

ALBEMARLE COUNTY ROADS
1725-1816

By

Nathaniel Mason Pawlett
Faculty Research Historian

Virginia Highway & Transportation Research Council
(A Cooperative Organisation Sponsored Jointly by the Virginia
Department of Highways & Transportation and
the University of Virginia)

Charlottesville, Virginia
January 1981

VHTRC 81-R36

Mechunk Creek being the only sizeable watercourse between the Rivanna River and Lickinghole Creek near Goochland Court House. In addition, the numbered markers along this road make it seem that it was selected for improvement as a major road at an early date, possibly by Peter Jefferson the site of whose Shadwell plantation it already passed when still a mere Indian path.

At this same session (15 July 1740 O.S.), another order issued which ultimately produced a road tributary to the Mountain Road. This order called for a "Road from the Thorrowfare [an old English name for a pass or gap] a little above Morrisons to the Secretarys fford". Whether anything was done on this road is not clear. A little more than a year later (15 September 1741 O.S.) the same group, considerably enlarged, appears with another petition evidently relating to the same road. This time leave is given them to clear a road from "Thomas Morrisons to the D.S. Tree in Michael Woods road". From this it would appear that Michael Wood's Road (later to be included in Three Notch'd) was open from the Blue Ridge to Secretary's Ford and that the petitioners needed only to connect with it. The D.S. Tree was located at the intersection of Routes 677 and 250 between Ivy and Charlottesville, and this is the first mention of it in the road orders although it may have been there as the zero marker when the numbers were placed from this point along the Mountain Road. Legend has it that Michael Wood and Davis Stockdon, after a trip to Williamsburg to patent their lands, separated at this point on their way home and Stockdon carved his initials "D.S." on a large tree. Whatever its origin this noted landmark was to figure prominently in road orders well into the nineteenth century.

The rest of this road from "The Thorrowfare a little above Morrisons to the Secretarys fford" must have been the road which leads from D.S. along the west side of the Ragged Mountains through Batesville into Nelson County (D.S. ▶ Route 677 ▶ 637 ▶ 689 ▶ 635 ▶ Batesville ▶ 635 ▶ Nelson County). Later, in the 1790's, the part of this road from D.S. to near Batesville would come to be called the Dick Wood's Road, after its surveyor. At this early stage of road development it would have provided access to the Mountain Road, with its superior route east, for the people between the Ragged Mountains and the Blue Ridge as far as the Rockfish Valley. The "Thorrowfare a little above Morrisons" may have been Brent's Gap, earlier perhaps Verdeman's Thoroughfare, but pronounced Vardaman's.

As a part of this same long road order another group was directed to clear a road from the Secretarys fford to the D.S. Tree. Still another group, liberally sprinkled with Woods and their connections, was to clear a road from the D.S. Tree to Michael Wood's. This must have been at most a reworking of the road previously opened by the Woods from Wood's Gap to Ivy Creek, and gives rise to the notion that the portion from the D.S. Tree down to Secretary's Ford was also being improved rather than "cleared" for the first time.

A similar case presents itself in another road order of the same date, this one giving "leave", or permission, to the "Honble John Carter Esq^r. to Clear a road from his Tye River Quarters to his Clear mount Quarters", the same road previously ordered to be opened by Robert Davis, Carter's overseer,

**STAUNTON
ALIAS BEVERLEY'S
MILL PLACE &
AUGUSTA COURT
HOUSE**



400,000

TO LOVINGSTON