

**“Trails, Taverns, and The Road to War”** commemorates British General Edward Braddock’s march through Rockville 250 years ago on his way to a major battle of the French and Indian War.

The French and Indian War (1754-1763), the first truly global war, started over control of the Ohio River Valley. French traders and trappers and their Indian allies resisted the efforts of settlers from the British colonies to settle west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Braddock’s mission in 1755 was to capture France’s Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio River (now Pittsburgh). He and his troops marched up the Great Road (today’s Route 355) to Frederick where his young aide-de-camp, George Washington, joined him. Braddock and his men then went to Cumberland, and from there built the first road over the Alleghenies. Close to Fort Duquesne, a battle broke out between Braddock’s army and a much smaller group of French soldiers and Indians. By the end, the French and Indians shooting from woods and ravines had overwhelmed the British troops. Braddock was mortally wounded, and Washington, who stayed calm and courageous amid the chaos, established a reputation as a capable military leader.

The British ultimately won the war and gained an empire that included most of North America. However, this empire was expensive to administer, and the King began taxing the American colonies to raise funds. This generated resentment among the colonists and helped lead to the American Revolution two decades later.

The road that Braddock took through the settlement that would grow into Rockville had been an Indian trail. The intersection of that road and another one from the Monocacy River to Bladensburg was a natural place to build an inn or “ordinary” as colonial taverns were often called. In the early 1750s, Lawrence Owen opened an establishment there, and the tiny frontier settlement that grew up around the inn was known as Owen’s Ordinary. A colonial tavern was more than just a place for travelers to stop for food and lodging. It also served as a meeting place for farmers who lived in the surrounding area.

In 1755, the residents of Owen’s Ordinary watched as British troops and colonial militiamen marched off to defend settlers trying to move west. Perhaps some men from this area joined Braddock’s army as it passed through in April of 1755.

By the early 1770s, the settlement was known as Hungerford’s Tavern, and political attitudes had changed profoundly. On June 11, 1774, citizens met in the tavern and passed the Hungerford Resolves supporting the people of Boston in their struggle against British authority. Rockville, along with the rest of America, was on the road to independence.

### **Diary Excerpts of Two of Braddock’s Men, April 1755**

Seaman:

*On the 14<sup>th</sup>:—We began our march at 6, and were ordered with our detachment to go in front, and about 2 o’clock at one Lawrence Owens, 15 miles from Rock Creek, and 8 miles from the upper falls of Potomack; and encamped upon good ground.*

Batman (servant) of a British officer:

*We Marched to Larance Owings or Owings Oardinary, a Single House, it being 18 miles and very dirty.*