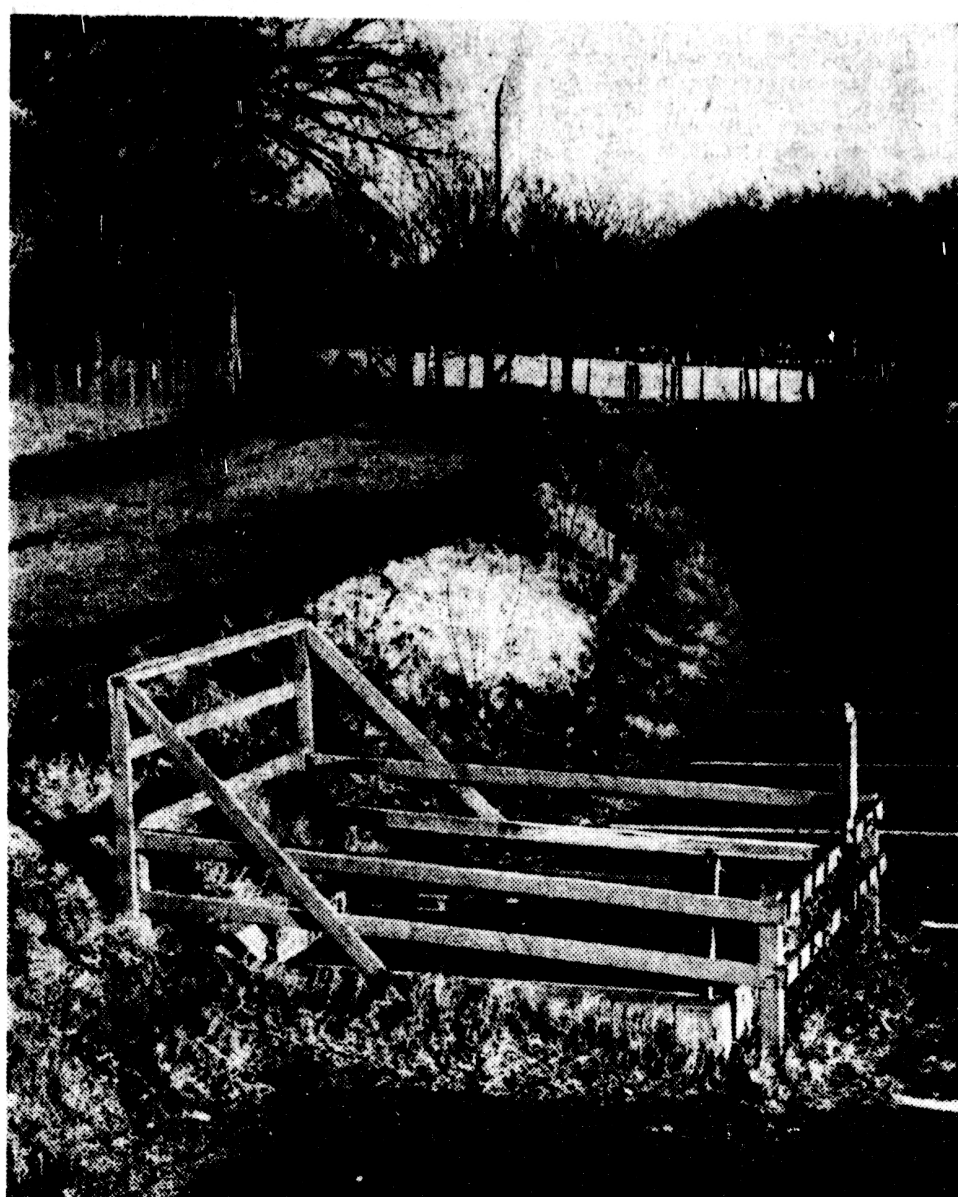


# The Evening Star

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**BRADDOCK'S ROCK TODAY**—The huge rock formation on which Gen. Braddock is believed to have landed his troops in 1755 is visible now only at the bottom of this 12-foot shaft near Twenty-third street and Constitution avenue N.W. The fenced shaft is in the old Naval Hospital parking lot.—Star Staff Photo.



**IN FORMER YEARS**—Braddock's Rock wasn't always inland. This early photograph shows it somewhat as it must have appeared to Gen. Braddock—as a promontory in the Potomac River. Subsequent landfills have surrounded and all but buried the rock.

## Braddock Rock to Be Spared

By JOHN W. STEPP  
Star Staff Writer

Braddock's Rock, one of Washington's oldest historical landmarks, lies directly in the path of one of the proposed approach roads to the Constitution avenue bridge.

District highway officials, who had scarcely even heard of the rock much less known its location, made the discovery Wednesday after an inquiry by The Star. Before the Star's interest had been aroused by a letter from a Washington historian concerned over the landmark's preservation.

But within hours after the discovery was made by a specially dispatched team of surveyors, highway planners were giving assurances.

Douglas S. Brinkley, chief of design and planning, said that a slight swerving realignment of the westbound approach of Constitution avenue to the bridge could be made with little difficulty. This would place Braddock's Rock in an angle formed by the westbound leg and the avenue's proposed loop

connection with Twenty-third street N.W.

### May Be More Conspicuous

"Actually," Mr. Brinkley said, "the new road layout could make the rock more conspicuous by putting it more in the center of things."

The boulder, in fact, is practically consigned to oblivion as it now rests. If Gen. Braddock, after whom it is named, were to land on it with his troops today—as he is believed to have done in Colonial times—he would have to drop down a 12-foot shaft to reach his target.

Two centuries ago the original rock mass jutted like a natural wharf into deep water of the Potomac River. The Potomac shoreline has steadily moved westward toward Roosevelt Island a distance of several city blocks owing to years of landfill operations.

### Landing in Doubt

Today about 50 square feet of it remains, open to daylight at the bottom of a well-like structure in the middle of the old Naval Hospital parking lot about 100 yards northeast of the Twenty-third and Constitution intersection.

Gen. Sir Edward Braddock reputedly disembarked his British and Colonial troops on the original promontory in April, 1755. His transports had sailed in from Alexandria for the land march that was to lead Braddock to ambush and eternity in the French and Indian War engagement near Fort Duquesne—now Pittsburgh, Pa.

Some historians still quibble over whether the general actually landed there and subsequently camped on the nearby slopes in the company of Lt. Col. George Washington. The dominant view seems to be that he did. This band of believers, in any case, has seen to it over the years that the rock was spared from being covered, along with the rest of the waterfront area.

Not only from Braddock does the rock historical sentiment stem. Back in the olden time when it stood at the river's edge it served as the starting point for drawing the boundary line of such colonial tracts as

"The Widow's Mite," "Mexico" and "The Vineyard" — all of which were to become part of the Federal City.

For many years the rock bore a surveyor's bench mark for this purpose. It was labeled "Key of all Keys," a corruption of "Quay of all Quays."

### Dream of Capital?

And some researchers contend, perhaps a bit romantically, that it was the time spent near the rock with Braddock that first gave Col. Washington his idea the general area would make a fine site for the Nation's Capital.

After Washington's time the rock was a favorite preaching place for a local pastor, the Rev. Obediah Brown, who also happened to be Postmaster General. Pastor Brown used to bring along a portable pulpit, set it up on the rock and spread the gospel to his large flock as they sat on the grassy slopes called Camp Hill from Braddock's times. The water's edge served for baptisms.

History lovers over the years have chided the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal people for "ruthlessly blasting away" large portions of the rock in order to build their project, which even today is controversial in other respects.

### Used as Quarry

Still later, the whole rocky area became a quarry from which some of the foundation stone for the United States Capitol was taken.

With the abandonment of the canal, the place became a dumping ground, river mud deposits accumulated along the shore and finally the whole section from Rock Creek on downstream was filled in as a reclamation project.

Controversy over whether Braddock really set foot on the rock before it went underground has not echoed for decades. Perhaps the late John Claggett Proctor, historical writer for The Star ended it back in 1924 when he observed similar doubts have been raised over Plymouth Rock, "but you can't convince the Yankee that the Pilgrims did not land there."