

Chapter 1

Regional Setting - History

Regional Setting

Warren County is located in the Shenandoah Valley of northwestern Virginia. It is bounded by Frederick and Clarke Counties on the north, by Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties on the east, by Page County on the south, and by Shenandoah County on the west. The Shenandoah Valley is part of a 1,200 mile long valley extending from southern Canada to Alabama.

Warren County has a total land area of 217 square miles, or 141,215 acres. The County's rural area contains 207.49 square miles, or 135,318 acres. The Town of Front Royal has 9.51 square miles, or 5,897 acres.

Three major factors have greatly influenced the County's growth and development: its beauty, its location, and its proximity to major cities. For more than a century the Shenandoah Valley has been noted for its beautiful mountains and clear streams which have attracted many tourists and seasonal guests. Because of the ease of travel along its length, the Valley has been an important North-South transportation route since Indian times.

The County's location, bordering two low passes over the Blue Ridge Mountains, has facilitated travel. Much pioneer commerce from the Richmond and Hampton Roads areas passed through Chester and Manassas Gaps, across Warren County to distant markets. The early retail and industrial economy sector developed from the trans-shipping of manufactured goods and agricultural produce through the County.

The third factor is Warren County's proximity to major cities. The distance to Washington, D.C., is 69 miles; to Baltimore, 107 miles, and to Richmond, 129 miles. These and other eastern cities have been major markets for the County's produce, products, and for major suppliers of manufactured goods.

History

History tells the origins and backgrounds of the area's people. This knowledge is essential to those interested in the County's development if they are to maintain the area's identity and characteristics and its residents' pride.

Warren County's history is unique because it can be traced to prehistoric times (**Table 1.1**). The Thunderbird archeological complex consisting of 1,800 acres of prehistoric sites cover the entire range of human prehistory in eastern North America, roughly a 12,000 year period from approximately 10,000 B.C. to 1600 A.D.

The Thunderbird site and the Fifty site, are stratified (layers of artifacts indicating human occupancy over 12,000 years) and are two of the most significant and important sites in North America. Thunderbird is the only stratified base camp of the paleoindian period known in the Western Hemisphere and contains evidence of the earliest known buildings in the New World.

TABLE 1.1 CHRONOLOGY OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

<u>Period</u>	<u>Cultural Pattern</u>	<u>Years</u>
Paleoindian	Intensive hunting	9500-8000 B.C.
Early Archaic	Hunting	8000-6500 B.C.
Middle Archaic	General Foraging	6500-2500 B.C.
Late Archaic	Specialized Seasonal Foraging	2500-1000 B.C.
Early Woodland	Specialized Seasonal Foraging	1000-500 B.C.
Middle Woodland	Specialized Seasonal Foraging & Horticulture	500 B.C.-1000 A.D.
Late Woodland	Horticulture & Specialized Seasonal Foraging	1000-1600 A.D.
Protohistoric	Absent or Unknown	1600-1700 A.D.
Pioneer-Colonial	Farming-Foraging	1700-1750 A.D.
French & Indian War	Farming-Crafts	1750-1775
Revolutionary War		1776-1781
Post-Revolutionary	Farming-Early Industrial	1781-1860
Civil War Period	Farming-Light Industry	1860-1865
Post Civil War Period	Farming-Light Industry	1865-1900
Present	Farming-Moderate Industry-Recreational	1900-Present
Indian Occupancy		12,000 B.C.-1700 A.D.

*SOURCE - Thunderbird Research Corporation Newsletter - June, 1976

Approximately 12,000 years ago, when the Ice Age was ending, the first occupants of what was to become Warren County made a camp on the narrow floodplain near the confluence of Flint Run and the Shenandoah River's South Fork, at what is now known as Thunderbird. While it is not known whether these were the first inhabitants of the valley, no evidence of occupation prior to this time has been found.

Carrying tools typical of the Paleoindian culture, these prehistoric Indians established a base camp where they fashioned tools and weapons from stone quarried from the jasper outcroppings along Flint Run and the eastern bank of the South Fork. Although they were attracted primarily by the availability of stone, the abundance of wildlife, food, water, and creature comforts were also important factors in their site selection. The base camp was the center of manufacturing activities. Excavations have uncovered a variety of tools that indicate an emphasis on hunting and animal processing.

Across the river from the camp was a quarry reduction station where rocks were broken into smaller sizes prior to being shipped to the manufacturing site. Less than a mile upstream from the base camp was a hunting camp, now known as the Fifty site. Artifacts found in this area consist almost entirely of weapons and tools used to kill and butcher game and to process by-products. A bog was located in the floodplain just below the Fifty site where animals were driven for the kill.

Evidence of at least one structure at Thunderbird is supported by the discovery of post molds, or circular earth discoloration's where posts were driven to support a framework. This is the earliest evidence of any type of structure on the North American continent. The presence of shelters indicates that the site was more than just a tool manufacturing station--that visits were of some duration. While Thunderbird was not a permanent settlement, it was an excellent camp and as such, was periodically revisited.

The Paleoindian period began in 9500 B.C. and lasted until 8000 B.C. When prehistoric man first entered the valley, the northern glaciers were beginning to recede; the climate was much colder and wetter than it is today. Extensive grasslands interspersed with spruce forests covered the valley. The mountains were blanketed by forests and were more than likely capped by a permanent snow cover. Large animals, perhaps even mastodons, roamed the land. In the succeeding Archaic Periods (8000 B.C. - 1000 B.C.) and Woodland Periods (1000 B.C. - 1600 A.D.) the weather began to moderate. As temperatures became warmer, the climate became drier and the seasons set in. Forests enclosed what had once been grasslands, streams dried, and the river changed course.

The life styles of prehistoric man also changed. As terrestrial resources decreased, there was a de-emphasis on hunting. Fishing and other river resources increased. During the summer and spring months, large groups congregated along the river to conduct ceremonies and acquire mates. In the fall and winter, these groups split into smaller units and left the valley for the mountains. In addition to hunting weapons, their tool kits were expanded to include grinding and milling stones and wood cutting instruments. At the Thunderbird Corral site, of the Late Archaic period, the first evidence of trade appears with the discovery of artifacts made of stone not native to this area. The Cabin Run site, excavated in 1981, is several miles down stream from the Thunderbird base camp. Excavations have revealed that this site was inhabited from 8000 B.C. to the late 17th century. Among the major findings are: a deeply buried Archaic site (8000 B.C.); a ceramic sequence stretching from the Early to the Late Woodland periods (1000 B.C.-1700 A.D.); a portion of a Late Woodland hamlet (1100-1200 A.D.); and a portion of a Late Woodland palisades village (1690 A.D.). In addition, burial mounds dating to approximately 100 A.D. were found at the Woodland sites. By this time, occupancy had become permanent.

By the time of the first detailed exploration (1707 A.D.), the Indians had disappeared. After settlement by colonists, tribes with a variety of different heritages are reported setting up

temporary encampments and moving on. In the 1750's, Indians from across the Appalachians, fighting on the side of the French in the French and English power struggle, conducted periodic raids on the Valley's newest settlers. One excavated site dating from this time, the Conrad Cemetery at Shenandoah Farms, appears to be the campsite of an Indian raiding party; the only such site found in Virginia.

An interesting footnote to prerecorded history is the fact that the first European to settle in the valley, Robert McKay, also selected Thunderbird as the site on which to establish his homestead.

1669-1774

The Blue Ridge Mountains served as a natural barrier to the settlement of the Shenandoah Valley for about 120 years after the founding of Jamestown. In 1669, John Lederer climbed the Blue Ridge and first viewed the beautiful valley and meandering river that lie below. In the following year he crossed the mountains two more times at Manassas Gap (Linden) and explored the valley. This exploration was commissioned by Governor Berkeley to explore the part of Virginia then called the "Far West" and to initiate a fur trade with the Indians. In 1673, Cadwallader Jones explored the origins of the Shenandoah and Rappahannock Rivers. He went through a pass believed to be Chester Gap and descended to a point near the present site of Front Royal.

The first settlers of the valley were Germans (especially in Warren County), as well as Scotch-Irish and English Quakers who migrated from Pennsylvania. A Scotch Quaker, named Robert McKay, who arrived in 1731, was the first settler in what is now Warren County. From the beginning, there was much real estate speculation as men secured large amounts of land and sold them in smaller parcels at a profit.

Warren County was situated at the intersection of land and water trade routes. Supplies and manufactured goods came in through Chester and Manassas Gaps from the seacoast, traveling through the County on an old Indian trail later known as the "Valley Pike" and currently known as U.S. 11. Upon reaching the trace, the merchandise was sent north and south to the frontier forts and settlements of the Shenandoah Valley, western Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Locally, one such early trade route extended over Manassas Gap, through Dismal Hollow, and over Morgan's Ford to Winchester. A second trail went from Manassas Run along what is now Happy Creek Road, then by Ferry to Riverton, and on to Strasburg and points north and south. A third trail ran over Chester Gap, along the current U.S. Route 522, to Riverton.

At the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River, many of the valley's early agricultural products were trans-shipped by flatboat river barges for the long trip down the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers to the seaports at Georgetown and Alexandria. A river port soon sprang up. This early port, now the Town of Front Royal, is the County seat and the only incorporated municipality in the County.

1775-1860

Leadership and military manpower were the major resources furnished by Warren County and other valley communities during the Revolutionary War. Pig iron, grain, leather, flour, meat, fruit, vegetables, and lumber, were other valuable resources furnished to the colonial cause.

Front Royal was officially established and divided into half acre lots on November 15, 1788. A minister who preached in 1804 and 1805 recorded in his diary that the town "contains about 60 houses, a Methodist chapel, an academy, a mill and several stores."

The County began to boom in the early 1800's. The wars in Europe created a need for bread stuffs and brought a quick change from a tobacco-oriented economy to the raising of wheat. One local historian during the early 1800's described Front Royal as follows:

"Roads were opened through the mountain gaps to the then market towns of Dumfries and Falmouth. The abundance of paper money gave an impulse to general improvement. Along Happy Creek were erected a woolen cloth factory, four flour mills, and a large distillery. These gave employment to a number of people and formed a suburb known as New Dublin. All the trades, including a comb factory, were represented, but the most prominent and prosperous was the wagon manufacturing business: it gained such reputation that for thirty years the three shops of Messrs. Trout, Cline, Fort and later J.B. Petty found it difficult to meet the demand from the southern and western states. This prosperous condition declined when the sudden decline of wheat in value, caused a financial crash among farmers, merchants, and manufacturers."

In 1836 Warren County was formed from parts of Frederick and Shenandoah Counties, Warren County was named in honor of General Joseph Warren, a Massachusetts physician and patriot who ordered Paul Revere to set out on his midnight ride. From the beginning Front Royal was the County seat.

Writing around 1846, Henry Howe said Warren County's population was 5,627, twenty-five percent of which were slaves. There were 5,000 cattle, 7,000 sheep, and 7,000 hogs. On October 10, 1854, the first railroad made its way into the Shenandoah Valley by way of Manassas Gap and Front Royal.

1861-1899

The County was of strategic importance during the War Between the States because of its agricultural productivity and its transportation links with Winchester and eastern Virginia. Eastern Virginia was reached by roads through Chester and Manassas Gaps and by the vital Manassas Gap Railroad. General Lee and part of his forces passed through the County going to and from Gettysburg.

The Battle of Front Royal, on May 23, 1862, was one of the battles of General Stonewall Jackson's famous Valley Campaign. Colonel John R. Kenly (US), with 1,000 men, was stationed at Front Royal to protect a military supply depot, the Manassas Gap Railroad, and the strategic bridges over the two forks of the Shenandoah River at Riverton. General Jackson, with 17,000 men, marched from Luray for a surprise attack. After five hours of fierce fighting the Union command was overrun, with 904 of the Federal Troops killed, wounded, or captured.

Other significant battles have taken place in Warren County or in a portion of the County. In 1864, the Confederate Army of the Valley under Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early surprised the Federal army at Cedar Creek and routed the VIII and XIX Army Corps. Commander Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan arrived from Winchester to rally his troops, and, in the afternoon, launched a crushing counterattack, which recovered the battlefield. Sheridan's victory at Cedar Creek broke the back of the Confederate army in the Shenandoah Valley. Lincoln rode the momentum of Sheridan's victories in the Valley and Sherman's successes in Georgia to re-election.

In September and October of 1864, two battles occurred at the village of Milford in Warren and Page Counties, then a prosperous commercial hub now known as Overall. Although the casualties were low at these little known battles, the engagements were strategically important. Overall lies at the narrowest point in the Page Valley and provided an ideal defensive position for the smaller Confederate cavalry (about 1800) with artillery to face the larger Union cavalry (about 5000) with artillery. Both battles prolonged the fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, since both times the Confederate cavalry held the line at Milford and allowed Confederate General Early's defeated infantry to escape the flanking action of Union General Sheridan and retreat southward up the Shenandoah Valley.

Other historic persons active in Warren County during this period were Belle Boyd, noted Southern spy, and Major John S. Mosby and his Rangers. Six of the Rangers were captured by General Custer and were subsequently executed in Front Royal. Four were shot in a public execution and two were hanged on the hill near 15th Street. A State Historical Marker records the event.

The war had destroyed most of the County's buildings, but the soil could still be farmed and the County was able to attract investments to develop local natural resources. An enormous vineyard was started, which covered the low hills just south of Front Royal. Iron, copper, and manganese were discovered. One company, located near Happy Creek, shipped 100 tons of ore daily to Pennsylvania.

A lime works was founded in Riverton in 1869 and soon ranked as one of the largest industries of its kind in the South. This industry is still in operation and currently employs approximately 100 people.

Manufacturing soon expanded. The previously famous wagon shops were revived. A molasses and sugar cane factory was established on Happy Creek. The sumac tanning and leather industries regained the place of importance they had previously known. Factories started producing horse collars, harnesses, shoes, and gloves.

Farmers in Warren County concentrated on providing sumac to the tanneries for tanning and dyeing. In addition to the other industries, a mill at Riverton produced flour at the rate of 125 barrels daily. Other industries were tinning and cigar production.

Summer guests came to Warren County from Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore to enjoy the area's natural beauty and climate. Other travelers went through the County on their way to the spas in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, and in Orkney Springs, Virginia, in Shenandoah County.

The County again erupted into a flurry of activity in the 1890s when promoters took an option on all land between Front Royal and Riverton and laid it off in lots and streets. They built strong new bridges across both branches of the Shenandoah, which had not been spanned since the original bridges were burned during the Civil War. This section was known as the "Boom." The promoters guaranteed the lots would be worth ten times their current value in a few weeks. The project failed and many of the lots were sold in later years to meet unpaid taxes.

1900-Present

The two most important changes in Warren County's modern history have been the construction of a large chemical-textile plant in Front Royal and the growth of tourism. In 1937, construction began on a plant which became the world's largest producer of rayon. At its peak, this plant employed 1,600 workers and was responsible for the area's 77% population growth between 1930 and 1950. It was the primary source of employment for County residents until 1989, when the plant was closed due to environmental issues.

In the intervening years, other industries have located in the County. Among the current major employers are DuPont, Family Dollar Services, Ferguson Enterprises, and Toray Plastics. Another major industry currently being constructed is SYSCO. This industry will add 380 jobs. These plants will employ a total of approximately 500 workers.

Because of its climate, its accessibility to major cities, and its scenic beauty, Warren County has long attracted tourists and seasonal residents. With the opening of the Shenandoah National Park and the Skyline Drive in 1936, tourism became a major local industry. The discovery in 1937 of a cave system one mile south of Front Royal, further expanded the number of activities for area visitors. The greatest development in tourism occurred after World War II when many new motels, restaurants, campgrounds, and shops opened.

During the 1950s and 1960s recreational-retirement subdivisions became common. By 1972 most subdivisions were platted for recreational-retirement use. In recent years, these subdivisions have become populated by full-time, permanent residents.

In 1948, the U.S. Department of Agriculture was assigned 4,135 acres of federally owned property southeast of the Town limits. The Department, in conjunction with Virginia Polytechnic Institute, operated a Beef Cattle Research Station on this land until 1973. Originally bought in 1912 by the U.S. Army as a remount station, the property was used as a breeding, procurement, and training center, for horses. During World War II it served as a prisoner-of-war camp and as a training site for dogs in the K-9 Corps. After the Research Station closed, the major portion of the land was acquired by the Smithsonian Institution for the establishment of the National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Center for the breeding and raising of rare species. In addition to the Research Center, the grounds house the U.S. Customs Dog Training Center where dogs are taught to detect concealed narcotics and other dangerous drugs. The Virginia Polytechnic Institute acquired 229 acres of the former Research Station for a 4-H Educational Center. Opened in 1980, the Center provides educational and recreational facilities for members of a 19-city/county area of Northern Virginia.

The state's first Agricultural and Forestal District was created in 1978 in Warren County's Rockland area. Comprised of approximately 9,000 acres, the District was formed to

conserve, to protect, and to encourage, the improvement and development of farmland. Most of the agricultural land in the County is used for grazing, orchards, and grain crops. In recent years, the cultivation of grapes has grown in agricultural importance. The Shenandoah Valley has many vineyards and wineries; one is located in Warren County and several are in adjacent counties.

The Town of Front Royal, in 1978, designated a large portion of Chester Street as a historical district. During the summer of 1982, the Belle Boyd Cottage, which was a temporary residence of Belle Boyd a Confederate spy who played a significant part in Civil War history, was moved from Jackson Street onto the grounds of Ivy Lodge in the historical district.

Each period of its long, active, history has left Warren County richer in important buildings and sites. Warren County has six sites on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Commission Register: Mt. Zion, Flint Run Archeological District, Thunderbird Archeological District, Erin, Killahevin, and the Warren County Courthouse. Also included on the National Register for Warren County are the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove, although both sites are either totally or largely in Frederick County.

The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission lists 158 other Warren County sites as possibly meriting such recognition. The survey from which this list was derived was conducted under the auspices of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission during 1970 and 1971. It was financed by the Department of Interior and entailed the inventorying of sites of architectural, historical, and/or archeological interest. From such inventories are gleaned entries to the Virginia Landmarks Register. Sites named to the Virginia Landmarks Register are automatically nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the Department of Interior. Additionally, in 1991, a Rural Historic Resources Survey of Warren County was prepared by Ms. Maral S. Kalbian, an Architectural Historian. This document was the result of a grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources awarded to the Warren County Board of Supervisors. The survey was the first comprehensive attempt to catalog the County's historic sites.

Acknowledgment should also be given to recovering the data and to preserving the major sites of the area's rich Indian history. Thunderbird Research Corporation archeologists have successfully preserved several sites and excavated many artifacts.

Summary

As Warren County continues to grow and develop, the preservation of its heritage and its culture becomes vitally important. The County has played a major role in the history and development of this nation; therefore, the preservation of associated sites and artifacts must be protected from developmental pressures resulting from an increasing population and the associated demands for public and private services.