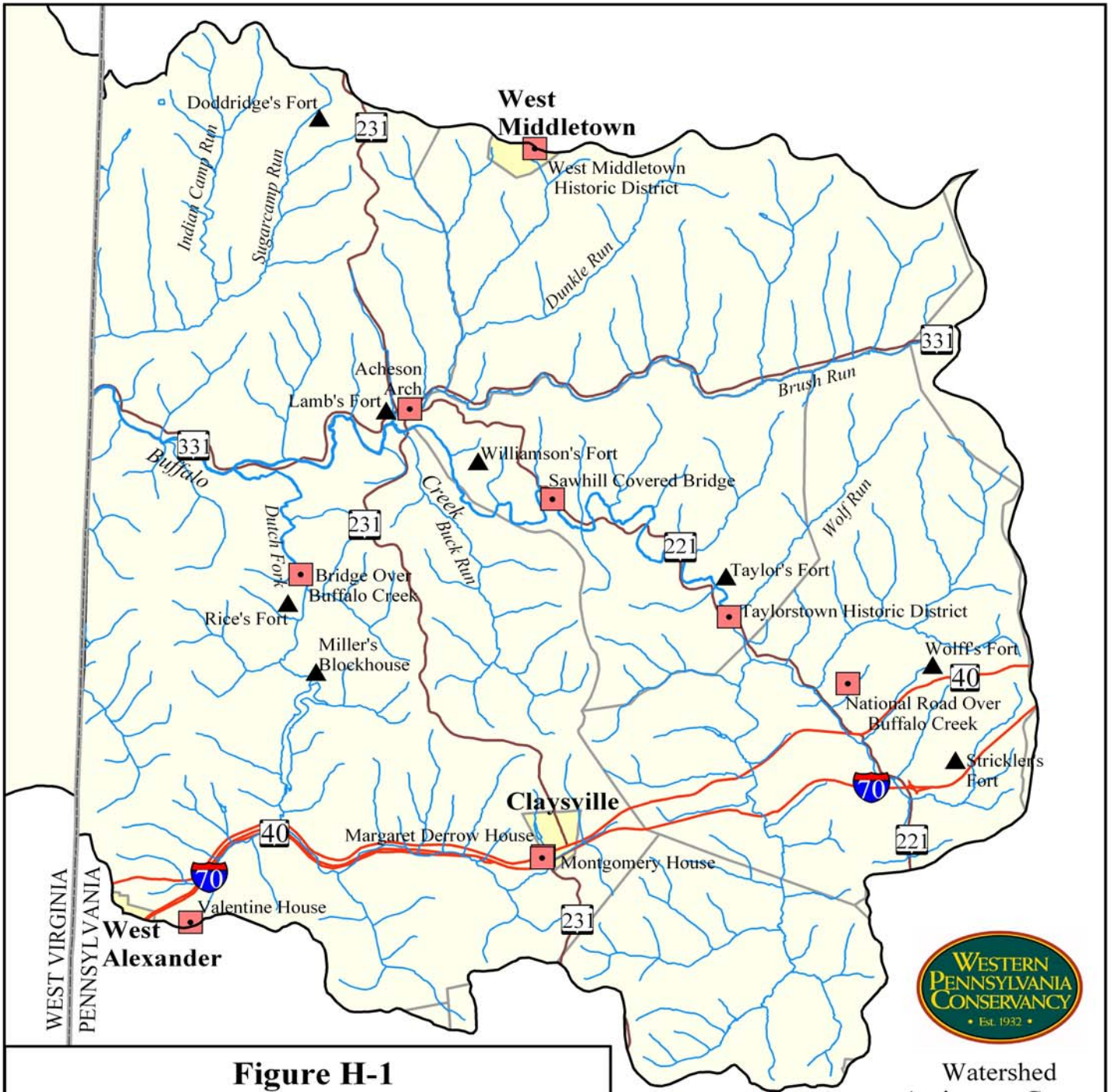
Taylorstown Historic District: This historic town, which is itself considered a national historic site, retains many of its 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings exemplifying the Greek Revival architecture in the United States at the time of its settlement. It was the most prosperous town in Washington County during part of the 1800s.

Sawhill Covered Bridge: An example of covered bridge architecture in Washington County built in 1915.

Bridge Over Buffalo Creek: A Historic bridge over Dutch Fork Creek.

Acheson Arch: A historic bridge over Brush Run.

West Middletown Historic District: This historic town, considered a national historic site, retains many of its 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings exemplifying the Greek Revival architecture in the United States at the time of its settlement. It was one of the most significant stations of the Underground Railroad.



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