PUBLISHED BY THE OFFICE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING – JUNE, 1980

LANGLEY FORK HISTORIC DISTRICT

Fairfax County, Virginia

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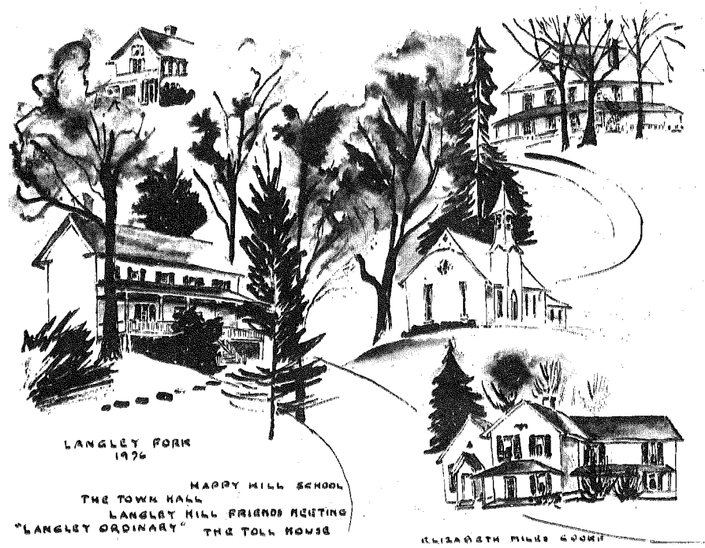
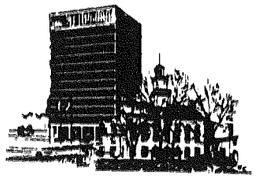
Cover: A portion of the map "Providence No. 5" from G.M. Hopkins' *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington D.C., 1878.*
Title page sketch by Elizabeth Miles Cooke, from *The History of the Old Georgtown Pike,* courtesy of the Charles Baptie Studios, Annandale, Virginia.

LANGLEY FORK
HISTORIC DISTRICT



LANGLEY FORK

Fairfax County, Virginia



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX

4100 CHAIN BRIDGE ROAD
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030

July 1, 1980

John F. Herrity, Chairman
Board of Supervisors
County of Fairfax
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dear Mr. Herrity:

Forwarded for transmittal to the Board of Supervisors is the staff proposal for the Langley Fork Historic District. The district is designed to protect the historic structures clustered around the intersection of Old Chain Bridge Road and the Georgetown Pike, as well as the intersection itself.

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.

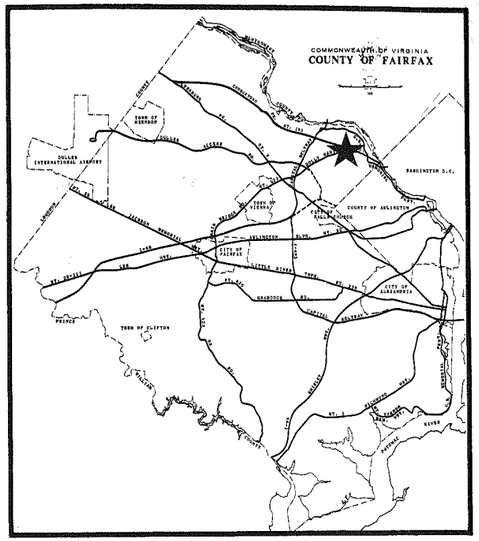
Sincerely,

J. Hamilton Lambert
Acting County Executive

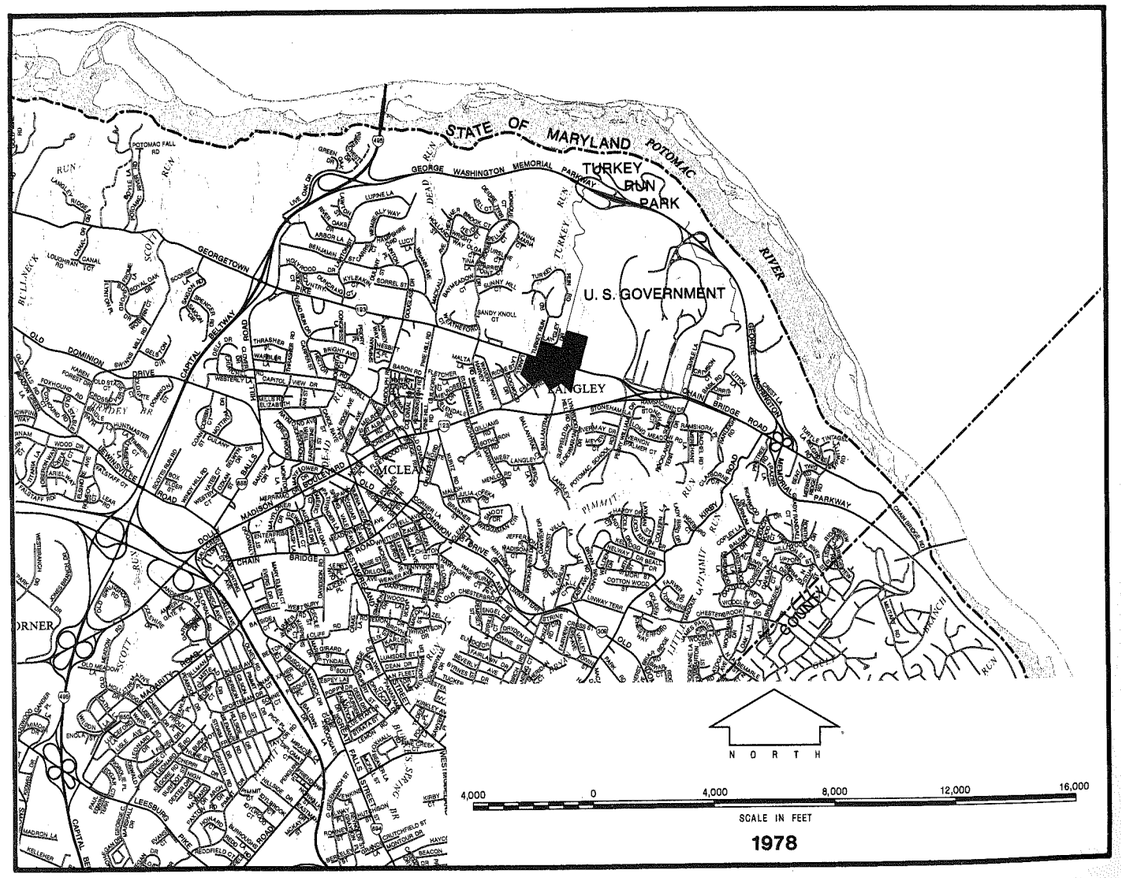
Table of Contents

Preface	1
The Property	3
Site Plan	4
Topographic Profiles	5
Land Use and Structures	6
Historic and Architectural Significance	8
Current Plans	12
Current Zoning	12
Development Trends	13
Historic District	14
Recommendations	16
A1-900-Langley Fork Historic Overlay District	18

Location Map



Vicinity Map

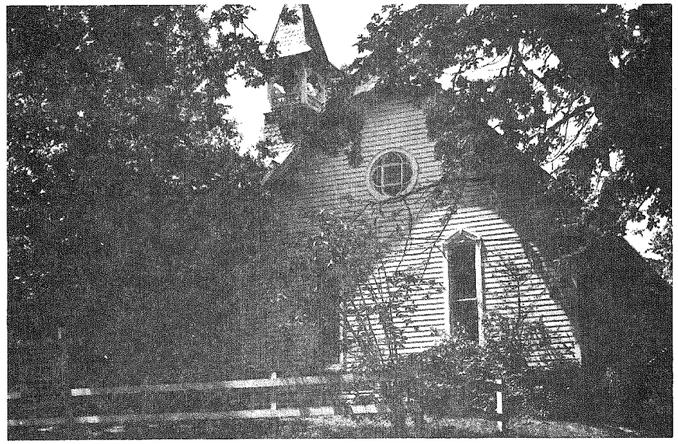


Preface

The creation of historic districts was authorized by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in order to protect and enhance the county's historic landmarks. Few historic sites have sufficient acreage to guarantee that no visual blight can be seen nearby. A historic site is vulnerable if development nearby could block its view or result in an unattractive building next door or across the street. The creation of a historic district affords protection by ensuring that all new development, whether commercial or residential, will be compatible with the historic site. After final adoption by the Board of Supervisors, a historic district is administered by the Architectural Review Board.

The Langley Fork Historic District is the ninth district proposed within the county.

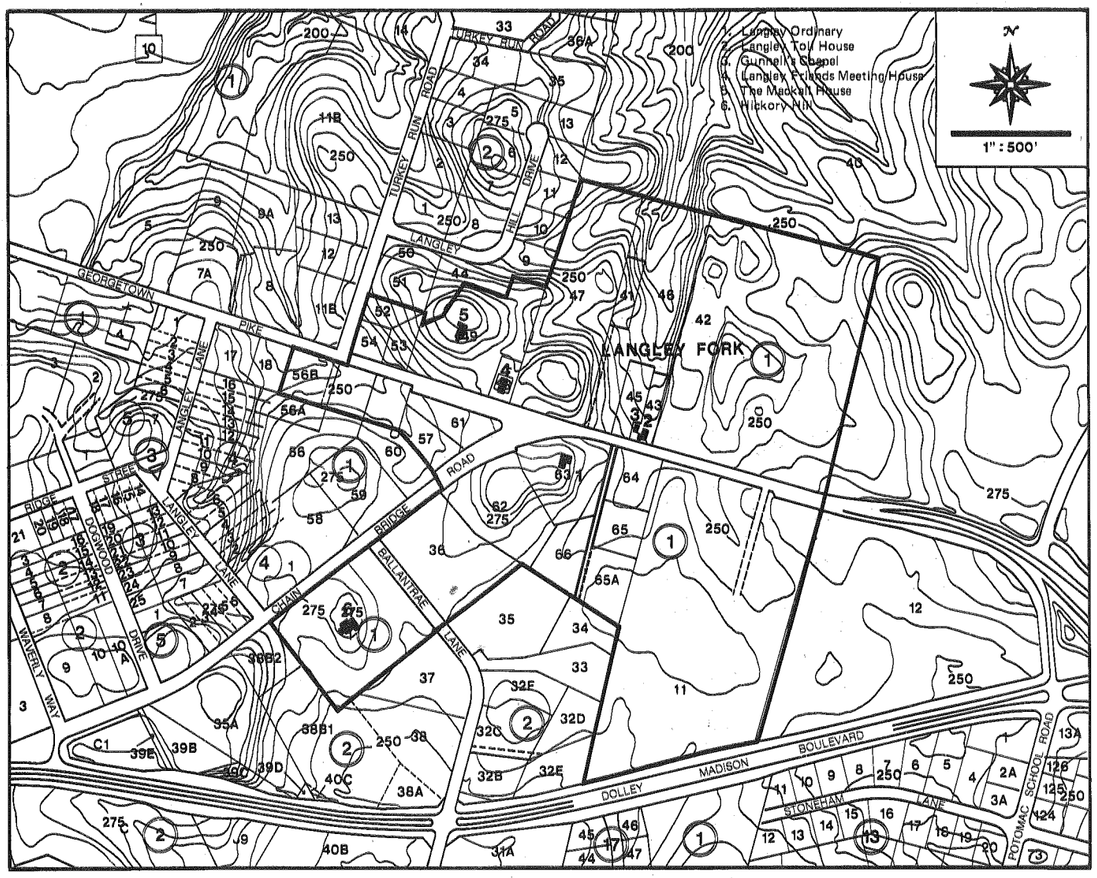
Recommendations for the area stress retention of the present character of the area and protection for the Georgetown Pike.



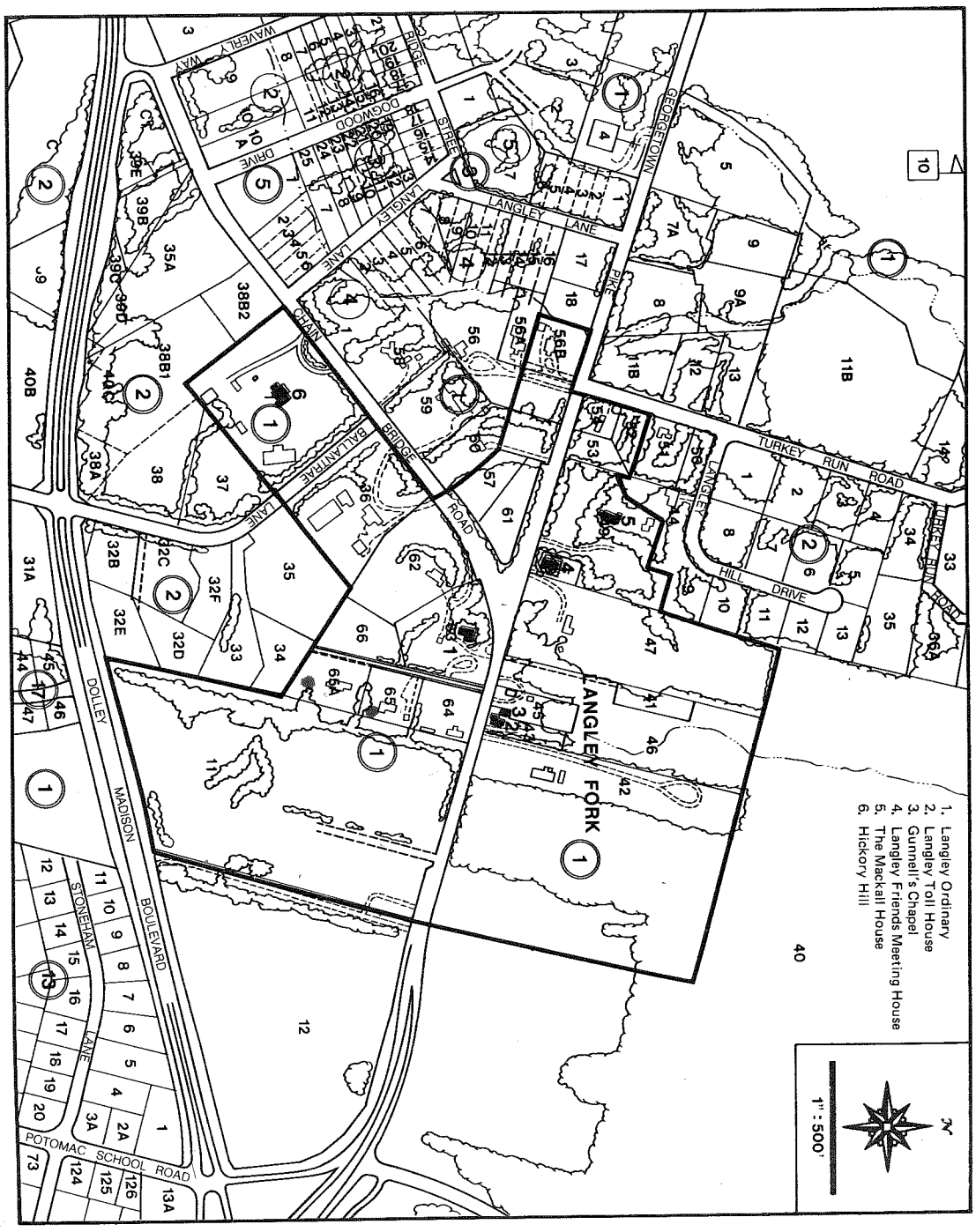
The Friends Meeting House at Langley, a serene reminder of a less hurried time.

The Property

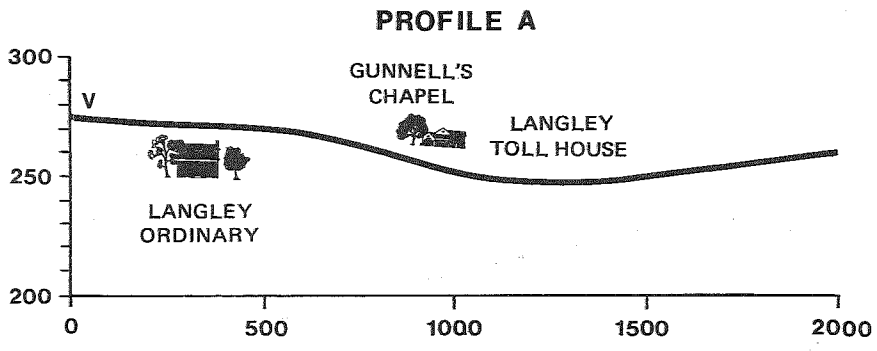
The Langley Fork is formed by the intersection of the Georgetown Pike (Route 193) and Chain Bridge Road (Route 3563). Clustered around the fork are six historic structures. Those on Georgetown Pike include the Langley Ordinary, the Langley Toll House, Gunnell's Chapel, the Langley Friends Meeting House and the Mackall House. A sixth site, Hickory Hill, is south of Georgetown Pike on Chain Bridge Road. Georgetown Pike itself has been named by the Virginia State Highway Commission as a "Virginia Byway," a designation which recognizes the scenic and historic nature of the road.

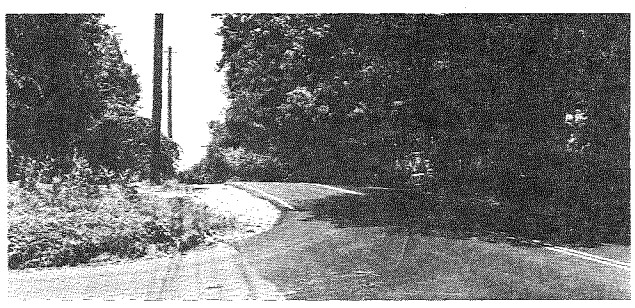


Site Plan



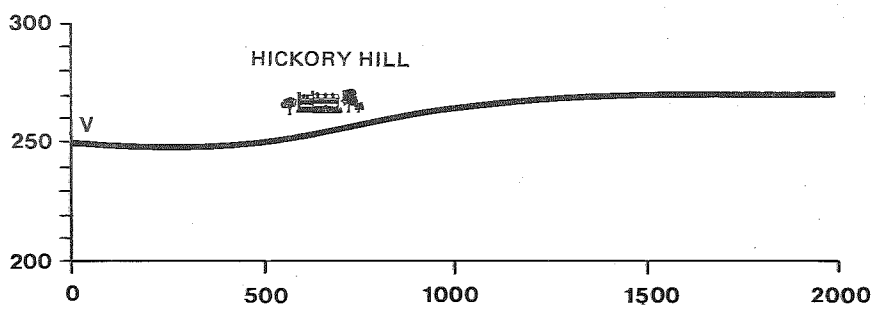
PROFILE A

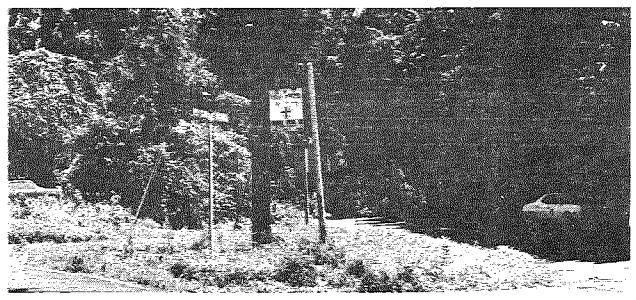




PROFILE A

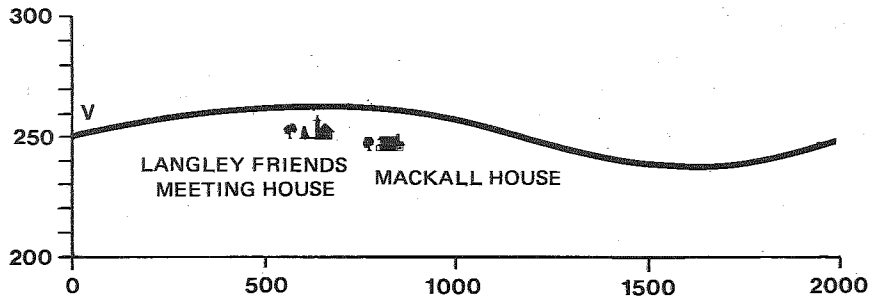
PROFILE B

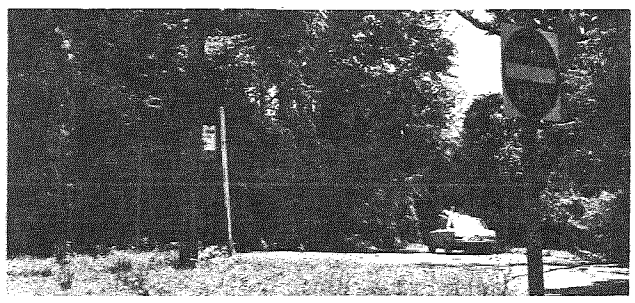




PROFILE B

PROFILE C





PROFILE C

SCALE IN FEET

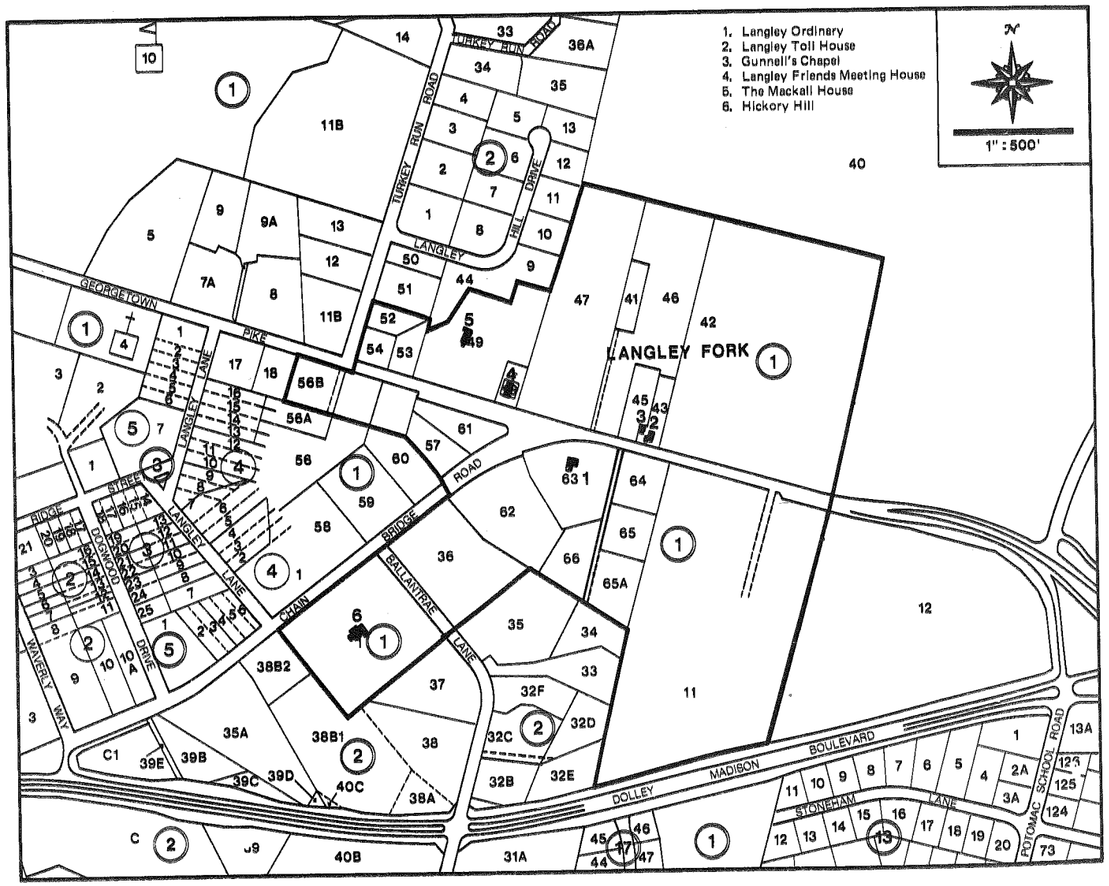
V - VANTAGE POINT FROM FORK

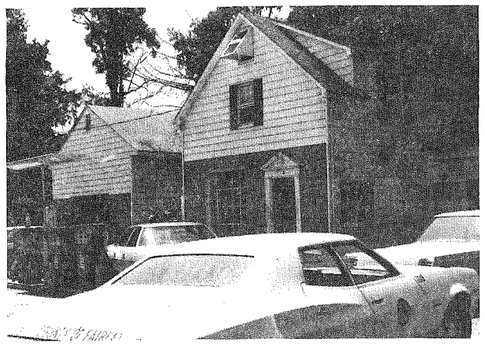
Topographic Profiles

Land Use and Structures

There are 83.8 acres within the proposed historic district. The following uses exist within the area:

	Acres	% of Area
Residential, single family	54.6	65.1
Public and semi public (parks, schools, and churches)	4.1	4.9
Commercial	1	1.2
Vacant Land	24.1	28.8
	83.8	100.0%





This small residence, like many in the area, is well screened by old trees.

The semi-residential character of an old service station blends surprisingly well with the area.

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUATION, AGE, AND CONDITION
OF STRUCTURES WITHIN THE PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT*

Parcel		Acreage	Land Valuation	Improvements Valuation	Age	Condition
22-3 ((1))	40	742.8714	$22,286,140	$120,752,215	1962	Good
	41	.5	12,500	-0-		
	42	4.0477	99,575	1,500	Old	Fair
	43	.544	36,800	26,440	Old	Fair
	45	.75	40,500	25,970	1925	Fair
	46	4.74	112,340	-0-		
	47	6.685	147,070	86,225	1934	Fair
	48	15,300 sq. ft.	33,000	26,910	Old	Fair
	49	3.7779	99,200	85,000	Old	Fair
	52	.459	17,900	-0-		
	53	.459	17,900	-0-		
	54	.476	18,565	28,840	Old	Fair
	56	3.13	87,015	64,925	1927	Fair
	56B	1.054	45,000	51,340	Old	Fair
	60	1.768	64,000	83,455	1942	Good
	57	35,029 sq. ft.	45,000	187,565	1979	Good
	61	42,797 sq. ft.	48,000	-0-		
	62	2.8418	86,675	137,745	1952	Good
	63	2.0047	65,755	58,040	Old	Fair
	64	43,560 sq. ft.	87,120	21,150	1932	Fair
	65	.915	41,000	72,375	1955	Fair
	65A	1.14	45,000	71,230	1956	Fair
	66	1.0	42,500	-0-		
31-1 ((1))	1	5.6316	149,235	294,240	Old	Good
	11	18.5473	439,570	90,000	Old	Fair
31-1 ((2))	36	3.5745	101,515	234,780	1950	Good

* Information from the Office of Assessments, April 1980

Historic and Architectural Significance

"Langley is a hamlet of a schoolhouse, a church, and several dwellings set upon the north and south sides of the Georgetown and Leesburg road, a road which many persons still call by its old name, the Georgetown and Leesburg Pike."

The Rambler, *The Sunday Star*
Washington, D.C.; July 7, 1917

There is a different schoolhouse, and a different church congregation, but the hamlet of Langley is not much altered from the place the Rambler visited in 1917.

The intersection now known as the Langley Fork dates from the eighteenth century when it was the meeting place of the Sugarlands Rolling Road and the Little Falls Road. During the turnpike era, the Sugarlands Rolling Road came to be called the Georgetown-Leesburg Turnpike and the Little Falls Road became known as Chain Bridge Road.

The Langley name in this area has persisted since the eighteenth century grant of land given to Thomas Lee. Lee named the area for the ancestral estate "Langley" in England. In 1839 the Lee family sold 700 acres of land to Benjamin Mackall, who retained the name.

A cluster of structures has existed around the Langley Fork, a natural focal point, since the early nineteenth century. In 1878 G. M. Hopkins published an *Atlas of Fifteen Mills Around Washington, D.C.* The map of Providence District, No. 5, shows the Georgetown Pike area and a special insert pictures the Langley area. The configuration and cluster of structures pictured there remains virtually unchanged today, a century later.

The Langley Ordinary once served as a tavern, and as Union General McCall's Headquarters. Huge old trees both shade and shield the property.

Six structures form the nucleus of the Langley historic district. They are the Langley Ordinary, the Langley Toll House, Gunnell's Chapel, the Langley Friends Meeting House, the Mackall House, and Hickory Hill.

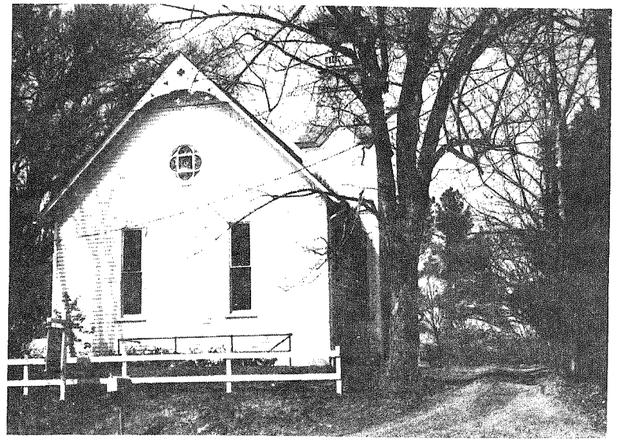
The Langley Ordinary was built about 1850, probably by George F. M. Walters, and was the second ordinary or tavern to serve the area. (According to the Rambler, the first ordinary had been there so long its boards and rafters were preserved in alcohol.) The ordinary was a relatively new but obviously important structure when the Civil War interrupted its trade. During the war years it served as the headquarters of Union General McCall of the Pennsylvania Reserves. As is the case with many old structures in Fairfax County, it was used as a hospital for Civil War wounded. Signatures of Union soldiers still can be found on the walls of the old house. The Langley area during the Civil War must have been a scene of uneasy peace. It was a haven of Southern sympathies--General William Mackall was away serving with the Confederate army while the Langley area was occupied by Union forces. The Langley ordinary today is a private residence, but though the roof lines have been altered, the old porch covers three sides of the house as it did in the Rambler's 1917 photograph.

Across Georgetown Pike from the Langley Ordinary is the Langley Toll House. In 1820 the Falls Bridge Turnpike Company authorized the erection of a toll house on the road. The structure known today as the Langley Toll House was the second structure of that name. It was purchased just after the Civil War by a Confederate veteran named Braden Hummer, who made alterations to it. During his ownership, which lasted until 1924, he operated a grocery store in the house. Directly to the west of the Toll House is Gunnell's Chapel, a small wooden structure originally built as what was then known as a colored chapel. West of this property is the Langley Friends Meeting House. The structure dates from 1893, when it was built as the second meeting place of the Trinity Methodist Church. The clapboard structure, with its asymmetrical bell tower, has unique wooden buttresses built up against both side walls, a design characteristic frequently found in stone churches but not in those wood. A scrollwork bargeboard decorates the front roof gable and the long narrow windows are surmounted by geometric pediments. In 1961 this building became the property of the Religious Society of Friends and is now called the Langley Friends Meeting House. Overlooking the surrounding area reminiscent of Civil War activity, the Quaker Meeting maintains its traditional stand opposing war and on the door is posted a Writ of Sanctuary.

It was at the Langley Toll House, set very close to the old Georgetown Pike, that fees were collected for use of the once private road.

Gunnel's Chapel was established after the Civil War to serve black residents of the area. It is part of the Toll House property.

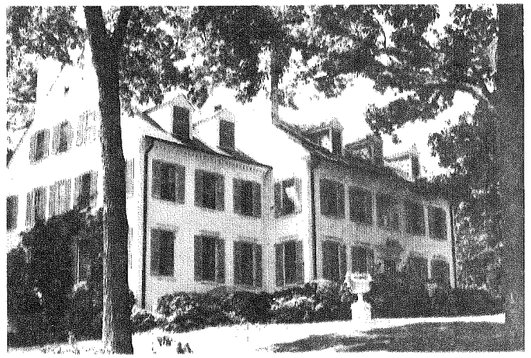
The Langley Hall Meeting House was first built as a Methodist Church, but is now the property of the Religious Society of Friends. The Quaker Writ of Sanctuary is posted on the door.



Immediately west of the meeting house is the old Mackall House, now the site of the Happy Hill Country Day School. This structure was first built as Trinity Methodist Church in 1858. The Douglass S. Mackall family converted the building into a residence in the later part of the century and different generations of Mackalls occupied it until the 1940s. Since that time, it has housed different schools, including its present occupant, the Country Day School. It is a large mansonry structure which sits on top of a high hill facing Georgetown Pike. Wings have been added, as well as a large porch which covers the front and south sides. The central core is clearly an eccesiastical structure, revealing characteristics of the Greek Revival.

South of Georgetown Pike on Chain Bridge Road is the old house known as Hickory Hill. In 1846 George Walters bought 88 acres of land, including this site, and before his death in 1890 had built several houses in this area. An 1865 ordinance map of northern Virginia indicates that at that time there was no structure on the site of Hickory Hill. This house was built shortly after the Civil War. In 1924 Frank Lyon purchased the property and in 1931, with his architect Ashmead Fuller, transformed it from a mansard roofed structure with encircling columned verandah to a simple 2½ story white brick building. Since that time additional interior renovations were made by subsequent owners Associate Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson and Senator (later President) John F. Kennedy. In 1964 Senator Robert F. Kennedy added a north wing containing 2 bedrooms, a living room, and a family room on the ground level. Because of the national and international significance of the Kennedy family, Hickory Hill has been the scene of much important and highly publicized political and social activity.

Twice in recent history residents along the pike and fork have rallied to express their interest in retention of the character of the whole area. In the late 1950s the Virginia Department of Highway and Transportation planned to widen and improve the old Langley Fork intersection. A committee of local residents, including then Senator John F. Kennedy of Hickory Hill, was instrumental in convincing the highway department to abolish this plan and instead to choose a new alignment, now Dolley Madison Boulevard, to the east of the Old Chain Bridge Road. In 1974 efforts of the citizens in the area of the 16 mile Georgetown Pike culminated in the designation of the old road as a Virginia Byway, the first in the state system. The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission staff recently stated that the Langley Fork area is eligible for designation as a district on the National Register of Historic Places. Clearly, this is an unusual and important concentration of Fairfax County structures.



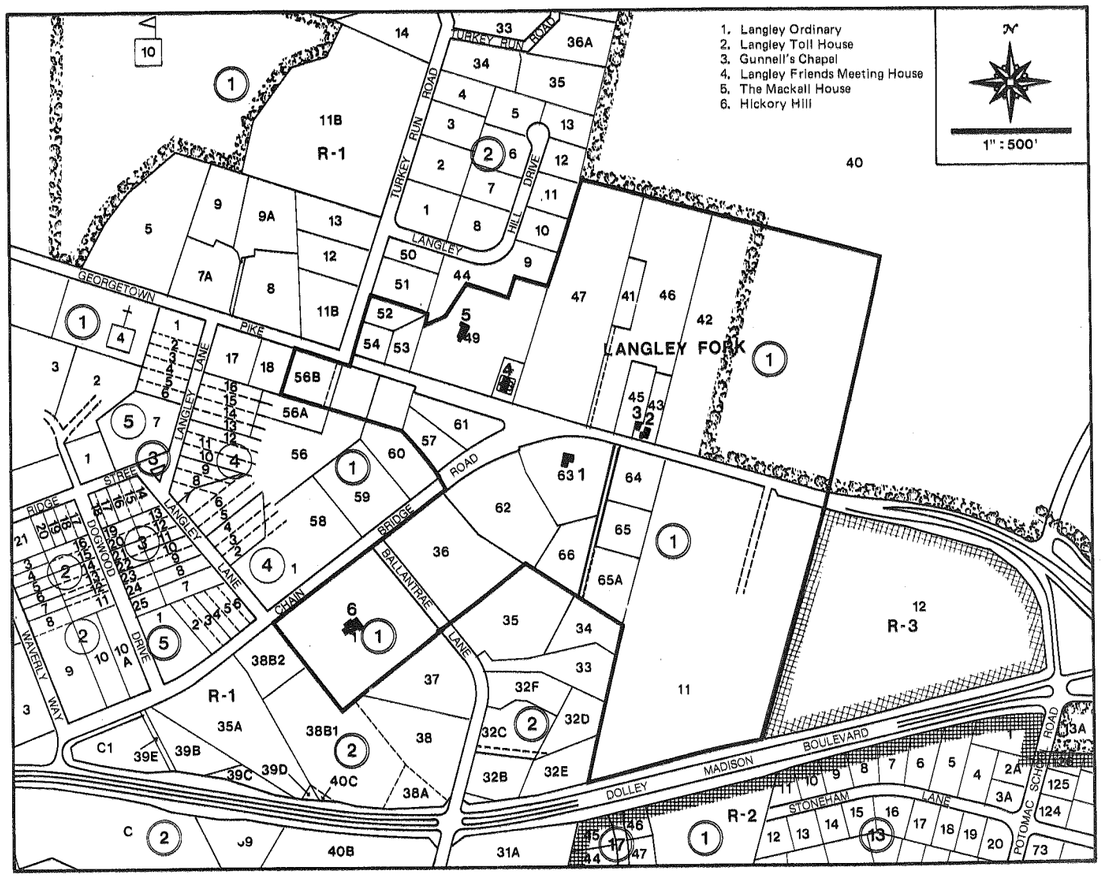
Hickory Hill was built shortly after the Civil War and has been the home of both John and Robert Kennedy. It has been the site of much highly publicized political and social activity.

First built in 1858 as the Trinity Methodist Church, the structure was transformed into a residence for the Mackall family. It now houses a day school.

Current Plans

The land in the proposed Langley Fork Historic District is located at the junction of three sectors of McLean Planning District: Kirby; Balls Hill; and Potomac Palisades (M3, M4 and M5). Its use is governed by the Area II Plan. North of Georgetown Pike residential density is limited to one unit per acre. South of the pike the plan recommends both 1-2 and 2-3 units per acre. Recommendations in all three sectors of the plan stress the need for protection of the many historic sites within the area and the protection of the character of the Georgetown Pike.

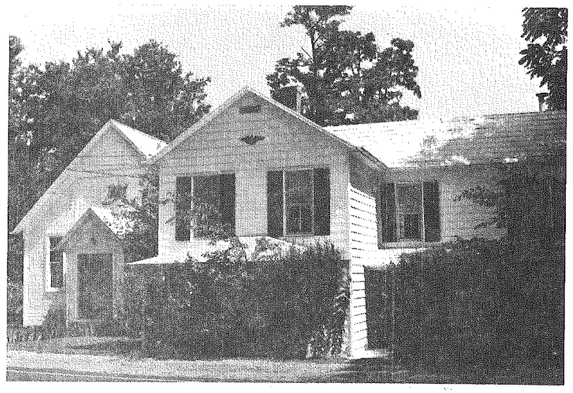
Current Zoning



This 1918 photograph by the Washington Star's "Rambler" shows the Langley Toll House in the foreground.

Development Trends

Development in the Langley Fork area is largely residential, characterized by single-family dwellings on parcels zoned R-1. On the north side of Georgetown Pike are the Langley Friends Meeting House, the Country Day School, and federal land. On the south side of the pike is an old service station on land now zoned R-1. East of the area proposed for the historic district is Turkey Run Farm and the CIA Headquarters. The only vacant land within the proposed district is two small parcels north of Georgetown Pike and one south of the pike. An eighteen-acre parcel south of the pike may be considered for subdivision at some future date. North of the pike and east of Langley Fork is a large amount of open space at present owned by the federal government. Should this area be declared surplus, potential development could have a serious impact on the area.



Taken from a different angle, this contemporary photo of the Langley Toll House also shows the old Gunnell's Chapel, now used by owners of the Toll House for storage.

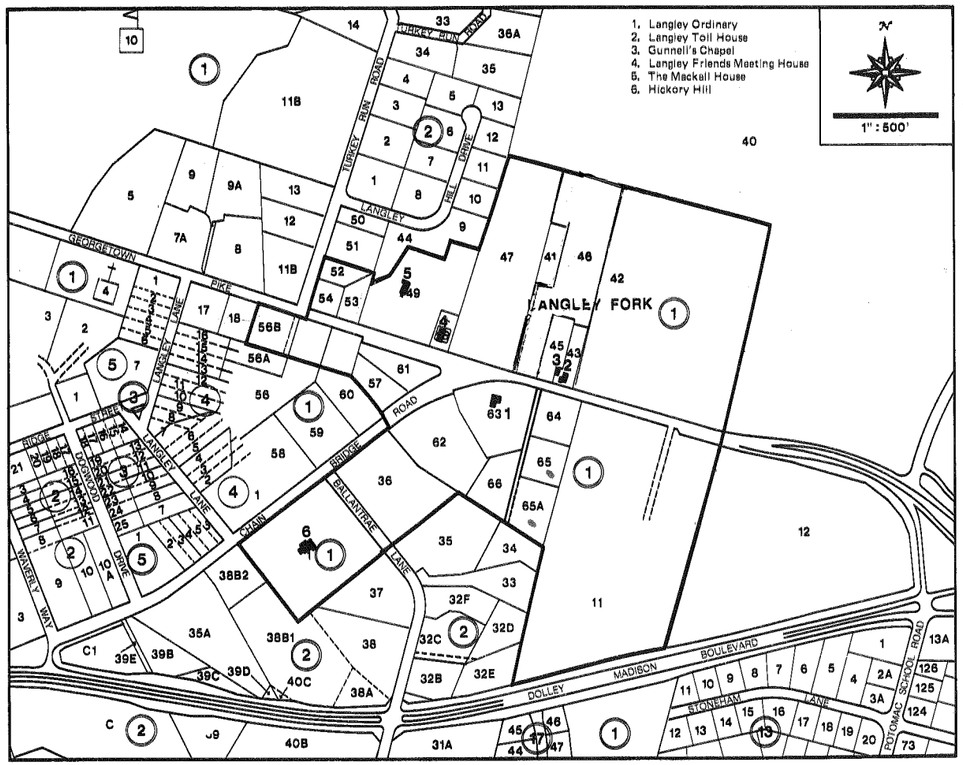
Historic District

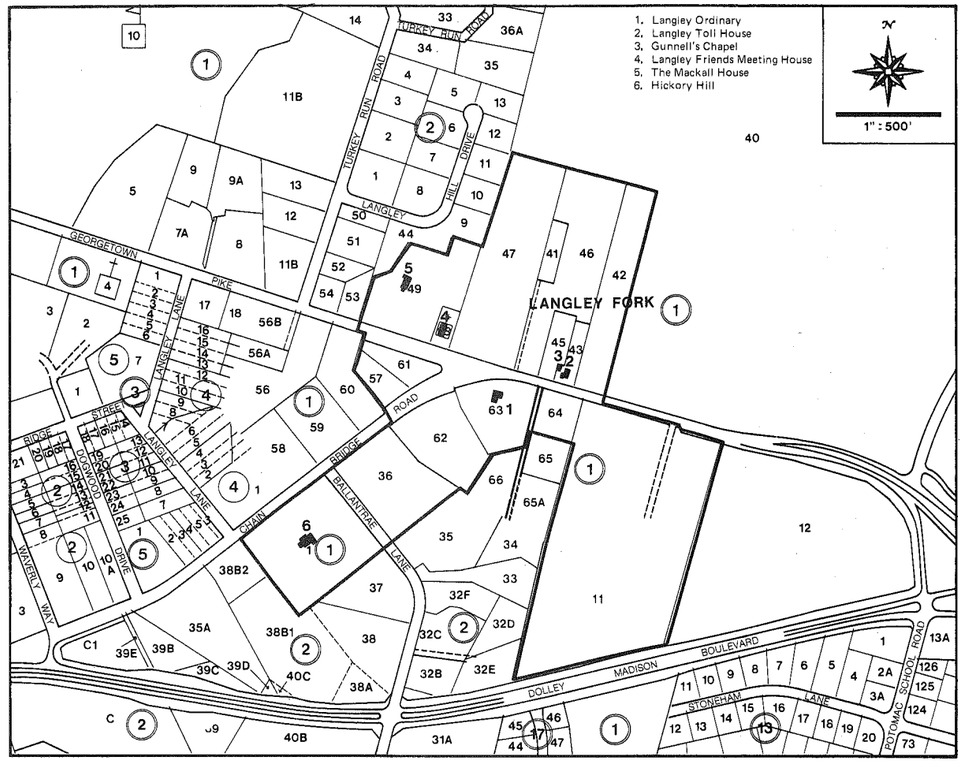
The following factors indicate the need to establish a historic district around the Langley Fork:

The historic and architectural value of six structures clustered around the intersection of Chain Bridge Road and Georgetown Pike: Langley Ordinary; Langley Toll House; Gunnell's Chapel; Langley Friends Meeting House; the Mackall House; Hickory Hill. This cluster of structures forms a complex of such value that it has been declared eligible to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district.

The historic and scenic value of the Georgetown Pike, the first road in the state to be designated a "Virginia Byway." This designation is largely honorary.

HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY





PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

The need to protect the area from adverse environmental influences including inappropriate improvements to the Georgetown Pike.

The need to ensure that any future development within the area will be compatible in use and in scale with the existing development.

The boundaries of the Langley Fork Historic District are proposed with respect to the area nominated as a National Register District. The proposed National Register District is drawn to include the six historic sites and adjacent parcels. Listing on the National Register protects the district from federally funded impact but has no affect on private development. The boundaries of the Fairfax County district are drawn to include the National Register District and additional land along Georgetown Pike in order to protect the approaches to Langley Fork. Part of parcel 40, federal land, is also included because any development of that land could have a negative visual impact on the east approach to Langley Fork.

Recommendations

The following policies are recommended in order to protect the Langley Fork and its surrounding historic sites from adverse environmental influence.

LAND USE

- The area should remain generally residential in character, with density limited to 1-3 acres. Uses should be limited to those allowed in residential zones.
- No commercial zoning should be permitted. If the service station should cease to operate the property should be redeveloped at the R-1 density.
- No industrial zoning should be permitted.
- If at some future time the federal government should declare part of parcel 40 to be surplus, the development should be carefully coordinated with the county.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT

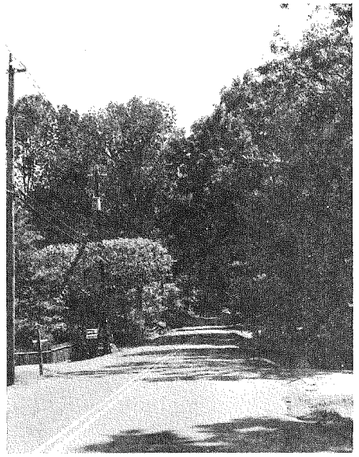
- Because of the historical scenic value of the Georgetown Pike, any improvements to the road should be minimal and should not include substantial widening of the road.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

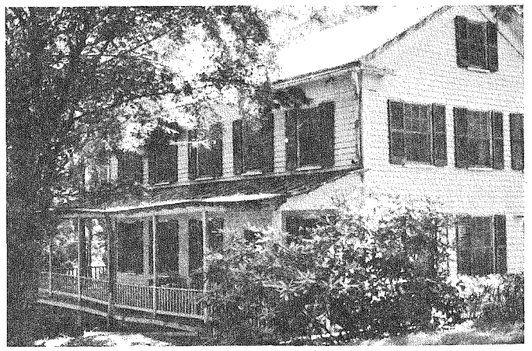
The design of all improvements, public as well as private, in the Langley Fork Historic District is critical to the preservation of the area.

- No structure should exceed 35 feet in height.
- Free standing signs should not exceed 5 feet in height.
- Site design should be such as to preserve a maximum of natural tree cover.

Old Chain Bridge Road was bypassed when Dolley Madison Boulevard was constructed. It remains a quiet, two-lane road.

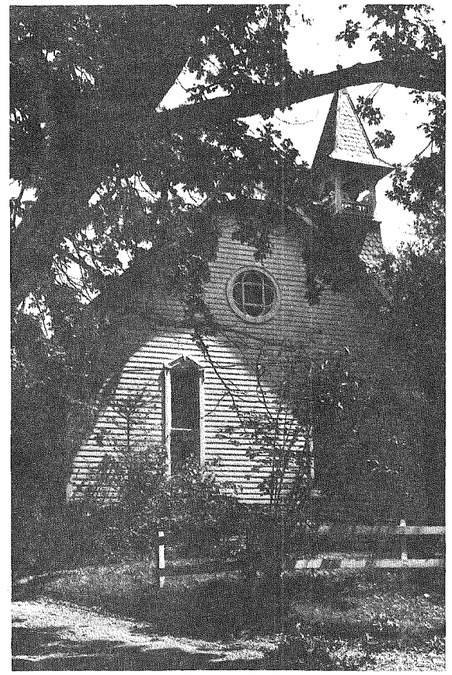


The porch of the Langley Ordinary seems little altered from its appearance in very early photographs.



During the Civil War the old ordinary served as headquarters for Union troops, who left evidence of their occupation on the grounds and on the walls of the old building.

Fairfax County History Commission member Donie Rieger examined signatures and regimental identifications written on the ordinary's walls and recently uncovered when wallpaper was removed.



The old meeting house with its lacy steeple and wooden buttresses stands opposite the meeting place of the two old roads.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTIONS REQUESTED

- Adoption of a declaration that the Langley Fork area has structures of historic and architectural significance requiring protection against destruction and encroachment.
- Adoption of the Langley Fork Historic District report which substantiates the architectural and historical significance of the area.
- Adoption of provisions for the Langley Fork Historic District as Appendix H-9 of the Zoning Ordinance.

PART 9 A1-900 LANGLEY FORK HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT

A1-901 Purpose and Intent

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

A1-902 Permitted, Special Permit and Special Exception Uses

All uses permitted by right, special permit and special exception in the underlying zoning districts, except as follows:

1. Residential dwellings shall be limited to single-family detached units.

2. No additional commercial uses shall be permitted.

3. No industrial uses shall be permitted.

A1-903 Use Limitations

1. The provisions of Part 2 of Article 7 shall apply to all lands within this district.

2. Development within this district shall be in strict accordance with the development policies and recommendations set forth in the adopted comprehensive plan.

3. All 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 landmark structures.

4. Freestanding signs shall not exceed five (5) feet in height.

A1-904 Lot Size Requirements

As specified in the underlying zoning districts

A1-905 Bulk Regulations

1. Maximum building height: 35 feet

2. Minimum yard requirements: As specified in the underlying zoning districts

3. Maximum floor area ratio: As specified in the underlying zoning districts

A1-906 Maximum Density

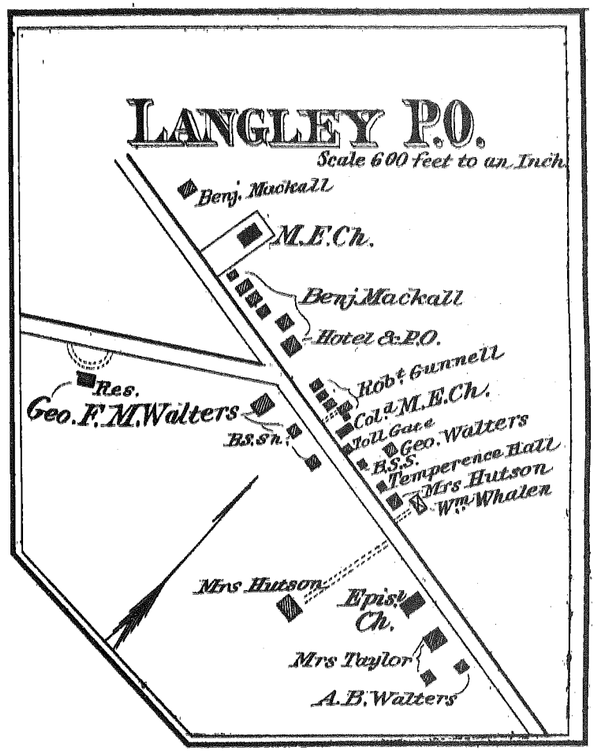
As specified in the underlying zoning districts

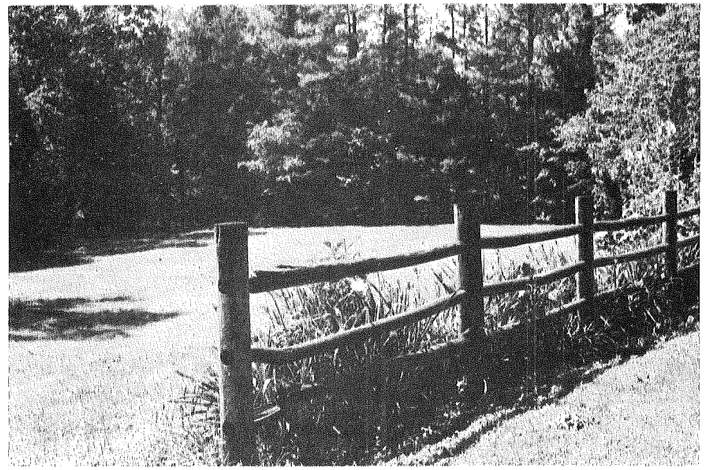
A1-907 Open Space

As specified in the underlying zoning districts

A1-908 Additional Regulations

As specified in the underlying zoning districts





This field no doubt was used to pen animals for drovers who stayed at Langley Ordinary in its days as a working tavern.

The wooden church steeple and the old trees are both evocative symbols of the historic and aesthetic importance of the Langley Fork area.