

Historic District

The Spotsylvania Court House District was designated a Virginia Historic Landmark and listed in The National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Three major Civil War battles occurred in Spotsylvania County, and it was the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House which marked the beginning of the fall of the Confederacy.

Spotsylvania Court House was the scene of one of the bloodiest engagements of the war. Because of its strategic importance, the intersection of Routes 613 and 208 controlled the shortest route to Richmond. Lee used the Spotswood Inn as an observation point and Berea Christian Church was used as a hospital during the fighting.

The District represents important historical periods in Spotsylvania County, from the building of the Spotswood Inn, 1838, through the Civil War, to serving as the present location of the Spotsylvania Government Center.

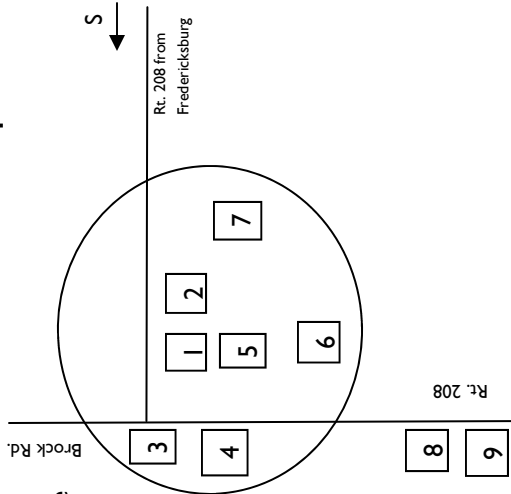


The Community

Following the Civil War, the Community located around the Courthouse continued to function, with activities centered around the old tavern, two small churches and several smaller dwellings. It was not until the last years of the 19th century that any substantial building activity took place. An 1895 directory indicates the Clerk of Court, J.P.H. Crismond, Sheriff T.A. Harris, tavern and storekeeper T.H. Harris, and the local Commonwealth's Attorney were the only full-time residents of Spotsylvania Court House. An 1887 picture of the tavern and Courthouse confirms written evidence that the Courthouse seat was then sparsely populated. By 1905, several substantial dwellings had been added to the tax rolls including the Crismond Residence, the Pendelton House (now the Christ Church Education building) and the T.H. Harris House, just outside of the Courthouse.



Spotsylvania Court House Historic District Map



1. Spotsylvania County Courthouse
2. WPA Building
3. Spotswood Inn
4. Spotsylvania County Museum
5. Spotsylvania Jail 1855
6. Christ Episcopal Church
7. Confederate Cemetery
8. One Room School
9. Zion United Methodist Church

Spotsylvania County Visitors Center

Spotsylvania County Visitors Center-Massaponax
4704 Southpoint Parkway
Fredericksburg, VA 22407
540-507-7090
1-877-515-6197



Spotsylvania County
Department of Economic Development
and Tourism
10304 Spotsylvania Ave., Suite 440
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
540-507-7210
www.spotsylvania.org

Spotsylvania Court House

Historic District

"Crossroads of the Civil War"



Spotsylvania Courthouse



The court system of Spotsylvania was first established at Germanna in 1722; moved to Fredericksburg in 1732; to the "Old Courthouse" in 1778; and to its present site in 1839. Lewis Rawlings, owner of the Tavern, gave the County ten acres for the present Courthouse green. The team of Malcolm Crawford, carpenter and William Phillips, brick-mason, who helped Thomas Jefferson build the University of Virginia, won the contract and completed the Courthouse in 1840.

The battering sustained by the Courthouse during the Civil War necessitated major repairs in 1870. By 1900, the building was declared unsafe; subsequently, a new, enlarged building of similar design was constructed on the site, using cream brick instead of red. The original Doric columns were salvaged and put in place. In 1964, the wing on the southwest corner was added to house government offices.

Official County records were buried during the Civil War, and with the exception of three books which were damaged by water, the records are complete, dating from the founding of the County in 1720-1721.



Visit our Website: www.spotsylvania.org

Spotswood Inn

This imposing building, built by Samuel Alsop in 1838, was a popular stopping place since it was ideally situated on the well-traveled road from Fredericksburg to Richmond and Williamsburg. It was noted for its hospitality and delicious meals.

At one time, there was a large stone in front of the Inn. It had been used by the Indians to grind their corn, and has since been moved to the Dabney Farm, the home of the late John R. Alrich.

In its past history, it has served as a school, post office, tavern and during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, as headquarters for General Jubal Early. It was also an observation point for General Robert E. Lee during this battle.



WPA Building

(Adjacent to the Courthouse)

This one story masonry building adjacent to the east side of the historic courthouse was a Works Projects Administration (WPA) project built during the 1930's. The WPA was created in 1935 by the Executive Order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide jobs to citizens unemployed during the "Great Depression" of the 1930's.

The moderate size of the building, which was used as the 20th century offices for the Voter Registrar, Juvenile Court and most recently as the County Administrator's offices, allowed the courthouse to be the focal point of the county seat. The plan of small buildings around a larger and sometimes elaborately designed courthouse preserved the rural village settings.

NOTE: The WPA was Works Progress Administration when it was started in 1935 and then the name changed to Works Projects Administration in 1939 when it became part of the Federal Works Agency.



Spotsylvania Jail 1855

The masonry Jail that visitors see today was built in 1855 after the 1839 Jail, positioned closer to the Courthouse, burned in 1853. Citizens, for convenience, wanted a Courthouse and Jail located close to the center of the County. Ten acres conveyed to Spotsylvania by tavern owner Lewis Rawlings, would allow for expansion of government and citizen facilities.

The exterior brick walls are two feet thick while interior cell walls are lined with thick oak planks. A front iron door grate allowed for air circulation in the warm weather while a stockade door could be closed when necessary. Original iron bars on the windows reportedly were removed in the early 1940s for war materials. In 2004, bars were replicated and installed along with the sign over the door admonishing 'no talking to prisoners.'

After the Chancellorsville Battle in 1863, the Courthouse green and Jail yard were holding areas for Union prisoners. The Jail ceased to be a prison in 1943 but was leased to Rural Telephones of Milford and then renovated for County offices. After being used for storage for many years, the Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation, Inc. (SPFI) in 1998 began the process of an adaptive reuse as a Jail Museum.



Confederate Cemetery

In this cemetery rest some 600 Confederate soldiers who were killed on the Civil War battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. They came from ten Confederate States, to fight for the Confederate cause here in Virginia. One-third of the Battles in the Civil War were fought in this state, and one-third of those battles were fought in Spotsylvania County.

The Spotsylvania Museum has a roster of Confederate veterans buried in this cemetery, as well as a list of other burials here.



Christ Episcopal Church

Christ Episcopal Church was constructed in 1841. It is believed that clay, from what is now a field at Robert E. Lee Elementary School, was used for the bricks. The Church was consecrated that same year by the Right Reverend Bishop More.

Christ Church served as a hospital during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, and still bears scars received from shelling during the battle.

After an Episcopal congregation in Mattaponi dissolved, the church's large lectern Bible (King James Version), dated 1754, was brought to Christ Church. It is now prominently displayed as a church treasure.

This little church is exceptionally well preserved, and is a fine example of Virginia's late Federal period architecture.



Spotsylvania County Museum

(Old Berea Christian Church)

The present Old Berea Christian Church was built in 1856 under the supervision of Samuel Alsop who, even though he was 81, was considered one of the foremost builders of that time. This little church is a fine example of Virginia's Gothic Revival period architecture, and is exceptionally well preserved.

When the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House was fought in 1864, Berea was scarred by shots and shells. One large shell passed through one of the front doors and lodged in the wall. The cemetery, located in the rear, dates back to the pre-Civil War period.

In October, 1987, the Research Library was formally dedicated as The Frances L.N. Waller Research Library to honor Mrs. Waller, for her years of devotion to the Museum and her dedication to the preservation of Spotsylvania County's heritage. The Museum is under the direction of the Spotsylvania Historical Association, Inc.



Don't forget to visit these two sites just outside of the District...

Zion United Methodist

Zion United Methodist Church still stands near the road called "The Road To Travelers Rest" and at or near the spot that once was called "Liberty Meeting House". Spotsylvania County records state that on November 20, 1850, a Liberty Class of at least twelve persons was organized and may have met in the original "Liberty Meeting House". By 1859 the class had grown into a church of 40 members and the church was erected under the name, Liberty Methodist Episcopal Church South and changed in 1861 to Zion.

Zion United Methodist Church was used as a field hospital, look-out post, and temporary command post. General Robert E. Lee met with General A.P. Hill at his temporary command post at Zion. General Stonewall Jackson was carried past here on his way to Guinea's Station.

Zion United Methodist Church still serves the community as a place for worship.



(Portions of this information was taken from the pamphlet: "On the Road to Travelers Rest" by Mr. Bob Weeks.)

One Room School

This one-room school is typical of the schools scattered throughout the County beginning in 1870 with the establishment of the public education system. This 1930s school for African-American children was originally located on Stubbs Bridge Road and moved to its present location at Spotsylvania Court House in 1999.

This modest building remains largely unchanged. Its wood clapboard walls enclose an entry vestibule, a small cloakroom, and a single classroom where children in grades 1-7 were taught. The building contained no plumbing and was not wired for electricity. A cast iron stove was the only heat source. In its original rural setting, the schoolyard included an outhouse and a dusty play lot.

The one-room school was closed by the School Board in 1943.

