CENTREVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Fairfax County, Virginia

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

John F. Herrity, Chairman

Joseph Alexander
Thomas Davis
Sandra Duckworth
Nancy Falck
Elaine McConnell
Audrey Moore
Martha V. Pennino
James M. Scott

PLANNING COMMISSION

George C. Lilly, Chairman

Rosemarie Annunziata
Peter H. Brinitzer
Tybelle Fasteau
Suzanne Harsel
Ronald W. Koch
Peter F. Murphy, Jr.
Carl L. Sell, Jr.
Robert R. Sparks, Jr.
John H. Thillmann
Alvin L. Thomas

James C. Wyckoff, Jr., Executive Director

HISTORY COMMISSION

Virginia B. Peters, Chairman

Bernard N. Boston
Burdick H. Brittin
C.J.S. Durham
Denzil O. Evans
Jack Hiller
Mary M. Fahringer
William A. Klene
Elise Murray
Donie Rieger
Edith M. Sprouse
Mayo S. Stuntz

ARCHITECHTURAL REVIEW BOARD

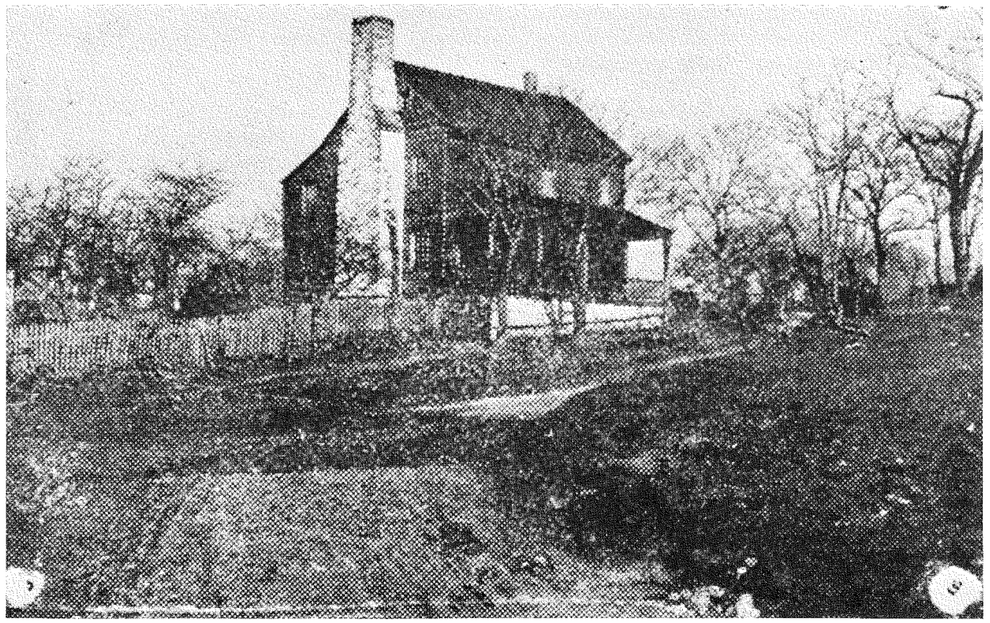
Michael Gick, Chairman

Lorrine Case
Mary Fahringer
Mark Lewis
Susan Notkins
Richard O'Brien
Louis Papa
Richard Redler
S. Richard Rio
Helen Tidball

Union solider standing in Braddock Road. The stone church is in background. Attributed to Mathew Brady.

Centreville Historic District

Office of Comprehensive Planning
Fairfax County, Virginia
September, 1984



Havener House, c. 1907.

Mr. John F. Herrity, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Chairman Herrity and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

In my capacity as Chairman of the Centreville Area Study, it is a distinct privilege to forward, for your consideraton, the staff and citizenry proposal for the creation of a Centreville Historic District. The creation of this particular district is intended to preserve and protect the eighteenth and nineteenth century structures and their environs which collectively represent the old town area of Centreville.

The creation of this district will enable Centreville which has played a very significant role in the development heritage of our County, State and Nation to retain an identity that would otherwise be obscured by population growth and cultural flux. The new district will provide a visual educational medium by which a better understanding of our historic and cultural heritage may be imparted to present and future generations.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the historic district amendment adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The report has been coordinated with the appropriate Fairfax County agencies as well as the History Commission and the Architectural Review Board.

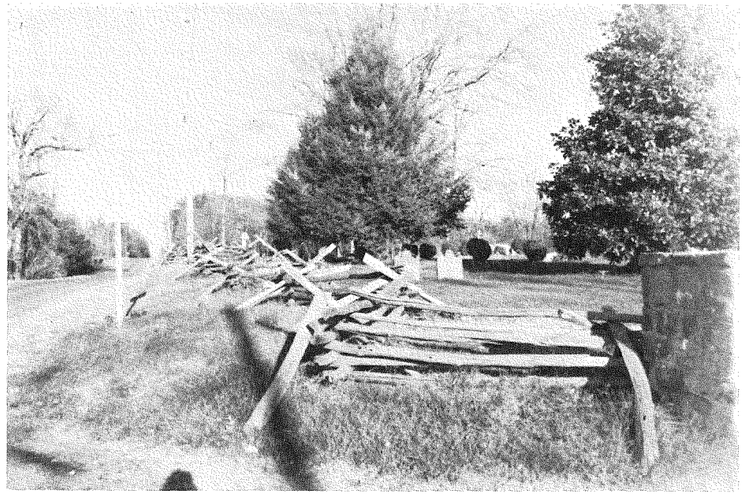
Sincerely,

Richard L. Korink
Chairman

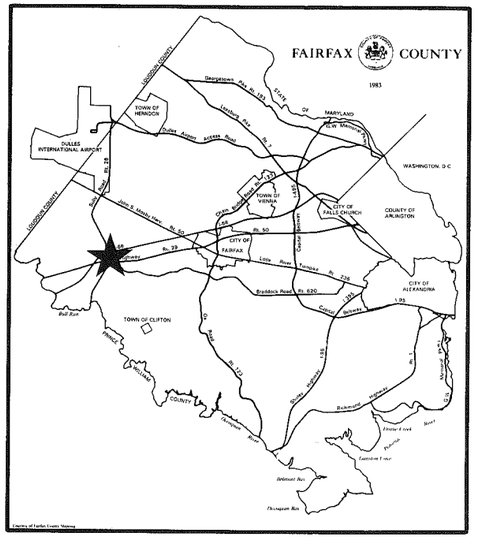
RLK:alc

TABLE OF CONTENTS

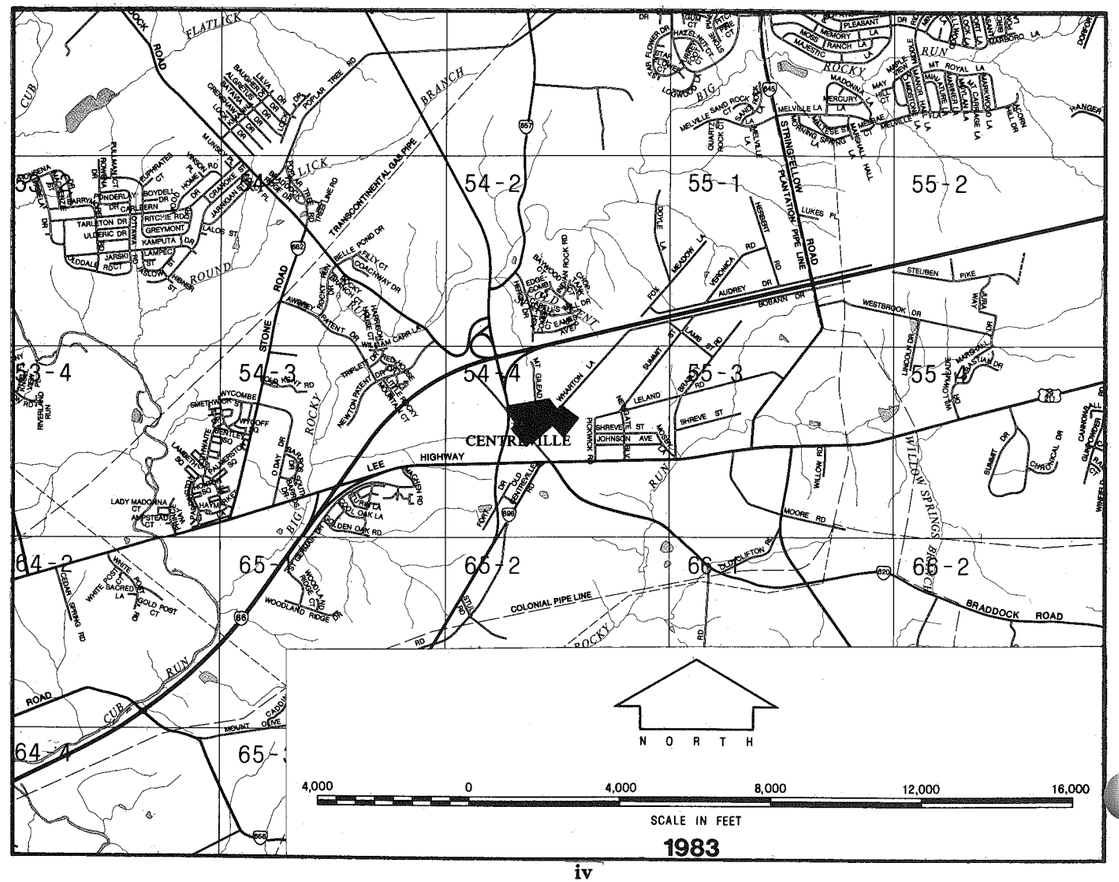
LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL	ii
LOCATION MAP AND VICINITY MAP	iv
PREFACE	1
SITE PLAN	1
THE PROPERTY	2
HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE	3
CURRENT ZONING	11
CURRENT PLANS	12
DEVELOPMENT TRENDS	12
PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES	14
HISTORIC DISTRICT	15
RECOMMENDATIONS	16

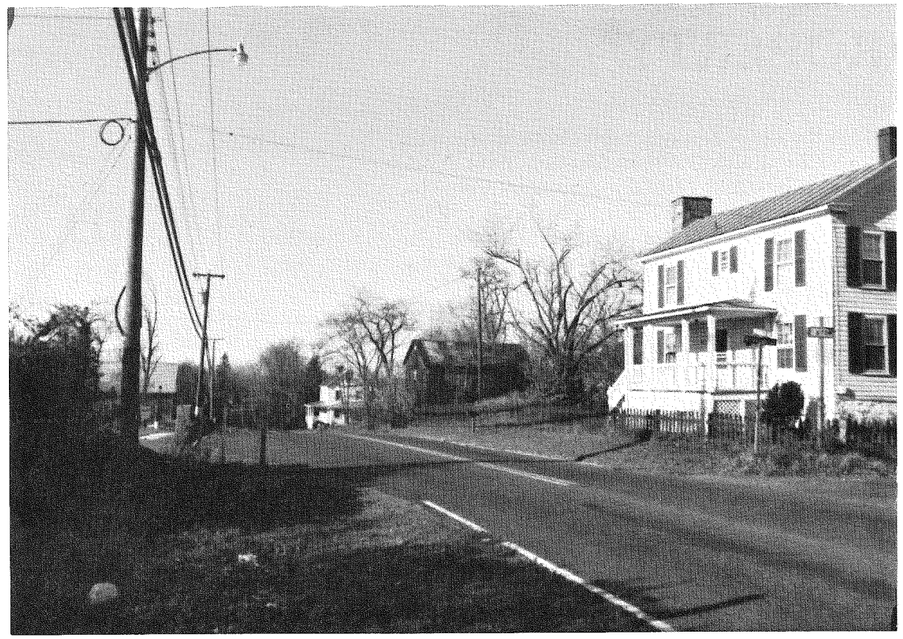


LOCATION MAP



VICINITY MAP





PREFACE

The creation of historic districts was authorized by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to protect and enhance the county's historic and architectural landmarks. These sites are not only valuable but vulnerable—vulnerable to incompatible nearby development and to pressures of increased population and new uses. The creation of a historic district affords protection by ensuring that all new development and any exterior alternations to existing structures will be compatible. After final adoption by the Board of Supervisors, a historic district is administered by the Architectural Review Board.

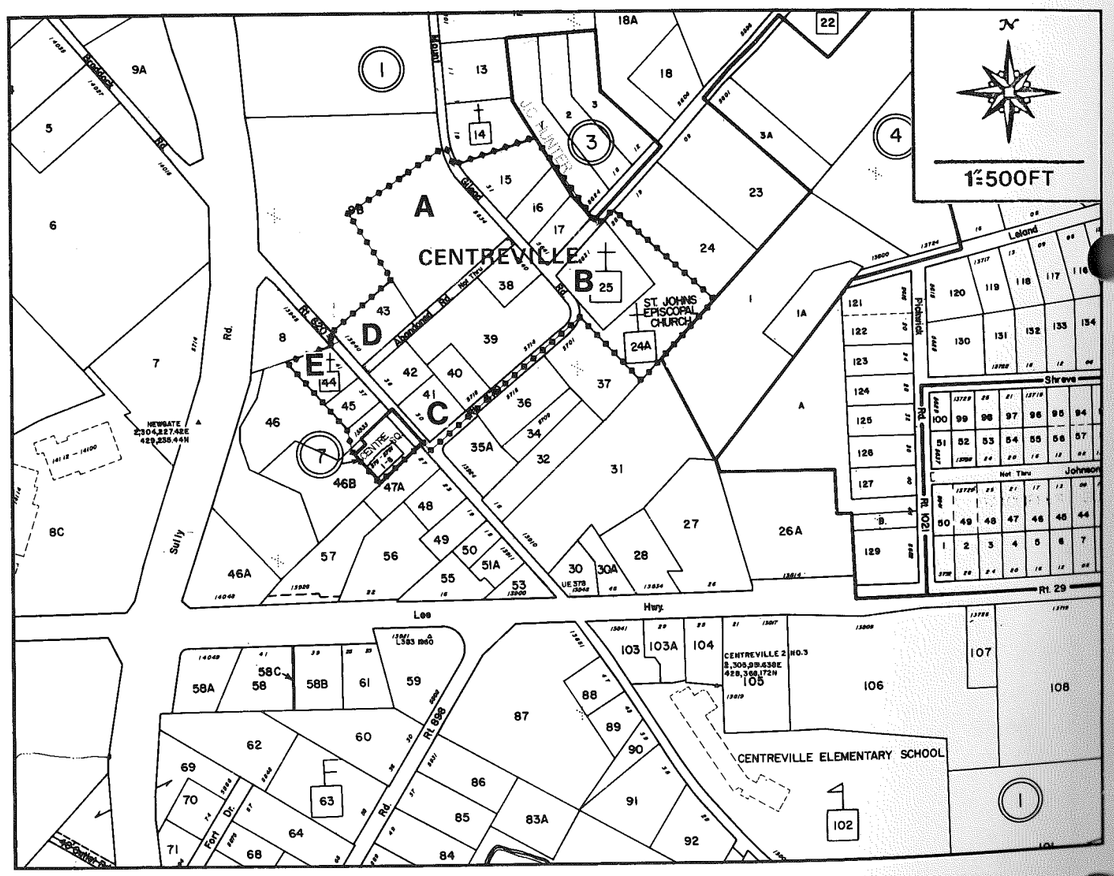
The Centreville Historic Overlay District brings to twelve the number of such districts in Fairfax County.

Recommendations for the Centreville Historic District stress retention of the old mixture of uses which have historically characterized the area.

THE PROPERTY

Old-town Centreville is the site of five structures clustered around a rectangular area formed by Braddock Road, Mount Gilead Road, and Wharton Lane. Along Braddock Road are situated the Harrison House, the Havener House and the Old Stone Church. Mount Gilead and St. John's Episcopal Church are on Mount Gilead road. On the grounds of Mount Gilead are remains of trenches and fortifications constructed during the Civil War.

A. Mount Gilead and Civil War Trenches
B. St. John Church
C. Harrison House
D. Havener House
E. Old Stone Church



HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The recorded history of Centreville dates from the first half of the eighteenth century when settlement began. Indeed the oldest artifact in the Centreville area is the boundary stone from the Willoughby Newton property, marked "WN" and dated 1739. Tobacco production was the basis of economy and the old Indian trail, known as the Mountain Road, became a "rolling road," on which hogsheads of tobacco could be rolled to the river port. What was then called "Walter Griffin's Rowling Road" is basically what is now known as Braddock Road, from Route 123, the Ox Road, to Centreville. About 1755 this road began to be called Braddock Road, apparently in hope that Major General Edward Braddock, commander of the British forces would use that route on his army's march to Winchester. This, however, was not to be.

Early and prominent landowners included Newton, as well as the Carrs, Jetts, and Lanes. The Lanes' store was a local landmark along the road. In addition to dry goods, land and slaves were sold there. The store acquired the name of Wapping, apparently in reference to a section of London—a section known for a raffish, low-life style. In furtherance of the London reference, the tavern in operation by 1768 was known as Newgate, famous as a market, but also as a prison where imprisoned debtors carried on active social life, holding parties in their rooms, and purchasing alcoholic beverages through the jailers. By 1773 Newgate was used to refer to the village itself. As Eugenia Smith points out in *Centreville, Virginia, Its History and Architecture*, the association of the names is "gay but disreputable."

The third of the original Newgate structures, Mount Gilead, was also used as an ordinary, or inn, under the ownership of Joel Beach. It is the only survivor of the village of Newgate.

In a burst of post-Revolutionary economic enthusiasm, Newgate residents petitioned the Virginia Assembly to found a town, expecting economic prosperity from travellers along the old road. In 1792 the assembly created the town of Centerville (though the name quickly altered to Centreville). The residents of the area established tanneries and saw and grist mills and the village was locally known as a trading center for the yearly rental of slaves that took place each January. The records of the Machen family at nearby Walney are full of information about slave hirings.

Of paramount consideration, however, was the necessity of location along a major highway. The selection of the site of the Little River Turnpike and its completion in 1806 had a severe affect on Centreville's prosperity. The construction of the Warrenton Turnpike restored prosperity somewhat, but an additional blow was the 1850's construction of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad.

Mount Gilead, from a sketch made during the Civil War years.

Sparse but probably reliable information on Centreville during the first half of the ninteenth century is found in an 1835 gazetteer:

> "Centreville P.V. (post village) in the western part of the county 143 miles from Richmond and 27 southwest of Washington. This village is situated on the Fauquier and Alexandria turnpike road about 6 miles from the line dividing the Counties of Loudoun and Prince William. It derives its name from its central position, being about equidistant from Leesburg, Middlesburg, Warrenton, Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria. Its situation is elevated and highly picturesque affording one of the best mountain prospects in the state of Virginia. It has always been remarkable for the salubrity of its air, and the health of its inhabitants. It contains 30 dwelling houses, 1 Methodist meeting house, 2 taverns, 3 mercantile stores, 1 common school, and a well organized Sunday school. The mechanics are 2 tanners, 1 saddler, 4 boot and shoe manufacturers, 1 wheelwright, 2 blacksmiths, 1 cabinet maker, 2 house carpenters, and 1 tailor. For some time past this village has been declining but the spirit of industry and enterprise at present manifested by its inhabitants justifies the hope of a more favorable state of things. Population 220 of whom 2 are attorneys and 3 physicians."

From 1800 to 1861, the story of Centreville is one of gradual decline, both physical and economic. This may be explained by loss of business on the Warrenton Turnpike, general economic difficulties, and the departure in the 1820's and 1830's of the younger and more vigorous generations of Lanes and Adamses to newly opened territory in Kentucky, Illinois and other frontier states.

When Confederate and Federal troops arrived in 1861, they found a small town that was already decaying.

In April of 1861 the voters of Centreville cast 105 ballots for secession from the Union—a unanimous vote. By June the town was already occupied by Confederate troops as Centreville became the focal point for the war in northern Virginia. Its strategic importance was based on its position in relation to turnpike and railroad systems, its topographical position on a high plateau and its proximity to Washington, D.C. The buildings of Centreville were pressed into service as hospitals after the First Battle of Bull Run (or Manassas) as the defeated Union soldiers fled through Centreville on the way to Alexandria.

A major disruption began in October of 1861 when Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston brought his main force of almost 40,000 men to Centreville to set up winter encampment, and the nearby fields were converted into drill grounds. The army built over five miles of earthworks on the Centreville plateau. The demand for wood for housing and firewood was tremendous. By the end of December the troops had built fifteen hundred log cabins housing from eight to twenty men each. A young girl living at nearby Level Green during the winter of 1861-1862 recalled:

> "There was enough firewood on our farm to last us for hundreds of years. But during the winter the southern troops had their winter quarters there and cut down every last bit of it,

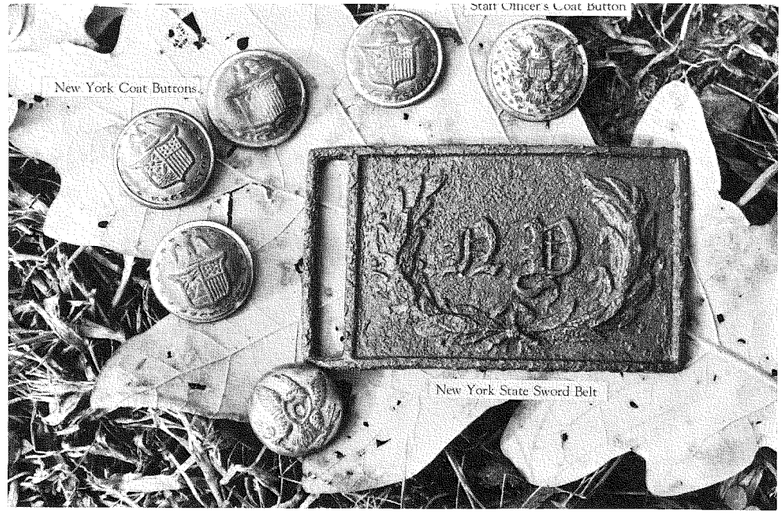
The Second Battle of Manassas, showing Jackson's Confederate troops, their ammunition exhausted, hurling rocks at the advancing Federals.

built log houses to live in and they even used our logs to corduroy the road from Centreto Manassas. And all during the winter they burned our trees for firewood. We were beginning to worry that we were going to do for wood for ourselves the next winter."

Confederate headquarters were set up in the Grigsby house and Johnston himself moved into nearby Mount Gilead.

The Confederates left Centreville on March 8 and 9, 1862 and on March 10 the Union Army entered. Johnston left behind the "Centreville Military Railroad," the world's first military railroad, a spur between Centreville and Manassas Junction. Its rails were soon to be ripped up by the Union troops in order to repair the Manassas Gap Railroad so as to supply federal forces in the Shenandoah. Union photographs record the treeless town and the lines of the trenches.

Civil War artifacts found in Centreville area. Photos By Gary Indre.



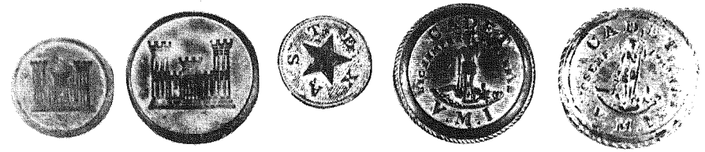
Evidence of northern occupation of Centreville

As was the case with much of northern Virginia, Centreville was a long time in recovering from the effects of the war. In 1914 the Washington *Sunday Star's* "Rambler" described Centreville as he saw it in August of that year.

"Centreville is not a stirring place. It does not feel a single busy throb. It is stagnant and some men say 'its dead.' If ever a village was killed in war it was Centreville. Perhaps it was choked by smoke of burning powder or smothered by the sulphurous gas from guns; perhaps it was blighted by the rain or overcome by the horrors that it saw. Today it bears wounds and scars. Its wounds are bullet-pitted walls and shot riven trees. Its scars are sunken graves and vine veiled redoubts.

A dozen houses compose the hamlet. Half of them cling to the roadside, as though to feed their lean and leaning sides on such excitement as a passing team and the visitation of a stranger bring. These wan houses seem to sniff the yellow dust whirled up by a slow-going team as though it were exhilarating snuff. They bear a feeble and listless look, and were they sentient things they would likely say: 'Centreville is a little slow just now, but oh, my! if you had been here about fifty years ago you wouldn't laugh at us for being a bit shaky and out of joint now.' And the Rambler believes that the old houses would speak truly."

The nucleus of old Centreville in 1984 is formed by three houses and two churches known to "The Rambler" in 1914. They are Mount Gilead, the Harrison House, the Havener House, St. John's Church and the Stone Church, formerly the Centreville Methodist Church.

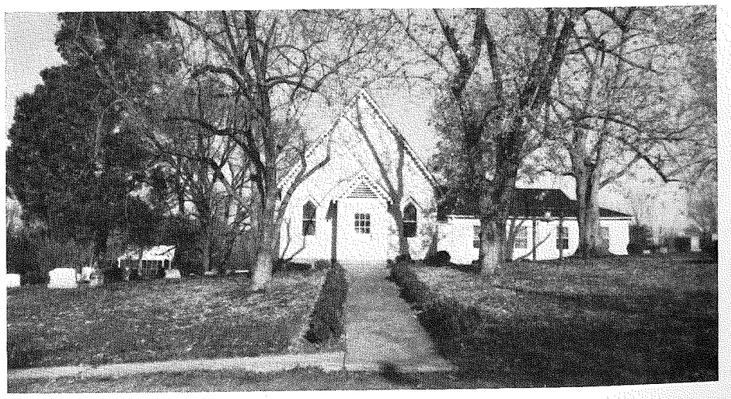


Mount Gilead

Mount Gilead, built before 1750, is one of the oldest houses in the county and is an excellent example of local Potomac River architecture. Distinguishing architectural characteristics include porches along the front and back elevations, and a sloping roof line with dormers and chimneys at both ends. Although local tradition has it that George Washington visited the house on several occasions, no verifications of these events can be found in Washington's diaries.

During the winter of 1861-62, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, Commander of the Department of Northern Virginia, used Mount Gilead as his headquarters while some 40,000 Confederate troops were quartered in Centreville. Remains of the Confederate breastwork can be found on the northeast lawn of Mount Gilead, is located on Mount Gilead Road just east of Route 28.

Nearby is St. John's Episcopal Church, a small one-story Gothic revival-style building with arched windows and entrance way. A parish hall, built in 1954, adjoins the church, and there is a cemetery in the churchyard. The fencing around the property strongly evokes the Civil War connections.



St. John's Church

Harrison House

The Harrison House, located at the corner of Braddock and Mount Gilead Roads, is believed to have been constructed about 1840. It is a two-story white frame structure with a stone walk-in basement and chimney. Local historians believe that services for St. John's Episcopal Church were conducted here during the Civil War when the church building was occupied.

Although the exact age of the Havener House is not known, photographs taken during the Civil War serve to document its existence at that time. At one time the structure was an inn and was used as an aid station during the Civil War. In 1912, it was said to have served as the Centreville Post Office and in the 1920's, the building served as combination residence and general store. The house is located across Braddock Road from the Centreville Methodist Church.

Havener House.

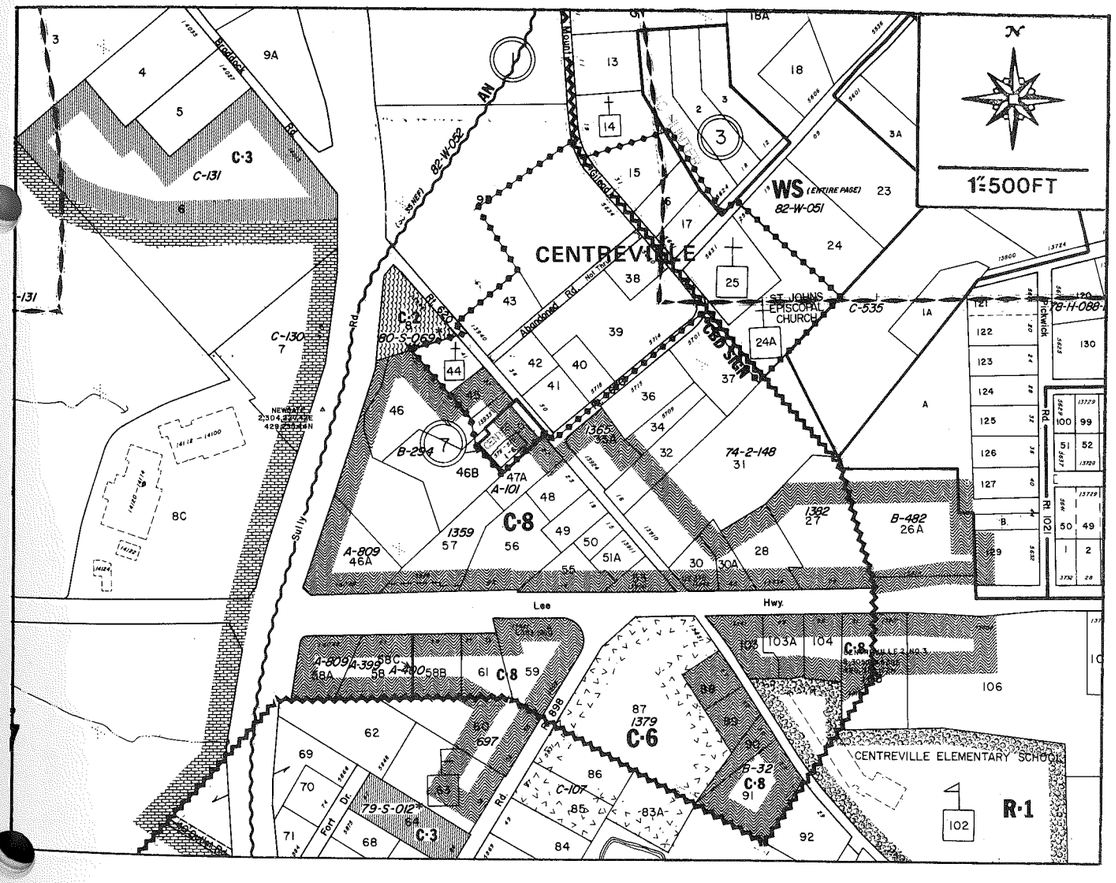
Old Stone Church

The original structure of the Centreville Methodist Church was completed in 1855 and was used as a hospital during the first and second battles of Manassas. The original structure was destroyed in the second battle. Rebuilt in 1870, the first section of the present stone church is similar to the original structure. A stone addition to the church was completed in 1945. It should be noted, too, that during General Johnston's troops' occupation of the Centreville area, a large system of earthworks was constructed for the Confederate defense. At Centreville, these earthworks were part of a system which extended seventeen miles between Centreville, Union Mills, Occoquan, and Dumphries and connected several forts. Evidence of these earthworks can still be found on either side of Wharton Lane, northwest and northeast of St. John's Church and on the Mount Gilead grounds.

Evidence of Earthworks

CURRENT ZONING

Zoning within the historic district is predominantly residential, single family (R-1). A small amount of commercial (C-8) property is located along Braddock Road between Mount Gilead Road and the old Stone Church.



CURRENT PLANS

The old Centreville complex is located within the BR6 sector of the Bull Run Planning District. It is also part of the Centreville Complex area which has been singled out for special study. One of the issues in the study is preservation of the historic sites, with the recommendation that "preservation of these sites should be accomplished in the context of future urban development." A historic district is specifically recommended to protect the historic structures and their environs.

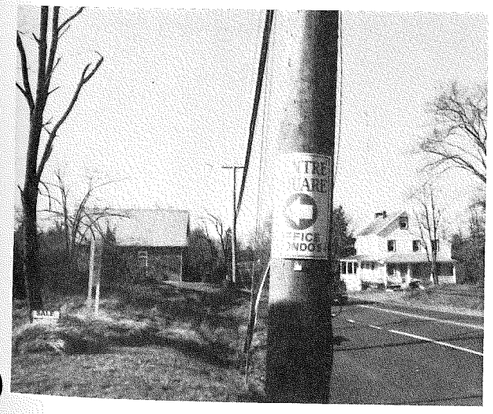
DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Development in the Centreville area has always been a mixture of commercial and residential uses. This mixture has endured, but only as recently as the 1970s has Centreville been seen as a major regional growth center. Evidence of the pressures for development are seen in the new area subdivision and in the nearby Newgate Shopping Center. Along old Braddock Road itself two new office buildings and increasing commercial use of older structures are evidence of this pressure. There is some vacant land in the district, but there are also older residential structures on lots which could be consolidated for more intense development. This clearly puts great pressure on the historic sites in the area, the only visible reminder of Old Centreville.

Commercial uses, both newly constructed and in old structures, adjoin the historic area.

The following factors indicate the need to establish a historic district around old Centreville;

- The historic and architectural significance of the five structures: Mount Gilead; St. John's Church; Harrison House; Havener House; the old Stone Church.
- The value of the Civil War earthworks near Mount Gilead.
- The need to protect the area from adverse environmental influences, including inappropriate improvements to Braddock Road.
- The need to assure that any future development within the area will be compatible in use and scale with the existing development.
- The current assumption for high density development in the entire area, which could have undesirable consequences for its historic core.



PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES

GENERAL GOALS

1. To protect the historic and aesthetic integrity of the structures.
2. To ensure that both the immediate and the secondary surroundings provide this protection.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create a visually identifiable historic district.
2. Protect the feeling of calm and spaciousness in the historic distict and its environs.
3. Create a stable land use pattern as a form of protection.
4. Encourage design compatible with the aesthetic quality and the historic association of the structures.
5. Reorient heavy commercial traffic and excessive passenger traffic away from the immediate environs of the district.
6. Encourage tourists to notice and visit the district.
7. Retain a maximum amount of open space and natural tree cover.

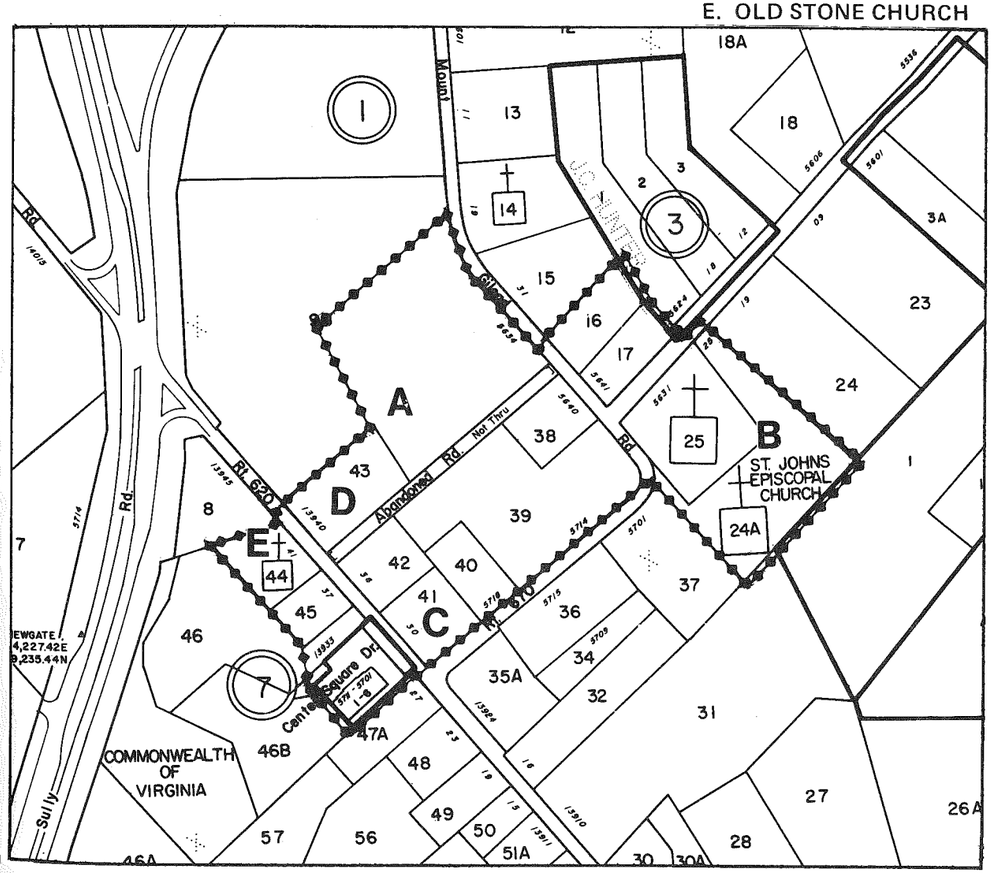
Evidence of earthworks on the Mount Gilead property.

OLD CENTREVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Proposed Boundaries

LEGEND

A. Mt. GILEAD
B. St. JOHNS CHURCH
C. HARRISON HOUSE
D. HAVENER HOUSE
E. OLD STONE CHURCH



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policies are recommended in order to protect the Centreville Historic District from adverse environmental influences and to guide development within it and its immediate environs.

LAND USE

- Additional residential development should be kept at a density of not more than five to eight units per acre.
- Additional commercial development on any site should not exceed a total .25 FAR (Floor Area Ratio). Commercial uses should be local serving and tourist-oriented, such as professional offices, craft shops, antique shops restaurants, *etc.*
- Public facilities should be permitted within the area, except and as determined by the Board of Supervisors with the recommendations of the Architecural Review Board.
- No industrial zoning should be permitted.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

The design of all improvements, public as well as private, in the Centreville Historic District, is critical to the preservation of the character of the historic area and its immediate environs. The following environmental design policies should be applied to this area.

- All new development should be designed to preserve existing land contours and to protect existing tree cover.
- All new development should provide as much open space as possible with an emphasis on pedestrian circulation within the historic area.

- Specific landscape plans should be included with all site plans submitted to the Architectural Review Board.
- Any new buildings constructed in the area should be of a bulk and scale so as not to overwhelm the human scale of the historical structures and/or compete for the visual focus of the historic area.
- All buildings should be subject to a 35 foot height limit.
- All improvements, including public facilities, parking lots, walkways, structures, signs, fences, street furniture, outdoor graphics, and public and private utilities should be designed, located and installed compatible with the historic sites in terms of mass, scale, color, types of material and visual impact.
- All parking lots should be screened/landscaped and on-street parking should be discouraged.
- Signs should be kept to a minimum in number and size. In no case should freestanding signs exceed 10 feet in height. All signs should be designed to be harmonious with the historic and aesthetic qualities of the area.
- Any type of outdoor lighting should be subject to Architectural Review Board control.

TRANSPORTATION

- With regard to the devasting impact road improvements/upgrading could have on the historical structures and environment of this particular historic district, care should be taken in considering improvements that will result in increased use of the roadway network within the historic district. Also, increased vehicular traffic should be discouraged within the historic district.
- On-street parking should be discouraged so as not to interfere with the flow of traffic on the existing roadways.

Braddock Road, looking northwest from the Harrison House to the Havener House.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTIONS

- Adoption of a declaration that the old town area of Centreville has both historic and architectural significance requiring protection against destruction and encroachment.
- Adoption of the Centreville Historic District report which substantiates the architectural and historic significance of the area.
- Adoption of the provisions for the Centreville Historic Overlay District by amending Appendix I of the Zoning Ordinance to add a new Part 12.

Earthworks at Centreville, c. 1862. Library of Congress photo. (The apparent double image of the dog in the foreground is probably due to the limitations of early cameras.)

PART I A1-1200 CENTREVILLE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT

A1-1201 Purpose and Intent

The Centreville Historic Overlay District is created to protect against destruction of the historic and architectural quality of the landmarks; to encourage uses which will lead to their continuance, conservation and improvement; and to assure that new uses within the district will be in keeping with the character to be preserved and enhanced.

A1-1202 Permitted, Special Permit, and Special Exception Uses

All uses permitted by right, special permit, and special exception in the underlying zoning districts.

A1-1203 Use Limitations

1. The provisions of Part 2 of Article 7 shall apply to all lands within the district.
2. All uses and development within this district shall be in strict conformance with the development policies and recommendations set forth in the adopted comprehensive plan.
3. Any new improvements, to include structures, signs, fences, street furniture, outdoor graphics, and public and private utilities shall be designed and installed to be compatible with the historic landmarks.

A1-1204 Lot Size Requirement

As specified in the underlying zoning district.

A1-1205 Bulk Regulation

1. Building height should not exceed 35 feet.
2. Minimum yard requirments: the location and arrangement of structures shall not be detrimental to existing uses or prospective adjacent uses, some of which are not set back.
3. Maximum floor area ratio: in any redevelopment of the area the FAR should not exceed .25 per property.

A1-1206 Maximum Density

As specificed in the underlying zoning district.

A1-1207 Open Space

As specified in the underlying zoning district.

A1-1208 Additional Regulations

As specified in the underlying district.