



VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

File no. 76-301
Negative no(s). 5176

SURVEY FORM

Historic name Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Common name Potomac Railroad
 County/Town/City Prince William County
 Street address or route number See verbal boundary description below.

USGS Quad Fort Belvoir, Occoquan, Quantico Date or period 1871-72
 Original owner Multiple Architect/builder/craftsmen Potomac Railroad Co.
 Original use
 Present owner Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Co. Source of name
 Present owner address c/o RF&P, Potomac Yard, Alexandria, Va. Source of date
 Present use Railroad Stories N/A
 Acreage Foundation and wall const'n N/A
 Roof type N/A

State condition of structure and environs

State potential threats to structure
 Note any archaeological interest

Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes ___ no ___

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

The RF&P Railroad runs along the Potomac River in eastern Prince William County, from where it crosses the Occoquan at Woodbridge to where it crosses the Chopawamsic Creek south of Quantico. Since its construction in 1872, the route has been changed slightly to improve the right-of-way. The bridges have all been replaced. The bridge across the Occoquan, the second railroad bridge on the site, was constructed in 1892 and was converted for use as a highway bridge in 1914. It was recently demolished, in part, for construction of a new highway bridge. The pilings of the old bridge across the Neabsco Creek are still visible. The bridges across the Quantico and Powell's creeks were constructed in the 1940s. The passenger station at Quantico was built after World War II. There is a two-story freight station at Quantico built in 1919 as a "Receiving Station," but that is no longer used by the Railroad.

Interior inspected? N/A

Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

The Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company was chartered in 1834, as the sixth railroad chartered in Virginia and the third in the state to operate by steam. Service was completed from Richmond to Fredericksburg by January 1837, and to Aquia Creek by November 1842. Service to Washington, D. C., however, was not in existence until 1872. At that time, the RF&P Railroad, which had been completed to Quantico in 1870, met the Alexandria and Fredericksburg Railway Company's line from Alexandria to Quantico. Prior to the completion of the railroad connecting Richmond and Washington, passengers traveling from Richmond to Washington would ride the railroad to Aquia (and later to Quantico) where they would board a steamboat which would journey up the Potomac to Washington. The reason for the combination rail and water route was the notoriously swampy and frequently impassable condition of the north-south route, the Potomac Path, especially in the vicinity of the Chopawamsic Creek crossing, the dividing line between Prince William County and its neighbor county, Stafford, to the south.

Before 1815, travel from Richmond to Washington was by stagecoach, a 38-hour trip with a layover in Fredericksburg. After 1815, when steamboat service began, the travel time was considerably shortened to 24 hours. A stagecoach from Richmond would deliver passengers to a Potomac River landing (first to Aquia Creek, and later to Potomac Creek) where travelers would board a steamboat to Washington. Freight was moved either by boat or by Conestoga wagons or carts. Mail was delivered by pony express or stagecoach.

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CONTINUATION SHEET
RICHMOND, FREDERICKSBURG AND POTOMAC RAILROAD

Historical Significance (continued)

The original charter for the RF&P Railroad Co. was for building a railroad from Richmond through Fredericksburg to some point on the Potomac where a connection to Washington could be made by steamboat. By 1836, the railroad was completed from Richmond to a point on the south side of the South Anna River, a distance of 20 miles. The journey from Washington to Richmond in 1836 went as follows: Depart Washington at sunrise by steamboat. Journey down the Potomac to Potomac Creek Landing; transfer to stagecoach, and proceed to Fredericksburg. Dine in Fredericksburg and continue to Bowling Green, where passengers would have supper. Return to stagecoach (night-time) and travel to the RF&P Railroad terminal near the South Anna River. Board train at 2:00 a.m. and arrive in Richmond at 5:00 a.m. By 1837, the railroad had been completed to Fredericksburg, thus eliminating part of the stagecoach connection. By 1842, when the line was opened to Aquia Creek, the stagecoach was eliminated altogether. Sometimes in the winter, icing up of the Potomac prevented the operation of the steamboats and necessitated the use of the old stage road to Washington from Fredericksburg. Interestingly, from 1845 until the railroad connecting Richmond and Washington was completed, the RF&P Railroad Company owned controlling stock in the steamboat that provided the service from Aquia Creek to Washington, the Washington and Fredericksburg Steamboat Company.

The Alexandria and Fredericksburg Railroad Company was incorporated in 1851 to build the link connecting Alexandria with Fredericksburg, thus completing the railway service from Washington to Richmond. The connection, however, was not made until 1872. Two alternative routes, in addition to the one finally selected, were considered: One involved linking Warrenton with the RF&P's northernmost terminal at Aquia, while the other alternative made the connection at Manassas. Both of the unchosen alternative routes would have taken advantage of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which traversed the Middle Piedmont from Gordonsville to Alexandria. The selected route involved extending the RF&P from Aquia to Quantico Creek, where the RF&P would meet the line extended from Alexandria to Quantico by the Alexandria and Fredericksburg Railroad Company. The completion of this line was delayed many years by the Civil War.

The Alexandria and Fredericksburg Railroad Company, which was succeeded by the Washington and Southern, operated under the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, while the RF&P was part of the Southern Railway system. For that reason, prior to 1920, passengers between Washington and Richmond would disembark at Quantico and change trains. A common "Wye track" at the point where the two railroads met at Quantico would enable each train to turn around for the return trip. Eventually, the two railroads were combined under the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Co. In the early 1900s, RF&P operated a small trunk line from Quantico to the shipyard on the Potomac. Another branch in Prince William County was operated to serve the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine between the mine near Dumfries and Possum Point on the Potomac.*

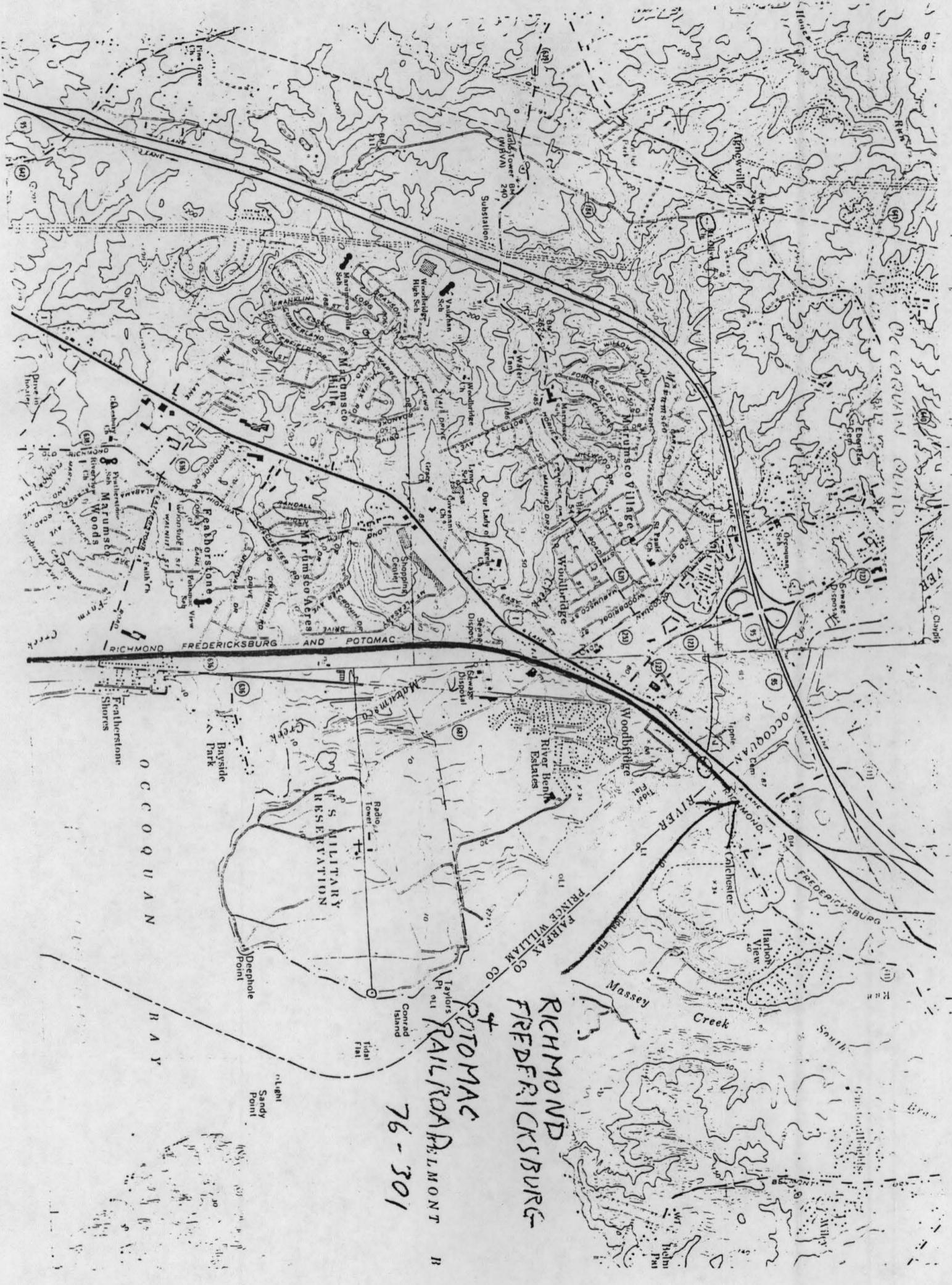
There were several stations along the route in Prince William County. The station at Cherry Hill was named "Myron;" Woodbridge was called Occoquan Station; and there was a station at the Neabsco serving the Freestone Point area. The Long Branch Station in Fairfax County was at Newington.

The first railroad bridge built over the Occoquan in 1872 was probably constructed like Long Bridge over the Potomac in Washington. A large wooden trestle bridge made by H. K. Bradshaw Co. had abutments made from Fredericksburg granite and Aquia "freestone." A new bridge across the Occoquan was constructed in 1914, though the wooden bridge, a single-track facility, remained in service long after other bridges along the line were rebuilt as double-track bridges. In 1915, the old railroad bridge was reconditioned for vehicular travel, at the expense of the railroad company. The bridge built in 1914 is still standing.**

One of the founders of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Co., Conway Robinson, was a director of the company in 1834, and its president from 1837 to 1840. A small state forest near Gainesville, in Prince William County, was established as a memorial to Conway Robinson, a noted jurist and legal scholar.

*Some say that the narrow-gauge railroad serving the Cabin Branch pyrite mine was not connected with the RF&P Railroad.

**This bridge was partly demolished in March 1981.



Richmond
Fredericksburg
and Potomac

OCCOQUAN RIVER

WOODBRIDGE

MARMUSCO VILLAGE

FABORSTONE

SANDY POINT LIGHT

MILITARY RESERVATION

RICHMOND + POTOMAC RAILROAD RAILROAD RICHMOND + FREDERICKSBURG

76-301