

What Did They Do After Lunch?

Article taken from "Backsights" Magazine published by Surveyors
Historical Society

excerpted from GEORGE WASHINGTON'S JOURNAL

A JOURNAL OF MY JOURNEY OVER THE MOUNTAINS
BEGAN FRIDAY, THE 11th OF MARCH, 1747/8

March 29 & April 7: What Did They Do After Lunch?

Friday, March 11, 1747/8. Began my journey in company with George Fairfax, Esq. We traveled this day 40 miles to Mr. George Neville's in Prince William County.

Saturday, March 12th. This morning Mr. James Genn, the surveyor, came to us. We traveled over the Blue Ridge to Capt. Ashby's on the Shenandoah River. Nothing remarkable happened.

Sunday, March 13th. Rode to his lordship's quarter. About 4 miles higher up the River Shenandoah we went through most beautiful groves of sugar trees, and spent the best part of the day in admiring the trees and the richness of the land.

15th. Worked hard till night, and then returned. After supper we were lighted into a room, and I, not being so good a woodsman as the rest, stripped myself very orderly, and went into the bed, as they called it, when to my surprise I found it to be nothing but a little straw matted together without sheet or anything else, but only one threadbare blanket...I was glad to get up and put on my clothes, and lie as my companions did. Had we not been very tired, I am sure we should not have slept much that night. I made a promise to sleep so no more, choosing rather to sleep in the open air before a fire.

18th. We traveled to Thomas Berwick's on the Potomac, where we found the river exceedingly high, by reason of the great rains that had fallen in the Alleghanies. They told us it would not be fordable for several days, it being now six feet higher than usual, and rising. We agreed to stay

till Monday. We this day called to see the famed Warm Springs. We camped out in the field this night.

20th Finding the river not much abated, we in the evening swam our horses over to the Maryland side.

21st. We went over in a canoe and traveled up the Maryland side all day, in a continued rain...about 40 miles from the place of starting in the morning, and over the worst road, I believe, that ever was trod by man or beast.

23rd. Rained till about 2 o'clock and then cleared, when we were greatly surprised at the sight of more than thirty Indians coming from war with only one scalp...

After clearing a large space and making a great fire in the middle, the Indian men seated themselves around it and the speaker made a grand speech, telling them in what manner they were to dance. After he had finished, the best dancer jumped up as one awaked from sleep, and ran and jumped about the ring in the most comical manner. He was followed by the rest.

They began their music which was performed with a pot half full o water and a deerskin stretched tight over it, and a gourd with some shot in it to rattle, and a piece of horse's tail tied to it to make it look fine. One person kept rattling and another drumming all the while they were dancing....

26th. Traveled up to Solomon Hedge's, Esquire, one of his majesty's justices of the peace in the County of Frederick, where we camped. When we came to supper there was neither a knife on the table, nor a fork to eat with, but as good luck would have it, we had knives of our own.

29th. This morning went out and surveyed five hundred acres of land. Shot two wild turkeys.

30th. Began our intended business of laying off lots.

April 2d. A blowing, rainy night. Our straw, upon which we were lying took fire, but I was luckily preserved by one of our men awaking when it was aflame. We have run off four lots this day.

4th. This morning Mr. Fairfax left us, with the intention of going down

to the mouth of the river. We surveyed two lots, and were attended with a great company of people, men, women, and children, who followed us through the woods, showing their antic tricks. They seemed to be as ignorant a set of people as the Indians. They would never speak English, and when spoken to, they all spoke Dutch, this day our tent was blown down by the violence of the wind....

7th. This morning one of men killed a wild turkey that weighed twenty pounds. We surveyed fifteen hundred acres of land, and returned to Van Meter's about one o'clock.

I took my horse and went up to see Mr. Fairfax. We slept in Cassey's house, which was the first night I had slept in a house since we came to the Branch.

8th. We breakfasted at Cassey's, and rode down to Van Meter's to get our company together, which when we had accomplished, we rode down below the Trough to lay off lots there...

From The Story of Young George Washington by Wayne Whipple, 1915