

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District

other names/site number DHR No. 053-0276

2. Location

street & number From intersection of alignment with Shirlington Road, Arlington, Va. to intersection with Rt. 690 Purcellville, Va. (see continuation sheet) not for publication ☒

city or town Arlington, Falls Church, Vienna, Herndon, Leesburg, Purcellville Vicinity ☒

state Virginia code VA county Fairfax/Loudoun code 059/107 Zip _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District
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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

___ building(s)
X district
 ___ site
 ___ structure
 ___ object

| | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <u>5</u> | <u>0</u> buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> sites |
| <u>63</u> | <u>45</u> structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> objects |
| 68 | 45 Total |

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Transportation Sub: Rail-related

[illegible]

Cat: Recreation Sub: Outdoor Recreation

[illegible]

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
roof _____
walls _____
other Earth _____
 Stone _____
 Cast Iron _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **X** **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ashley M. Neville

Organization: Gray & Pape, Inc. date 7/25/00

street & number: 1705 E. Main Street telephone 804-644-0656

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23223

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

street & number 5400 Ox Road telephone 703-729-0596

city or town Fairfax Station state VA zip code 22039-1022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation _____
Commerce _____
Military _____

Period of Significance 1855 - 1950 _____

Significant Dates 1855 _____

1912 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A _____

Architect/Builder James Roach, Builder _____

Sidney G. Miller, Builder _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

_____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

_____ previously listed in the National Register

_____ previously determined eligible by the National Register

_____ designated a National Historic Landmark

_____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

_____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

_____ Other State agency

_____ Federal agency

_____ Local government

_____ University

_____ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 547.45 _____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 318160 4301900 2 18 316900 4303000

3 18 315640 4304160 4 18 315640 4304180

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2. Location

The nominated property extends from the intersection of the railroad alignment with Shirlington Rd, Arlington, Va. to its intersection with Route 690 in Purcellville, Va. It passes through the following localities:

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Arlington | Code 013 |
| Falls Church | Code 610 |
| Vienna | No code |
| Herndon | No code |
| Fairfax County | Code 059 |
| Leesburg | No code |
| Purcellville | No code |
| Loudoun County | Code 107 |

7. Summary Description:

At its peak, the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad (W&OD) extended from Alexandria at its eastern terminus to Bluemont situated at the foot of the Blue Ridge fifty-four miles to the west. Today, forty-five miles of the railroad exist as the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park. That part of the W&OD preserved in this linear park wends its way through the urban heartland of northern Virginia to the still rural and bucolic farmland of Loudoun County. It extends from just west of I-395 at Shirlington and passes through Arlington, Falls Church, Vienna, Fairfax County, Herndon, Reston, and Leesburg, before ending in Purcellville in Loudoun County. Along the way, it crosses waterways, interstate highways, and climbs through Clark's Gap. It passes apartment buildings and modern condominiums, homes – both modern and historic – town halls, industrial sites, high-rise office and commercial buildings as well as passing through significant stretches of natural areas tucked in a densely urbanized area as well as the rural farmland of Loudoun County. The nominated resource consists of the original railroad alignment, bridge abutments and piers, stone arches, culverts, depots and freight stations.

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Detailed Description

The area through which the nominated portion of the W&OD Railroad passes has changed significantly from its inception in 1853 as the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire Railroad. At that time, the train originated in Alexandria and crossed through farmland and undeveloped areas dotted with small towns and hamlets. One description noted the presence of farms in the Four Mile Run area. An 1860 timetable listed the following stops or hamlets: Old Factory, Arlington Mills, Carlinville, Falls Church, Vienna, Hunter's Mill, Thornton, Herndon, Guilford, and Farmwell (Ashburn). The phenomenal growth of the northern Virginia area in the post-World War II period has created a densely urban and suburban landscape through which the railroad trail now passes on its eastern segment while Loudoun County maintains farmland and open space amid the increasing development of that area. The Four Mile Run valley continues to be a scenic and natural oasis in an area of apartment buildings, single-family homes, commercial establishments, and industrial sites. Between Vienna and Reston the railroad alignment continues through another undeveloped natural area and wildlife habitat along Piney Branch. The Reston area is heavily developed with high-rise office and apartments buildings towering over the trail. West of Route 28, the area becomes increasingly open with modern subdivisions flanking the route. The alignment passes the Luck Stone Quarry where quarrying operations can be viewed from a lookout. The ruins of a lime kiln are visible along the alignment in Leesburg. Grain mills, located adjacent to the railroad stations at Hamilton and Purcellville, attest to the important role the railroad played in the industry of the area through which it passed. The mill is still standing at Ashburn, but the depot is gone. Visitors to the old W&OD railroad alignment have a diverse panorama from which to partake. They can see urban industry, city gardens, streams cascading over rocks with frolicking children in the summer, deer, otter, snakes, hawks and other wildlife, office workers out for a brisk walk at lunch time, historic buildings, or cows and horses as it passes through the western farmland.

Roadbed (from east to west)

The 100-foot wide original roadbed of the W&OD survives today as the W&OD Railroad Regional Park - a forty-five mile long linear park that uses the former roadbed as a multi-use trail. The alignment extends from Shirlington Road just west of I-395 in the east to the Purcellville Station at the western terminus of the trail and uses the original grading of the railroad. The roadbed is paved with an eight to ten foot wide asphalt surface that is being widened to twelve feet in intense-use areas. Adjacent to the roadbed, a thirty-and-one-half-mile long bluestone-surface bridle path runs

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from just west of Vienna to Purcellville. The alignment consists of level stretches, fill, and cuts. In the Four Mile Run valley, the alignment hugs the edge of a ledge above the creek. In one section, dry laid stone reinforces the embankment below the roadbed. In the Piney Branch area, the W&OD used old cars, crushed flat and laid vertically, to reinforce the embankment. For the most part, the track and ballast do not survive. When the railroad ceased operation most of the track was removed. A few sections may survive at intersections where the rails still exist under the road pavement.

The railroad alignment headed west from Alexandria following the land contours as closely as possible with a minimum of major grading. From Alexandria to Falls Church, it followed the Four Mile Run drainage gently upgrade crossing the stream a number of times. Beyond Falls Church, it followed no particular natural course but the route ran at right angles to the drainage system necessitating a number of major and minor stream crossings. By the time it reached Leesburg, it had climbed and dropped through twenty-one major grades yet ended at about the same elevation as at Falls Church. West of Leesburg, the route climbed, crossing the Catoctins at Clark's Gap with an elevation of 635 feet, the highest point on the railroad (Williams 1970:26). West of Clark's Gap, it travelled up and down hills passing Purcellville and Round Hill before ending at Bluemont at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Over 60% of the railroad was laid on grades of over 0.9% (Harwood 1969:14). In places, the roadbed was elevated with steep drop-offs on either side such as the area along Dry Mill Road in Loudoun County while in others, the alignment was cut through a hill side with steep embankments on either side as is found just west of Ashburn.

Although the original railroad continued on to Round Hill and Bluemont, that stretch of the original alignment survives only in segments. Immediately west of the Purcellville Station, the alignment completely disappears under a parking lot and modern buildings. West of Purcellville in the open countryside, the alignment is more discernable as a line of trees crossing fields. It survives as a raised berm where it is crossed by Route 716 and as a shallow cut at Route 720. However, its approach to Round Hill has been obliterated by a modern residential development. The frame station survives at Round Hill and is now used as a residence; however the path of the alignment to the station is difficult to determine due to residential development in the immediate area. It is difficult to identify the alignment west of Round Hill (this section was abandoned in 1939) and nothing appears to survive in Bluemont.

For the most part, the trail alignment follows the original path of the W&OD. Exceptions to the original alignment occur at several major highway crossings such as Roosevelt Boulevard, Interstates

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66 and 495, Fairfax Parkway, Route 15 at Leesburg, Route 7 at Clark's Gap and Route 287 at the entrance to Purcellville. In these areas, most of which were grade crossings, the original alignment has been breached or the opening widened. In some cases changes were made to the alignment by localities as soon as the railroad ceased to function. In addition, for that part of the W&OD Trail that runs parallel to and immediately adjacent to I-66 (from Patrick Henry Dr. to Washington St/Rt. 29), the original alignment is now under I-66. The construction of I-66, and the use by I-66 of the original railroad right-of-way, was one of the reasons for the demise of the W&OD.

When the W&OD railroad ceased operations in 1968, Virginia Power purchased the right-of-way for its electric power transmission lines. As a result, for much of its length, overhead transmission lines and their towers stand adjacent to or on the alignment. The transmission lines run from the beginning of the surviving alignment as far west as Cochran Mill Road just west of Sycolin Creek in Loudoun County.

Bridges (Abutments, Piers, and Arches)

The land upon which the W&OD was built is watered by a number of both large and small streams. The railroad alignment ran at right angles to these drainages necessitating the construction of bridges for the larger streams and culverts for the small ones. Major stream crossings include Four Mile Run (which it crosses seven times), Piney Branch, Difficult Run, Sugarland Run, Broad Run, Beaverdam Run, Goose Creek (a state-designated scenic river), Sycolin Creek, Tuscarora Creek and Leesburg Town Branch, the last major stream crossing. So many stream crossings were not without problems. High water in Four Mile Run frequently carried away embankments and trestle members (Williams 1970).

For the purposes of this nomination the historic features of the bridges are the abutments, piers, and stone arches. The bridge spans have all been replaced. The bridges fall into two categories; those with abutments and piers and those with stone arches. Most of the major stream crossings have abutments and piers. They include the bridges across Four Mile Run, Piney Branch, Difficult Run, Broad Run, Goose Creek, Sycolin Creek, Tuscarora Creek and Town Branch. Many of the bridges were steel trusses that later were replaced by deck girder spans. What survives today of the historic bridges are the abutments and piers with new superstructures and wooden decks to carry the W&OD trail across the streams. The bridge abutments are well constructed of dressed stone. Bridge piers are built of both dressed stone and concrete. The three piers for the Tuscarora Creek crossing, which

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does not have a bridge today, are concrete although the abutments are stone. A modern concrete pad or footings have been placed atop many of the original abutments to carry the modern bridge.

The Goose Creek bridge is the highest and longest bridge (278 feet long) on the route. It has been destroyed and rebuilt several times since its initial construction although the stone abutments and piers date from the original pre-Civil War period of construction (Williams 1970:26). It consists of stone abutments with three stone piers. The present bridge span was built in 1981 (NVRPA 1996:30). The Tuscarora Creek bridge was the next longest at 149 feet with the bridge across Broad Run slightly shorter at 140 feet. The Difficult Run bridge has abutments with one concrete pier located at the bank. The Piney Branch bridge west of Clark's Crossing is a single span with stone abutments as are the Four Mile Run bridges.

There are six stone arch bridges. All but one carry the W&OD across streams. The Clark's Gap bridge, probably the best known and most accessible of the stone arches, is the exception. It carries the original Leesburg Pike/Route 7 across the railroad and the alignment runs through the arch. The single span masonry arch bridge, built about 1867-1868 is constructed of large rough-cut stones with dressed stone voussoirs. It measures twenty-four feet wide and twenty-nine feet long (VDHR File No. 53-552). A stone balustrade of random rubble that appears to be a later construction surmounts the bridge. The Sugarland Run bridge, just west of Reston, is constructed entirely of dressed stone blocks and is thought to be the only survivor from the original construction phase of 1855-1860 (VDHR File No. 029-5011). The Piney Branch bridge southeast of Clark's Crossing is also a single span stone arch bridge. It was constructed of local stone in the spandrels and barrel with dressed stone voussoirs. It has a 12 foot span with the barrel measuring 54 feet 6 inches (VDHR File No. 029-5011). The Park Authority has added concrete at the base to prevent scouring by the stream while the railroad added a metal beam across each opening connected through the arch by metal cables.

There are also two sets of abutments that were constructed to carry vehicular traffic over the railroad. A pair of sandstone abutments is located in an undeveloped area of Loudoun County between the Sycolin and Tuscarora Creek crossings. The road it served has long since disappeared. A second pair of abutments is located just east of Vienna near mile marker 10.5. It carried the Arlington Fairfax Railway over the W&OD. The southern abutment is stone while the northern one is built of poured concrete.

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Modern bridges on the W&OD were constructed to cross major highways. These include bridges that cross Interstates 66 and 495, the Herndon Parkway East and West, Town Center Parkway, Route 28, Panorama Parkway, and the Route 7 Bypass just west of Leesburg. In addition to these modern bridges that carry the trail over obstacles, it goes under the Reston Parkway, Route 50, Wilson Boulevard, the Dulles Access Road, Route 15 and others (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority [NVRPA] 1996:14).

Culverts

In addition to the historic bridges, there are numerous culverts used to cross smaller streams and drainages that survive along the W&OD. Fewer historic culverts survive in the eastern sections of the alignment. As the areas of Reston, Sterling Park, and Fairfax County upgraded their stormwater management systems, many of the historic culverts were replaced with modern concrete culverts and spillways (Paul McCray, personal communication, 7 March 2000). In some cases, the modern systems makes use of the older stone culverts. In one instance just west of Vienna near mile marker 12.5, a modern concrete spillway has been laid to the stone culvert to direct water away from the adjacent backyard of residences and to the culvert. More of the original stone culverts survive in the western reaches of the alignment.

The stone box and arched culverts are the oldest and appear to date to the original construction of the railroad grade. They are built of cut stone laid up with mortar. The larger ones have a rectangular opening with one long stone across the top of the opening and a stone floor. The stone side walls may extend along the embankment anywhere from one to three feet. There are two good examples west of Ivandale and two more along Dry Mill Road between Leesburg and Clark's Gap. There is also a good example of a box culvert in the Four Mile Run area of Arlington. Many of these culverts are in good condition. There are several stone culverts with arched openings. One carries an un-named tributary of Beaverdam Run under the railroad alignment west of Ashburn. It has a semicircular or Roman arch opening with dressed voussoirs and random rubble embankment walls. Another is located on an un-named tributary of Tuscarora Creek west of mile marker 32.5 in Leesburg. It also has random rubble embankment walls and dressed voussoirs but with a segmental opening.

In a later period of the railroad development, cast iron culverts replaced the stone culverts. Several survive including one just east of Panorama Parkway. Concrete pipes have been used as modern culverts.

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Depots

Five depots or stations survive in their original location adjacent to the railroad alignment. These include (from east to west) Vienna, Sunset Hills, Herndon, Hamilton, and Purcellville. The Leesburg freight station is still extant but has been moved several blocks from its original location and is now part of a commercial complex. It is not included in this nomination. Except for the original Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire facility in Alexandria, all stations were wooden frame buildings and date to the turn-of-the-century. Most followed the typical southern station design with two "separate but equal" waiting rooms, an agent-operator's office, and freight shed together under one roof. Leesburg and Round Hill had separate freight depots (Harwood 1969:14). Except for the Sunset Hill station, the surviving stations were agency stations – full sized buildings with waiting rooms and freight facilities. In addition to the stations, one passenger shelter survives but has been moved from its original location.

Vienna

The Vienna Station is a full sized agency station located in what is now a commercial/light industrial area of Vienna. It is a one-story, frame building with board and batten siding. The gable roof has wide overhanging eaves typical of railroad architecture. Light decorative brackets are found only at the ends of the building. A single brick chimney flue pierces the roof which also has a wooden ventilator at the ridge. There is a box bay window on the rail side of the building with double, paneled doors immediately west of the bay window. There are large freight doors on both the north and south elevations at the west end of the building. Windows are four-over-four light double-hung sash. This depot was built prior to the Civil War and appears in an 1864 photograph. At a later date, the passenger waiting area was added. The train order signal survives on this station.

Sunset Hills Station

The Sunset Hills Station is a small, frame, one-story, three-bay building with novelty siding and a hip roof of asphalt shingles. There is one interior chimney flue on the rear. The windows are six-over-six light double-hung sash and flank the modern, central single-panel with light door. There are double doors on the east end. At one time, it served as a ranger station for the park.

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Herndon Station

Located in the heart of the historic area of Herndon, a station stood here as early as 1857 but this building appears to have reached its present form by about 1881. It is a frame building with board and batten siding and gable roof with wide overhanging eaves supported by simple brackets. Two interior brick chimney flues pierce the roof. A fascia board delineates the foundation level. Windows are fairly narrow four-over-four light double-hung sash and there is a box bay window on the northeast elevation. The main doors have transoms with colored glass panes around the large center pane. There are large freight doors on both the north and south elevations at the west end of the building. The train order signal survives above the box bay on this station. The interior features waiting rooms for white and colored passengers separated by the ticket master's room. The station is operated as a museum by the Herndon Historical Society and is individually listed on the National and Virginia Landmarks Register.

Paeonian Springs Shelter

This passenger shelter, typical of non-agency stations, originally stood at Clark's Gap but was moved to this location. Paeonian Springs originally had a full size agency station, that burned in 1941. This shelter is a heavily framed, one-story structure on a cement slab with board and batten siding on three sides. It is open on the fourth. Pressed metal shingles cover the gable roof. A wooden bench is located on each interior wall.

Hamilton Station

The Hamilton Station is located in a rural area with a grain mill standing just to its east. An interchange of the modern Route 7 Bypass and Route 704 is located just southwest of the station. The station is a frame structure on a low stone foundation with board and batten siding. The shingle-covered gable roof has a wide overhang on the north side (rail bed side) and is pierced by one shed-roof dormer on this side also. There is a box bay window on the north side. A fascia board delineates the foundation level. All windows are boarded over with plywood sheathing.

Purcellville Station

The Purcellville Station, built about 1903, is located at the end of the business district in a historic industrial area that includes grain mills and warehouses. The station has recently been restored. It

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is a one-story, frame building with board and batten siding and a hip roof of standing-seam metal. Typical of railroad architecture, the station has wide overhanging, bracketed eaves and a box bay window on the rail side. The original windows are six-over-six light double-hung sash. The doors are five-panel topped with transoms and both the windows and doors have simple board trim. The train order signal survives on this station. Changes to the exterior include the addition of handicap ramps on the south side and west end and the replacement of the freight door on the west end with a window/door combination. The interior of this station features one large room on the west end and smaller room on the east end. The walls in this room have the original vertical beaded board sheathing and the ticket window survives as well.

8. Statement of Significance

That portion of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad (W&OD) that is contained within the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park along with the surviving associated depots are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for their contribution to the broad patterns of the history of Northern Virginia in the areas of transportation and commerce. The railroad is historically significant as one of the major commercial and transportation arteries of the northern Virginia area from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. The railroad, initially planned by Alexandria merchants as a means to compete with the city of Baltimore for western trade, began in 1853 as the Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad. Although it never reached its promised target of Winchester and access to the fertile Shenandoah Valley or the coalfields of West Virginia, it nevertheless, played a significant role in the development of the Northern Virginia area.

Instead of the envisioned trunk line, the W&OD and its predecessors, had a varied career as a local carrier. During the early days of the Civil War, it was appropriated by the Federal government and became part of the U.S. Military Railroad. The eastern half was used to transport troops and supplies. It again served the troops during the Spanish American War. The railroad also facilitated the development in the late nineteenth century of the early Washington suburbs of Falls Church and Dunn Loring. Development companies touted the advantages of rail transportation to would-be commuters and prominently featured the precursor to the W&OD Railroad in their advertisements. The railroad also carried vacationers seeking to escape the hot Washington summers to the Blue Ridge mountains and hauled milk and produce from farms to the city. Before the advent and widespread use of the automobile, the W&OD was Loudoun County's lifeline to urban markets for

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its agricultural products as well as passenger travel to the city. It was one of the few steam railroads to become an interurban electric line in the early part of the twentieth century and one of the few to survive and make the switch to diesel power. It completely abandoned passenger traffic in 1941 only to resume it during World War II. In its final years in the 1950s and early 1960s, the W&OD transported construction materials needed to build the new suburbs and the raw materials used in the construction of Dulles Airport and the Capitol Beltway, two modes of transportation that hastened the demise of the little railroad.

Historical Background

By the 1840s, the merchants of Alexandria, a seaport from colonial times, were concerned that they were losing trade to the City of Baltimore. Beginning in 1828, the city of Baltimore backed the development of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) with the ultimate goal of linking their port with the Ohio River at Wheeling and tapping into Virginia's fertile farmland and coal fields. In 1836, the Winchester & Potomac Railroad connected with the B&O at Harper's Ferry, which had the effect of directing trade from the Shenandoah Valley to Baltimore instead of Alexandria. Several Alexandria merchants and bankers organized the Alexandria and Harper's Ferry Railroad Company which was chartered by the Virginia General Assembly on March 20, 1847 (Williams 1970:1). It was thought this railroad could link up with the then independent Winchester & Potomac and continue to funnel trade to northern Virginia. However, support for this project was less than enthusiastic and the idea languished. In addition, several of the Alexandria and Harper's Ferry supporters were involved with two other northern Virginia railroads, the Orange and Alexandria and the Manassas Gap railroads, which were organized within the next three years with the same goal of recapturing the Shenandoah wheat trade from Baltimore. By 1848, the B&O had incorporated the Winchester & Potomac into its fold effectively eliminating any chance that the Alexandria and Harper's Ferry could link with it. Construction of this railroad never began.

Six years later, on March 15, 1853, the General Assembly amended the charter of the Alexandria and Harper's Ferry changing the name of the railroad to the Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad Company and specified a new route. It was to run as close as possible to Leesburg, pass through Clark's Gap in Loudoun County, cross the Blue Ridge Mountains through Bloomery Gap, and continue to Paddytown in Hampshire County (now Keyser, Mineral County, West Virginia) or connect with any railroad extending into the coals fields. It was prohibited from connecting with the B&O at any point east of Cumberland, Maryland. Lewis McKenzie, one of the original organizers

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of the Alexandria and Harper's Ferry, was elected president on May 24, 1853 and Charles P. Manning, formerly with the B&O, was appointed to the post of chief engineer (Williams 1970:2). McKenzie, from an old Alexandria shipping family, was an energetic and dynamic supporter of the railroad and remained president of the railroad for the next twenty-five years. Born in 1810 of Scottish ancestry, he was a lifelong bachelor, one of Alexandria's most successful businessmen and, during the Civil War, a staunch Unionist. During the war, he was elected to the 37th Congress and was re-elected in 1870. He also served on the Alexandria city council and as mayor and served as postmaster. His philanthropic activities included local hospitals, orphan's asylums, and other charities (Williams 1970:10).

Two routes were surveyed across the Blue Ridge and much of the company's scarce capital was spent on surveys beyond the Blue Ridge where it never reached. A compromise southern route was selected which followed Four Mile Run out of Alexandria, ran along the Vestal's Gap Road through Dranesville, Leesburg, Clarke's Gap, and Hillsborough, and entailed drilling a tunnel three-quarters of a mile long at Snicker's Gap, or Snickersville as Bluemont was then known. In October 1854, construction bids were advertised and James Roach was selected to build the first ten miles. Sidney G. Miller of New York won the award for the remaining fifty-three miles to the Shenandoah River. Construction began on February 25, 1855 at the farm of Lewis Bailey about five miles from Alexandria on a 100-foot right-of-way (Williams 1970:3).

The railroad's first locomotive arrived by schooner from Taunton, Massachusetts on October 12, 1858 and was promptly named the Lewis McKenzie in honor of the railroad's president. The iron rail was brought in from England and Wales. A brick depot, small roundhouse, and turntable were built at Alexandria. Twenty-four freight cars and a forty-seven-foot passenger coach finished with lilac plush seats were built in Alexandria for the railroad. Two mail-baggage-passenger combines were delivered in early 1860 and completed the initial complement of rolling stock. By August 1859, limited freight and passenger service extended to Vienna and by September 1859, the road had been graded from Alexandria to Clark's Gap on a 100-foot right-of-way. A single track of 52-pound rail was laid from Alexandria to Herndon. In January 1860, regular daily round trip service began to Farmwell (now Ashburn) thirty-one miles from Alexandria. One of its early passengers was President James Buchanan who rode the train to his summer White House in Sterling. On May 17, 1860, the AL&H made its initial run to Leesburg. West of Leesburg, grading had been completed as far as Clark's Gap and stagecoaches temporarily ferried passengers over the mountain to Winchester. By March 1861, business had increased to the point that two additional trains were added (Williams 1970:8).

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The onset of the Civil War in 1861 halted all construction activities and precipitated a scramble for rail lines and rolling stock. On May 24, Federal troops crossed the Potomac and occupied Alexandria for the duration of the war seizing all rail and dock facilities including those of the AL&H which were incorporated into the newly-organized U.S. Military Railroad. Although the AL&H had only limited strategic value and was useful mainly as a local supply line for the Washington-Alexandria area, retreating Confederates destroyed most of the railroad's western half between Vienna and Leesburg. Military authorities kept the portion between Vienna and Alexandria running to serve the military camps scattered south of Washington and to bring wood into the city. The only battle along the AL&H occurred early in the war while the Confederates were still within range of Washington. On June 17, 1861, a South Carolina contingent ambushed the military train near Vienna opening fire on it occupants with artillery. At the war's end, the AL&H served to transport the Army of the Potomac which was camped along its line. On August 8, 1865, the railroad was finally given back to the Virginia Board of Public Works and the original owners. It had been under Federal control for four years and three months - longer than any other southern railroad. This was in spite of the staunch Unionist support of its president, Lewis McKenzie (Harwood 1969:5)

It took some time for the AL&H to recover from the war. West of Vienna, bridges were gone, track was torn up, and nature had begun to reclaim the right-of-way. It was not until June 1867, that service to Leesburg was reinstated. Between 1868 and 1870, the line reached Hamilton, a farming community about eight miles west of Leesburg, on an alignment largely graded before the war.

The late 1860s and early 1870s saw the reorganization of the railroad's finances and a new vision for its ultimate goal. The Board of Directors reached an agreement with the Virginia Board of Public Works for the purchase of the state's interest in the railroad. The Board also authorized the extension of the railroad to any point west permitted by the legislators of West Virginia and Maryland. West Virginia authorized the company to extend its railroad through the state to the Ohio River at any point between the Little Kanawha and the Big Sandy Rivers and connect with the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) and the B&O. Bonds were issued to cover the stock repurchase and construction expenses to Clarkes Gap. Work on extending the line continued and it reached Purcellville on April 1, 1874. In December, track was laid to Round Hill and grading was begun on the Winchester extension. During this same period, a new 131-foot Howe truss bridge was erected over Broad Run (Williams 1970:27, 41).

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Like many railroads, financing for the line was always precarious and by the 1870s, the AL&H had an impossible burden of debt. Bankruptcy was declared and the management who had overseen its initial construction, the turmoil of the war, and its post-war recovery retired from the scene. A receiver sold the entire property of the company in 1882 for \$592,000 to a new corporation, the Washington and Western Railroad Company. This company only lasted a year before it defaulted on the debt. In May 1883, New York interests purchased the railroad and renamed it the Washington, Ohio & Western (WO&W). There was some modernization during this period including the addition of new locomotives and additional rolling stock, gradual replacement of the original fifty-two-pound iron rail with sixty-pound steel, and several new iron bridges (Harwood 1969:11).

Train service during this period consisted of one mail train and one accommodation train from Washington to Round Hill and back using the facilities of the Washington Southern and Pennsylvania Railroad to access Washington. A daily mixed train out of Alexandria took care of the freight service. The railroad took on a casual air of the low-pressure territory it served – mostly rural with little heavy industry.

Through a series of consolidations, leases, and purchases during the 1880s and 1890s, the WO&W came under the control of the Richmond and Danville in 1886 through a lease agreement. With the collapse of the R&D system in 1892, J.P. Morgan's Southern Railway Company acquired control of the WO&W. The Southern Railway Company operated the line from July 1, 1894 to July 1, 1912. Southern control finally brought the extension in 1900 of the railroad to Snickersville, four miles from Round Hill, where surveyors had laid out its route more than thirty years prior. However, plans to pursue the original idea of tunneling through the mountain to reach Berryville and Winchester were shelved (Harwood 1969:13). Instead, the line catered to tourists and vacationers who came to enjoy the natural and scenic beauty of the Blue Ridge mountains. As an added inducement, the name of the village was changed from Snickersville to the more enticing Bluemont. The entire rail line became known as the Bluemont Branch of the Southern Railway.

The Spanish-American War brought the railroad back into contact with the military and a period of prosperity. The War Department established Camp Alger near Dunn Loring. During the summer of 1898, some 20,000 soldiers were billeted there and hundreds of soldiers, looking for daily entertainment, rode the train into Washington (Netherton 1987:217). That same summer, President William McKinley rode the WO&W to Camp Alger to review the troops. One of the soldiers

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stationed at Camp Alger was the poet Carl Sandburg for whom Sandburg Road, which crosses the rail line in Dunn Loring, was named (Paul McCray, personal communication, 7 March 2000).

Train operations during this period were typical of a branch railroad. From two to four cars a day carried a mixed complement of milk cans, mail, express baggage, and local passengers. One daily local freight handled the grain, fertilizer, lumber, brick, livestock, and other commerce of an agricultural economy that formed the base of the Bluemont Division's territory (Harwood 1969:14). The segment of the line between Paeonian Springs and Bluemont contained numerous boardinghouses and summer hotels patronized by Washington residents seeking to escape the summer heat. Hunters and fishermen used the railroad to reach the fields and streams of Loudoun County where game was plentiful. Grover Cleveland frequently traveled by train to Leesburg to fish. Depending on the season, the line ran four to six daily passenger trips between Washington and Bluemont and nonstop express trains took tourists to Bluemont on summer weekends. Also during this period, Carlin Springs, located along the scenic Four Mile Run Valley, became a popular spot for day excursions and church and Sunday school picnics. An ice cream parlor and dance hall stood just south of the tracks (Williams 1970:43).

The Bluemont Branch also played a role in the development of the early suburbs in northern Virginia. In 1886, three local men purchased a 600-acre tract mid-way between Falls Church and Vienna and envisioned a development with tree-lined streets, neatly manicured homes, and parks. They laid out the proposed subdivision on both sides of the railroad (then the WO&W). The development was named for two of the businessmen, retired General William M. Dunn and Dr. George B. Loring, a Washington oculist. Dunn Loring is said to be the earliest platted subdivision in Virginia (Saegesser 1986:26). An 1887 promotional brochure noted that Dunn Loring was located "at the highest point on the W.O. & W. R.R. in Fairfax County." It went on to point out that it was only 45 minutes from the Baltimore and Potomac Station in Washington and that "good railroad accommodations are provided; a tasteful and comfortable depot has been erected at Dunn Loring; and telegraph and postal arrangements have been made" (Saegesser 1986:27). Indeed, the station at Dunn Loring, which has been described as an "elfin affair", was a small four-bay frame building with decorative window hoods copied from those at Maplewood, the home of General Dunn. The station also housed the post office. It is no longer extant.

The railroad was used to promote other developments as well. It was used extensively in advertising the desirability of Falls Church for real estate development. A map drawn in 1890 by E.A.

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Greenough of the Falls Church Park subdivision prominently displays the route of the railroad and a drawing of the East Falls Church Station. The station was dismantled in 1970 (Wrenn 1972:79).

A third development that took advantage of the proximity of the railroad was the village of Wiehle. In 1886, Carl Wiehle, a recently retired Philadelphia physician began purchasing large tracts of land around the railroad two miles east of Herndon in an area on the railroad known as Thornton Station. He envisioned a mixed-use development combining residences and commercial/industrial areas and in 1892, commissioned a German planner to lay out this new community. Three hand-dug lakes (which still survive) separated the residential section from the railroad and industrial area. A brick kiln and sawmill were constructed first to provide building materials and the Maryland and Virginia Serpentine and Talc Company of Baltimore built a mill there to take advantage of the locally available soapstone. A school was built on a lot donated by Wiehle and a brick town hall built. It served not only as a civic center but also as a sanctuary for the Wiehle Methodist Church (Netherton et al 1978:465). (It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) Wiehle built a twenty-five-room mansion as well as the Aesculapian Hotel for summer visitors. While the Aesculapian flourished as a summer resort, Wiehle's vision was never realized and the town never grew much beyond fifty residents. Wiehle died in 1901. In 1927, A. Smith Bowman of Kentucky purchased most of the property, about 7,200 acres, established a farm, and renamed it Sunset Hills. After the end of prohibition, Bowman established a bourbon distillery on part of the estate utilizing the old Wiehle buildings. By the late 1950s, this area was the largest undivided tract of land in Fairfax County and was purchased by Robert E. Simon who developed it as the mixed used town of Reston (David 1987).

The advent of the trolley or electric train has been hailed as causing rapid changes in the pace and manor of development of the suburb. Its effect on the development of northern Virginia, as well as the role of the steam train and automobile, has been summed up neatly:

The tracks of the electric trolley traced a distinct line between nineteenth- and twentieth-century Fairfax County. More than any other development, this new form of transportation caused the changes of the first quarter of the new [twentieth] century to come at a rate and with an impact unimagined in the final third of the last. Just as the steam train, described as "attuned to its surroundings, ... slow moving, casual and carrying a halcyon air," accurately reflected the less ambitious aspirations and accomplishments of the earlier period, so the

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trolley embodied both the county's confidence in and its anxieties about the future. Although the trolley itself would be replaced by the automobile as the leading force shaping the county's development in the mid-1920s, its tracks left a path that the people of Fairfax would follow for the next half century (Netherton 1987:467).

During the late 1890s, trolleys pushed in all directions out of Washington as real estate developers recognized their importance in converting undeveloped woods and farms into suburban settlements. An extensive system developed that connected the Capital with Alexandria, Mount Vernon, Arlington, Clarendon, Falls Church, and Fairfax Court House. Two men, wealthy and prominent in political and business circles, decided to take advantage of this new means of transportation and develop their own line. John R. McLean and West Virginia Senator Stephen B. Elkins took the recently incorporated Great Falls & Old Dominion Railroad (GF&OD) and built a trolley line that extended from Washington to Great Falls on the Potomac, a natural and scenic attraction that Elkins and McLean developed into a popular day destination for Washington and area residents. The fourteen-mile line opened in 1906 and was such a success that Elkins and McLean looked around for new directions to push the GF&OD.

The Bluemont Branch of the Southern Railway was a logical candidate. Its steam road complimented the GF&OD and its routes were parallel but the Bluemont with its fifty-four-mile of track had a far more extensive reach. Its Blue Ridge excursion traffic also fit well with the Great Falls Park business. Elkins and McLean thought they could create an operation from the combined systems that would provide relatively high-speed transportation to a burgeoning area. Although Senator Elkins died suddenly before the deal was completed, McLean went ahead and agreed to a long-term lease of the Bluemont Line from the Southern Railway. With the consolidation of the two lines, the name was changed to the Washington and Old Dominion Railway.

The W&OD took control of the Bluemont Branch on July 1, 1912 and with seventy-two miles of track, it was the largest interurban system in Virginia and one of the country's last large projects of its type (Harwood 1969:31). Three miles of track were built to connect the Bluemont with the GF&OD. The new track joined the Bluemont line in a wooded gully about two miles east of the Falls Church station that was named Bluemont Junction. The steam main line from Alexandria and Potomac Yard up the hill to Bluemont Junction was relegated to secondary status and functioned largely as the freight outlet to the big railroads in the Alexandria area. From Georgetown to Bluemont was 52.1 miles; Georgetown to Great Falls was 14.2 miles, and from Bluemont Junction

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to the old AL&H station in Alexandria was 7.2 miles (Harwood 1969:31). By October 1912, the steam line was electrified from Bluemont Junction to Leesburg and by December, electrification had been completed to Bluemont. The Potomac Yard to Bluemont Junction segment was not electrified until 1918 (Harwood 1969:108).

The W&OD continued to use the old GF&OD 650-volt system even though by 1912 it was becoming obsolete by newer 1200-volt installations. Catenary was used on the Bluemont division and brick substations that housed Westinghouse 300 kw converters were built adjacent to the wooden depots at Round Hill, Leesburg, Herndon, and Bluemont Junction. A fifth substation boosted power on the Great Falls division at Spring Hill and a portable substation that could be moved as needed was purchased. Rolling stock consisted of a variety of cars. Those inherited from the GF&OD were a varied assortment but new cars were ordered for the Bluemont Division. They included four combines, six coaches, six trailer coaches, and two wood express motors. All had multiple-unit equipment and were designed to run together in any combination. The combines and coaches were equipped with toilets and leather seats and formed the backbone of the Bluemont service (Harwood 1969:34-35).

Initially the new line established a schedule of fourteen daily round trips. By 1913, this was curtailed to ten, four to Leesburg and six to Bluemont, with twelve Bluemont Junction locals and five Alexandria shuttles. The Washington to Bluemont trains consisted of one to four cars and managed an average speed of twenty miles per hour. A ride to Bluemont took from two to two-and-a-half hours depending on the class of train. Freight service was minimal although greater than most interurbans. There was a daily milk run, which left Bluemont at dawn to pick up Washington-bound milk cans at each station, road crossing and cow pasture. Early in the evening, it returned the empties for the following day's run.

In its early years, the partially electrified W&OD presented an interesting picture. Steam and electric rolling stock of all descriptions shared the tracks between 1912 and 1919. The double track between Rosslyn and Thrifton (where the link to the Bluemont Division began) saw over 150 scheduled daily trains while the heavily wooded Alexandria branch ran only a daily steam train and an occasional passenger train. Water tanks stood next to the electric wires at Vienna, Leesburg, and Bluemont (Harwood 1969:37).

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The extension of the electric trolley had an effect on a number of the small towns along the route of the W&OD. Both Vienna and Herndon experienced growth due to the more convenient transportation opportunities. As early as 1907, a Fairfax County publication noted, "great activity in suburban home-building...especially...along the lines of the electric railway" (Netherton et al 1978:488). A 1924 survey found that a large number of government clerks and other employees of Washington comprised much of the population of Vienna which was served by two electric lines (the Arlington Fairfax Railway crossed the W&OD just east of the commercial center of Vienna) (Netherton et al 1978:488). Herndon also experienced changes brought by the increased access of the electrified W&OD. Herndon had served as a market community and social center for the rural northwest Fairfax County since the 1850s. The conversion of the W&OD to electricity coincided with fundamental changes in the town. The trolley initially enhanced Herndon's role as a market center especially for the milk produced in this dairy center of Fairfax County. Area dairy farmers brought their milk to Herndon where it was loaded onto the W&OD and shipped to Chestnut Farm Dairies in Washington (Netherton et al 1978:482). Although there had been some residents of Herndon who commuted daily to the city, the installation of the electric trolley, significantly increased interest in Herndon by Washington workers. It was seen as a quiet place for a home but easily accessible to their businesses. The trolley significantly increased the real estate business in the area around Herndon.

While the GF& OD had been a financial success for McLean and Elkins, the W&OD was less so. While business was great, the company lost over \$107,000 in its first year and more in the succeeding year. Running a railroad with too much traffic but too little money and organization created problems that at times signaled chaos. Scheduling could be erratic and haphazard. Regular trains were dropped, terminals changed, or extra runs added with little public notice. At a time when ridership was ballooning, the Great Falls schedule was reduced by thirty percent due to monetary constraints with resultant crowding. One resident complained that he had to wait for forty minutes for a train only to have it race past him with people hanging on the steps and standing on the couplings. Others described the cars as so crowded that the motormen were barely able to operate them. The Bluemont Division has its own peculiar problems. Heavy traffic days brought potential accidents as trains struggled to work both directions on the single-track line. The one- and sometimes as many as three-freight crews tried to switch cars, unload freight, load cattle, stay out of the way, and make headway. Sometimes freight crews would be stranded and forced to spend the night inside their freight motors. Milk trains would be late causing spoilage and loss of markets.

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The train crews also could be somewhat relaxed. According to popular thinking, they tended to be comprised of young men or itinerant railroaders with a preference for strong drink. Young motormen would sometimes pass waiting passengers because "they had a good speed up and didn't want to slow down." One enterprising crew appropriated milk and made their own butter which they sold between runs (Harwood 1969:40-41).

Prospects for the railroad dimmed with the death of John McLean in 1916 from cancer. The railroad was now in the hands of the heirs of McLean and Elkins and their attorneys who had little interest in the railroad except to stem the loss of money. It soon became apparent that the cost of electrifying the system had not been worth it. High rental costs, fixed charges, and haphazard operations, had produced large deficits every year since 1912. The absentee owners had no incentive to spend money on the railroad which meant a significant amount of deferred maintenance. The electric distribution system, taxed by heavy train operations repeatedly broke down and night trains ran without lights. The running stock deteriorated to the point that by early 1919, half of the motor cars were waiting for repairs (Harwood 1969:45). Labor troubles only added to the railroad's problems.

The sixteen-year management of the heirs of McLean and Elkins was a turbulent period. Soaring consumer complaints forced the Virginia Corporation Commission to hold hearings on the railroad between 1918 and 1922. The Commission severely chastised the company and ordered improvements but little happened. The stock market crash of 1929 further crippled the finances of the absentee owners and by 1932, they refused to make up the deficit. That year the Washington & Old Dominion Railway was placed in receivership.

The railroad's receivers, Senator Davis Elkins (son of Stephen B. Elkins) and William J. Lambert, appointed George C. Baggett, a former Southern Railway employee as general manager. In an effort to keep the railroad afloat, Baggett instituted a program to reduce costs. He cut the number of employees and decided to abandon the Great Falls Division which had suffered the greatest losses. It was shut down in stages, ceasing all operations in June 1934 (Williams 1970:74). Lambert died in 1935 and Baggett was appointed in his place.

Davis Elkins formed a new corporation in 1936 -- the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad -- which purchased the assets of the former company for \$35,000 (Williams 1970:93). Elkins was president and Baggett became vice-president and general manager. A new lease agreement was negotiated with Southern Railway that greatly reduced rental costs. In 1939, the section of the line

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between Purcellville and Bluemont was abandoned. Passenger business on this segment had substantially declined and the flour mill at Round Hill closed. Apples, once an important freight item were now being hauled by truck to Berryville and Winchester. In late February 1939, service ended and the rails and electrical equipment were removed and delivered as salvage to the Southern Railway Company. With declining passengers, agency stations in West Falls Church, Sterling, and Paeonian Springs were closed. The annual report for 1939 showed passenger traffic at an all time low but freight revenue increasing. On April 13, 1941, all passenger service was terminated (Williams 1970:93). The W&OD hauled freight exclusively.

In that same year, electricity was abandoned in favor of diesel powered locomotion. By this time, the 1920s electric locomotives needed extensive overhaul or replacement, as did the entire overhead trolley system which the company could not afford. With a loan from Southern Railway in exchange for all the copper wire recovered from the electrical system, Baggett purchased three diesel engines. It would not be until 1944 that electric operations ceased completely and the contract with Potomac Electric Power Company was terminated (Williams 1970:94).

The W&OD profited from the business created by World War II and its freight revenues increased. The war also brought the return of passengers to the W&OD when the Office of Defense Transportation forced the company to resume passenger service in 1943 as a war emergency measure. Difficulties arose in acquiring suitable equipment for the passenger service but once secured, the volume of traffic justified running an additional train each day except Sunday between Rosslyn and Purcellville. In 1945, Baggett persuaded Southern Railway to sell the Bluemont Branch for \$70,000 cash. This was an advantageous deal for the W&OD reducing costs significantly. In two years, the line saved enough rent money to pay for the purchase (Williams 1970:94).

After the war, passenger traffic again declined. By 1950, the daily train between Leesburg and Rosslyn was discontinued and all renewed passenger service ended in May 1951. During the nine years of resumed passenger service, the railroad carried 504,360 passengers. The high point had been in 1945 (Williams 1970:95). The end of passenger service reduced the number of employees to 69.

The little railroad had been brought back from the financial brink to the point that the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) began negotiations with the Elkins estate for the purchase of the railroad. The main impetus for this purchase was the expectation that a steam-generated power plant would be built near

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Sterling and that the W&OD would get the coal hauling contract. The C&O would have a new customer for coal hauled through Potomac Yard. Unfortunately, about a month after the sale was completed in 1956, a site in Maryland was chosen for the power plant out that was of the reach of the C&O. The C&O now had a short-line railroad for which it had no immediate use. However, a year later, the construction of the Dulles Airport at Chantilly provided the W&OD with a significant opportunity – it had the nearest rail head to the construction project. A massive bridge and track renewal project was undertaken to replace worn rails and ties and replace the sixty-year-old truss bridges that were too small to handle the heavy loads. The Difficult Run bridge, for example, dated to 1884 and had an axle loading capacity of only fifteen tons although seventy-ton diesels crept across it. In all, thirteen bridges were replaced between Potomac Yard and Sterling from 1958 through 1960 (Harwood 1969:75). A number of sidings were also built. In 1959, the W&OD experienced its most profitable year, hauling 11,464 carloads – more than double the traffic of 1940 when Baggett turned his first profit (Harwood 1969:77). In addition to the traffic generated by the construction of Dulles Airport, the W&OD hauled carloads of stone for the construction of the I-495-Capital Beltway (Paul McCray, personal communication 9 March 2000).

Even with this success, the end of the W&OD was near. The Virginia Department of Highways was eyeing the W&OD right-of-way through Falls Church for the I-66 project and Virginia Electric & Power Company (VEPCO) wanted the remainder for its transmission lines. In 1965, the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad filed an application with the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to abandon its entire line. The abandonment of the W&OD became the most voluminous and controversial abandonment case ever handled by the ICC. No one, it seemed, wanted the demise of the railroad save the Virginia Department of Highways and VEPCO and the W&OD. Customers, railroad enthusiasts, cities and counties along the route, and real estate developers all argued against its abandonment. The railroad, however, did not want to be saved. This was an opportunity to go out of business at a profit. After three years of public hearings and court cases, the W&OD was allowed to cease operations. Shortly after the decision was announced, it came to light that the W&OD had a secret agreement for more than a year with the Virginia Department of Highways and the Virginia Electric Power Company that the utility would purchase 30.5 miles of right-of-way with a second agreement for the utility to purchase an additional 17.5 miles, minus the four miles wanted by the Highway Department. This would give the power company virtually complete control of the former 100-foot wide, 48 mile long stretch of ROW from the Potomac Yard to Purcellville (Williams 1970:109).

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The end came on August 27, 1968, when a leased B&O switcher (ironic since it was the success of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad that prompted the establishment of the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire in 1853) pulled two empty lumber box cars from the Murphy & Ames siding at Falls Church and took them to Potomac Yard. Dismantling of the track began in January 1969 and was essentially complete by late summer 1969 (Harwood 1969:93).

After a 115-year run, the Washington & Old Dominion became a victim of the development it helped create. Located elsewhere, it may have survived but in an area of superhighways, intense development pressure, and land worth as much as \$332,000 per acre, the single-track, short line with grade-level crossings on major highways in areas increasingly congested with traffic, did not make economic sense (Netherton 1978:602). However, a judge who offered a dissenting opinion when the matter of abandonment was before the State Corporation Commission in 1968, and others, saw things differently. The dissenting judge opined that now was not the time to tear up railroad tracks:

just when the country is preparing for a heroic effort to take the pressure off the highways by encouraging movement by rail...The right of way of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad forms an open passage that might conceivably be used ten or fifteen years from now as part of a rapid transit system...The interest of the public *qua* taxpayers is against abandonment (Williams 1970:132).

Today, forty-five miles of the old W&OD alignment, from Shirlington Road just east of I-395 to Purcellville, constitutes the W&OD Railroad Regional Park. In 1977, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority signed an agreement with Virginia Power (who had purchased the ROW in 1968 for its electric transmission lines) to purchase the ROW in stages over a period of years. The Park Authority completed the purchase in 1982 of the entire ROW with Virginia Power retaining an easement for its transmission lines. The Park Authority, with financial assistance from the U.S. Department of the Interior's "Rails-to-Trails" program and the Virginia Commission on Outdoor Recreation, in addition to private and corporate contributions, completed the linear park. The first section opened in Falls Church in 1974. By 1988, the entire forty-five mile paved trail, from Shirlington to Purcellville was completed. The multi-use W&OD trail connects a series of wayside parks and provides access to the rural countryside beyond the Beltway (NVRPA 7).

The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad never made it over the mountains to Winchester and the West Virginia coalfields nor did it save Alexandria's market dominance but it was a vital link

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Continuation Sheet

(Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District)
(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)

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between western Loudoun County and the urban center of Alexandria and Washington, D.C. For many years was a lifeline for Loudoun and western Fairfax counties. Farmers shipped milk, grain, and other cash crops to market and Washington residents escaped the stifling summer heat with rides to the mountains. More than one developer used access to the W&OD as a selling point and when development in the northern Virginia area mushroomed after World War II, it was the W&OD that hauled the materials necessary to construct the new houses, office buildings, highways, and airports. But in the end it could not compete with the automobile and the truck. Its grade crossings were becoming dangerous and its land too valuable. The little railroad with a distinct personality succumbed to the development it helped to create.

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(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)

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5. 18 315130 4304500
6. 18 314880 4305700
7. 18 314880 4305080
8. 18 308400 4306780

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(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)

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9. 18 304890 4308220
10. 18 304890 4308230
11. 18 299700 4312200
12. 18 294220 4315290
13. 18 294220 4315300
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22. 18 274690 4333890
23. 18 274150 4335540
24. 18 273080 4336270
25. 18 273080 4336280
26. 18 268400 4335840
27. 18 265440 4335510

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the Washington & Old Dominion Historic District include the 100-foot wide by 45 mile long roadbed of the W&OD from Shirlington Road just east of I-395 in Arlington, Virginia, west to the Purcellville Depot at Route 690 in Purcellville and include the land occupied by the Vienna, Sunset Hills, Herndon, Hamilton, and Purcellville depots. Further reference for legal boundary description is made to the plat maps drawn December 5, 1980 by Bengtson, DeBell, Elkin & Titus, Consulting Engineers, and on file at the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, Fairfax Station, Virginia.

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(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)

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Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries chosen for the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District incorporate that portion of the original alignment now incorporated by the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park. The five surviving depots, Vienna, Sunset Hills, Herndon, Hamilton, and Purcellville are also included within the district boundaries.

(8-86)

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Continuation Sheet(Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District)
(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)Section Photo List Page 26

The following photographs for the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District were taken by Ashley M. Neville on the dates listed below. The original negatives have been deposited with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

1. Vienna Depot, Vienna, view to the southeast.
Negative No.: 18408
Date: March 2000
2. Hamilton Depot, Loudoun County, view to the view to the southeast.
Negative No.: 18410
Date: March 2000
3. Railroad Roadbed, view to the northwest at Salliemae Drive with the towers of Reston Town Center in the background, Fairfax County.
Negative No.: 18408
Date: March 2000
4. Railroad Crossing of Old Reston Avenue with the Sunset Hills Depot at the crossing and the old Wiehle Town Hall/Bowman Distillery Warehouse in the background, Fairfax County.
View to the north.
Negative No.: 18408
Date: March 2000
5. Railroad roadbed in cut just west of Reston Parkway, Fairfax County. View to the east.
Negative No.: 18408
Date: March 2000
6. Railroad roadbed at the village of Ashburn just east of the Ashburn Road crossing, Loudoun County. View to the northwest.
Negative No.: 18408
Date: March 2000

(8-86)

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet(Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District)
(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)Section Photo List Page 27

-
7. Railroad roadbed west of Leesburg just north of the Dry Mill Road crossing, Loudoun County. View to the southeast.
Negative No.: 18411
Date: March 2000
 8. Railroad roadbed just west of the Route 800 crossing, Loudoun County. View to the west.
Negative No.: 18409
Date: August 1999
 9. Beaverdam Run Bridge, Loudoun County, view to the southeast.
Negative No.: 18412
Date: March 2000
 10. Clarks Gap Stone Arch, Loudoun County, view to the south.
Negative No.: 18409
Date: August 1999
 11. Hamilton Stone Arch, just east of the Hamilton Depot, Loudoun County. View to the north.
Negative No.: 18410
Date: March 2000
 12. Railroad bed and stone box culvert along Dry Mill Road west of Leesburg, Loudoun County.
View to the northeast.
Negative No.: 18411
Date: March 2000
 13. Stone box culvert, west of Hamilton Depot, Loudoun County. View to the south.
Negative No.: 18410
Date: March 2000
 14. Segmental arch stone culvert, Four Mile Run area, Fairfax County. View to the northeast.
Negative No.: 18413
Date: May 2000

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(Fairfax & Loudoun Counties)

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(From east to west)

1. Vienna Depot, view to the northwest.
2. Piney Branch Stone Arch, view to the north.
3. Difficult Run Bridge, view to the southwest.
4. Railroad bed just west of Salliemae Drive in Reston Area, view to the northwest.
5. Sugarland Run Stone Arch, view to the south.
6. Broad Run Bridge, view to the south.
7. Railroad bed at Ashburn, view to the northwest.
8. Goose Creek Bridge, view to the south.
9. Town Creek Bridge, Leesburg, view to the south.
10. Stone Box Culvert, west of Leesburg, view to the north.
11. Stone Box Culvert, west of Leesburg along Dry Mill Road, view to the east.
12. Railroad bed at Clarks Gap, view to the south.
13. Clarks Gap Stone Arch, view to the south.
14. Railroad bed southeast of Paeonian Springs, view to the north.
15. Paeonian Springs Stone Arch, view to the north.
16. Railroad bed east of Hamilton Depot, view to the southwest.
17. Hamilton Stone Arch, view to the north.
18. Railroad bed at Hamilton Depot, view to the west.
19. Hamilton Depot, view to the southeast.
20. Purcellville Depot, view to the north.

OWNER OF RECORD

Verification Form for Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places

Name of Property: Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Historic District

Located in County or City of Fairfax & Loudoun Counties, Arlington, Falls Church, Vienna, Herndon, Leesburg, and Purcellville

OWNER OF RECORD See attached list

or CONTACT PERSON _____ Full Name

_____ Address

_____ City / State / Zip Code

Telephone: DAY _____ / _____ EVENING _____ / _____
Area Code / Number Area Code / Number

(In the event of corporate ownership or a historic district nomination, the name of the appropriate contact person must be provided.)

ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS (Names and addresses of ALL owners adjacent to the proposed property boundaries must be submitted. *Any adjacent property owners numbering over three requires two (2) identical sets of labels including ALL adjacent owners must be submitted by the preparer/consultant.*)

ALL LABELS MUST BE TYPED NO HANDWRITTEN LABELS ACCEPTED.

_____ (2) _____

(3) _____

HISTORIC DISTRICTS - Two (2) identical sets of labels for property owners and two (2) identical sets of labels for adjacent property owners **MUST** be submitted for proper notification. **NO HANDWRITTEN LABELS.**

RECORDS CONSULTED _____ Vol. _____ Page(s) _____
Name of County or City Tax Land Deed Book or Will Book Reference
Assessor Records

By visit: Yes No By telephone: Yes Telephone Number: _____ / _____

Date records consulted _____ By _____

Name and SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Consultant to receive
copy of notification. (PLEASE
PROVIDE MAILING LABEL.) Address _____
City, State, Zip Code _____

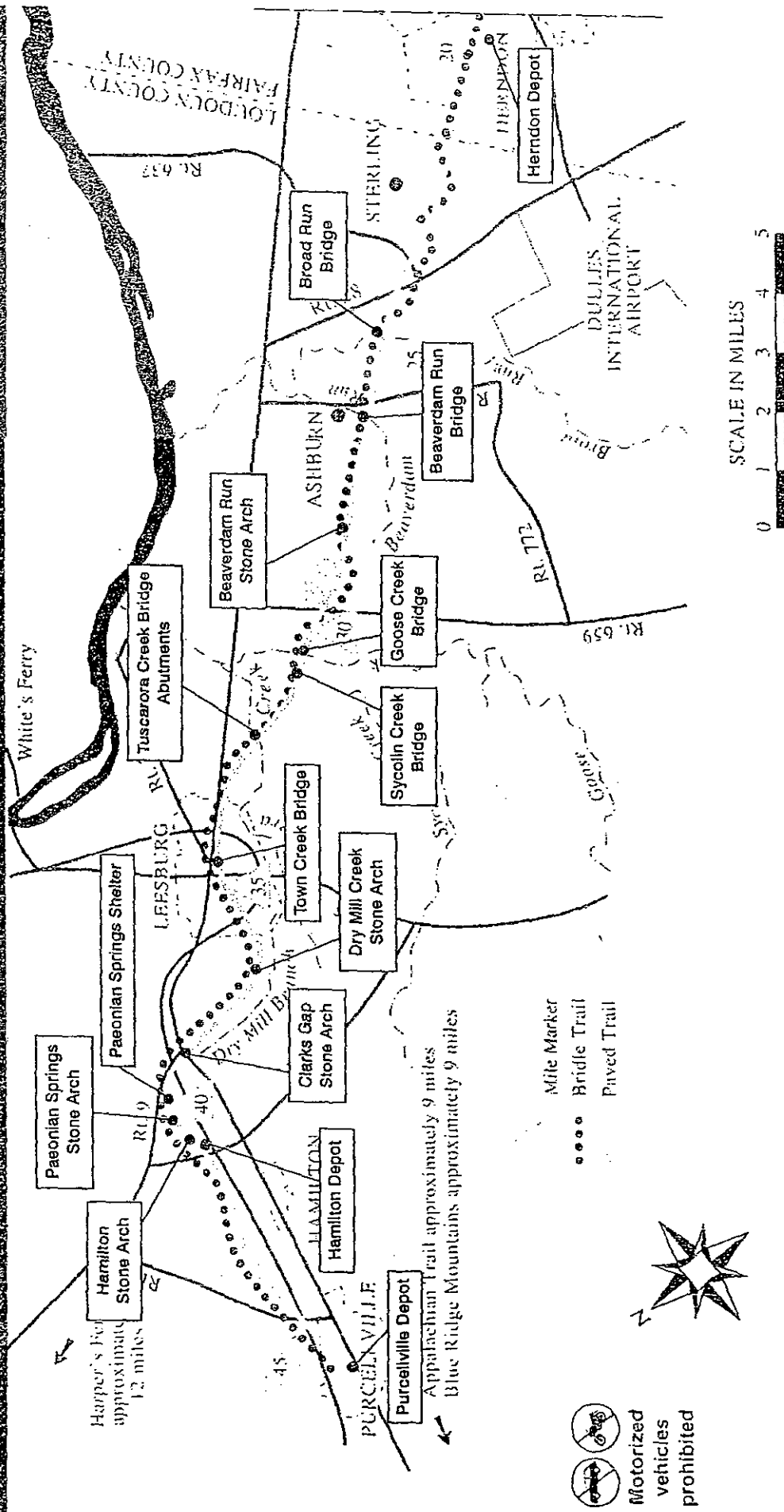
MANDATORY FORM

OWNER OF RECORD
Verification Form for Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places

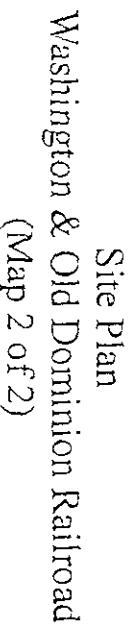
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Fax (703) 787-7325
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Purcellville Preservation Association
P. O. Box 765
Purcellville, Virginia 20134
Tel. (540) 338-3774
4. Loudoun Milling Company (Hamilton Depot)
39098 Irene Road
Hamilton, Virginia 20158
Tel. (540) 338-6455

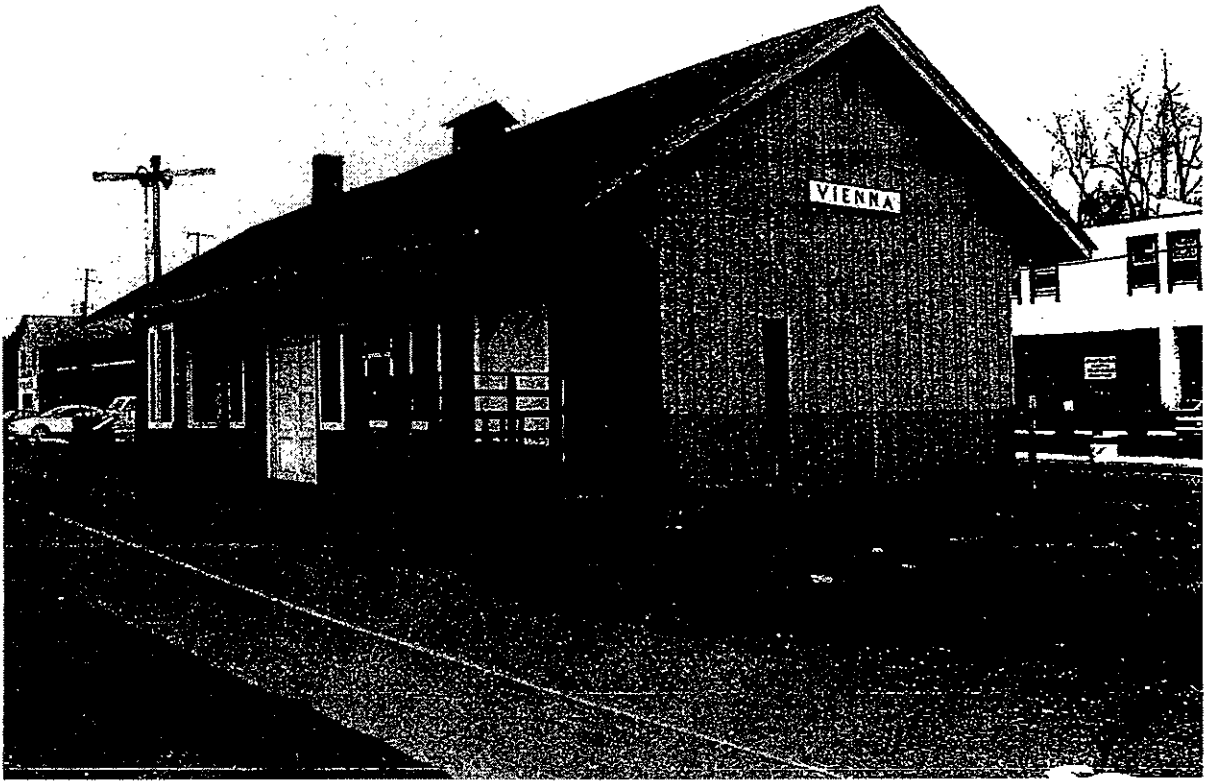
WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION



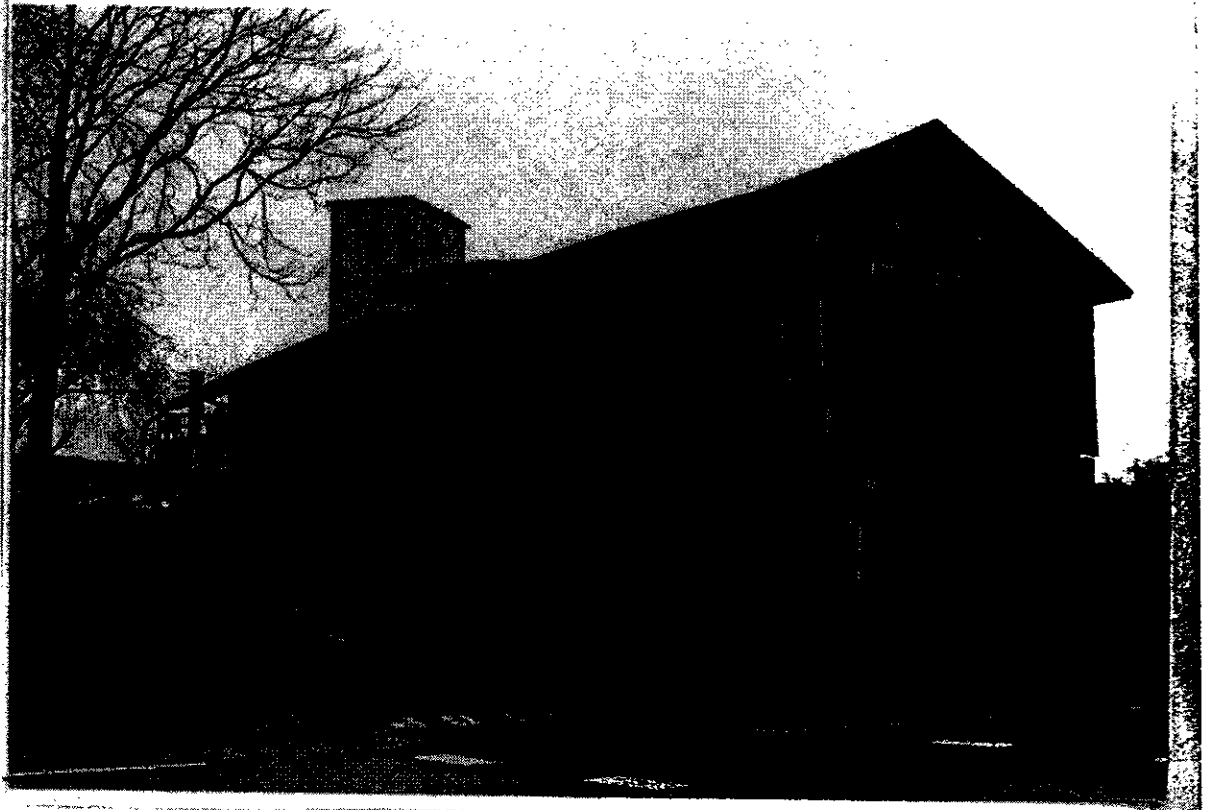
Site Plan
Washington & Old Dominion Railroad
(Map 1 of 2)



1



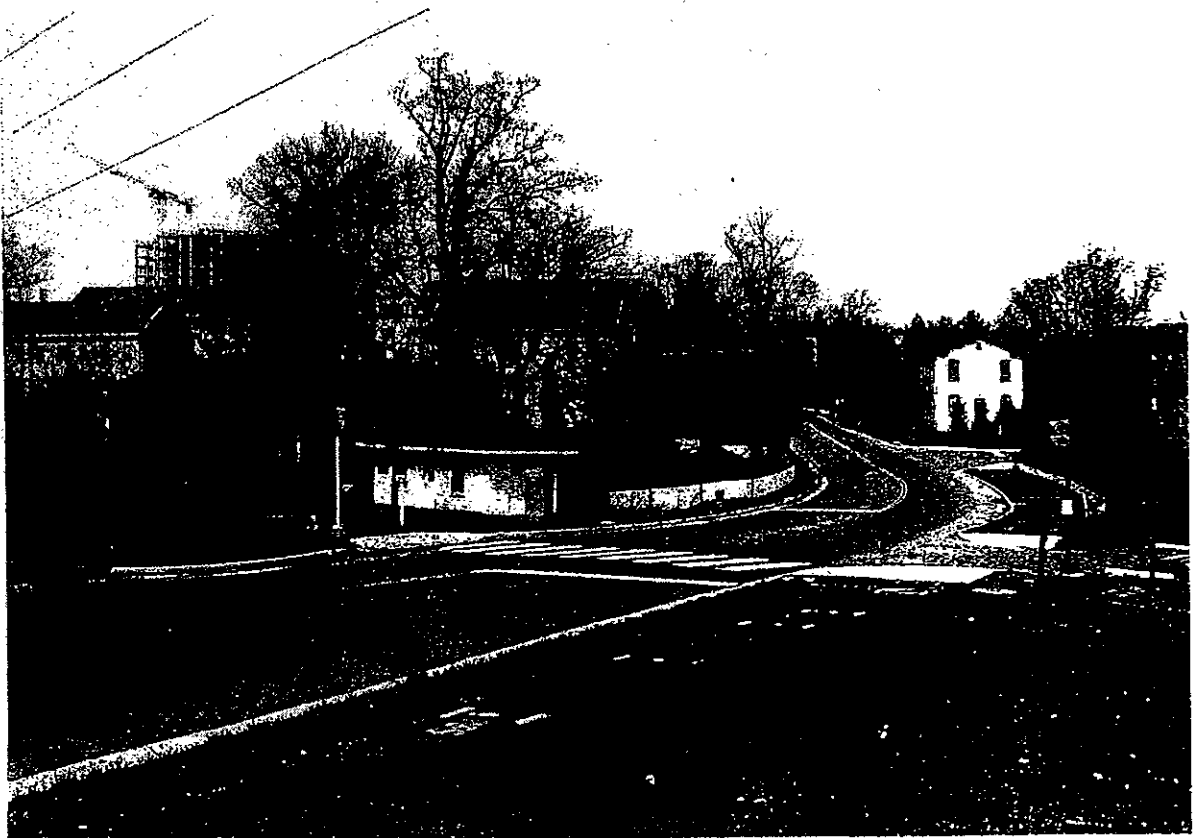
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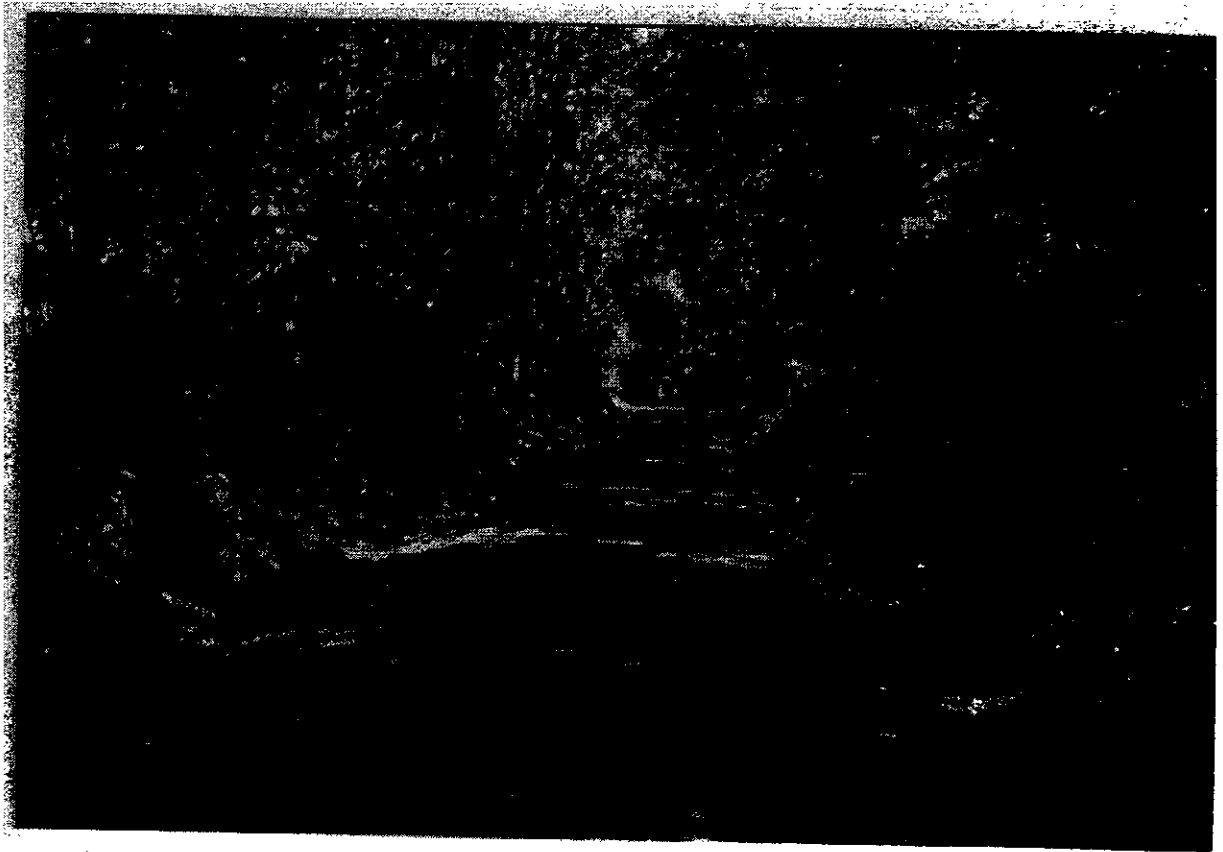
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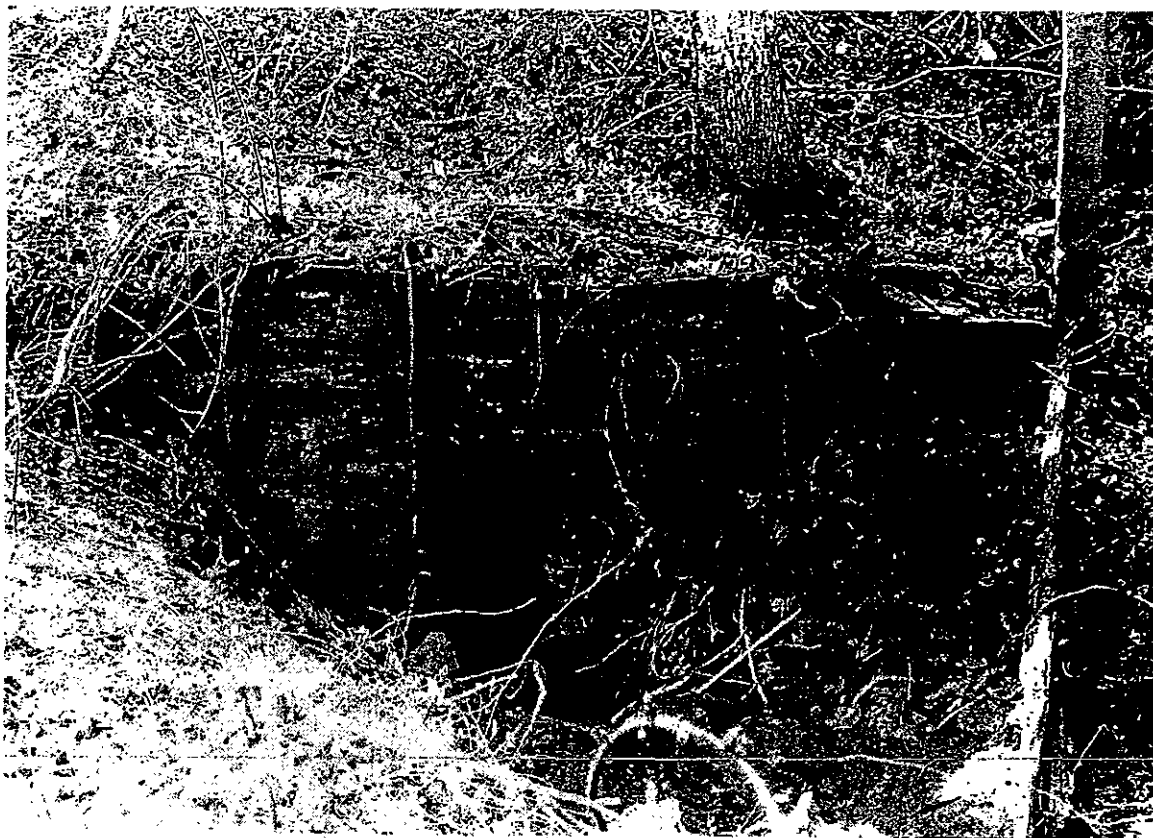
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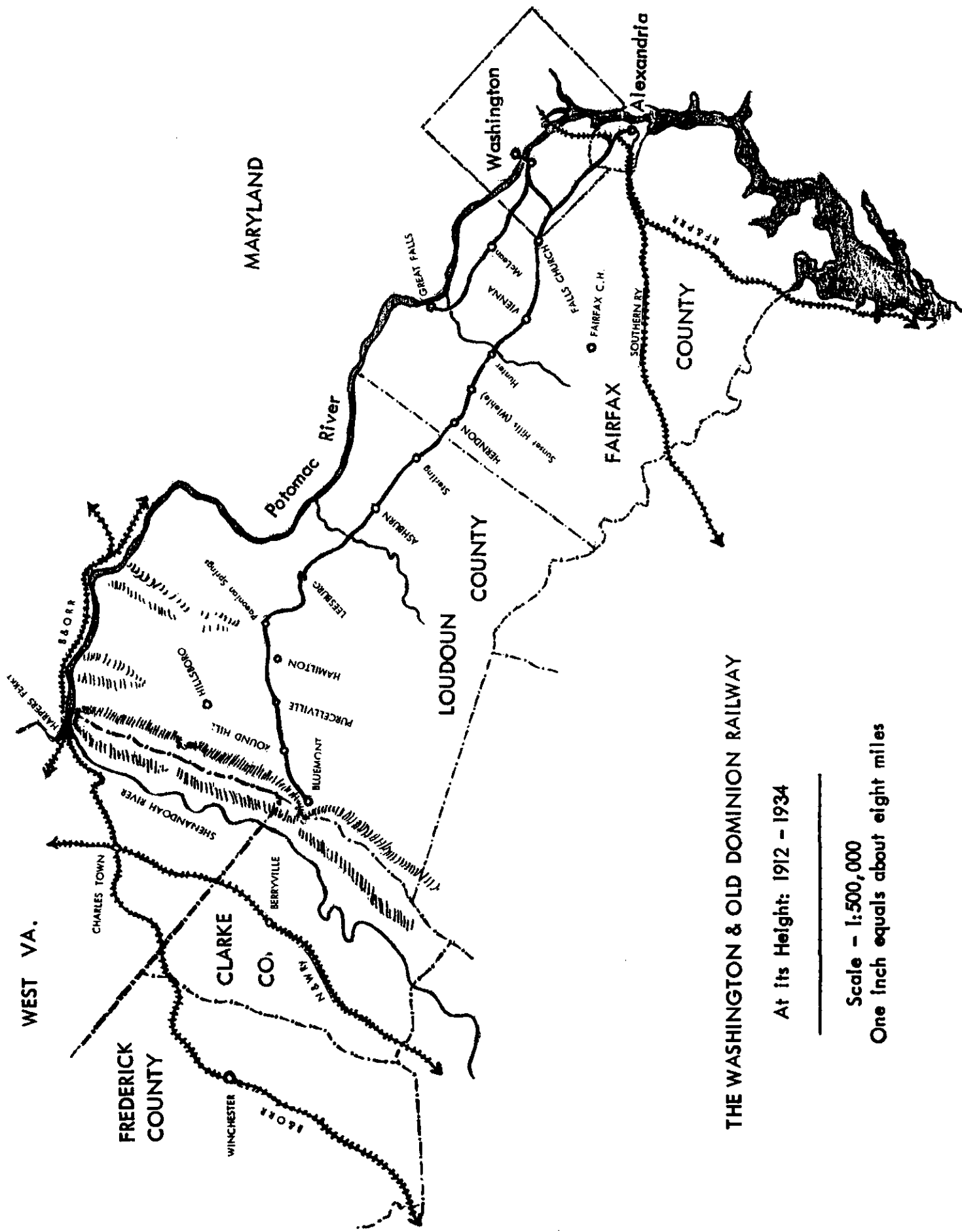


RAILS TO THE BLUE RIDGE

THE WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILROAD 1847 - 1968



HERBERT H. HARWOOD, JR.



THE WASHINGTON & OLD DOMINION RAILWAY

At its Height: 1912 - 1934

Scale - 1:500,000
One inch equals about eight miles



In the early days of W&OD electric operations, a single 70-series interurban coach trundles across the Aqueduct Bridge into the line's Georgetown terminal at 36th and M Streets. At this time, probably about 1913, cars were required by D. C. law to use the city's distinctive underground conduit current collection system. The view looks east from the Washington side of the 1888 truss bridge. (*Historical Society of Washington, D. C.*)

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Published by:
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority
5400 Ox Road
Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039-1022

ISBN 0-615-11453-9

THIRD EDITION

APRIL 2000

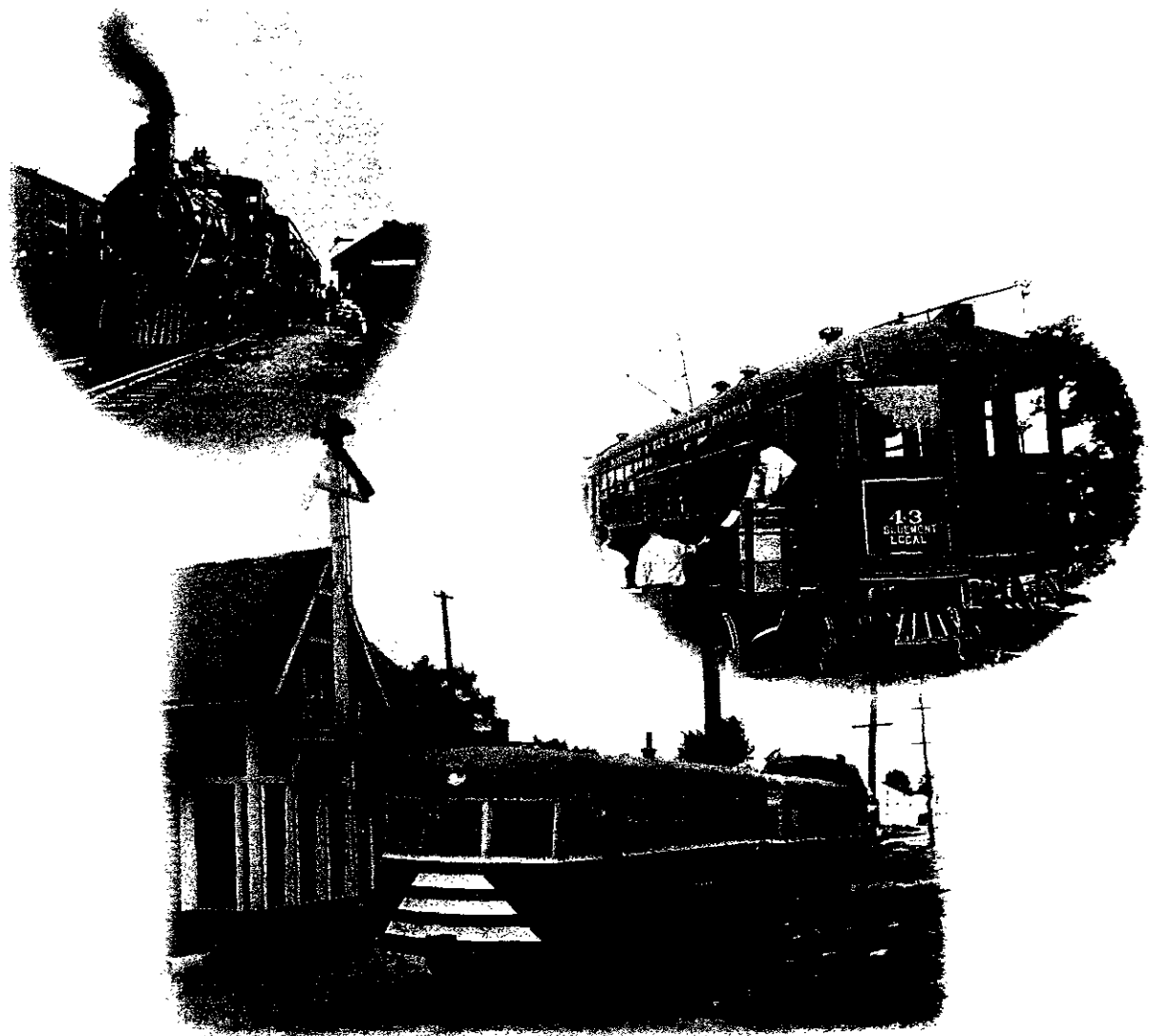
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Washington & Old Dominion passenger service was in its waning days, but the scene at Purcellville was still active as diesel-electric motor car 45 loads mail, and passengers wait to board the morning trip east to Rosslyn. (*Wm. Streit; R. E. LeVan collection*)

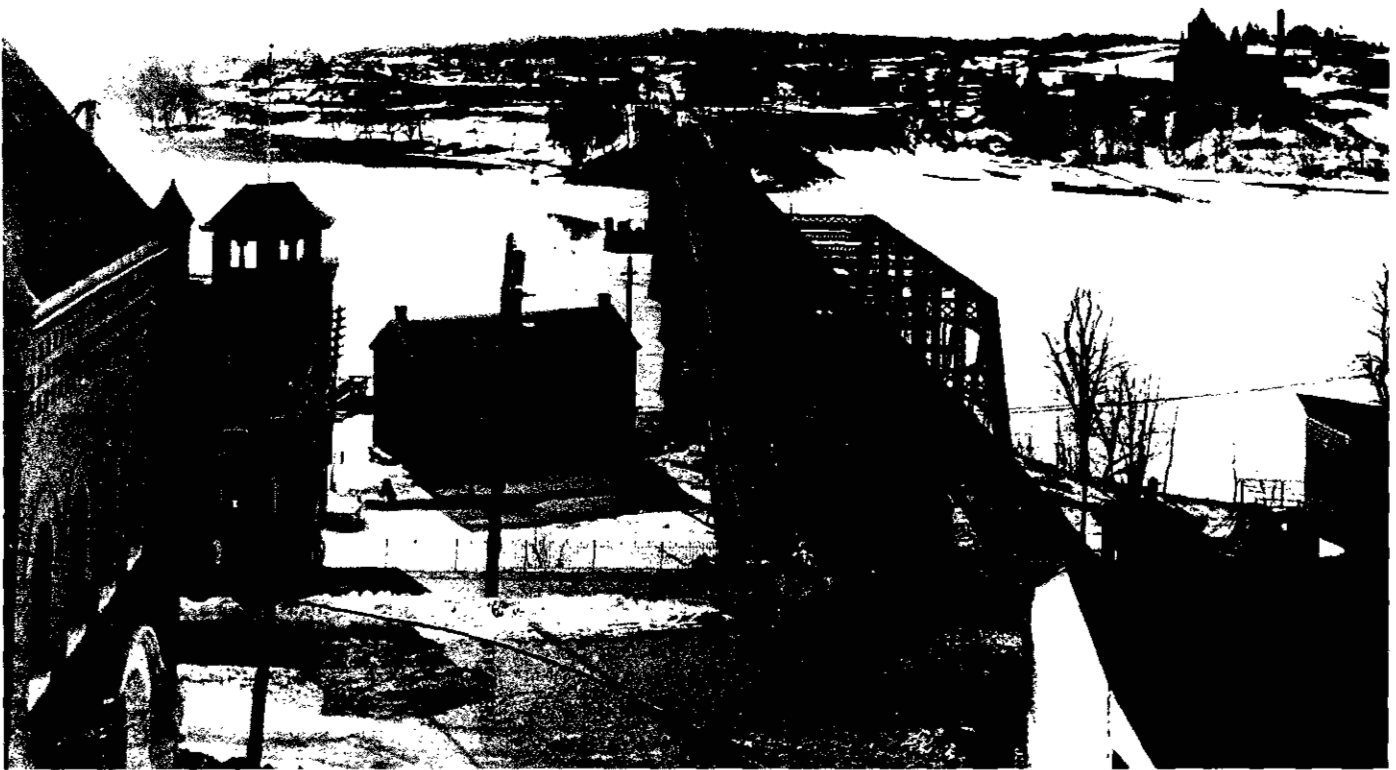
OPPOSITE PAGE LOWER: One of several unique vehicles to operate on Washington & Old Dominion rails was this sleek but otherwise ill-starred two-car streamlined gas-electric motor train, obtained as a desperate wartime expediency to restore passenger service. The streamliner, former Pennsylvania Railroad Nos. 4688-4689, has arrived at Leesburg in July 1943 after a commuter run from Rosslyn. (*L. W. Rice*)

RAILS TO THE BLUE RIDGE

THE WASHINGTON AND OLD DOMINION RAILROAD
1847 - 1968



HERBERT H. HARWOOD, JR.



For 17 years, the Washington & Old Dominion and its predecessor, the Great Falls & Old Dominion, entered Georgetown in Washington over the old Aqueduct Bridge from Rosslyn. Both photos are taken from the bluff above 36th and M Streets looking south toward Rosslyn. Above, the scene as it was in the late 1890s, before the GF&OD was built, showing the bridge's original roadway configuration. In the left foreground is the newly built Capital Traction Co. office and carbarn; Rosslyn's new Consumers brewery is across the river at the right. Below, the creaky bridge is nearing the end of its useful life about 1920 as the replacement Francis Scott Key Bridge takes form at the left. Note the extra truss span added at the bridge's right to accommodate the GF&OD-W&OD trolley track. The railway's trainshed roof dominates the foreground; the terminal station itself is at the right. (Top, LeRoy O. King collection; bottom, Bob Cohen collection)



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INTRODUCTION



The joys of a time gone: In the days when the railroad station was the center of small-town life, a pair of Bluemont youngsters eagerly receive their mail-order bicycle from the Washington & Old Dominion interurban train. The date was 1937; in two years the train would be gone. (*E. E. Edwards*)

American railroad history teems with tales of big men, big machines, and big empires. But for each successful project there were at least a dozen failures. Some never got beyond the paper stage and a few were downright fraudulent. But many were born of an honest high purpose, begun with fanfare and hopes, then slowly petered out and settled into relatively secure but dull lives as branch lines or independent feeders of the successful rail behemoths.

This is the story of such a failure—though it was

certainly spared a dull life. Meandering across northern Virginia was a 47-mile short line last known as the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad. Begun in the mid-19th century by a fading Potomac River seaport hoping to hold its past glory as a center of world trade, the little railroad had grand dreams of crossing the Alleghenies to bring the wealth of the west into its mother city.

It never happened. Alexandria, the mother city, quietly stagnated and its railroad gave up long before it

reached any place of importance. But its failure bred success of a different sort. Instead of big-railroad bustle, it acquired the casual, easygoing charm of the rural countryside it served, with a personality and career varied enough to suit any taste.

The W&OD—or “Virginia Creeper” as it was sometimes called by the riders of its now-vanished trains—was as rich in history as it was in weeds. Its corporate life story matches the best of the big ones in labyrinthine complexity, and the variety of its rolling stock beat almost all of them. Indeed, over its rails rolled almost every type of vehicle known to railroad-ing: classic mid-19th century woodburners, conventional coalburning steamers, electric interurban cars, city streetcars, dinky one time elevated railway steamers and their wooden coaches, gas-electric “doodle-bug” cars, a stainless steel streamliner, convertible bus-railcars, electric locomotives, and diesels—in short, practically every form of locomotion but sail.

Chameleon-like, the W&OD managed to adapt itself to each change in its status and surroundings. It lived through Mosby’s Raiders and commuter lawsuits. It was one of the few steam railroads to become an electric interurban line and one of the few interurbans to survive into the 1960s, albeit in changed form. It had the almost unique distinction of completely abandoning its passenger service and then resuming it—with a different form of motive power to boot. In its prime years tales of its nonconformist and sometimes hazardous operations were local legends. Little wonder then that the “Old Dominion” acquired a following and enthusiasm usually reserved only for sports teams.

That enthusiasm, in fact, showed itself with a vengeance during the railroad’s last years. Before it finally gave up the ghost in 1968, users, local politicians, and railroad fans fought their way through the largest and hottest abandonment case ever heard by the Interstate Commerce Commission up to that time.

But even then the little railroad refused to disappear. It still exists today in yet another form, and surely carrying more people than it ever did in its lifetime of running trains. For while it was withering up, its once-bucolic territory was metamorphosing into a sprawling suburbia whose inhabitants needed some escape from the ever-expanding expressways, shopping malls, and housing developments. Thus it became the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park, one of the earliest and most popular projects of the “rails to trails” movement, with a steady stream of bicyclers, joggers and hikers now huffing along its route—virtually all of them, sadly, heedless of the history beneath their feet.

This work stems partly from the pure and simple nostalgia of one who once rode those trains. But it has one serious purpose. Nobody now needs to be told how rapidly the onetime woods and farms have been bulldozed into subdivisions, shopping centers, and superhighways. As the old landmarks and methods of moving around are obliterated, they leave only memories which may dissipate as fast as the exhaust fumes of their replacements. Here we are attempting to record a bit of the history and memories of one such institution before they too vanish.

ALEXANDRIA STRUGGLES WEST

1847 - 1865



The Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire's most elaborate structure was its Alexandria passenger terminal and office building at Princess and Fairfax Streets, built in the late 1850s and shown here in 1862 while occupied by Federal troops. (National Archives)

It was not the best of times for Alexandria, Virginia. As the mid-19th century approached, the Colonial-era port on the Potomac River was suffering from a combined case of economic stagnation and a civic inferiority complex. Before there was a United States, the city had been in the mainstream of world commerce, with

sailing ships lined up in the river waiting their turns at its docks. Feeding those docks was a network of turnpikes reaching west and southwest into the fertile Piedmont farming country and the Shenandoah Valley. But by the mid-1840s Alexandria was slipping into a backwater. For one thing, it was now overshadowed by



Half a block east of the passenger station was this substantial brick freight house. When photographed here in 1946 it was in its last days but still jointly serving the Southern Railway and Washington & Old Dominion. A track entered the building's rear and originally extended farther south through the large archway. (*H. H. Harwood, Jr.*)

Washington, D. C. only six miles upriver—a crude newcomer with unpaved streets and absolutely no breeding, to be sure, but nonetheless now the area's major population magnet. In fact, it had been part of the District since 1791, inhibiting both its political and economic independence. More importantly, however, Alexandria was rapidly ceasing to be a consequential trade center, overtaken and passed by port competitors both to the north and south.

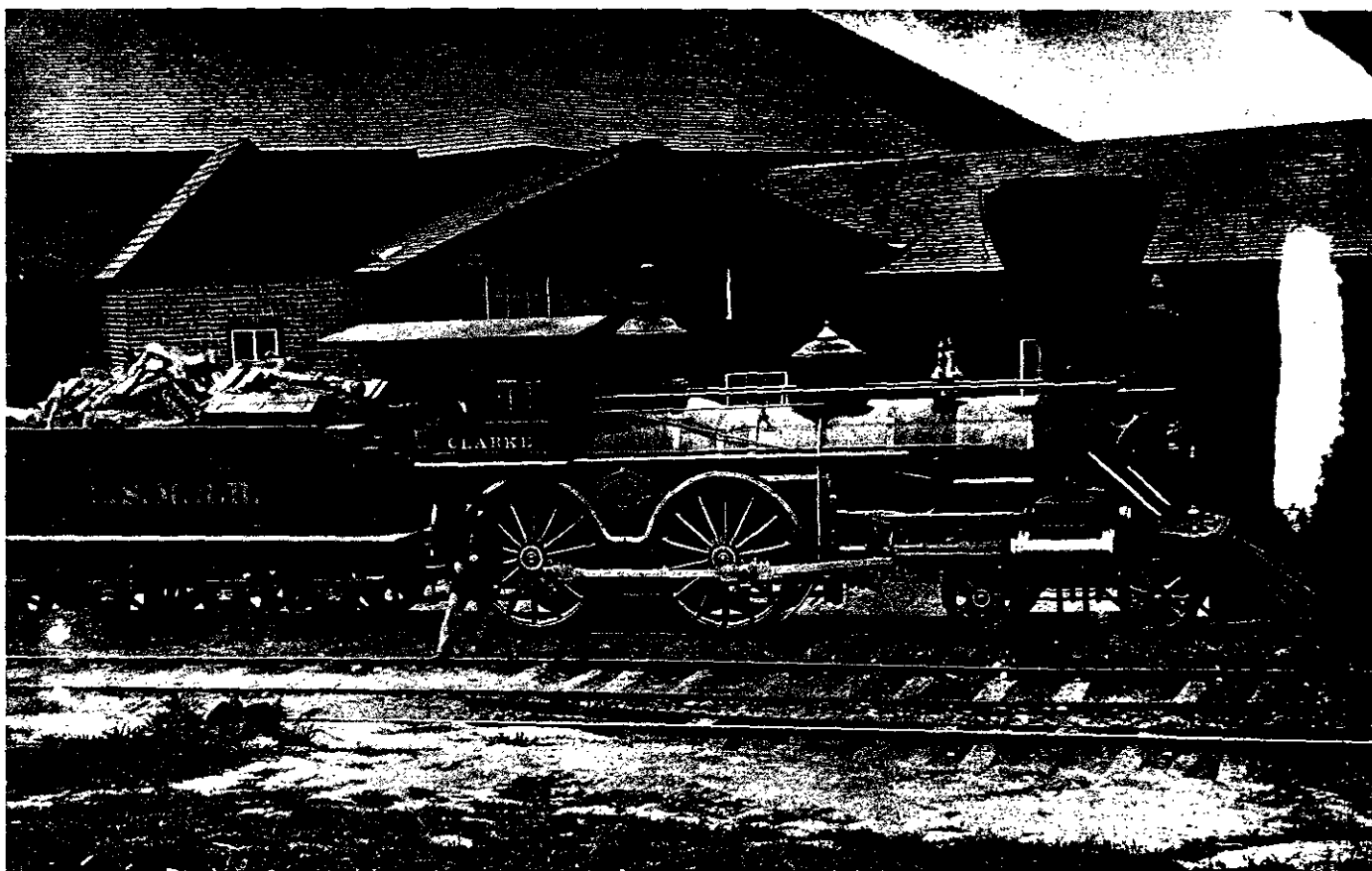
Inland transportation was a principal problem. Like most early port cities, Alexandria had lived off its turnpikes, which brought produce and raw materials to the piers and took back manufactured goods and other imports. But these were now obsolete, made so by New York's Erie Canal and, more recently, railroads. By the mid-1840s Alexandria did have a canal of somewhat limited value but no railroads.

Alexandria's particular devil was nearby Baltimore on Chesapeake Bay. Aggressive, creative, and fed by its own first-class road system stretching to the Ohio River and beyond, Baltimore had been one of the country's fastest growing cities—until the Erie Canal dramatically changed the economics of inland movement. But

Baltimore's merchants and bankers then made a bold and risky gamble. Realizing early on that topography and location precluded a competitive canal, they committed themselves to the railroad—a new and untried English technology previously used mostly for short-distance mining and ironmaking operations.

Unawed by the enormous pioneering challenges, the Baltimoreans incorporated the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in 1827 with the goal of building to the Ohio River, over 300 miles west. Construction began the following year and, not surprisingly, progress was slow—dogged by miscalculations, misfortunes, and periodic financial crises. By 1842, however, the B&O reached Cumberland, Maryland, roughly its halfway point, and by the late 1840s it was well on its way over the Alleghenies.

Alexandria and Georgetown, its nearby neighbor and competitor, were not so daring and preferred what was then the conventional wisdom: a canal to the west. On July 4, 1828—the same day that work on the B&O Railroad began—Georgetown celebrated the start of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, which would also reach the Ohio River along roughly the same route as the



The "Clarke", built in 1859, was one of the handsome trio of William Mason-built eight-wheelers which constituted the AL&H's entire original locomotive roster. It poses at Alexandria during its enforced service for the U. S. Military Railroad. Amazingly, a near-duplicate may be seen today at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore. (Ansco Brady Collection)

railroad. Nobody was really sure how to get a canal over the 2600-foot summit of the Alleghenies, but this became academic; beaten to Cumberland by the B&O, the C&O Canal gave up at that point.

While the C&O Canal was to terminate in Georgetown, seven miles upriver, the Alexandrians organized their own connecting canal to reach their city, spanning the Potomac with an impressive aqueduct at Georgetown. Work on it began in 1831 and, after financial problems and political wrangling (Georgetown was not enthused over the competition), it was finally finished in 1843.

Alexandria's aims were more modest than Baltimore's; traditionally it traded within a smaller hinterland, particularly the Shenandoah Valley. Its initial goal was to keep and expand this traffic, much of which was now being diverted to Baltimore via Harper's Ferry, one of the valley's major northern gateways. The struggling C&O Canal had reached Harper's Ferry in 1834, but it quickly lost whatever advantage it had. Hard on its heels, the Baltimore & Ohio crossed the

Potomac there in 1837 and joined the Winchester & Potomac Railroad. The W&P had finished spiking its rails down the valley from Winchester to Harper's Ferry a year earlier, and together the two railroads now formed an unbroken rail route to Baltimore.

Alexandria's reaction was nothing if not leisurely. Its subservient political status probably did not help, and money may have been hard to raise in a city of only 8400 people. Happily for the city, it was ceded back to Virginia in 1846, and this may have supplied the needed spark. In any event it was not until March 20, 1847 that a group of local merchants and bankers, led by George H. Smoot and Lewis McKenzie, chartered the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry Railroad. They planned to build west through Fairfax and Loudoun counties, touching Leesburg and then swinging northwest to the Potomac at Harper's Ferry where they would join the Winchester & Potomac. Then, they reasoned, they could consolidate with the still-independent W&P to form their own through rail line up the Valley to Winchester.

But the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry's goal almost instantly turned dubious. Perhaps spurred by the threat, the B&O tied down control of the Winchester & Potomac's traffic in 1848, and although the W&P remained technically independent until 1867 it essentially became a B&O branch. With the hoped-for Harper's Ferry connection now in hostile hands, the Alexandrians' enthusiasm promptly wilted and the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry died aborning.

Soon enough afterward they were diverted by more promising railroad projects in two other directions. First to appear was the Orange & Alexandria Railroad, incorporated in 1848 to build between Alexandria and Gordonsville, Virginia, via Culpeper and Orange. At Gordonsville it would meet the Louisa Railroad, which would link it to Richmond on the east and to Charlottesville and some vague destination beyond the Blue Ridge on the west. The O&A itself also planned to continue southwest to Lynchburg. George Smoot, one of the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry's principal promoters, became its president and construction started in 1850—Alexandria's first real railroad. It reached Tudor Hall (now Manassas) in late 1851 and was finally completed to Gordonsville in 1853.

With the Orange & Alexandria on its way, a second project quickly materialized to connect the O&A with the Shenandoah Valley, climbing through the Blue Ridge at Manassa's Gap and passing through Front Royal and Strasburg. In this case Fauquier County promoters mostly financed the Manassas Gap Railroad rather than Alexandrians. They incorporated their company in 1850 and began building west in 1851, starting at its junction with the Orange & Alexandria at present Manassas and reaching Strasburg in the Valley in 1854. The O&A fed the Manassas Gap's traffic into Alexandria, now effectively giving the city rail lines to the southwest and west.

As an aside, the young Manassas Gap soon decided to expand both east and north, projecting its own line from Manassas into Alexandria and also building a branch into Loudoun County—roughly the same territory that the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry would have served. Work on both lines began about 1853 and extensive grading was done before financial problems in 1858 stopped the project "temporarily." Then came the war; afterward the Orange & Alexandria absorbed the Manassas Gap, and the roadbeds never received rails. But even today the aborted grading can be seen in many places if one knows where to look.

Heady with expansion plans, the Manassas Gap's promoters also came up with an even grander scheme; they would continue west into the bituminous coal fields of what was then Hampshire County, Virginia—now Mineral County, West Virginia. In 1852 they got authority to extend their railroad to the upper Potomac River at Paddytown, now Keyser, West Virginia. (Here too they would meet and do battle with the Baltimore & Ohio, which had just built its main line to Wheeling through the area.) In this case the dream died before any dirt was shoveled, but the idea apparently re-lit a spark in Alexandria, and here our story really begins.

Although the old Alexandria & Harper's Ferry had never fully come to life, it never quite died either; its promoters had managed to keep its charter alive "just in case." By the late 1840s, the B&O was hauling ever-increasing trainloads of coal from the fields west of Cumberland, Maryland, into Baltimore. Some of that could come through Alexandria too, carried by a re-incarnated Alexandria & Harper's Ferry.

And so it quivered back to life—this time as the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire, which received its charter on March 15, 1853. George Smoot left the Orange & Alexandria to set up the new organization, along with several other of the Alexandria & Harper's Ferry's original promoters including Lewis McKenzie and Cassius F. Lee—the latter from Virginia's notable Lee family. McKenzie served as president and would guide the AL&H's wavering fortunes for the next 25 years—a decision he doubtless regretted more than once. (An otherwise highly successful Alexandria businessman, McKenzie at various times also occupied virtually all of the city's major civic positions—including commissioner, mayor, and postmaster—and was later a U. S. congressman.) Charles P. Manning, a former B&O Master of Road, was appointed Chief Engineer in charge of location and construction.

Appropriating the Manassas Gap Railroad's unfulfilled dream, the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire aimed at Paddytown (Keyser) on the upper Potomac, about 165 rail miles from Alexandria. There it could connect with the newly built Baltimore & Ohio main line, which had just opened to the Ohio river at Wheeling; it also would be close to the Georges Creek and upper Potomac coal fields—although connections into Maryland at Westernport would be needed to reach the richest seams.

En route to Paddytown the AL&H would leave Alexandria along the valley of Four Mile Run and roughly

TIME TABLE--NO. 1,

Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad Company,

To take effect on and after MONDAY, January 16, 1860.

| TRAIN GOING WEST. | Fares. | NAMES OF STATIONS. | Distances. | TRAIN GOING EAST. |
|---------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Leave at 10 A. M.</i> | | ..ALEXANDRIA.. 3 | | <i>Arrive at 2.30 p.m.</i> |
| " " 10.9 " | 15 | Old Factory 2½ | 3 | " " 2.21 " |
| " " 10.15 " | 25 | ... Arlington Mills ... 1½ | 5½ | " " 2.15 " |
| " " 10.25 " | 30 | Carlinville 3¼ | 6¼ | " " 2.10 " |
| " " 10.35 " | 50 | Falls Church 4½ | 10½ | " " 1.55 " |
| " " 10.55 " | 75 | Vienna 3 | 15 | " " 1.35 " |
| " " 11.08 " | 90 | Hunter's Mill 3 | 18 | " " 1.20 " |
| " " 11.20 " | 1.00 | Thornton 2½ | 21 | " " 1.10 " |
| " " 11.30 " | 1.10 | Herndon 3¼ | 23¼ | " " 1.00 " |
| " " 11.45 " | 1.25 | Guilford 4 | 27 | " " 12.45 " |
| <i>Arrive at 12.00 M.</i> | 1.40 | .. FARMWELL .. | 31 | <i>Leave at 12.30 PM.</i> |

The AL&H's first public timetable, advertising service as far as Farmwell station, now Ashburn. Arlington Mills is present-day Barcroft and Guilford is now Sterling. (NVRPA collection) (State Records, Board of Public Works (RG57), Entry 115, Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire Railroad Records, 1853-1883, "Time Table—No. 1...1860", Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.)



Alexandria Junction was created by the Federal military authorities to connect the AL&H with the Alexandria & Washington Railroad. This Civil War-era view looks east toward Alexandria. The AL&H line runs left to right; the curving track in the center is the Alexandria & Washington connection. Dimly seen at far right are bridges over the turnpike (now U.S. Route 1) and Alexandria Canal. (*National Archives*)

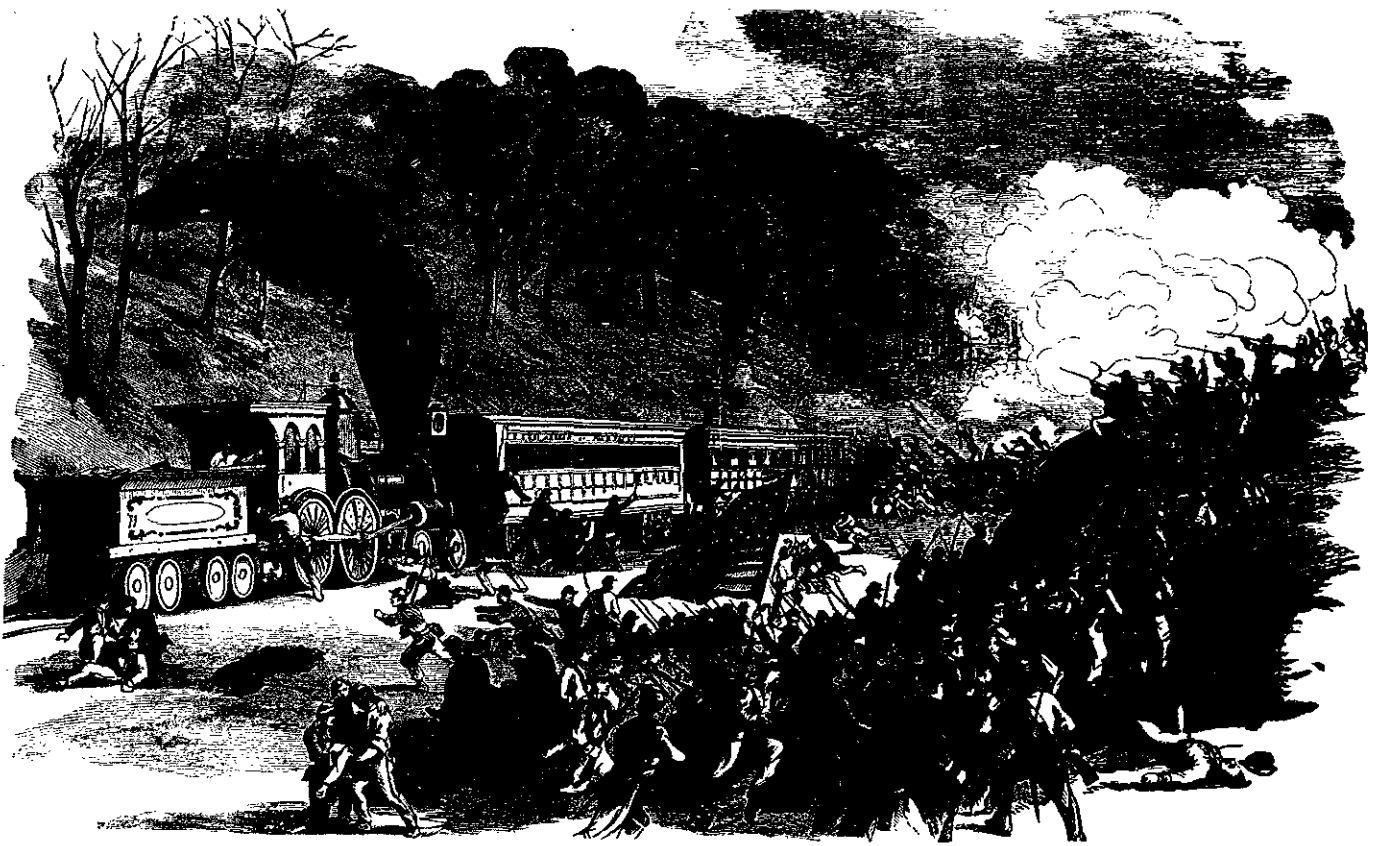
follow the old Alexandria & Harper's Ferry route through Fairfax and Loudoun counties. Rather than swerving north to circle the Blue Ridge at Harper's Ferry, however, it would head directly west through the mountain and cross the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester. West of Winchester the going promised to be far rougher. The surveyed line ran roughly parallel but north of present U. S. Route 50, hurdling a seemingly endless succession of mountain ridges—an unhappy contrast to the B&O's river-level line along the Potomac to the same point. It was to cross Cacapon Mountain at Bloomery Gap and would tunnel both South Branch and Knobly mountains.

In all, building the AL&H promised to be difficult and expensive for a small city like Alexandria, and the costs of hoisting trains over all the mountain grades would be still another story. Happily, some help was forthcoming from the state. In an era of intense regional economic competition, many states aided railroad projects that promised to develop commerce within their borders; Virginia was one, and in the next several years invested in three-fifths of the

railroad's capital stock while maintaining a sizeable representation on its board of directors. Clarke County, on the west side of the Blue Ridge, hopefully subscribed to \$100,000 in stock.

With high hopes the railroad set out westward. Ground was broken in Alexandria in February of 1855 and construction crews followed surveyors through the gently rolling Fairfax and Loudoun county farmlands. But money was still scarce and progress slow. Fundraising meetings were held in the little villages and hamlets along the way, but the farmers always seemed to be too busy either planting or harvesting. It was not until the summer of 1858—almost three and a half years later—that the grading finally reached Leesburg, a historic little Loudoun County farm center 38 miles from Alexandria.

At Leesburg the AL&H engineers were well within sight of the Blue Ridge, the gateway to the Shenandoah Valley and the first of the many mountain barriers to come. They decided to aim toward Keye's Gap, where the rails would climb the ridge, cross the summit in a cut, pass through a 1600-foot-long tunnel on the west



The AL&H's only major exposure to battle was this skirmish at Vienna June 17, 1861. (*Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*)

slope, then turn southwest along the valley to Winchester. Following this survey, grading proceeded west of Leesburg in the general direction of Hillsboro.

While the contractors were digging up the Loudoun County landscape, the tangible fixtures of a railroad began to appear at the eastern end. On October 12, 1858 the schooner "Samuel B. Grice" docked at Alexandria with the line's first locomotive—a graceful eight-wheeler turned out by William Mason's machine works at Taunton, Massachusetts. In the classic tradition of early railroading the newcomer carried the name "Lewis McKenzie" in honor of the railroad's president and guiding light. A brick passenger station and office building, a brick freight house, a small roundhouse and turntable all took shape near the waterfront in the two blocks north of Princess Street and east of Fairfax. The first rails were spiked down on the depot lot in the closing days of 1858, and on a muddy March 22, 1859, sweating crews pulled the "McKenzie" onto the tracks. On May 9th it was finally fired up for a mile-and-a-half test run and afterward was put to work pulling construction trains. In the meantime more ships brought in iron rail from England and Wales.

During 1859 two more Mason-built woodburners arrived—the "Charles P. Manning" (honoring the company's chief engineer) and the "Clarke", commemorating the county which had so enthusiastically supported the railroad. Alexandria craftsmen fashioned the rolling stock for their home railroad: T. S. Jamieson helped to build 24 freight cars (14 "burthen" and 10 "house" cars according to a contemporary report) and John Summers constructed a 47-foot passenger coach fitted with lilac plush seats. Two baggage-mail-passenger combines were delivered in early 1860 to round out the roster. All told, it was a rather sparse roster—three locomotives, three passenger train cars, and 24 freight cars—which said something about the railroad's immediate business prospects.

By August 1859 the company was running a limited freight and passenger service as far as Vienna, about 15 miles from Alexandria, and on January 16, 1860 a regular daily round trip was started to Farmwell station (now Ashburn), 31 miles distant. The AL&H's big day finally came on May 17 of the same year when the citizenry of Leesburg turned out to welcome their first passenger train—which arrived appropriately bedecked with flags supplied by its milestone-conscious conductor.

.....

Alexandria and Leesburg joined in enthusiasm for the new railroad and its blessings. Leesburg's weekly newspaper rhapsodized: "This opens a new era in the history of our ancient town and reminds us that Leesburg is no longer to be considered one of the finished and out-of-the-way places of the earth, but in the future is to be a living, active, and prosperous town. We are now hitched to the rest of the world, about an hour and a half to two hours travel from Alexandria and Washington..." Said the Alexandria Gazette with a commercial gleam in its eye "We trust that our country friends may now find it convenient to double the number of visits to this city. They are always welcome."

Initially a single round trip sufficed for the rural business along the line, with a total running time of two and a half hours to cover the 38 miles. Stages met the trains at Leesburg to carry passengers to Winchester. Business turned out to be encouraging and a second round trip was added in March 1861, scheduled so that the same equipment could handle all services. Concurrent with its opening to Leesburg, the railroad received its first mail contract—the beginning of a regular service which, with a break during the Civil War, would continue for 90 years. At first, however, the mail was carried only three days a week, another commentary on the railroad's territory at the time.

At Leesburg, the railroad was less than one-quarter of the way to its goal in the coal country. It had taken over five years from groundbreaking to finish those 38 miles—not a particularly optimistic sign, considering that the construction so far had been relatively easy and a lot of very rugged topography lay ahead. West of Leesburg the railroad existed largely on surveyor's maps, although grading had been finished as far as Clarke's Gap, about three miles beyond Leesburg in the Blue Ridge foothills.

Whether or not the AL&H could have sustained its drive toward the Hampshire County coalfields may be debatable, but the events of April 1861 made argument academic. On the 17th of that month Virginia joined its southern bretheren and announced its secession from the Union, although the action was not formally ratified until May 23rd. The AL&H's world suddenly had ended.

During the uncertain interim before Virginia's official secession, the hapless little railroad found itself in the middle of a frantic scuffle for rail lines and rolling stock. In late May, Robert E. Lee managed to extract two of its locomotives and sent them south on

the Orange & Alexandria to serve the Confederate war effort. Both were rechristened with good patriotic names—"General Johnston" subsequently served on the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac, and "General Beauregard" wound up on the Virginia Central. Before evacuating northern Virginia, Lee also burned most of the railroad's brand-new cars.

The moment Lee left, Union troops swarmed down from Washington, occupied Alexandria, and took over the city's rail and dock facilities. On May 24th the Federal government confiscated about eight miles on the AL&H's easternmost section, from Alexandria to a point beyond Arlington Mills (later Barcroft), where it established Camp Upton. It also appropriated the line's last remaining locomotive, the "Clarke", and promptly relettered it for the newly created U. S. Military Railroad. By 1862 the Federal authorities were operating the road as far as Vienna, 15 miles from Alexandria. Beyond there, however, it had no military value.

Afterward the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire played only a minor part in the conflict and at best is barely mentioned in Civil War histories. Unlike its neighbors to the immediate south—such as the Orange & Alexandria, Manassas Gap, and Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac—its strategic value was nominal, and being close by Washington, it was kept securely under Federal control for the duration. Nonetheless it managed to be as badly mangled as its more important peers. Before Lee withdrew from northern Virginia he destroyed much of the railroad west of Vienna. Seven wooden bridges were burned and rails were heated, twisted, and scattered in the woods along the right-of-way. The Federal operators never bothered to rebuild this section; thus the line between Vienna and Leesburg remained a dead railroad for the length of the war.

The eastern half, from Alexandria to Vienna, was kept open to serve the various military camps scattered around Washington's southern environs and to bring food and wood to the capital. Even this section did not lead an entirely peaceful life. Mosby's Raiders and other southern partisan groups periodically shot up trains and undisciplined Union troops bathed in the locomotive water supply, stole wood fuel, and tore up several sidings.

The only action on the AL&H resembling a real battle occurred early in the war when Confederate troops were still within range of Washington. On June 17, 1861 a contingent of South Carolina infantry and

cavalry ambushed a military train on the outskirts of Vienna and opened fire on its outnumbered occupants with artillery. In the heat of the fight a cannonball accidentally uncoupled the locomotive and one car from the rest of the train; its engineer immediately took the opportunity to head east to Falls Church at full speed, leaving about 180 men to face what was reported as 2000 rebels. But thinking the engine would return soon with reinforcements, the Confederates withdrew after burning the remaining cars, while the Union troops straggled back to Arlington on foot.

The war did have one positive byproduct for the AL&H by giving it rail links both to Washington and the South, neither of which it had before. By that time three railroads reached Alexandria, but none of them directly connected with one another; the military authorities acted quickly to remedy that problem.

Most critical, of course, was a direct line to Washington. Shortly before the war the Alexandria & Washington Railroad was built to connect the two cities but had not quite succeeded. It opened a line between Alexandria and the south end of the Long Bridge over the Potomac, paralleling the present-day Jefferson Davis Highway, and also completed trackage within Washington to connect with the Baltimore

& Ohio, then the city's only railroad. But its route was broken by the creaky wooden Long Bridge, originally built in 1809 for wagon traffic and unable to carry locomotives.

The Federals built a new railroad bridge over the river and also connected the Alexandria & Washington with both the AL&H and Orange & Alexandria. (The AL&H junction was located west of today's Jefferson Davis Highway on Alexandria's north side, and was later named Alexandria Junction.) While this did not give the railroad its own entry to Washington—something Lewis McKenzie had tried to accomplish earlier—it at least provided a direct connecting route. The military authorities also built a connecting track between the AL&H and Orange & Alexandria.

With the war's end the AL&H served briefly to transport the Army of the Potomac, which was camped along its line before being mustered out. On August 8, 1865, the disheveled property was finally given back the Virginia Board of Public Works, (technically its majority stockholder) after four years and three months of Federal control—the longest "captivity" of any southern rail line. The state in turn put it back in charge of McKenzie and its other original managers and looked for a way to get out of its now-burdensome investment.

The Washington & Ohio Railroad Co.

ISSUED UNDER AUTHORITY OF AN ACT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVED FEB. 23^d 1875.

ALEXANDRIA, VA.

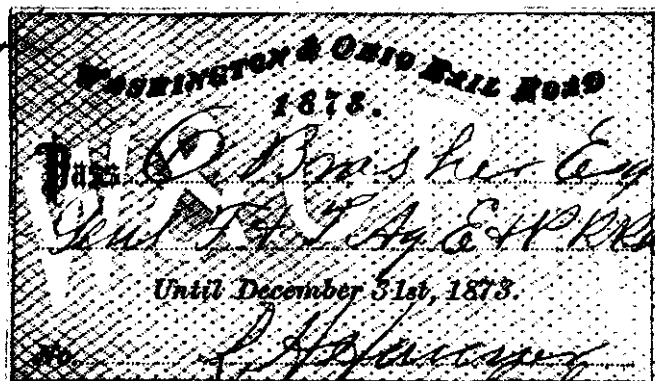
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This is to certify that there is owing from the **WASHINGTON & OHIO RAILROAD CO.** to _____ or bearer

TWO Dollars, payable twelve months after date, with Interest at the rate of six per cent per annum. This Certificate, when due, will be receivable for tolls on passengers and freight and for all other dues to the Company, and for the bonds of the Company at the market price thereof.



Treasurer.



282 ALEXANDRIA, LOUDOUN & HAMPSHIRE RAILROAD.
 LOUIS MCKENZIE, President. N. HAYES, Gen. Superintendent.
 R. JOHNSON, Secretary. Alexandria, Va.

| Trains Leave. | | | | March, 1870. | | Trains Arrive. | | | |
|---------------|-------|-----|---------------|--------------|--|----------------|-------|-------|--|
| Acc | Mail | Mis | STATIONS. | | | Frs. | Mail | Acc | |
| P. M. | A. M. | | | | | P. M. | A. M. | | |
| 5 00 | 8 30 | 0 | Alexandria | ... | | 2 35 | 7 45 | | |
| 5 20 | 8 50 | 7 | Carl's Spring | ... | | 3 12 | 7 20 | | |
| 5 30 | 9 00 | 11 | Fall's Church | ... | | 2 00 | 7 10 | | |
| 5 45 | 9 14 | 15 | Vienna | ... | | 1 44 | 6 56 | | |
| 5 56 | 9 22 | 18 | Hunter's Mill | ... | | 1 36 | 6 46 | | |
| 6 08 | 9 32 | 21 | Thornton | ... | | 1 26 | 6 38 | | |
| 6 20 | 9 40 | 23 | Herndon | ... | | 1 16 | 6 30 | | |
| 6 36 | 9 52 | 27 | Gullford | ... | | 1 04 | 6 18 | | |
| 6 48 | 10 04 | 31 | Farmwell | ... | | 12 52 | 6 08 | | |
| 7 03 | 10 20 | 38 | Leesburg | ... | | 12 35 | 5 52 | | |
| 7 17 | 10 32 | 42 | Clark's Gap | ... | | 12 23 | 5 40 | | |
| 7 25 | 10 40 | 44 | Hamilton | ... | | 12 15 | 5 30 | | |
| P. M. | A. M. | | [ARRIVE] | | | [LEAVE] | P. M. | A. M. | |

The AL&H's entry in the June 1870 *Travelers' Official Guide of the Railways*. "Acc" stood for "Accommodation", or a local passenger train.

