

National Conservation Training Center

Historic Trail Guide

A Prehistory

There are several known prehistoric sites located on the NCTC property. These are found primarily in the floodplain and on the bluffs along the Potomac River. Several springheads on the property would have been a significant factor in the choosing of a site by prehistoric cultures, as well as the abundance of game and the importance of the river to the social aspects of trade for cultures in this region.



From artifacts recovered, it has been determined that occupation by prehistoric cultures dates from the Late Archaic to the Late Woodland periods (5000 B.C. - 1300 A.D.). Lithic tool materials recovered from these sites include rhyolite, chert, quartz, and chalcedony. Fire cracked rocks and pottery, tempered with sand and crushed quartzite, were also found.

B Riverview: Lower Complex

The lower section of this farm includes the remnants of a springhouse and outbuildings built to take advantage of the water trickling from the base of the hill. The western boundary of "Riverview Farm" had been deliberately placed by Lord Fairfax's surveyor in the 1750's in order to provide adjacent property owners mutual access to the water; a regional settlement strategy that allowed a greater number of families to own their own farms. In the 1860 census, the owner at the time, James Markell, listed himself as a tanner, suggesting another possible use of the spring. By then he was married to Elizabeth, the second of two Swearingen sisters he had taken to the altar. While a partner in a mercantile business in Shepherdstown in the early 1840's, he first married Almira Swearingen and they had a daughter Betty. After the death of his first wife and later his daughter, he served two terms as the mayor of Shepherdstown, then married Elizabeth Swearingen in 1850 and moved to Riverview Farm. They had four daughters, and used several slaves and a hired hand to help run the farm. They were forced to sell the farm after the Civil War.



Native Americans, including the Shawnee, Delaware, and Catawba tribes, used the area primarily for occasional seasonal subsistence with no permanent village sites nearby.

C Riverview: Upper Complex

This farm was developed in the early 1800's by Van Swearingen, the grandson and namesake of Col. Van Swearingen, on land that had been in the family since 1758. In 1807 Van purchased the property from his father Hezekiah, a Revolutionary War veteran, who owned the adjacent farm to the south; Hezekiah had inherited what became known as Riverview Farm after his father's death in 1788. Van and his wife Elizabeth had five children, and eventually owned about 20 slaves who tended the household, orchards, grain fields, and farm animals, including cattle, sheep, horses, and hogs. After Van's death in 1837, his children sold off their inherited portions of the farm between 1838 and 1869. The large house and remaining

farm buildings were torn down in 1984, the last tenants having lived there in the 1950s. The remaining house foundation is located on a hill overlooking the floodplain of the Potomac River; some 50 ft. above the lower section of the farm.



D Springwood

The magnificent stone house at Springwood was built about 1759 by Col. Van Swearingen, a slave-owning farmer, sheriff and militia leader originally from Maryland; this was his second family home in the area. He acquired the land around Springwood in 1756 from Peter Beller, a German shoemaker; about 25 years after the first European settlement of the area, and lived there until his death in 1788. Two of his teenage grandsons inherited the property in 1796, who then sold it to Abraham Shepherd, son of the founder of Shepherdstown. The Shepherd family, some of whom became wealthy in the New Orleans shipping trade, owned this property and much of the surrounding area for the next hundred years, importing and raising thoroughbred horses and other blooded livestock from Europe and Great Britain. The Shepherds added an ell to the house in the 1820's. Springwood and Riverview Farm, and an adjacent parcel to the east were re-combined in the early 1940's by Dr. N.B. Hendrix, a surgeon from Martinsburg whose family has lived in the house until the present day. This is now the private estate of Mrs. Jessie Hendrix, whose late husband, Captain Charles N.G. Hendrix, was a noted World War II submariner.

The magnificent stone house at Springwood was built about 1759.



Participants in the Bee Line March embroidered their homespun hunting shirts with the phrase "Liberty or Death," added bucktails to their hats and tomahawks to their belts, and waited in a local camp several weeks for their rifles to arrive.

E Historic Shepherdstown

Two European cultural groups settled this area in the late 1720's and early 1730's. German immigrants traveling the trails south out of Pennsylvania crossed the Potomac at "Old Packhorse Ford" and, together with several families from the Monocacy River settlements in Maryland, began claiming land around the springs, creeks, wetlands and bottomlands on the Virginia side of the Potomac.

Thomas Shepherd, one of the early settlers from the Monocacy River valley, incorporated the town of Mecklenburg in 1762 on land he had first settled and patented in 1734. Prior names for the town site had included "Pack

Horse Ford," in reference to a river crossing just downstream that had long been used by Native Americans, and "Swearingen's Ferry," named for Thomas Swearingen's ferry business that began in 1755.

Thomas Shepherd and his wife Elizabeth first began selling town lots in the 1750's during the French and Indian War. The Shepherds with their nine children also ran a grist mill, saw mill, and various farming operations, and tried unsuccessfully to acquire the Swearingen Ferry operation across the Potomac. After Thomas's death in 1776, administration of the town passed to his son Abraham Shepherd, who at the time was a captain in the Continental Army fighting in the American Revolution. The town's name was officially changed to "Shepherdstown" in 1798, which was contracted to Shepherdstown after the Civil War.



R.D. Shepherd, son of Abraham Shepherd, became wealthy in New Orleans shipping trade.

At the start of the American Revolution, Mecklenburg and its outlying vicinity quickly raised a company of riflemen. One of the volunteers was Josiah Swearingen, who grew up at Springwood and would inherit it upon his father's death, and another was Abraham Shepherd, a later owner of Springwood, who was chosen as one of the lieutenants of the company. It was from Mecklenburg that the famous "Bee Line" March to reinforce the revolutionary troops near Boston, Massachusetts began; the group marched over 600 miles in 24 days.

The development and construction of the C&O Canal in the 1830's helped to increase the prosperity in the region and stimulated population growth.

During the Civil War the town was a busy crossroads for both Union and Confederate troops as they traveled to and from battlefields and skirmishes in Maryland and Pennsylvania. The aftermath of the Battle of Antietam (Sept. 17th, 1862) turned the town and surrounding area into one giant hospital. After the battle a Union attempt to follow the Confederate army across the river led to a bloody repulse at Pack Horse Ford.

By 1890, Shepherdstown was accessible by railroads, the C&O Canal, and several turnpikes. Industries included tourism, tanneries, flourmills, sawmills, a cotton factory and a woolen mill, with limestone



McMurrin Hall at Shepherd College was one of the many buildings used as a hospital during the Civil War.

quarries and cement mills nearby. Agriculture continued to be a mainstay of the region.

F Shepherd's Racetrack

Horse racing has been a popular business and pastime in the Shenandoah Valley for more than 200 years, and evidence of its past popularity can be found near the entrance to NCTC. An oval racetrack, at one time a graded dirt track with banked turns, was probably built for private use in the late 1880's or early 1890's by the Shepherd family as part of their thoroughbred horse farm operations. It was part of Shepherd's Lower Farm, and a young Henry Shepherd who had been given the responsibility for the operation in the late 1880's was described as a "fancy stock breeder." He died soon after, and the property was sold out of the Shepherd family in 1907.



G Swearingen-Bennett burial ground

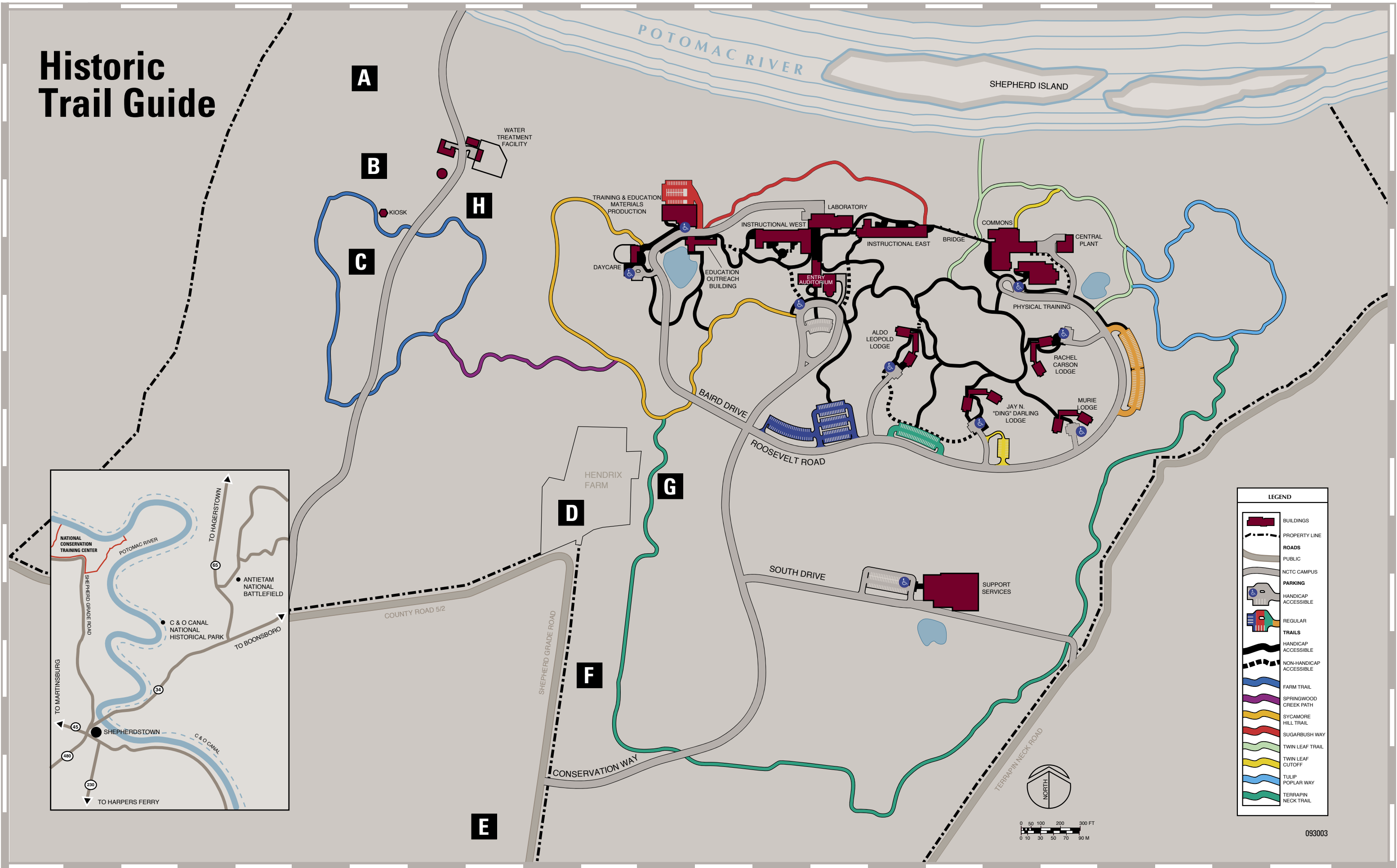
Several members of Col. Van Swearingen's family were interred here from 1779 to 1802. Known burials include Rebecca, wife of Van's son Hezekiah, who died at 26, in 1781, survived by two young children. Van's son Josiah buried his wife Phoebe, 29 years old, here in 1786 and was himself buried here in 1795, leaving four teenage orphans. Van's daughter Lurannah and her husband William Bennett buried here two young daughters, both named Mary, in 1779 and 1790. William Bennett was the last known family member buried here in 1802 before Abraham Shepherd acquired the property. Both William and Josiah were Revolutionary War veterans.

H Swearingen Graveyard

Burials here include Van and Elizabeth Swearingen, the developers of the plantation later known as "Riverview Farm." Elizabeth died in 1828 at 43, after giving birth to a daughter also named Elizabeth, while Van died in 1837. The first burial may have been an infant daughter in 1822, while the last burial was 20 years later when 17-year-old daughter-in-law Margaret, married for a year to their son James, was buried here with her infant in 1842. James then sold the farm he had inherited to his sister Elizabeth, 15, and his 3-year old niece Betty Morgan Markell, for \$10,000.



Historic Trail Guide



| LEGEND | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| | BUILDINGS |
| | PROPERTY LINE |
| | ROADS |
| | PUBLIC |
| | NCTC CAMPUS |
| | PARKING |
| | HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE |
| | REGULAR TRAILS |
| | HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE |
| | NON-HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE |
| | FARM TRAIL |
| | SPRINGWOOD CREEK PATH |
| | SYCAMORE HILL TRAIL |
| | SUGARBUSH WAY |
| | TWIN LEAF TRAIL |
| | TWIN LEAF CUTOFF |
| | TULIP POPLAR WAY |
| | TERRAPIN NECK TRAIL |