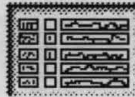




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NOTE	Class: Miscellaneous
NOTE	Date: Prior to 1753
NOTE	Location: 4.5 miles west of Haymarket, Rt. 55.
NOTE	Primary owners: William Beverly, Furr, Kerr, Blight and Chapman families
NOTE	Survey describes the history, folklore, geography, manufactures and agriculture of this section of the county. It was originally mapped by George Washington in 1748. There was much fighting here during the Second Battle of Manassas.
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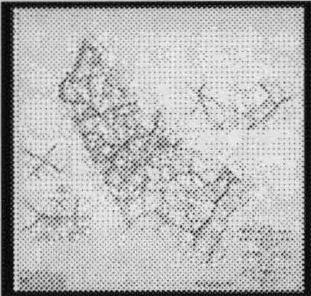
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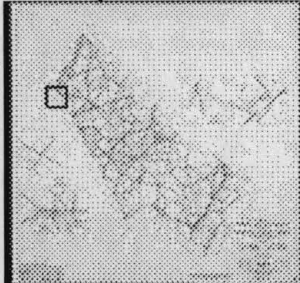
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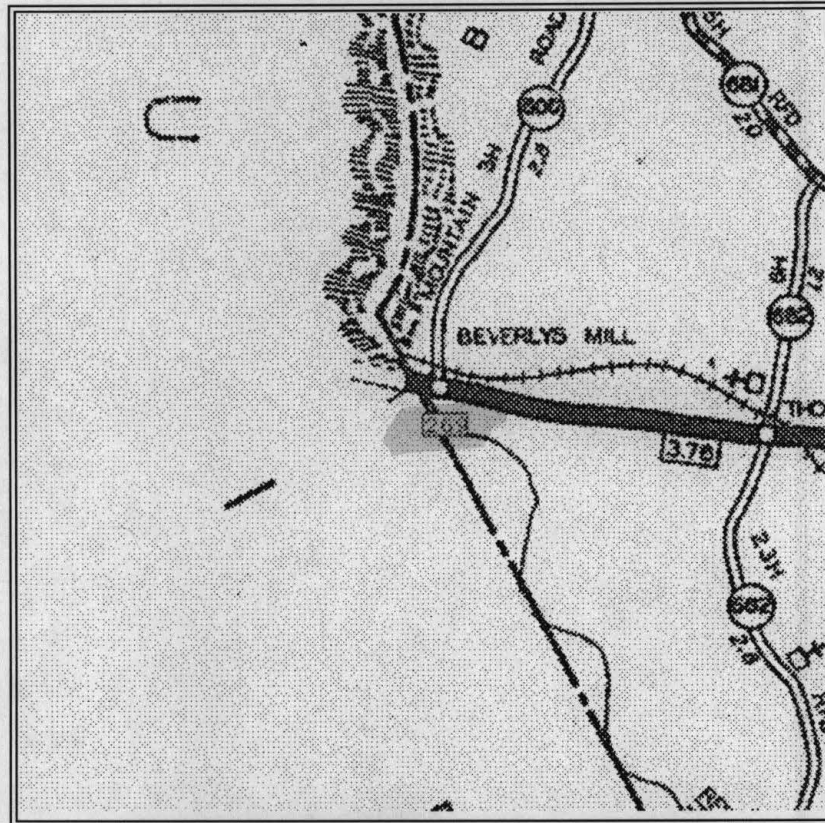
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HISTORICAL INVENTORY

269

COUNTY: Prince William

CLASS : Miscellaneous

----- THOROUGH GAP AND ENVIRONS -----

This write-up is a part of the Virginia W. P. A. Historical Inventory Project sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Commission under the direction of its Division of History. Credit to both the Commission and W. P. A. is requested for publication, in whole or in part. Unless otherwise stated, this information has not been checked for accuracy by the sponsor.

Research made by
Susan Rogers Morton
Haymarket, Virginia

August 6, 1937

1. SUBJECT:

Thoroughfare Gap and Environs.

2. LOCATION:

Situated at the line of Prince William and Fauquire Counties, on the John Marshall Highway, Route #55, 4.5 miles west of Haymarket, Virginia, and five miles from the Plains in Fauquire County.

3. DATE:

Prior to 1753.

4. OWNERSHIP:

From the middle of the 18th century until 1836, when there was a division of the property and at the present time the heirs of Mr. William Beverly own the land south east of the road, Messrs. Furr and Kerr the mill property and the land on the other side of the Railroad track belongs to Messrs. George and Samuel Blight, who inherited it from the Chapman estate. Eighteen acres lying on both sides of the road, immediately through the Gap, has been recently purchased and converted into a recreation Park by the Federal Government.

5. DESCRIPTION:

To the northwest of the road on the waters of Broad Run, is the old stone mill that was for so many years operated by the Chapman family, also the ruins of the old mill building and the Chapman mansion are to the north. The mountains which rise, a sheer rocky wall, fern and laurel covered form a beautiful background to the waters of Broad Run, and the peak to the south side of the Gap is Pond Mountain, that on the north side, Leather Coat.

6. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

To begin the history of this Gap, it would be necessary to go back to the time when the Red Man was the only traveler along the way, and this was evidently a favorite meeting place for the tribes who passed along the Carolina road only four and one-half miles away, making the detour here for fishing and perhaps trading with other tribes. On the south side of the Run, about five hundred feet from the road, is what appears to have been a camping ground. The late Mr. William Beverly had made a collection of arrow heads, many of them of the beautiful white quartz that abounds here, and shards of pottery that is most interesting, especially as to the identity of the latter's origin.

Lord Fairfax, having large tracts of land east and west of the Blue Ridge, which he wished surveyed and mapped, engaged George Washington, in 1748, to make the survey. Washington was three years completing the job, making frequent visits to Belvoir and Mount Vernon during that time. In the year 1748 or 1749, he surveyed and took the heights of the Bull Run Mountains at the Gap and named them. The peak on the south side of Thoroughfare Gap, he called Pond Mountain, as at that time there was a pond there, formed by the damming of the waters at the foot of the mountain, and a splendid fishing spot much frequented by the Indians.

The peak on the north side, he named Leather Coat Mountain, in honor of an old woman who lived in a log cabin about fifty yards from a very fine spring that is known as Spout Spring. She did the cooking for Washington and his party at the time that they were working there. Tradition has it that she wore a leather coat and apron all the time, regardless of the season, and was locally known as "Mother Leather Coat."

Within the memory of some of the older residents, the hearthstones and other evidences of a log cabin could still be seen at the spot indicated as being the site of her cabin. Spout Spring is noted for its fine water and people come from miles to carry it away.

After the foot-prints of moccasined feet were no longer known, the Gap and Thoroughfare Pike, as that part of the highway was known, saw travelers from the lower county going West, here flowed the articles of commerce going to Alexandria and Fredericksburg and the "back settlements," sending butter, cheese, flax, hemp, wheat, flour and some tobacco, when it was worth three shillings a pound; it was worth six times that of wheat, but a generation later, Culpepper's Act, authorized payments of debts in commodities other than tobacco; soon caused wheat to become the crop of greatest importance. About twenty years later, 1757, the Chapman Mill was built at Thoroughfare Gap and shared in the large amount of flour produced at Sudley Mill, Bull Run and Balladine's, at Oscoquan.

The pike must have been a very busy road in those days when the great wagons drawn by six horses, gay with bells brought wheat from the Piedmont and Valley sections, and herds of cattle and flocks of turkeys made their way along the place to the markets of Alexandria. John Marshall traveled this road in his gig, but the great day for the Gap came on August 26, 1862, when Stonewall Jackson passed through to a position directly across from the invaders' communications at Bristow, and it was the unprecedented movement of a troop thirty-six miles in a day, which brought on the Second Battle of Manassas.

Mr. William Beverly, who was a boy of ten at that time, near the beginning of the War Between the States, told of General Lee spending the night at "Avenel," the home of his father, just the other side of the Gap, and of his riding back of General Lee, on "Traveler," the next morning, as he tried to sight his men from the hill, just through the Gap, on the Fauquier side. There was also an old colored woman who was, as a child, greatly amused at General Stuart having some of his Scouts tie bushes to the horses tails to obliterate their tracks.

There was much hand to hand fighting all through the Gap and there were numerous soldier's graves scattered about the vicinity. For many years, "Thoroughfare" has been the name applied to the little hamlet two miles northeast of the Gap, where until a short time ago, there was a station by that name on the Southern Railroad, but originally the environs of the Gap was the place known as "Thoroughfare."

Aside from the busy Chapman Mills, now known as Beverly's Mill, there were stores and tanery, saw-mill, slaughterhouse, and in 1865, there were no houses, except several log cabins that belonged either to the Chapman plantation or to Cloverland, and the old Carter-Dulany home at the place now called Thoroughfare.

Naturally at a place as rich in dramatic incident as is the Gap and its environs, it would be the setting for many ghost stories, and "Uncle" Joe Ford, who was born a slave on the neighboring plantation of Blantyre, just through the Gap, recalls many tales of superstition that are associated with the place. Blantyre had a hundred and fifty slaves; Cloverland and Chapman Mills plantation about the same number, and there was much intermingling amongst them, and ghost stories and strange nocturnal encounters were constantly being told, many of which are still remembered today.

On the road that leads from the Gap, to Hopewell, Virginia to the west, a four horse wagon, driven by a soldier, gallops madly along in the still of the night, and woe to the one who does not get out of the path. There is a large white calf that is met just through the Gap, frequenting the rocky slope of Pond Mountain, and its presence is supposed to presage death to the beholder. About an eig of a mile from the Mill, on a grassy ledge, where the Railroad tracks now turn, an Irishman, named Johnny Sweeny, who was a well known character at the Mill and Store, where he was employed, froze to death one night. He was a jovial fellow and much liked by the travelers who stopped over

At the store and saloon, but invariably on Saturday night he would get drunk, and he was in that condition when he froze to death. Not long afterwards, he was seen at the spot where he died, usually carrying his head in his hands.

There is also the story of the ghostly guardian of the buried treasures at the ruins of the old Chapman home, which is repeated in the report of that site.

7. ART:

8. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Informants: Mr. Wirt Henry, Broad Run, Virginia.

Mr. Adoniram Powell, Manassas, Virginia. I

"Uncle" Joe Ford, Broad Run, Virginia.

Mr. Thornton Johnson, Thoroughfare, Virginia.