

# Columbia Pike

## The History of an Early Turnpike



Arlington County Historic Preservation Office

John Paul Liebertz

April 1, 2010

## Table of Contents

Turnpike History.....	1
District of Columbia and Virginia Turnpike, Early 1800s.....	3
District of Columbia’s Impact on the Development of the Columbia Turnpike Co.....	5
Origin of Columbia Turnpike.....	7
Provisions of the Act to Create Columbia Turnpike Company.....	9
Benjamin Henry Latrobe’s Influence on Columbia Turnpike.....	12
Columbia Turnpike and the Civil War.....	14
Columbia Turnpike and Railroads, 1860 – 1930.....	17
Columbia Turnpike Experiments, 1911 – 1915.....	19
Columbia Turnpike Experiments, 1921.....	21
Arlington County Road Improvements, 1925.....	22
Columbia Turnpike Becomes a State Route.....	23
Prominent Structures Along Columbia Turnpike.....	24
Development along Columbia Turnpike.....	28
Bibliography.....	30

# Turnpike History

## Need for Turnpikes in America

- Public maintenance of early Virginian roads was inadequate due to the heavy traffic generated by wagons and carriages moving goods between the Potomac and the rest of the state. Local property owners who were liable for upkeep of the roadway performed enough maintenance to keep the route passable for local traffic.
- In the late 1700s, the idea of an improved roadway maintained by the collection of tolls took hold throughout the country.
- Turnpikes offered a superior method of road care due to inherent organizational advantages.
- Turnpikes were not a technological innovation, but a legislative authorization to construct roadways and collect a toll.

## British Turnpikes

- First toll road in 1663.
- Prevailed in Britain circa 1750-1772.
- Organized as trusts, which were non-profit organizations financed by bonds.
  - Committee of citizens borrowed money, constructed roads, and collected tolls for their maintenance and the amortization of the debt.
  - After debt was paid, the trust was to stop collecting tolls and give control of the right of way to the public.

## New England vs. Virginia Turnpikes

- The United States turnpike laws were modeled on the English system. However, there was a significant difference between the New England and Virginian turnpike policy.

New England		Virginia
States left private enterprise to acquire funds.	VS.	State gave financial aid to turnpike companies.

- Unlike the English system, neither New England nor Virginia adopted the planned surrender of the turnpike to the public when the debt was negated by the collection of tolls.
  - In theory, the turnpike companies would be able to profit from the turnpikes indefinitely.
  - However, in most cases, turnpikes resulted in little profits and the roads reverted to the public within a few decades.

## **Economics of Turnpike Companies**

- Structure of turnpike companies
  - Companies sold stock to individuals, companies, or governments.
  - Stockholders elected a board of directors.
  - Directors levied tolls to pay for repairs, expenses, and dividends.
- Early transportation corporations had poor financial performance.
- Economic motivation of investors was based on indirect benefits of improved transportation.
  - Higher land values
  - Increased local commerce
  - Greater ability to market crops
  - Better access to consumer goods
- Thomas Gordon, *A Gazetteer of the State of Pennsylvania*,

“None have yielded profitable returns to the stockholders, but everyone feels that he has been repaid for his expenditures in the improved value of lands, and the economy of business.”

## **The Collection of Tolls**

- Tolls were collected at tollhouses where the road was barred by a long pole or pike, which had to be turned to allow passage.
- Toll keepers, who resided in the tollhouse, acted as a security guard, custodian, handyman, representative and conduit to the turnpike executives of information from the public.

# District of Columbia and Virginia Turnpikes, Early 1800s

## Little River Turnpike

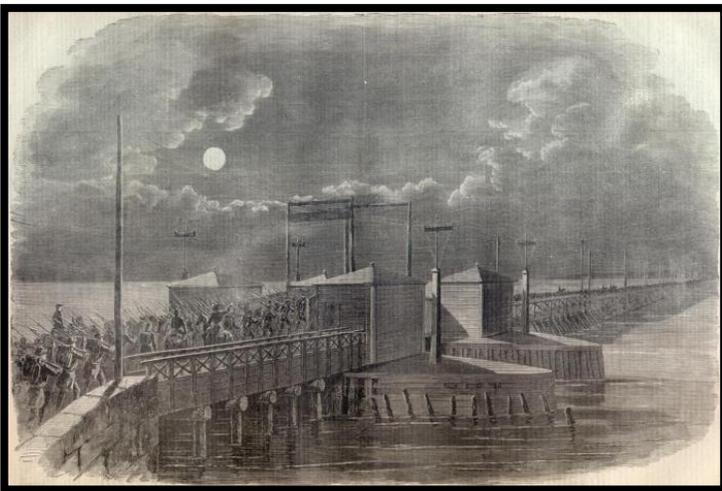
- First turnpike in the area ~ Chartered by the Virginia Assembly in 1796.
  - Duke Street, Alexandria to the ford on the Little River.
  - Roadway leading west from Alexandria towards the lower Shenandoah Valley.

## Washington and Alexandria Turnpike

- Chartered by United States Congress (April 21, 1808).

“...opening, graveling, and improving a road not exceeding one hundred, nor less than thirty feet wide, between the town of Alexandria and Bridgepoint, on Alexander’s island, opposite the city of Washington, and of erecting a bridge over Fourmile Creek, in the county of Alexandria.”

- Road constructed between Virginia end of Long Bridge and Alexandria.
- Washington and Alexandria Turnpike is now part of Jefferson Davis Highway.



1: Left, the advance guard of the grand army of the United States crossing the Long Bridge of the Potomac River, 1861. Right, the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge looking toward the District of Columbia, 1932. Long Bridge had been burnt or destroyed and rebuilt on multiple occasions before developing into the current 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge.

## **Condition of Turnpikes**

- Transportation on early turnpikes was difficult.
- March 17, 1875 *Alexandria Gazette*,

“Arlington Turnpike Company owing to the terrible condition of its road or perhaps to the ominous muttering of those who are so unfortunate as to have to travel it, have thrown its gate open until the road and the aforesaid mutter dries up.”

## **General Assembly of Virginia Turnpike Law** (February 17, 1817)

- Regulates the chartering of companies, the exercise of eminent domain and the assessment of damages, the width, grades, and surfacing of turnpikes, the weight of loads, width of wheels, tollgates and rates of toll, and remedies against toll evaders.

“60 feet wide at least, eighteen feet of which shall be well covered with gravel or stone where necessary and at all times by kept firm and smooth, free from all mudholes, ruts and other obstructions and in all respects fit for the use of heavy laden wagons and of other carriages; and on each side of the parts so to be made and preserved, they shall clear a summer road eighteen feet wide and keep the same always in good repair, free from stumps, roots, rocks, stones, mud holes, ruts and other obstructions fit for the use of wagons and other carriages in dry weather between the first day of May and thirty-first day of October, and fit for the use of horses and foot travelers at all times.”

# **District of Columbia's Impact on the Development of the Columbia Turnpike Company**

## **Legislation to Create a Permanent Seat of the Government**

- Article 1, Section 8, United States Constitution
  - “To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;”
- Residence Act
  - An act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the government of the United States. Enacted by Congress, July 16, 1790.
  - District to be located on the Potomac River.
  - Ten years to construct buildings for Congress.
- District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801
  - An act concerning the District of Columbia. Enacted by Congress, February 27, 1801.
  - Incorporated District of Columbia and divided the territory into two counties
    - Washington County, east of the Potomac River.
    - Alexandria County, west of the Potomac River.
  - Alexandria County included present day Arlington, Virginia.
    - In 1852, Alexandria County returned to Virginia.
    - In 1870, the city of Alexandria seceded from Alexandria County.
    - In 1920, Alexandria County renamed Arlington County.

## **Growing Pains of Washington DC**

- Initially, the District of Columbia was isolated.
  - Lack of major traffic routes to urban centers.
  - Lack of transportation options even to neighboring towns, Georgetown and Alexandria.
- Residents complained of a “City of Magnificent Distances” with inadequate streets and waterways.
- Lack of a mercantile community.
- Lack of integration into regional and national market.

### **Solution to DC's Slow Growth**

- City's economy hinged upon its ability to expand its external market, which would then provide the "means for an increase in the size of the domestic market, growth in money income, and the spread of specialization and division of labor."
- The development of transportation such as turnpikes, canals, and railroads was critical to the success of the district.
  - The earliest transportation developments were turnpikes that connected DC to the rest of the country.

# Origin of Columbia Turnpike

## Creation of the Columbia Turnpike Company

- An Act to incorporate a company for making certain turnpike roads in the District of Columbia. Enacted by Congress, April 12, 1810.
- Board of commissioners:
  - Daniel Carrol, George W.P. Custis, Thomas Fenwick, John Taylor, Samuel Harrison Smith, Daniel Brent, Daniel Rapine, Frederick May, Elias B. Caldwell, William Brent, James D. Barry, and John Law.
  - Responsible for raising a minimum of \$60,000 in shares of \$100.
    - Note: Congress chartered the turnpike as a private corporation and did not provide monetary aid similar to the New England turnpike policy.
- Creation of three turnpikes
  - Capitol to Baltimore
    - Allowed for easier access to the northeastern cities. The route follows current Bladensburg Road, N.E.
  - Capitol to Montgomery Courthouse
    - Would have facilitated access to the northwest. Surveyed and planned, but never constructed by the Columbia Turnpike Company, who sold the rights to the road in 1818 to the Rockville and Washington Turnpike Company. The roadway was to be an extension of New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
  - Capitol to Southwest ~ Columbia Pike
    - “One road from the western extremity of the causeway leading from Alexander’s island to the boundary line of the district of Columbia, and the most direct and practicable route towards the Little River turnpike road, in the state of Virginia.”

## Importance of turnpikes

- As stated previously, the District of Columbia was isolated from other adjacent urban areas and major cities. The act allowed for the integration of DC into a larger national and local economic market, and for the city to become a profitable urban center.

### **Importance of Columbia Pike**

- Opens the District of Columbia to the west and southwest.
- Connects to the Little River Turnpike.
  - The Little River Turnpike, chartered by the Virginia Assembly (1796), improved the roadway leading west from Alexandria towards the lower Shenandoah Valley.
- Easier transportation of goods by creating a more direct route to Washington DC, instead of traveling via Alexandria.
- Creation of mills along tributaries of Potomac in proximity to Columbia Pike.

### **Virginia Expands Columbia Turnpike**

- The Little River Turnpike is not part of the District of Columbia, but a part of Fairfax County, Virginia. Therefore, the Virginia General Assembly had to charter the Fairfax Turnpike Company to construct the Virginia portion of the Columbia Turnpike outlined by Congress.

# Provisions of the Act to Create Columbia Turnpike Company

## Specification for the roads

- “Not less than sixty-six feet in breadth, in such routes, tracts, or courses for the same respectively as in the best of their judgment will combine shortness of distance with the most convenient ground, and the smallest expense of money.”

## Dimensions of roads

- “...shall cause at least twenty-four feet in breadth, throughout the whole length thereof, to be made an artificial road, of stone, gravel, or other hard substance of sufficient depth of thickness to secure a solid and firm road, with a surface as smooth as the materials will admit, and so nearly level, that it shall in no case rise or fall more than an angle of four degrees with a horizontal line, and the said road shall thereafter be kept in good and perfect repair.”

## Toll Gates and Tolls

- Toll Gates
  - “Only two upon and across each of the said roads, as shall be necessary and sufficient to collect the tolls.”



- Lawful to appoint “toll-gatherers” to collect and receive tolls from individuals using the turnpike.
- “It shall be lawful for them to appoint such and so many toll-gatherers as they shall deem necessary to collect and receive of and from all and every person and persons using the said road or roads, the tolls and rates herein after mentioned, and to stop any person or persons, riding, leading or driving any horses, mules, cattle, hogs, sheep, sulkey, chair, chaise, phaeton, chariot, coach, cart, wagon, sleigh, sled, or any carriage of burden or pleasure from passing through the said gates, until the said tolls shall be paid.”

**Rate of Tolls**

<b>Individual/Animal</b>	<b>Price (cents)</b>
Sheep (20)	20
Hogs (20)	20
Cattle (20)	40
Horse/Mule and Rider	12.5
Stage and wagon with two horses	30
Carriage with four horses	40
Led or driven horse/mule	6
Sulkey, chair, chaise, or carriage of pleasure with two wheels and one horse	20
Coach, chariot, coachee, phaeton, or chaiser with four wheels and two horses	37.5
Coach, chariot, coachee, phaeton, or chaiser with four wheels and four horses	50
Sled or sleigh used as a carriage of pleasure	12.5/horse
Sled or sleigh used as a carriage of burden	8/horse
Cart or wagon with wheels under four inches in breadth	12.5/horse
Cart or wagon with wheels over four inches and under seven inches in breadth	6/horse
Cart or wagon with wheels over seven inches and under ten inches in breadth	5/horse
Cart or wagon with wheels over ten inches and under twelve in breadth	4/horse

**3: Two oxen are equal to one horse. One mule is equal to one horse.**

## **Repair of Roads**

- Duty of the corporation to keep the roads safe
  - Poor repair, unsafe or inconvenient for passengers, corporation will be held liable.
  - Company may be fined up to \$100 by the US Government for infractions.
  - Corporation will be held liable for damages incurred on person or persons.

## **Roads to become free**

- “Whenever the net proceeds of tolls collected on said roads shall amount to a sum sufficient to reimburse the capital which shall be expended in the purchase of such land and making said roads, and twelve percent interest per annum thereon, to be ascertained by the circuit court of the United States, in and for the district of Columbia, that same shall become free roads, and tolls shall no longer be collected thereon; and said company shall annually make returns to said circuit court of the amount of the tolls collected, and of their necessary expenses, so as to enable said circuit court to determine when said tolls shall cease.”
- The above policy is unusual for American chartered turnpikes, and is more in line with the British turnpike system.
  - In theory, since the District of Columbia is the center of the American government, access to the district should not be confined by the payment of tolls.
    - An 1852 Senate report states that all roads and bridges approaching the seat of government within the District of Columbia have been made free of toll except two turnpikes.
      - However, the report does not include Columbia Pike. In 1852, Alexandria County had been returned to Virginia.

# Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Influence on Columbia Turnpike

## Latrobe's Background

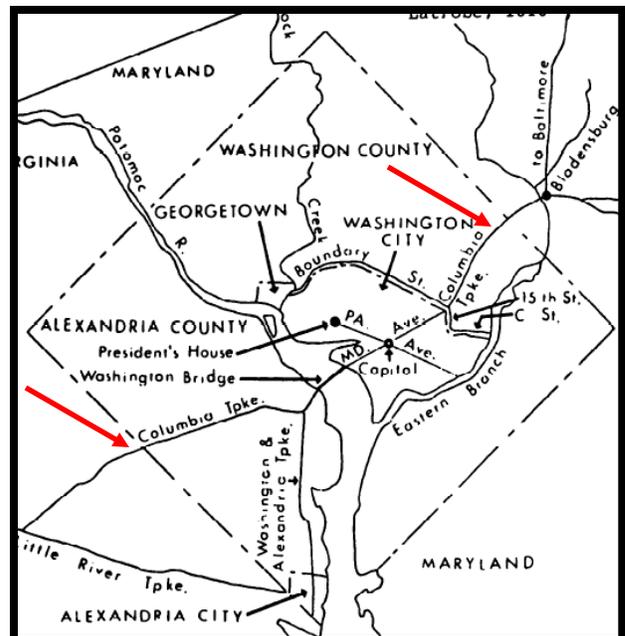
- Emigrated from England in 1795.
- Surveyor of Public Building in the city of Washington, 1801.
- Prominent for his architectural work.
  - United States Capitol
  - Baltimore Basilica
- District of Columbia was center for Latrobe's transportation work.

## Columbia Turnpike Company Hires Latrobe

- President of company, Daniel Carroll, applied to the circuit court of the District of Columbia for the appointment of three commissioners to lay out the turnpike routes.
  - Benjamin Henry Latrobe
  - Griffith Coombe
  - Joseph Forrest
- Latrobe designates himself "Chairman of the Columbia Turnpike Commissioners."
  - Only engineer on the commission.
- Company pays Latrobe \$2 daily compensation.
  - \$8 less than normal compensation.
  - Latrobe wrote that he "spared no labor, or fatigue" and "devoted many weary & hungry days to it."
    - He believed that the transportation initiatives were critical to the success of the city, which is why he accepted a low pay rate.

## Latrobe's Responsibilities

- Survey and outline the three turnpike routes.
- Columbia Pike
  - Latrobe received political pressure from prominent individuals who had financial interests in the route of Columbia Turnpike in Alexandria County.
  - George Washington Parke Custis asked Latrobe for the road to be moved closer to his mill on Four Mile Run. Latrobe declined his request.
  - From 1812-1815, Columbia Pike cost approximately \$40,000 to construct.



4: Columbia turnpikes laid out by Latrobe, 1810. The Baltimore Route and Columbia Pike are noted.

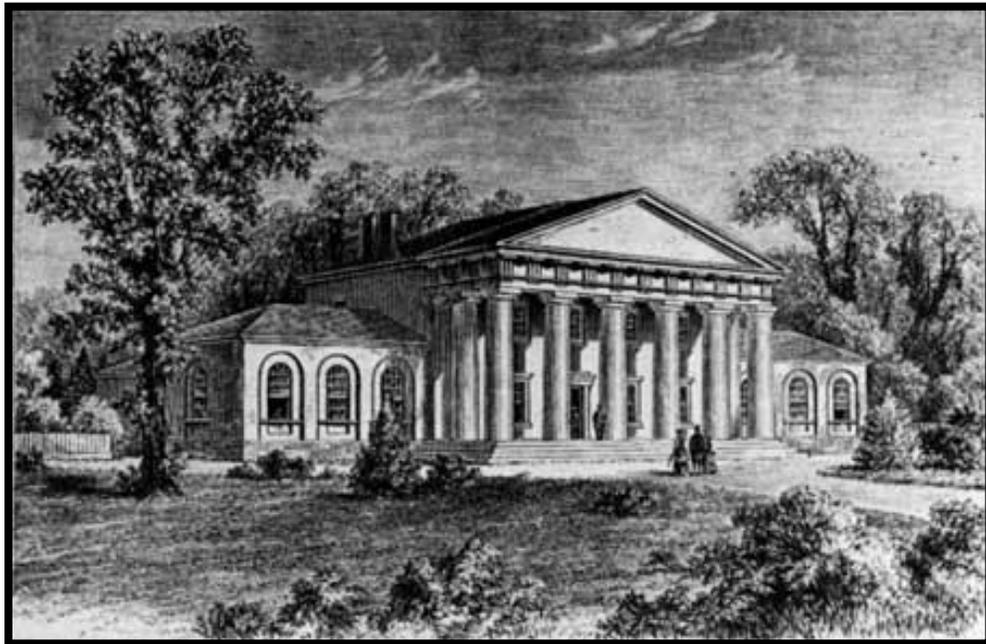
## **Columbia Turnpike Co. and Washington-Alexandria Turnpike Co. Conflict**

- Columbia Pike started at the “western edge of the causeway” leading to Washington/Long Bridge. Consequently, Columbia Pike traffic entering and leaving DC would use Long Bridge and the causeway built by Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company.
  - The Act to charter Columbia Turnpike Company required commissioner to decide the “proportion of the cost already incurred of making the causeway” which the Columbia Turnpike Company would pay the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company.
- Latrobe determined that it was possible to build a causeway for \$900 even though the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company spent over \$4,700.
  - Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company sued the commissioners for larger compensation, but settled for \$900 before the case went to court.

# Columbia Turnpike and the Civil War

## Arlington House

- In 1802, George Washington Park Custis began construction on Arlington House.
- Greek revival structure.
- Robert E. Lee marries Mary Anna Randolph Curtis. Lee takes control of property in the 1850s.
- House evacuated by Custis-Lee family at the start of the Civil War.
- After succession of Virginia, D.C. units commanded by Major General Charles W. Sanford occupy structure and fortify Alexandria County.



5: Sketch of Arlington House prior to 1861.

## Alexandria County

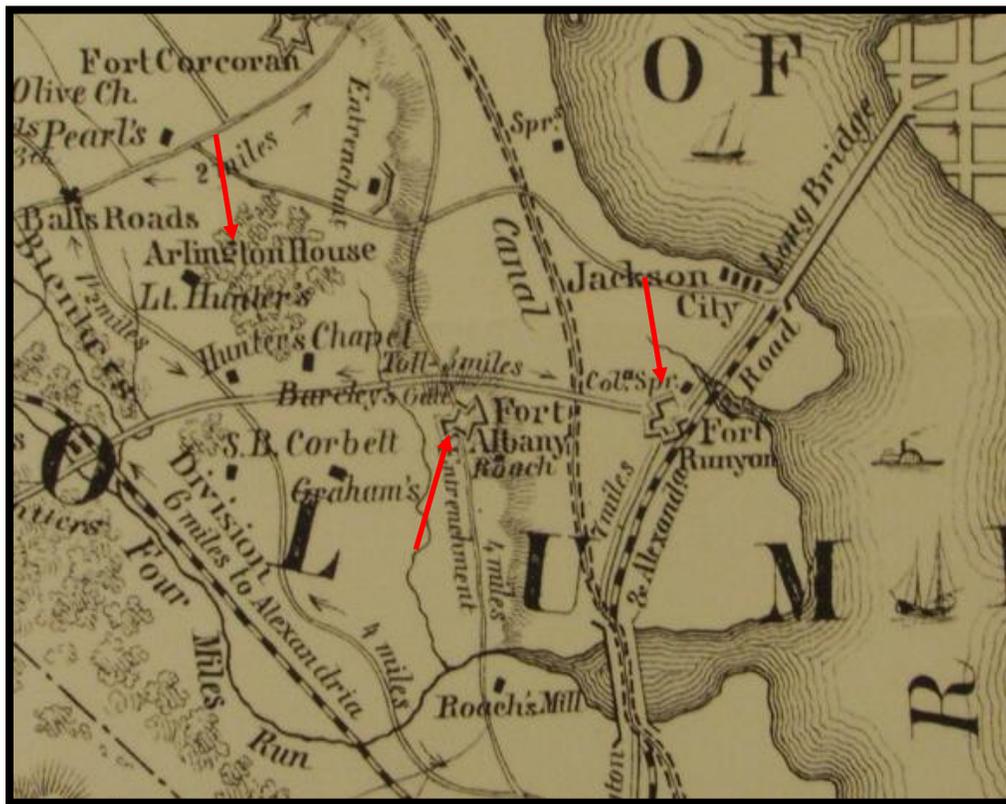
- Alexandria County, including all of present day Arlington County, remained in control of the Union Army even though Virginia ceded from the union.
- At the end of the civil war, over twenty forts were standing in Alexandria County.
- Columbia Turnpike was an important route that required protection since it was the most direct route from Washington into Confederate territory. Two forts were built to protect the turnpike.

## Fort Runyon

- Fort Runyon was the largest of the Washington Forts.
  - Constructed in 1861.
  - Covering 12 acres of ground enclosed within a 1,484-yard perimeter.
- The fort guarded the Virginia side of the Long Bridge.
- Served to cover the Washington-Alexandria and Columbia Turnpike.

## Fort Albany

- Fort Albany was constructed to protect Fort Runyon.
- Bastioned earthwork built 1861.
- Purpose was to command the approach to Long Bridge by way of Columbia Turnpike.
- The Fort is interspersed with civilian structures built along Columbia Turnpike.



6: Arlington House, Fort Albany, and Fort Runyon are noted on map, 1861.

### **Columbia Turnpike Company Claim**

- “This is a claim of the Columbia Turnpike Company for the use and occupation of their road [Columba Pike] on the Virginia Side of the Potomac river from June 1, 1861, to June 1, 1866, by United States troops.” Senate Report, 1868.
  - Estimated that 1,000 government horses per day passed over the route.
  - Claim against the government in the amount of \$73,000
- US government claimed that the road was discontinued to public travel in November 1861.
  - No proof of expenditures of the company to repair turnpike during Civil War.
  - No official account of government use of turnpike.
  - Turnpike and tollhouse were in enemy’s country.
- Damages sustained by this company “must be considered under the class of losses occasioned by the general ravages or war” and no government is responsible for such losses.

### **Damage sustained to Columbia Pike Residences**

- Account of Sewell Corbett, Southern Claims Commission

“I live on the farm opposite Young’s. The Columbian Turnpike separates our land. I knew the farm before Young purchased it fifteen years ago. He bought it from the Fairfax estate, and built the house in 1852 or ’53. The farm is three miles from the Long Bridge. It has a blacksmith shop, carriage house, barn, stable, cornhouse, and other buildings. Fort Woodbury, Tillinghast, Whipple, Craig, Albany, Richardson, Berry, Barnard and Blenker are within one-half to one mile from our farms. A large number of troops were stationed on these lands – from 10,000 to 100,000 men. We were ordered to leave in 1862. We did so. Our farms were badly damaged, our buildings destroyed, and the crops gone.”

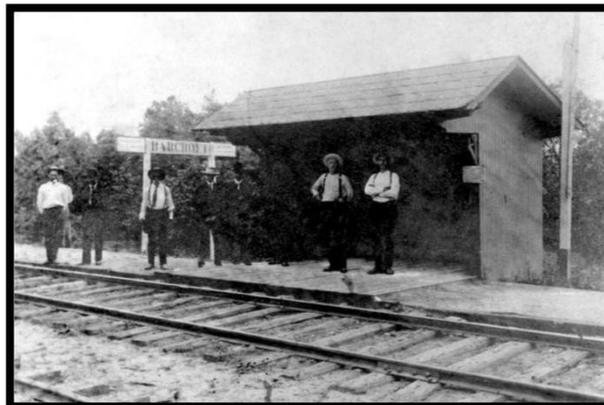
# Columbia Turnpike and Railroads, 1860 - 1930

## Washington and Old Dominion Railroad

- Incorporated on March 20, 1847 by General Assembly of Virginia.
- In 1860, one train ran each direction daily between Alexandria and Farmwell.
  - At that time, the company was the Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad Company
  - Run time was approximately two hours.
  - Train Stations Included:
    - Alexandria
    - Old Factory
    - Arlington Mills (Barcroft)
    - Carlinville
    - Falls Church
    - Vienna
    - Hunter's Mill
    - Thornton
    - Herndon
    - Guilford (Sterling)
    - Farmwell (Ashburn)

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.
Leave at 10 A. M.		.. ALEXANDRIA ..		Arrive at 2.30 p.m.
		3		
" " 10.9 "	15	... Old Factory ...	3	" " 2.21 "
		2½		
" " 10.15 "	25	... Arlington Mills ...	5½	" " 2.15 "
		1½		
" " 10.25 "	30	... Carlinville ...	6½	" " 2.10 "
		3½		
" " 10.35 "	50	... Falls Church ...	10½	" " 1.55 "
		4½		
" " 10.55 "	75	... Vienna ...	15	" " 1.35 "
		3		
" " 11.08 "	90	... Hunter's Mill ...	18	" " 1.20 "
		3		
" " 11.20 "	1.00	... Thornton ...	21	" " 1.10 "
		2½		
" " 11.30 "	1.10	... Herndon ...	23½	" " 1.00 "
		3½		
" " 11.45 "	1.25	... Guilford ...	27	" " 12.45 "
		4		
Arrive at 12.00 M.	1.40	.. FARMWELL ..	31	Leave at 12.30 P.M.

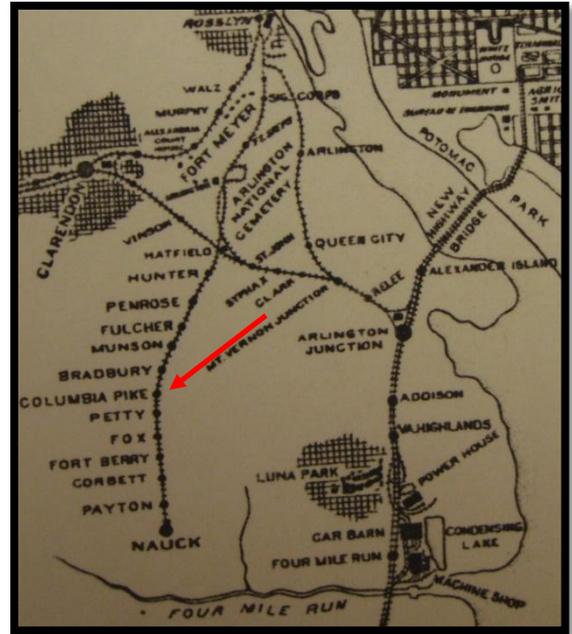
- The line expanded and became known as the Bluemont Line.
- Prior to 1912, Washington and Old Dominion Railroad utilized steam engines.
- After 1912, passenger trains became electrified. However, freight trains continued to operate on steam power.
- The use of the passenger railway service steadily declined after automobiles and public highways spread throughout the region.
  - On June 5, 1933, passenger trains were discontinued at the Barcroft/Columbia Pike stop when the railroad stopped service between Alexandria, Bluemont Junction, and Rosslyn.



7: The Barcroft station, circa 1910, located on Columbia Pike.

## Washington-Virginia Railway Company

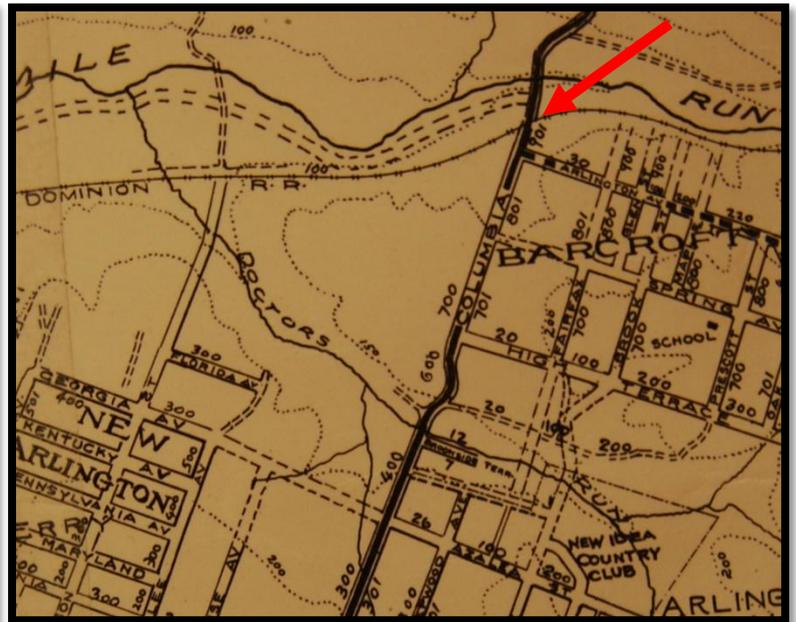
- First electric railway in Northern Virginia, 1892.
- Merger of the Washington, Alexandria and Mt. Vernon Railway Company and the Washington, Arlington, and Falls Church Railroad.
- Columbia Station spurs development near Alcova Heights.
- By the 1920s, commuting along Columbia Pike greatly improved with access to electric trolley service and two paved roads, Columbia Pike and Glebe Road.
- Trolley service in the area ceased operation in the 1940s.



8: Washington-Virginia Railway Map, circa 1920. Columbia Pike station is noted.



9: Columbia Station, intersection of Washington-Virginia Railroad and Columbia Pike.



10: Barcroft Station, intersection of Washington and Old Dominion Railroad and Columbia Pike. Location of Barcroft station is further southwest along Columbia Pike than Columbia Station.

## Columbia Turnpike Experiments, 1911-1915

### Earth Road Maintenance Experiments

- Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1912.
  - Contract between Alexandria County, Virginia and the Department of Agriculture in which the Office of Public Roads assumed the experimental maintenance of Columbia Pike and Alexandria-Georgetown Road.
    - Research has yet to indicate when ownership of the road transferred from Columbia Turnpike Company to Alexandria County.
    - Office of Public Roads has \$10,000 to spend on experiment.
    - Contract extended till 1915.
  - Columbia Pike chosen due to its high amount of traffic.
    - United States Cavalry from Fort Myer and batteries of artillery frequently utilized Columbia Turnpike.
    - Traffic census for three day in March show:

15	Loaded one horse wagons
58	Unloaded two horse wagons
38	Loaded two horse wagons
49	Unloaded two horse wagons
9	Loaded four horse wagons
4	Unloaded four horse wagons
96	Saddle horses
1	Motor runabouts

- Contract required Alexandria County to repair the roads to “good shape” prior to the start of the maintenance program.
  - Repairs consisted of shaping parts of the road with a scraping grader, clearing and widening the ditches, clearing culverts, and the application of gravel to portions of Columbia Turnpike.
  - Cost of repairs was \$700.
- Object of experimental work was to demonstrate the results that may be obtained on country earth roads by continuous maintenance under a patrol system.
  - Patrolman worked 8:00 am till 4:30 pm. The patrolman supplied a horse, cart, and small tools, and was supplied with a road-drag built of plank.
    - After a rainfall, patrolman was required to drag the road.
- Results of earth road experiments:
  - Road-drag greatly improved the daily condition of the road allowing for a smooth and comfortable travel.
  - Width of road over 24 feet is cost prohibitive due to maintenance costs.
  - Presence of patrolmen immediately following storms saves money in repair costs.
    - Removal of loose stones
    - Maintenance of drainage components

- Presence of old cobblestones and poorly consolidated gravel is an impediment to the dragging of roads. Stones must be removed prior to dragging.
- Section of Columbia Pike that was graveled has responded particularly well to maintenance system and remains in perfect condition since graveling was completed. (Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1913)
- Maintenance was discontinued on a portion of Columbia Pike since it was exceedingly rough after county repair due to years of improper maintenance and the dumping of cobblestone. (Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1913)

# Columbia Turnpike Experiments, 1921

## Pavement Experiments

- Agriculture Appropriation Bill. Hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives, December 14, 1917.
  - “During the present fiscal year surveys have been made and plans and specifications prepared for the experimental construction of a road in Alexandria County, Virginia loyally known as the Columbia Pike from the Mount Vernon Avenue experimental road to beyond Barcroft, Virginia a distance of over three miles.”
  - Alexandria County will pay for half of the expense of the construction.
- Experimental concrete road completed in winter of 1921.
  - Consisted of 32 sections of both plain and reinforced concrete. The variations in the sections consisted of changes in thickness, cross-section design, the use of cinders, and the use of various percentage of reinforced steel.
  - Certain sections utilized the use of inverted curbs and center longitudinal joints.
- The Columbia Pike experiments were the first road to have Continuously Reinforced Concrete Pavement (CRCP).
  - CRCP is a type of Portland cement concrete pavement reinforced with steel rebar throughout.
  - In the 1940s and 1950s, states began conducting extensive studies on CRCP.
  - In the 1960s, the Interstate System construction program extensively used CRCP in the construction of roads.
  - Currently, 28,000 miles of CRCP lanes have been constructed in the United States.



11: A modern example of steel rebar in CRCP.

# Arlington County Road Improvements, 1925

## State of County Roads

- In 1922, Arlington County realized that the main roads servicing key communities throughout county were in poor condition.
- Walter K. Handy Plan
  - Project cost \$753,503.
  - 20 miles of Arlington roads
- Columbia Turnpike repaired.
  - The western edge of the present concrete surfacing at Barcroft westward, 1 mile in length.
  - Road specifications:
    - 18 feet wide
    - Concrete pavement

**ARLINGTON ROADS  
IN POOR CONDITION**

Citizens of Clarendon and Other  
Communities Consider  
Issuing Bonds.

**\$500,000 MAY BE REQUIRED**

List of Highways, Improvement of  
Which Is Believed Most  
Necessary.

ARLINGTON CO. BUREAU OF THE POST,  
11 Strickler Avenue, Clarendon, Va.  
Phone Clarendon 267-J-1.

Realizing that the condition of even  
the main roads in Arlington magis-  
terial district, which embraces such  
thickly settled communities as Clar-  
endon, Ballston, Arlington, Barcroft,  
Fort Myer Heights, Lyon Park and  
Aurora Heights, are in a very bad  
condition, a movement is on foot to  
provide funds for repairs. The dis-  
trict is so situated that only a small  
portion of the roadway system is in-  
cluded in the State highway system,  
and therefore the expense for main-  
tenance must be provided by the tax-  
payers. It has been suggested that  
a bond issue of \$500,000 be floated.

12: The Washington Post. October  
14, 1922.

**JUDGE BRENT TO SET  
DAY FOR VOTING ON  
COUNTY ROAD BONDS**

Presentation of Petition Will  
be Made Today by Attor-  
ney John S. Barbour.

**CAMPAIGN EXPECTED  
ON \$753,503 PROJECT**

Alexandria Light and Power  
Co. Plans to Spend \$207,-  
000 on Improvements.

ARLINGTON COUNTY BUREAU.  
OF THE POST.  
Clarendon, Va. Tel. Clar. 600.

With the presentation of the pe-  
tition of the Arlington district good  
roads commission to Judge Samuel  
G. Brent today by Attorney John  
S. Barbour, of Fairfax and Wash-  
ington, asking a date be set for a  
special election, the final campaign  
for good roads in the district be-  
gins.

13: The Washington Post.  
February 26, 1925.

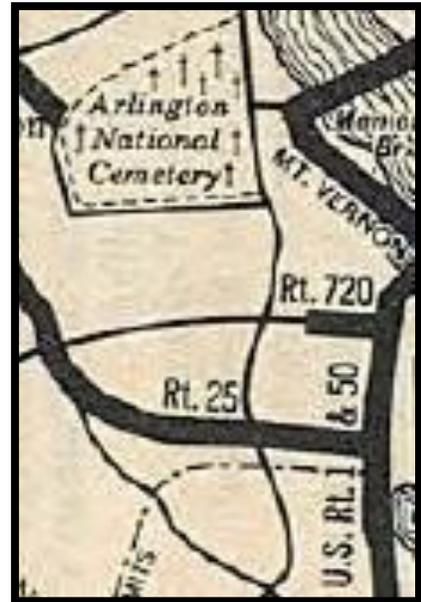
## Columbia Turnpike Becomes a State Route

### State Route 720

- In December 1930, first appearance as VA 720.
- In July 1932, VA 720 extended west from US 1-50 to the Fairfax County line, east of Baileys Cross Road.

### State Route 244

- In July 1933, VA 720 became VA 244 when Virginia renumbered the state routes.
- In October 1935, VA 244 was extended west to VA 236 in Annandale.
- In the 1940s, the east end of VA 244 was truncated to the western loop of VA 27, Washington Boulevard, when the Pentagon was completed.
- In December 1964, VA 244 was re-extended east to its current end point.



14: Initial State Route 720, Columbia Pike.



15: Route 244, Columbia Pike, extension to Fairfax County line.



16: Extension of Route 244, Columbia Pike, to Annandale

# Prominent Structures Along Columbia Turnpike

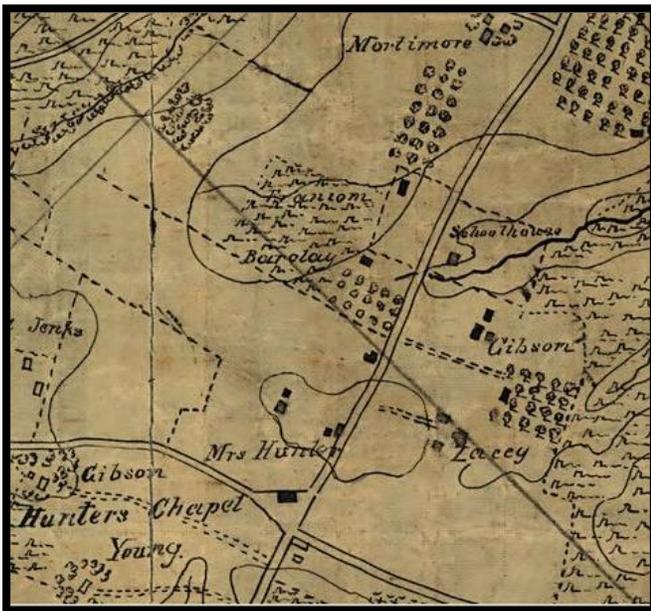
## Early Churches

### ➤ Hunter's Chapel

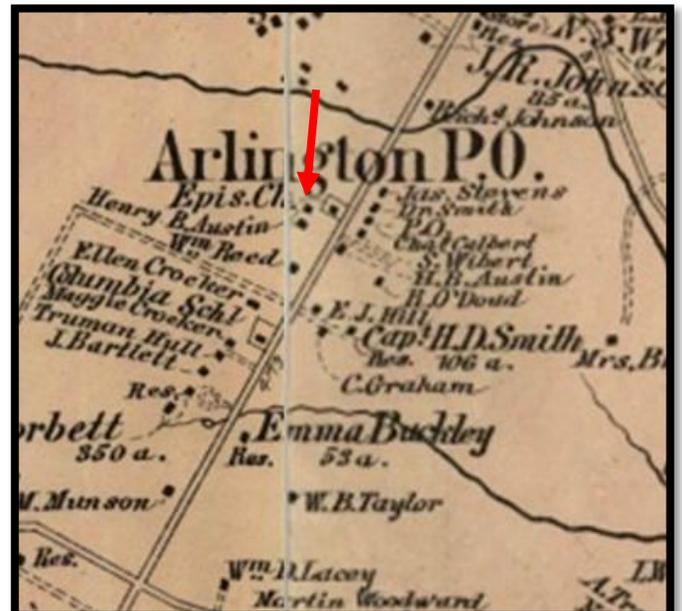
“In the late 1850s, Louisa Hunter gave land on the northeast corner of the Crossroads to a Methodist Church known as Hunter's Chapel. During the civil war, Federal troops dismantled the church for its building materials after using the structure as a picket post, blockhouse, commissary, and stable. Following the Civil War, the congregation used other buildings in this area. Today's successor, Arlington Methodist Church, stands two blocks to the north on Glebe Road.”

### ➤ Trinity Church/Episcopal Church

- One of the earliest churches along Columbia Pike. The Arlington Chapel, circa 1825, was erected on the Arlington estate by George Washington Parke Custis. The history of the church's use is unclear as to whether it was built for the Custis family or the family's slaves.
- Union soldiers burned the original structure at the onset of the Civil War.
- The congregation reestablished services in abandoned Union barracks after the end of the war.
- Congregation situated at several locations and structures along Columbia Pike until present building constructed in 1957.



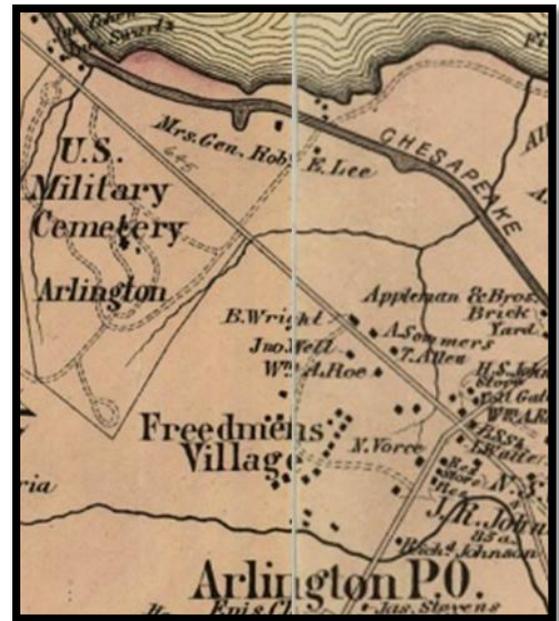
17: Hunter's Chapel, intersection of South Glebe Road and Columbia Pike. Detailed map of part of Virginia from Alexandria to the Potomac River above Washington, D.C., circa 1860.



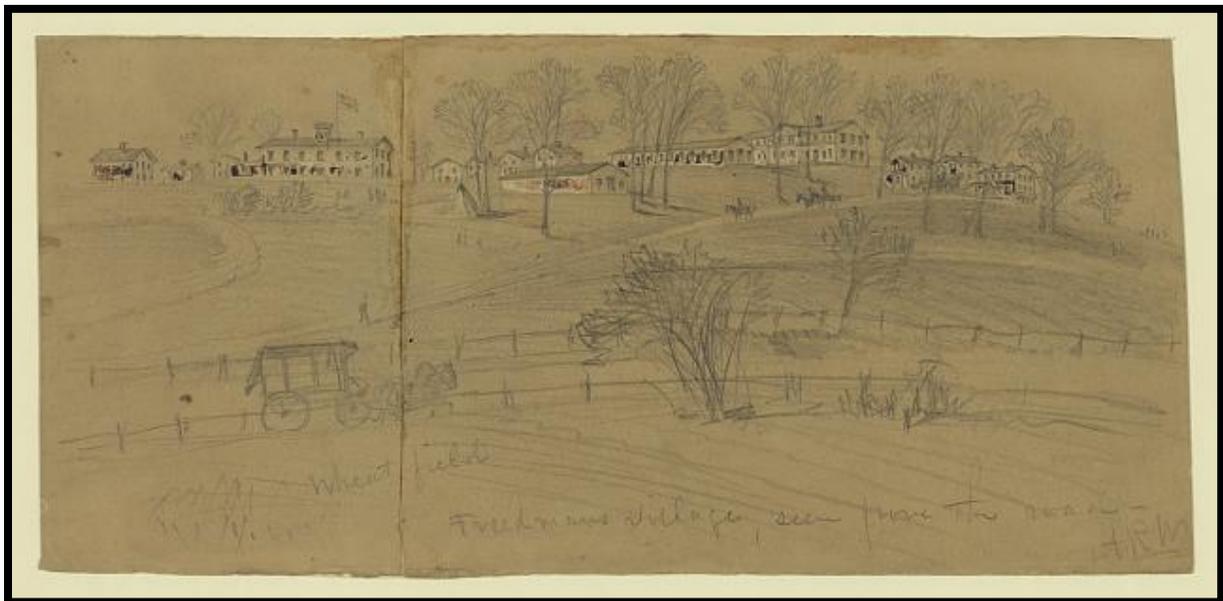
18: Episcopal Church (Trinity Church) is noted on map. Alexandria County, Virginia, 1878.

## Freedman's Village, 1863

- April 16, 1862, Congress passes legislation freeing all slaves in the District of Columbia.
- Freed slaves searched for work and shelter. Due to poor condition and overcrowding in Washington, D.C. camps, the Union army sought locations for larger African-American community.
- Arlington Estate selected due to its proximity to Washington D.C. and occupation by the Union army.
  - In addition, the location was symbolic in that the first freed African-American community was on the site of Robert E. Lee's former estate.
  - Intended to be a model community for freed slaves.
- Design of the village, 1865.
  - Fifty-five residences
  - Hospital
  - Kitchen/mess hall
  - School house
  - Laundry
  - Old people's home
- War Department intended for the village to be a temporary refuge where freed African-Americans would learn vocational skills before finding a permanent home. However, the village turned into a more permanent settlement with several thousand residents.
- In 1900, the United States government evicted and disbanded Freedman's Village.



19: Freedman's Village. Alexandria County, Virginia, 1878.



20: Freedman's Village, seen from the road. Alfred R. Waud Collection, 1864.

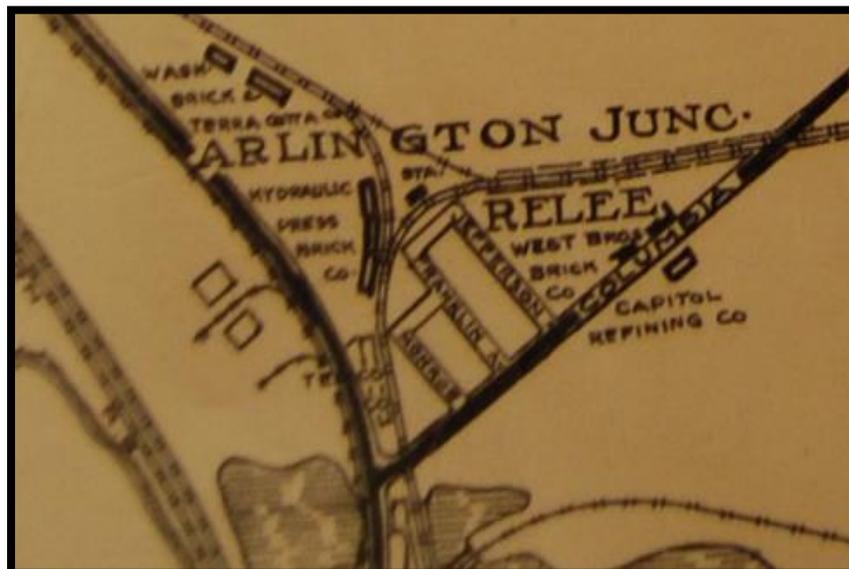
## Brick Yards, 1837-1930

- In the 1820s, James Breach established a brick plant bordering Columbia Pike.
- In 1878, multiple brick yards are located on the east end of Columbia Pike.
  - Appleman & Bros. Brick Yard, Potomac Brick Works, Smitson Brick Yard, Adamantine Brick Company.



21: Brick Yards on the east end of Columbia Pike. Alexandria County, 1878.

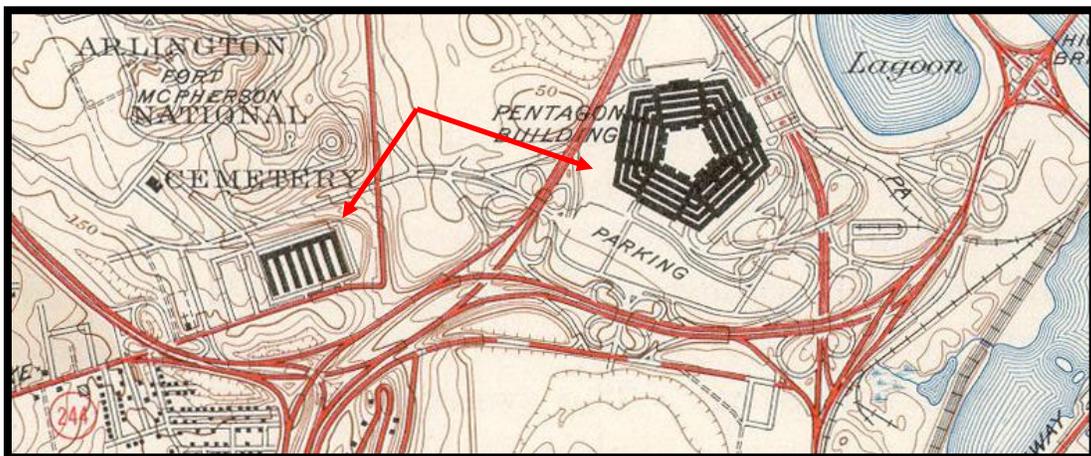
- In 1931, multiple brick yards and other industries are still evident on Columbia Pike.
  - Washington Brick and Terra Cotta Company, and Hydraulic Press Brick Company, West Brothers Brick Company.
  - In the 1940s, the construction of the Pentagon razed listed industries.



22: Brick yards on the east end of Columbia Pike. Arlington County, Virginia. Streets, Subdivisions, and House Numbers, 1931.

## Military Structures along Columbia Pike

- Arlington Naval Radio Station
  - In 1913, Navy built three radio towers on the south end of Fort Myer.
  - Two radio towers were 450 feet tall. The third tower was 600 feet tall.
    - The tallest of the towers was 45 feet taller than Washington Monument.
    - Also, the towers were positioned on a ridge 200 feet above the Washington Monument.
  - Site of first trans-Atlantic communication.
    - Arlington, Virginia to Paris, France
  - In the 1941, the three towers were dismantled due to safety issues with incoming planes to the newly constructed Washington National Airport.
- Navy Annex, Federal Office Building No. 2
  - Located on Columbia Pike, 1 mile from the Pentagon.
  - Constructed in 1941.
- Pentagon
  - Headquarters of the US Defense Department.
  - Construction finished in 1943. The structure only took sixteen months to build.
  - “Building is surrounded by 320 acres of land, has 30 miles of approach roads and cloverleaves...”
  - Dramatic impact on the east end of Columbia Pike. Historic districts and industries were lost during the construction of the building.



23: Pentagon and Navy Annex. USGS map, 1945.

## Development along Columbia Turnpike

### Antebellum

1669	Robert Howson acquires 6,000 acres of land.
1700	Howson sells land to Alexander.
1810	Columbia Turnpike legislation passes.
1825-1850	Scattered farm land dominates views from the turnpike.
	Construction of brick yards on east end of turnpike.
1850s	Land owners include Hunter, Jenks, Munson, Corbett, and Young families. New York families, such as Sewell Corbett, settle along Columbia Turnpike due to its mild climate, rural setting, proximity to Washington, D.C., and increasing land values with the expectation of passenger train service.
	Columbia School house is built.
1859	Hunter Chapel is built.
1860	W & O Railroad offers steam passenger train service at Arlington Mills station (Barcroft).

### Civil War

1861	Arlington House is occupied by Union Army. Fort Albany and Forty Runyon are built to protect Columbia Turnpike and Long Bridge.
1861-1862	Hunter Chapel is destroyed by Union soldiers.
1863	Freedman's Village is built. After leaving the community, freed African-Americans settle in nearby areas including Nauck, Johnson's Hill, East Arlington, Queen City, and South Washington.
1865	Property owners return to decimated farms, razed buildings, and impaired infrastructure.

### Post Civil War to 1910

1870-1880	Land still largely rural. Dwellings are concentrated along the turnpike. At the intersection of Columbia Turnpike and Georgetown-Alexandria Turnpike, there is a community of houses, two stores, a post office, and a black smith. The land around Episcopal (Trinity Church) and Columbia School contains another concentration of residencies.
1886	The opening of the toll free Aqueduct Bridge spurrs development in the county.
1890-1910	Washington-Virginia Railroad offers first electric passenger train service. Streetcars ran from Roslyn to Nauck, Rosslyn to Falls Church, and Mount Vernon to Washington D.C. The railroad offers service at Columbia Station.
	Real estate developers and investors in streetcar companies promote new neighborhoods built along rail tracks
	Alexandria County is marketed as a commuter suburb with the pleasure of county life.
1900	Arlington experimental farm is built.
1903	Barcroft is subdivided.

**1910 – 1940**

1913	Arlington Naval Radio Station is built.
1919	Bus line along Columbia turnpike to Washington, D.C.
1924	Columbia Quick Lunch is built; restaurant operates for over 50 years.
1930	Patrick Henry School is built.

**1940-1950**

1940	Westmont Shopping center is built.
1941	Navy Annex is built
	Construction on the Pentagon is started.
1942	Fillmore Garden Apartments is built.
1945	Walter Reed Garnder Apartments is built.
1949	Fillmore Garden Shopping Center opens.

## Bibliography

- “\$326,000 Road Bond Issue Planned for Arlington County.” *The Washington Post*. July 2, 1924. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- “Arlington Accepts Tentative Additions to Road Schedule.” *The Washington Post*. July 27, 1924. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- “Arlington District to get New Roads in Building Program.” *The Washington Post*. September 7, 1924. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- “Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.” *National Park Service*. <http://www.nps.gov> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- “Arlington Roads in Poor Condition.” *The Washington Post*. October 14, 1922. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- Barron, James. “Then & Now, A Pictorial History of Northern Virginia: Death Trap Still There.” *Northern Virginia Sun*. January 22, 1974.
- Branagan, Michael F. “Two Hundred Years of Transportation: Historic Columbia Pike in 2008: A Preservation Plan.” Preservation Planning, University of Virginia, 1988.
- Breed, Eltinge. “The Design, Construction and Maintenance of Reinforced Concrete Pavement.” *Good Roads* 68, no.6 (July 1925): 950.
- Bunting-Hallock, Jennifer. “National Register Nomination: Harry W. Gray House.” *United States Department on the Interior*. (May 2003).
- Carter, Edward C., II. *Benjamin Henry Latrobe and Public Works: Professionalism, Private Interests, and Public Policy in the Age of Jefferson*. Washington, D.C.: Public Works Historical Society, 1976.
- Collins, Sara. “Columbia Pike – Some History.” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 9, no. 1 (1989): 21-38.
- Columbia Heights Civic Association. “Neighborhood Conservation Plan, Appendix A: A History of Arlington County and Columbia Heights.” (May 16, 2004). <http://www.on-the-pike.com> (accessed April 04, 2010).
- Dalette, Norbert. *Concrete Pavement, Design, Construction and Performance*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2008.
- Department of Agriculture. *Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture For the Year Ended June 30, 1912*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913.

- Department of Agriculture. *Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture For the Year Ended June 30, 1913*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914.
- “Design of Continuously Reinforced Concrete Pavements Using Glass Fiber Reinforced Polymer Rebars.” *U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration*. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- “Emancipation at Arlington: Freedman’s Village, 1863.” *National Park Service*. <http://www.nps.gov> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- Froehlig, Adam and Roberson, Mike. “The Virginia Highways Project.” <http://www.vahighways.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- Formwalt, Lee. “Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the Development of Transportation in the District of Columbia, 1802-1817.” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 50 (1980):36-66.
- Goldback, A.T. “What the Arlington investigations are showing.” *Good Roads* 64, no. 8 (May 2, 1923): 163-167.
- Harwood, Herbert. *Rails to the Blue Ridge: The Washington and Old Dominion Railroad, 1847-1968*. Washington, D.C.: Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, 2009.
- House of Representatives of the United States. “Agriculture Appropriation Bill, Hearings before the Committee on Agriculture.” 65<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session. (December 15, 1917).
- Hunter, Robert Fleming. “The Turnpike Movement in Virginia, 1816-1860.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 69, no. 3 (July 1961): 278-289.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Turnpike Construction in Antebellum Virginia.” *Technology and Culture* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1963): 177-200.
- “Judge Brent to Set Day for Voting on County Road Bonds.” *The Washington Post*. February 26, 1925. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).
- Lee, Dorothy Ellis. *A History of Arlington County, Virginia*. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1946.
- Majewski, John. “Economy, Community, and Law: The Turnpike Movement in New York, 1797-1845.” *Law & Society* 26, no. 13 (1992): 469-512.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Who Financed the Transportation Revolution? Regional Divergence and Internal Improvements in Antebellum Pennsylvania and Virginia.” *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 4 (December 1996): 763-78.
- Merriken, John E. *Old Dominion Trolley Too: A History of the Mount Vernon Line*. Washington D.C.:L.O. King, JR, 1987.

“Member of Old Area Family.” *The Washington Post*. August 1, 1972.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).

Minutes of the United States Court of the District of Columbia, 1801-1863. June 6, 1810.  
National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Netheron, Nan and Netheron Ross. *Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History*. Norfolk, Virginia: Donning Company Publishing, 1987.

Paulin, Charles. “Alexandria County in 1861.” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 28 (1926):107-131.

Pawlett, Nathaniel Mason. *A Brief History of the Roads of Virginia 1607-1840*. Charlottesville: Virginia Highway and Transportation Research Council, 1977.

Rose, Cornelia Bruere. “The Map of Arlington in 1878 – People and Places.” *Arlington Historical Society Magazine* 2, no. 2 (1962).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Arlington County, Virginia: A History*. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington Historical Society, 1976.

Senate of the United States. “The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred S.R. 73, for the relief of the Columbia Turnpike Company.” 40<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, No. 153. (July 2, 1868).

Senate of the United States. “The Committee on District of Columbia, to whom was referred the memorial of sundry citizens of the county and city of Washington, in the district, and the adjoining county of Maryland, as also the resolution of the Legislature of the State of Maryland on the same subject, report.” 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, No. 176. (April 12, 1852).

“Short Road to Arlington.” *The Washington Post*. March 30, 1911.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed April 4, 2010).

Statutes at Large of the United States. “An Act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of this Government of the United States.” 1<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Chapter 28. (July 16, 1790): 130.

Statutes at Large of the United States. “An act to incorporate a company for making certain turnpike roads in the District of Columbia.” 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Chapter 23, 26. (April 20, 1810): 570.

Templeman, Elanor Lee. *Arlington House: Vignettes of a Virginia County*. Arlington: Author Published, 1976.

Waud, Alfred. "Freemens Village Seen from the Road." *Library of Congress*.  
<http://www.loc.gov> (accessed April 4, 2010).

Williams, Ames. *Washington & Old Dominion Railroad: 1847-1968*. Virginia: Arlington Historical Society, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Washington and Old Dominion Railroad." *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 66/68 (1966/1968): 231-276.

