

The Upper Road

~ Traffic ~

"While this trail [the *Occaneechi Path*] was doubtless of pre-historic origin, it does not appear to have become of great importance until the advent of the traders. It then sprang immediately into prominence and this condition has continued down to the present day...."

--Marcus W. Lewis

The Development of Early Emigrant Trails in the United States East of the Mississippi River.

The Indians were the first to trade among each other. As white settlers came into the interior of Virginia, they too began to use the path and to trade with the Indians. "Great caravans of white emigrants passed along this route both to and from in very early days, visiting the Red Men in their villages, selling them guns, powder, shot, hatchets, kettles, blankets, brass rings and other trinkets which always attracted them. This trading and transportation over this route was particularly active between 1700 and 1750. It is believed that De Soto and his cavaliers were the first white men to have used at least portions of the great *Occaneechi Path*, perhaps about the year 1540 or a little later."

--Marcus W. Lewis

The Development of Early Emigrant Trails in the United States East of the Mississippi River.

The *Carolina Road*, earlier an Indian hunting path, derived its name from trade between Frederick, Maryland and Georgia.

Because of notorious gangs of thieves besetting travelers, the road was also known as *Rogue's Road*. Later the road was used by settlers emigrating to western lands.

The *Carolina Road's* most famous traveler was Lafayette who rode triumphantly in 1824 on his way to Oakhill, home of ex-president Monroe.

~Features~

The *Upper Road* was known by several other names. Pioneers along the eastern front of the Blue Ridge Mountains developed a road first known as the *Carolina Road*. Because of the road's mountainous location, Tidewater Virginians called it the *Upper Road*. In a later period, some called it *Rogue's Road*.

The road seems to have followed the *Occaneechi Path* which went from Bermuda Hundred on the James River, and Old Fort Henry (later Petersburg, VA), southwest to the Indian trading town of the Occaneechi on the Roanoke River at about where the river crosses the present state line between Virginia and North Carolina. From there it passed through the Carolinas to Augusta, Georgia, and connected with other major trails leading to various sections of the southeastern and Gulf states.

As the Tidewater Region of Virginia became heavily settled, a stream of colonists flowed along the *Occaneechi Path* to locate in its most fertile parts. The old trading trail needed to be upgraded into a full-fledged road to permit wagon traffic.

This road provided access to farm lands in the interior of Virginia and points further south. The water transportation routes were no longer adequate to reach the new farming areas.

When land grants were issued, settlers came in great numbers into North Carolina's Granville District — the northern third of North Carolina.

The road ran to the west of but parallel to the *Fall Line Road* and the *King's Highway*.

At Athens, GA, travelers could pick up the *Federal Road* which went on south to Columbus, GA, and then west through Alabama and Mississippi all the way to Natchez where it intersected with the *Natchez Trace*.

~ *Timeline* ~
The Upper Road

- 1540 De Soto and his cavaliers are perhaps the first white men to use portions of the great *Occaneechi Path*.
- 1675 An important trading town of the Occaneechi Indians exists on an island in the Roanoke River at about the location of today's Clarks-ville, VA, close to the present Virginia/North Carolina state line. From that location the trading trail goes both north and south.
- 1700-50 Active trading is carried on by white emigrants with Indian villages.
- 1733 The once important Indian village of Occaneechi has been abandoned and deserted.
- 1740 The proprietary governor of the Granville Dis-trict begins issuing grants to Quakers and others from the tidewater counties of North Carolina and Virginia.
- 1750 The *Upper Road* has become an important wagon route for southbound migrations into North Carolina.
- 1775 After 1775 when much of the north-south traffic used the *Great Valley Road*, the *Upper Road* became a route for illegal trade and stolen cattle and livestock moving across central Virginia. This earned the road the nickname of *Rogue's Road*.
- 1776-1781 During the Revolutionary War, the *Upper Road* is used for troop movements in the South, particularly in connection with the battles at Guilford Courthouse, King's Mountain, and Cowpens.
- 1828 Travelers on the *Upper Road* are able now to continue south and then west on the Federal Road from Athens, GA, on south to Columbus, GA, and across Alabama and Mississippi.



Route of the Upper Road

The *Upper Road* began at Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the *King's Highway* and continued through Virginia and into the Carolinas. It ran west of the *Fall Line Road*.

Today, this path is no longer a continuous road because several man-made lakes are along the way. The general route from Fredericksburg was west of present-day Interstate 85. It passed through the current Virginia counties of Spotsylvania, Louisa, Goochland, Powhatan, Amelia, Nottoway, Lunenburg, and Mecklenburg. From the North Carolina line, it is nearly the same as Interstate 85 and continues into South Carolina.

- Fredericksburg, VA
- Hillsboro, NC
- Salisbury, NC
- Charlotte, NC
- Spartanburg, SC
- Greenville, SC