

Archaic Roads in Clarke County

An Historical Tour with Matthew Mackay-Smith

I. OVER THE BENT—WHY CLARKE COUNTY WAS THE VIRGINIA GATEWAY TO THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY



King's Road over Ashby's Bent



King's Road through "seductive" farmland



Fine example of a 'bent' in open farmland near Ashby's Gap

A. LAND FACTORS

1. "Impassable" ridge
2. Seductive farmland, much prairie
3. Mighty river for transporting of commerce, water power
4. Major ancient route—The Great Road (Rt. 11 north/south)
5. Open, mature mixed forest, +/-30% prairie

B. PEOPLE FACTORS

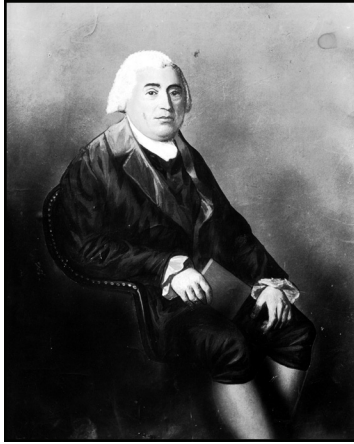
1. Proprietary case "settled"
2. Oligarch speculators must RIDE over to Stake claims to best land
3. Restless Pennsylvanians pressing down Great Road settling back country

C. EQUESTRIAN DESIDERATA

1. Ride with comfort and safety
2. Direct, unobstructed route
3. Avoid low ground/drainways, avoid paralleling streams, avoid muddy stream crossings
4. Springs—potable water
5. Grazing—not widely available east of Blue Ridge



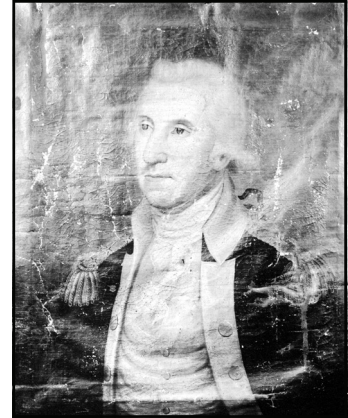
Old stone survey marker near the Berryville water tower



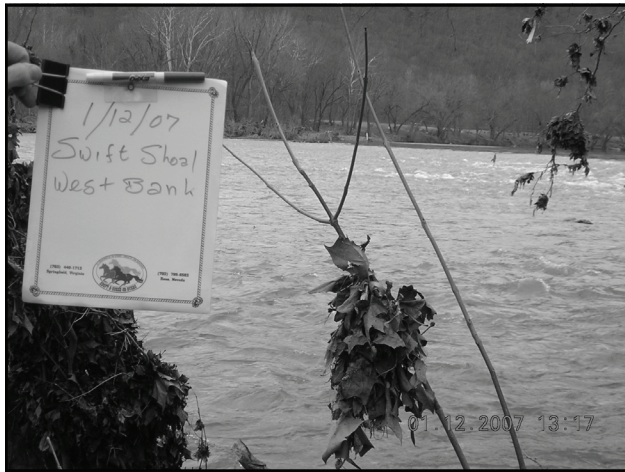
Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax

II. FAMOUS NAMES

- A. Lord Fairfax
- B. George Washington



George Washington



Swift Shoals on the Shenandoah

III. ON THE GROUND

- A. Ashby's Bent
- B. Smaller Bents
- C. Buffalo trails—local herd
- D. Swift Shoals
- E. Other Fords—pack/pedestrian, wagon, light ferries
- F. Water Courses (* = spring on map)
- G. Ridges, Soils, Terrains

IV. MAP OF ROADS

- A. "Kings Road"—runs east-west to Great Road, perpendicular to river
- B. "Commerce Road"—runs north-south and connects farms and industry to river



King's Road heading east from Bethel Church



A raised berm (where young trees are growing) and rocks to the side of the berm indicates where Commerce Road ran through these woods.