

First paved road in Prince William County was in Buckland, not ManassasBy **HEIDI BAUMSTARK**
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For most people the front-page article about Prince William County's first paved road in the May 17, 2013 issue of the Bull Run Observer wouldn't raise speculations. After all, it stated that Center Street (VA 28) in Manassas was the county's first paved road in the early 1900s when automobiles were first hitting the road.



Buckland Hall, the main house in Buckland, dates to 1774. It was owned by John Love, who formed the Fauquier-Alexandria Turnpike Company, which was incorporated by an Act of the General Assembly in 1808 during the Jefferson administration.

Courtesy Photo

However, recent findings point to another site that has earned this distinction, Buckland, the village in the western edge along U.S. 29 in Prince William County. Buckland is not only the location of the first paved road in the county; it's the first paved road in Virginia and the second one in the entire nation.

Although it's still true that by the turn of the 20th century automobiles were becoming more prevalent, there was actually a macadamized road in Buckland, the remnants of an 18th century town, located at U.S. 29 and U.S. 15 at the convergence of Broad Run in Gainesville. Besides a paved road, there were paved gutters, sidewalks and curbs almost a century before the Manassas street had its first pavement. In fact, when Buckland was paving its turnpike in the 1820s, Manassas didn't even exist as a railroad depot since the town of Manassas wasn't incorporated until 1873.

Chartered in 1798, one year before Haymarket, Buckland was the first inland town in Prince William County and is an example of an axial English village pattern, which means that the main house entrance gate connected to the town. It was also the first inland town to open a post office, the first pony express and first stagecoach line.

Among Buckland's other "firsts," the first shots of the Second Battle of Manassas were fired August 1862 from the Buckland/Broad Run Bridge built in 1807. (The abutments of this bridge are still intact along U.S. 29 near the south side of Buckland Mill Road, VA 684.) Another "first" occurred on

Oct. 19, 1863, when the Confederate cavalry defeated Union generals Judson Kilpatrick and George Armstrong Custer, sometimes referred to as "Custer's First Stand."

On Jan. 15, 1798, the Virginia General Assembly established the "forty-eight lott plan of the Town of Buckland." The town was laid out by John Love with streets and lots on both sides of Broad Run near Love's mill. Love lived at the historic house called Buckland Hall

along with several others, are private residences. Crossing over U.S. 29 and continuing south on Buckland Mill Road leads to Buckland Hall.

George Washington recorded in his diary during his early surveying days that he traveled to Buckland. Other big names in

Buckland's history include Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Lafayette, Stuart and Lee.

Regarding the first macadamized road, a 261-page in-depth report titled, "Archaeological Investigations of the Fauquier and Alexandria Turnpike" was com-

pleted by Rivanna Archaeological Services and its findings were presented to the Buckland Preservation Society in May. The archaeological group worked for months last summer uncovering many finds.

Blake said, It's amazing that

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In 1824, part of U.S. 29 at Buckland was first “macadamized” turnpike in VA

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all this technological advancement happened right here in Buckland.”

The improved “McAdam” system of road-building included a series of varying-size stones, layered on top of each other with a slightly-raised “crown” in the center to facilitate drainage since wet, muddy roads were the main culprit to pre-macadamized roads. In 1824, part of U.S. 29 at Buckland became the first “macadamized” turnpike in Virginia under the guidance of principal engineer Claudius Crozet, who was Napoleon’s engineer. It was touted as the “finest road in Virginia,” according to Blake. (Just a year earlier, the first road in the nation to use the “McAdam Plan” was in Boonsboro, Maryland.)

This macadam road plan used a revolutionary paving system, developed by John Loudoun (sometimes spelled Loudon) McAdam of Scotland. McAdam never came to Virginia, but his method of road technology certainly did.

The Rivanna archaeological report states that portions of the original Fauquier-Alexandria Turnpike still exist; therefore, the macadam section passing through Buckland has been designated a historic site and has been recorded with

the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Before the road paving began, the town was a busy place - in need of a suitable road to transport goods in and out of town. Shortly after 1775, a blacksmith, tannery, store, distillery and a second mill were frequented by travelers. Occoquan and Buckland had the first two mills in Virginia with automated milling technology invented by Oliver Evans in the late 1700s. Evans, known as the founding father of the American Industrial Revolution, designed a series of bucket elevators and conveyors for mills that automated the milling process, making it more efficient. “Evans was here in Buckland,” Blake added.

By the end of the 18th century, Buckland had all the essentials of a small town: shopkeepers, a church, tailor, saddle maker, wheelwright, boot/shoe manufacturer, a copper, two taverns, an apothecary and a woolen factory. In addition, the waters of Broad Run made it an ideal spot to power the town’s mills.

Because of all the industry taking place in Buckland, combined with all the farms in the area that needed their products exported, adequate transportation was essential. In addition to the need to export all the goods this industrial town was

producing, shop keepers needed to import commodities that could be sold in their shops.

“The earliest roads were called ‘tobacco rolling roads’ since European settlers rolled wooden barrels of tobacco down the roads to old port towns such as Dumfries, Colchester, and decades later, to Alexandria,” Blake explained.

The main street in Buckland was called Mill Street (today’s Buckland Mill Road on either side of U.S. 29) because of the several mills in operation in the late 18th century. On the sides of Mill Street, there are stone curbs, gutters and even stone paved sidewalks, making this historic streetscape a rare find. Blake said this even came to a surprise to the experts. “Mr. Graham, a senior architectural historian at Colonial Williamsburg, thinks this may be a truly significant discovery on a national scale as he knows of no other rural town in Virginia with paved sidewalks at such an early date,” Blake explained.

The portion of the paved street that goes into town was laid above an earlier 1806 “Telford” (cobblestone) road. “The cobblestone streets in old town Alexandria are actually called ‘Telford’ roads, which were named after Scotsman Thomas Telford,” Blake explained.

Over the old “Telford” road in Buckland, archaeologists found layers of stone the size of “hen’s eggs,” a term coined by Crozet. Over these stones is a layer of smaller stone broken by hand. The Rivanna report states that Jefferson was exposed to McAdam through publications and was informed that the “breaking of stone is the work of children.” Archaeologists have now documented that these transportation-related features are of national significance and have survived intact with remarkable integrity.

As an interesting side note, when the road in front of the White House was paved, almost a decade after the road at Buckland, an April 16, 1833 article in the Daily National Intelligencer newspaper reported on the “very noble road now in a state of construction in Pennsylvania Avenue” but that it might have been “better made quite as free from dust as that fine piece of Macadamized road leading from Warrenton to Buckland in Virginia which is made entirely of amorphous quartz.”

Blake ended, “As you can see, there’s not one thing here. There are layers of history that build this cultural landscape. This tiny place called Buckland - to think this all happened here is incredible. These new facts unveil innovations impor-

tant to Prince William County’s legacy, not just for now, but something we should all be proud of.”

The Buckland Historic District was created in 1987. It is a Virginia Historic Landmark and part of the National Register of Historic Places. Originally, it contained about 19 acres, less than half of the original town site. But the Buckland Preservation Society, formed in 2003 by concerned property owners, petitioned for the district to be expanded to 497 acres that stretch west and east of Broad Run and on both sides of U.S. 29. This historic district contains 21 original 18th and 19th-century buildings on the National Register.

Over 200 acres of the Buckland Mills Battlefield and town are in permanent easement with the National Park Service, Department of Historic Resources, and additional easements are pending. The area includes significant architectural, archaeological and landscape resources, and recently uncovered historic “streetscape” discoveries.

The Buckland Preservation Society website is www.bucklandva.net. Under the “Contact Us” tab, those who are interested can sign up to receive regular updates and calendar information on upcoming events.