

SCHS News



The Newsletter of the Stafford County Historical Society

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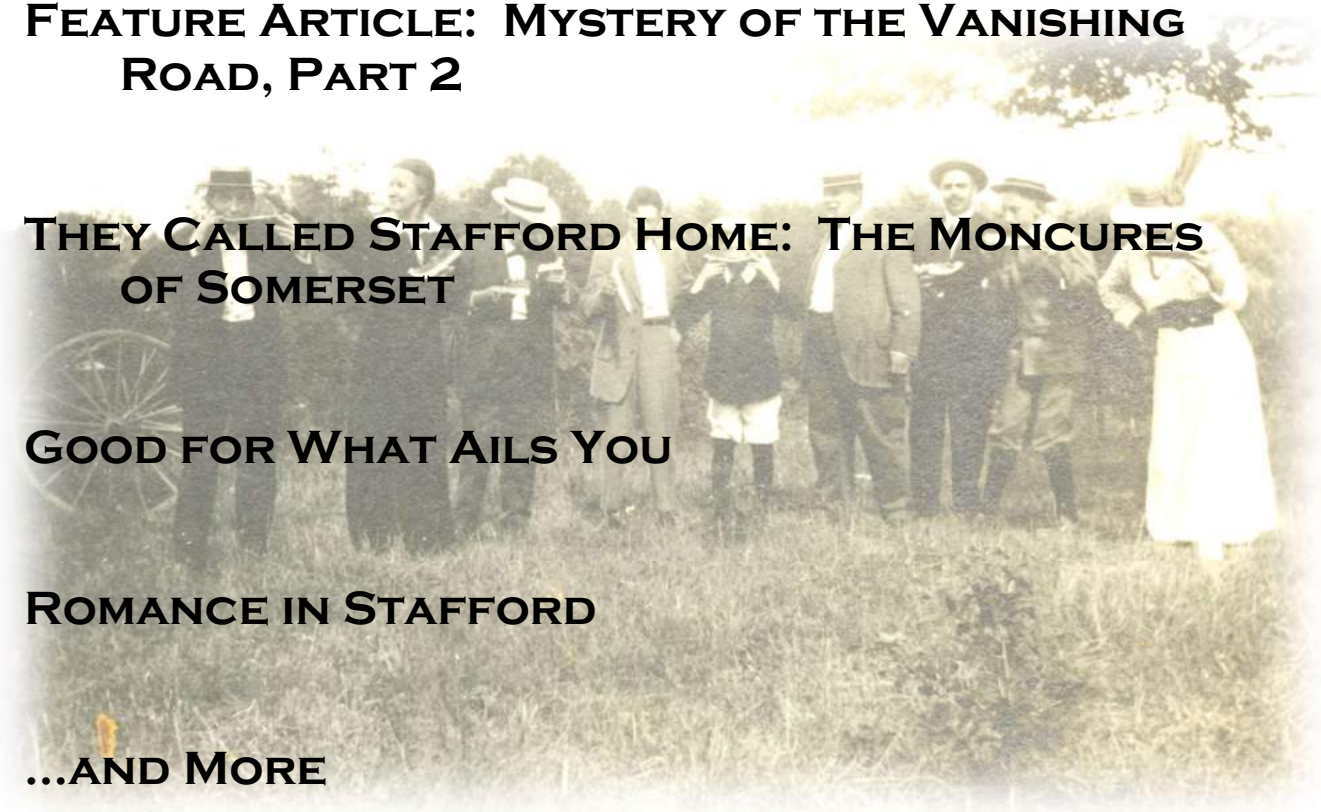
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PRESIDENT'S PEN

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that we are already half way through 2021! As most of you know, the Historical Society and the Museum Foundation are now merged and functioning as one with the hope that we will be better positioned to work with the county on the creation of a long-awaited museum. We have also resumed our in-house monthly meetings and look forward to seeing you at them.

Last month, John Shuck of the Henrico County Historical Society contacted us about a grave marker that was found at a home in Richmond and that he wanted to return to Stafford County. Jerrilynn and I met him and his wife at Carmel Church and retrieved the stone of Lucy Ennever (c.1776-1852). Later, we met with Anita Dodd, head of the Stafford County Cemetery Committee, and Linda Belles, a committee member, at the Manheim Auto Auction off Route 17 where the small family cemetery is located. We were surprised to learn that two more stones that had been removed long ago from this cemetery had recently been returned. They had been discovered, broken, at a Richmond construction site. How and why these three marble headstones ended up in Richmond and why they were in two separate locations there is a mystery.

The Ennever family resided at Stanstead, which now includes the large shopping center and industrial complex at the junction of Interstate 95 and U. S. Route 17. When the tract was developed, the family cemetery was fenced for protection. The inscribed footstones for all three of the above grave markers survive on site.

All three of these marble stones require repair before they can be returned to the cemetery. Your SCHS board voted to establish a designated fund to assist with the expense of gravestone repairs. Donations may be made through the SCHS website, staffordhistorical.org, or by check.

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Cover Illustration: The Moncure family of Somerset, c.1912.

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FEATURE ARTICLE:

The Mystery of the Vanishing Road

Part II: The Falmouth Triangle

By Mark Burton

AS REVEALED IN Part I, the vanishing road is depicted in several Civil War maps running from the main grounds of the Chatham estate (near today's Butler Road) northward to what is today Forbes Street, just north of today's Harrell Road in Falmouth. This road passed through the area that is now the Clearview housing subdivision. Maps from the 1930s, however, only show about half of the road. Today, the only remaining portion of this vanishing road is, apparently, the eastern leg of the boomerang-shaped Strawberry Lane.

Regrettably, I was never able to determine the vanishing road's antebellum status. Was it a major thoroughfare before the war or just a minor Chatham farm path? Or was it created, in whole or in part, by Union troops during the war as a shortcut to their Chatham headquarters?

I did, however, discover the vanishing road's 19th century name, though only accidentally. While researching the history of a Falmouth farm owned by some of my ancestors, I came across an 1878 deed that contained the name as well as two other intriguing revelations.

The deed, with a roughly drawn plat, reveals that the predecessor to Harrell Road had been relocated at some point prior to 1878. The plat shows both the predecessor roadway and what was then the new roadway. (Harrell Road, by the way, is today an east-west shortcut between Forbes Street on the west and Deacon Road on the east, passing under the railroad tracks and over Claiborne Run at about the halfway point. If I'm not mistaken, it was named after Goldsborough Harrell, who owned a 20th century farm just east of the railroad tracks.)

The 1878 plat also depicts a triangle, formed by three roads, in the area surrounding what is today the intersection of Forbes Street and Harrell Road. The predecessor of today's Forbes Street constitutes the western side of the triangle. The southern side of the triangle was the western end of the original predecessor of today's Harrell Road, which was located at least a hundred yards or so south of today's Harrell.

The third and eastern side of the triangle was the northern end of the vanishing road. The plat does not show if the vanishing road still extended all the way down to Chatham in 1878. At least one Civil War map also depicts this triangular junction.¹

Today, Strawberry Lane's eastern leg ends at Harrell Road but, at some point prior to 1931, it must have crossed Harrell and ended at Forbes Street, very near the front yard of my parents' house. This is not obvious, though, because it appears that that stretch of Harrell Road was bulldozed lower, presumably at some point in the early to mid-20th century, creating embankments on either side of Harrell in the vicinity of Strawberry Lane.

The 1878 deed refers to the third road of the triangle as Fitzhugh Road but reveals little else about it. I don't know when the road was first named Fitzhugh and I don't know if it was named after the William Fitzhugh who built Chatham or some other Fitzhugh. Still, I now know the 19th century name of the vanishing road.

¹ Michler, N. *Fredericksburg*. [S.l.: N.Y. Lithographing, Engraving & Printing Co, 1867] Map. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2009579483/>).

I also suspect that the southern end of the aforementioned triangle still exists as Strawberry Lane. That is, the southern segment of today's Strawberry Lane was, presumably, the western end of the Harrell Road predecessor. The eastern segment of Strawberry Lane was part of the now vanished Fitzhugh Road.

I don't know, however, if the triangular junction existed prior to the Civil War. That is, there might have been only two antebellum roads instead of three, intersecting near the bend in today's Strawberry Lane, with no triangle at all.



The triangular junction shown in an 1878 plat is also depicted in a Civil War map (left, top center).¹ Another Civil War map (right), of questionable accuracy, depicts a major road running from Stafford Courthouse directly to Chatham, with the southern portion of what is now Forbes Street shown as a separate road.²

On the Road to Boscobel

There is some evidence that one of those two possible roads might have run from Falmouth and Clearview mansion to Boscobel, combining what is now the southern end of Forbes Street with the Harrell Road predecessor. For example, my great-great-great aunt's house, formerly located just north of Clearview Avenue at 505 Forbes Street, was described in a deed as being located on "the road to Boscobel." Also, before Deacon Road was built in the 20th century, Harrell Road and its predecessor did, indeed, lead to Boscobel.

In addition, all of the land within the triangle originally belonged to the farm on the western side of today's Forbes Street (which became the Spring Valley housing subdivision in the 1960s). So why would there have been a road cutting the triangle land off from the rest of the farm? Had Union troops created the western side of the triangle during the Civil War by using it as a shortcut?

In the early 20th century, William R. Hill, who had inherited the farm and the triangle land from his father, sold the farm to George S. Graninger who, in turn, quickly sold the triangular piece of land to Aaron and Mary Knight in the 1920s. By then, Harrell Road separated the northern tip of the triangle from the rest. The Knights kept the land in the northern tip of the triangle and apparently sold all of the remaining triangle land that was south of Harrell Road.

The triangular junction explains why Harrell Road intersects with Forbes Street at an annoying angle that favors the south because, in the past, the Fitzhugh Road side of the triangle would have been used by people who wanted to go north from westbound Harrell or east from southbound Forbes. It also explains why my ancestors' farm did not extend all the way to the corner of Harrell and Forbes because the now-vanished northern end of Fitzhugh Road had once been the boundary.

In addition, it might explain why a powerline that services a few houses along the eastern leg of Strawberry Lane, south of Harrell Road, also services a house north of Harrell Road located on what had been part of the Knights' land inside the northern tip of the triangle.

Maps from 1931 and 1934, as well as 1937 aerial photography, indicate that the Fitzhugh Road side of the smaller triangular tip either no longer existed by the 1930s or, at least, was no longer in use, except perhaps as a private drive on the Knights' property.

In other words, by the 1930s, the northern end of the vanishing Fitzhugh Road ended at Harrell Road, more than a hundred yards south of Fitzhugh's former intersection with the Forbes Street predecessor. The bend in Forbes Street just north of that old intersection, however, might indicate that an early Forbes Street predecessor did not itself bend but, instead, was the northern portion of a much longer Fitzhugh Road.

Before the Civil War, this longer Fitzhugh Road might have been the only other major road in the area besides the road to Boscobel, running north all the way to Bellmeade (near the intersection of today's Forbes Street and Primmer House Road). In other words, as some questionable Civil War maps indicate, Fitzhugh Road might have been a part of the main north-south road between Fredericksburg and Stafford Courthouse, including more than a one-mile stretch of today's Forbes Street that runs past Falmouth Elementary School.²

In the 18th and early 19th centuries it would make sense, would it not, to have a road connecting two large estates like Chatham and Bellmeade? It would also make sense to have a major road between Fredericksburg and Stafford Courthouse, running directly from Chatham northward, given Chatham's importance and proximity to downtown Fredericksburg.

If this theory about two roads instead of three is correct, it would make little Strawberry Lane more historically significant than it looks. Ironically, the last remaining non-Forbes Street portion of what was once Fitzhugh Road could soon disappear.

An Urgent Development

The land around Strawberry Lane, including what used to be Roy's Used Car Parts and the Shelton family cemetery, was recently sold by some of my distant cousins to a housing developer. The developer basically wants to turn the area into a new section of the Clearview subdivision, connecting the existing Clearview subdivision on the south to Harrell Road on the north. I'm not sure what will happen to Strawberry Lane itself.

These developments have spurred me to publish the story of the vanishing Fitzhugh Road now, even though more research needs to be done (such as a review of historical highway records). I do so in the hope that someone else might one day pick up where I've left off and finally solve the Mystery of the Vanishing Road.

Mark Burton is a life member of the Stafford County Historical Society and a former editor of the Society's newsletter. He is the author of several books, including Burtons of Stafford: 1680 to 1930.

² Sneden, Robert Knox. *The Rebel entrenched position at Fredericksburg, Va. showing Hooker's flank march on Chancellorsville 3rd and 4th May.* [to 1865, 1863] Map. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. (<https://www.loc.gov/item/gvhs01.vhs00288/>).

THEY CALLED STAFFORD HOME: THE MONCURES OF SOMERSET



The first of this family to settle in Stafford County was John Moncure (1710-1764). Family history holds that he was born in the parish of Kinneff, County Mearns, Scotland. He arrived in Virginia in 1733, taught school, studied divinity, and, after ordination, moved to Stafford in 1738. There he resided with Alexander Scott (1686-1738) at Dipple, and served as his curate. Dipple was located at the junction of Chappawamsic Creek and the

Potomac River. Moncure became rector of Overwharton Parish after Scott's death in 1738 and was serving as such when Aquia Church was completed in 1758. Sometime between 1748 and 1753, John built his own home, Clermont, just upstream on Chappawamsic from Dipple. The western portion of this tract became a summer residence away from the mosquitoes that plagued waterfront residents and was called Somerset. Later Moncures built a fine frame home here and the property remained in the family until being taken by the U. S. Government in 1942 for the expansion of the Quantico Marine Corps base. The accompanying photograph was taken around 1912 at one of the frequently-enjoyed watermelon eating parties at Somerset. The boy in the middle is John Moncure (1899-1984) who may be remembered by some of our readers.

Note to Readers: The SCHS seeks to spotlight Stafford residents from earlier generations. Each one had a special story that is worthy of remembrance. When possible, the writer tries to include a photograph of the featured individual or group. If you have an image of and information about someone who called Stafford home, please send an email to staffordhistory1@verizon.net.

GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YOU

In the April newsletter, we offered a home remedy for head lice that was included in a book of hand-written treatments owned by Charles D. Green of Brooke. Perhaps some of you tried it and can testify to its effectiveness. This quarter we offer a remedy for rheumatism of the bone. It was clipped from a newspaper and tucked into the same little volume. If you are a sufferer of this malady, perhaps this will be the cure.

“I want to pass on a tried and true remedy for rheumatism of the bone. My husband suffered for years with his right arm and is as free of pain now as ever, due to this remedy alone. Dig a large poke root and wash, put in the stove and bake till soft. Cut it open down one side and mash the inside until it is smooth and soft. Then bind to the palm (inside) of the hand where the pain is in the arm, this will draw very hard and soon relieve the most severe case of rheumatism in a short time. If the pain is in the leg apply the same poultice to the bottom of the foot.”

ROMANCE IN STAFFORD

The following appeared in a July 1896 issue of the *Fredericksburg Star* newspaper:

“The course of true love does not always run smooth but it is seldom that it finds itself so obstructed at the very altar that instead of running at all it comes to an absolute stand still. Yet such was the case with Mr. Willie Harbour and Miss Emma Anderson, both of the county of Stafford last week at the altar ready to pledge their troth. The wedding was to take place at the bride’s home and the Parson was promptly on hand.

The guests were met
The feast was set
Mightst hear the merry din.

And bride and groom were there. Amid the pleased expectant hush that always obtains on such occasions the preacher began the solemn ceremony and all went smooth until he asked the momentous question that called on any one who knew of any reason why the couple should not be joined in holy wedlock to now speak or forever hereafter be silent. As the preacher paused the groom’s father rose deliberately in the assembly and said he objected to the proceeding because his son had already one wife. There was a dead silence, while the old man proceeded to read several letters from the former wife. Then the groom plucked up courage and said he was not married and had a paper certificate to show it. Upon the preacher asking to see it, he said that it was up stairs in his coat pocket but he never produced it and the preacher, the Rev. William Heflin refused to proceed further. The guests departed and the wedding is off.”

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

July 15—“The Union Raid at Hartwood Church, February 1863” with Frank O’Reilly.
August 19—Annual SCSH picnic at Rowser Building (*Members and their guests only*)
September 16—“Chatham During the Colonial and Revolutionary War Period” with John Hennessy

NEWSLETTER DISSEMINATION: Successful dissemination of our newsletter requires that we have your current email address or that we are made aware of your specific lack of access to a computer. Please contact Doris McAdams at (dmac200592@msn.com) or 540-720-1321.

DUES WERE DUE IN JANUARY!

Dues for 2021 were due January 1st. Membership benefits include a subscription to the newsletter and participation at special events. Please don’t forget to renew your membership so you’ll not miss out on any of our 2021 activities. Mail your check or money order made payable to Stafford County Historical Society (SCHS) to:

Treasurer
Stafford County Historical Society
P. O. Box 1664
Stafford, VA 22555

NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY! WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP:

\$15	Individual Annual Dues	\$5	Student
\$25	Family Annual Dues	\$200	Individual Life Member

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