

# The Strategic Location of Old St. Lukes - 1765

An important part of the history of Old St. Lukes is related to the French and Indian War, which began just north of Uniontown, Pa. when young George Washington subdued a company of French soldiers there in 1753. What followed were British expeditions led by Gen. Braddock in 1755 (a disaster) and Gen. Forbes in 1758 (a success). Serving with Forbes were George Washington, Henri Bouquet, and three men buried at Old St. Lukes - William Lea, Christian Lesnett, and Daniel South.

Both the French and British knew the value of securing the native Americans as their allies and supplemental warriors. As the war ended in 1763, the expelled French continued their efforts to harass the British forces. They supported the Ottawa's chief named Pontiac in a plan to simultaneously attack every British fort. Starting on April 27, 1763 at Ft. Detroit, the timing was to prevent the transfer of reinforcements between forts. They hit western Pennsylvania on May 28. However, Col. Henri Bouquet had already begun to form a relief expedition at Carlisle. His opinion of the Indians was summarized in one word "vermin." Only three British forts remained intact - Fts. Pitt, Detroit, and Niagara. The Indians wanted French forces to return and expel the British army which occupied the Indian's lands. The British strategy, on the other hand, set by Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Amherst, was to rebuild British forts and restock supplies for a counter-attack on the Indians in 1764.

Col. Bouquet came back to and commanded Ft. Pitt in 1764. That year he strengthened the fort, building a blockhouse for gunpowder and military supplies.

Bouquet took another step for defense in 1765. At Old St. Lukes set forth the belief that Bouquet also ordered his military engineers, the Pioneers, to find a strategic location on the Chartier's Creek for a stockade in order to monitor Indian canoe and foot movement toward Ft. Pitt. The Pioneers, including a young surveyor named David Steel (now buried at Old St. Lukes) chose the promontory overlooking the Creek where Old St. Lukes stands today. The awkward bend in the Creek around the mid-stream island must have made a good military vantage point. By tradition, a chaplain always followed the British troops, and whatever worship was offered at the Chartiers Creek stockade is taken as the seeding of Old St. Luke's Church on the same site.

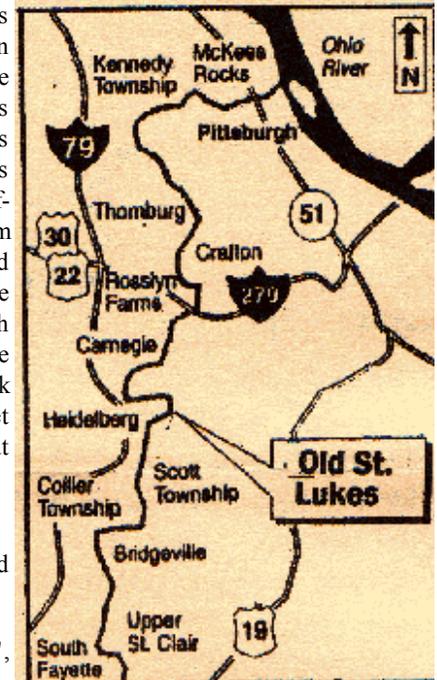
The Rev. David Zeisberger was a Moravian missionary to the Indians in western Pennsylvania in 1763-1764. His extensive history of North American Indians carefully notes the presence of the Delaware, Cherokee and

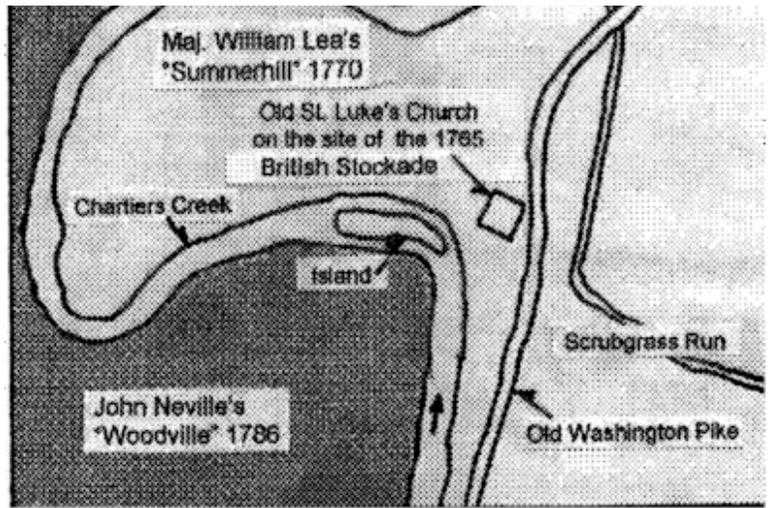
Seneca Indians in this region. He said the Indians were quick believers, and were capable of hiding their ferocious anger as they waited for a time to avenge themselves on anyone they thought injured them. They did not want to destroy British property as much as they wanted to take captives, to plunder goods and to take trophies (scalps of the wounded) for their spiritual power and to prove they were true warriors. White captives were seen as replacements for Indians killed in battle. Healthy women and children were prized, to be held for ransom or for sale as slaves. After a battle, Indians could not be controlled - just as Tanaghdsson, the Seneca half-king of the Iroquois Nation, from Logstown (Ambridge), ravaged Joseph Jumonville when George Washington subdued the French soldiers in 1753. Camped at the southern end of Chartier's Creek was Chief Catfish, and Bouquet had good reason to monitor what he was doing south of Ft. Pitt.

## Bibliography:

"The Crucible of War" by Fred Anderson, Knopf, 1999

"David Zeisberger's History", Wennawoods, 1999





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