REPORT

HISTORIC AND SCENIC ROAD
along the
POTOMAC RIVER IN VIRGINIA

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Washington's Headquarters, Winchester, Va.
Washington occupied this office as a surveyor for Lord Fairfax and as commander during frontier wars.
A REPORT

on a

HISTORIC AND SCENIC ROAD

along the

POTOMAC RIVER

MOUNT VERNON

to

GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE

NATIONAL MONUMENT
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword i
Summary ii

Interpretation

History 1
Natural History 3
Visitor Use Facilities 6
The Connecting Corridor 10

Appendix

A - Historical Sites
B - Biological Report
C - Archeological Report
D - Map
FOREWORD

Social and economic changes are resulting in significant increases in tourism. Great numbers of people are interested in seeing America — its scenic and scientific wonders and its historic shrines. The historic places in scenic Tidewater Virginia where so many great men were born and early colonial development occurred have long been recognized as one of the country's principal visitor attractions.

At present, the places of historic and natural interests between Mount Vernon and Wakefield are accessible over existing public roads. These multiple use roads are unsuitable and unsafe for leisure, sight-seeing driving.

The purpose of this study is to inventory places of visitor interests and suggest a location for a pleasure driving access road to them. It will have controlled access points and be restricted to noncommercial vehicles. This road will pass through a corridor of park-like character which will afford maximum advantage of scenic values of the country traversed. Conversely, it will conceal nonconforming distractions.
SUMMARY

Pleasure driving or tourism has been increasing rapidly in recent years. It may be expected to accelerate still more as the present interstate highway construction program reaches completion. This realization brings into focus the need to recognize and prepare places of national appeal for anticipated public visitation.

Interests of the recreation, historic, and scenic values of the Potomac River valley in Virginia between Washington's home at Mount Vernon and his birthplace at Wakefield have long been recognized as transcending State and local significance. A corridor road or parkway is considered the most appropriate means to see and enjoy this land of Washington and colonial Virginia.

Length of main parkway route: Five counties traversed - 69 miles.

Length of spur roads: Seven points of interest - 17.4 miles.

Length of major water crossings: Eight bays and streams - 10,300 feet.

Thirty-two important historic sites, twenty-six of which possess George Washington associations, have been inventoried. Also identified are twelve places affording potential opportunities for nature, geological, archeological study; picnic, camp ground and active recreation developments.

Selection of sites for overlooks and small rest stops will be determined when the road alignment is studied.
INTERPRETATION

Interpretation of the George Washington Country
Between Mount Vernon and
George Washington's Birthplace at Wakefield

History

One of the principal conservation needs of the present day is to preserve and make available to the public views of, or access to, the many historical landmarks in this area. It is a veritable "Historyland" because of its long history extending from the last half of the 17th century and because of its close association with the Founding Father of our Country, George Washington, and his great co-patriots, Lord Fairfax, George Mason, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Light Horse Harry Lee, James Madison and James Monroe. Chief Justice John Marshall's father and Robert E. Lee also came from this area. So many outstanding statesmen have been produced in this relatively small area it has been aptly called the "Athens of Virginia."

The colonial Virginia planter used the broad rivers and creeks of Tidewater Virginia for his principal means of transportation. Accordingly he built his home near the river. He was aware of the benefits of privacy and esthetic values of the "park" type setting of the British Manor House. Hence he adopted that principle in the design of his new home in America. As a result they are now usually located some distance from public roads. In consequence, the traveller who goes through the Tidewater Country today by automobile over present roads sees little or nothing of the great plantation houses where great men were born, or
lived, and where history was made. Interpretation today is limited to State of Virginia highway markers often out of sight of and miles from the places they interpret.

A few of the great historic places such as Stratford and George Washington's Birthplace are open to the public. Other great houses are open sporadically during Garden Week at the owner's whims. A place open this year may be closed next year for no particular reason at all. All the churches can be visited if you can find them, but usually there is no way to learn their fascinating history.

There is a need to make known the full extent and location of these historical resources and at the same time to afford a view or access to the historic sites themselves. Cooperative arrangements with the private owners could put year-round access or the Garden Week privilege on a more certain and more businesslike basis. There should be markers, trailside explanations at turnouts, exhibits in place at important ruins, free literature at the churches, orientation centers to guide visitors and provide interpretive information. Perhaps even museum exhibits to interpret the rich history of this area are warranted.

In addition to the birthplaces of great men and the plantation houses, there is much other important history to be explained: the story of colonial development in the Tidewater Country, the winning of this land from the Indian, the coming of the Cavaliers, relations between Catholic Maryland (Lord Baltimore) and Protestant Virginia (Leah and Rachel), the Northern Neck Proprietary of the Culpepers and the Fairfax.
growth of the early counties and county government, the Parish system, the power of the Vestry and the Justices in Colonial Virginia, explanation of county names and place names, plantation economy and plantation way of life, the American Revolution, and the Civil War in the Northern Neck, etc.

Mount Vernon, Woodlawn, Gunston Hall, Wakefield and Stratford are open to the public on a year-round basis and have good interpretive programs. The birthplaces of two of the great figures of American history produced by the Northern Neck, James Madison and James Monroe, are comparatively neglected. Some means of providing access to all seven of these key places and stimulating a more effective commemoration of Madison and Monroe is highly desirable.

Appended is a list and brief description of places, important historically, that merit inclusion in the interpretative program.

U.S.G.S. maps showing locations of historic sites, at a scale of 1" = 2000'; are available for review in the Washington office.

Natural History

Natural history interpretation along the Potomac River can be done by roadside signs and exhibits and by self-guiding trails.

Natural history interpretation should relate to the historical values. It should tie together history and nature. This is expressed by the writer of the "Biological Report":

"The atmosphere of Tidewater Virginia of Washington's day was not just of plantations, mansions and distinct historic events, it was
a feeling generated by a vigorous new country
and that vigor was manifested in the vitality
and virility of the land and its wildlife, in
salubrious blending of the man-made and the
natural."

Interpretation should provide an explanation of the general
features of the landscape that are evident from the road. It should
explain geological processes such as deposition, submergence and forma-
tion of river terraces. It should endeavor to visualize the original
vegetative and wildlife resources and should interpret the land and
water resources of Tidewater Virginia in relation to colonial life
here and significant interactions of man and nature during later periods
in history up to the present time. Interpretation for the bulk of the
visitors can be provided by the use of signs and exhibits at turnouts
where landscape features best illustrate this theme.

The "Biological Report" indicates there is a place for self-
guiding trails to points of special interest. Four or five such trails
probably would be an ample number to start with. For example, a trail
into a marsh, one or two to vantage points for observing wildlife, and
one or two for interesting geological features might be considered. At
the beginning of each, starting from a parking area, a sign should give
the name of the trail, its length, or time required, and a brief state-
ment on the features to be seen. Whenever possible interpretation should
relate the trailside features to human affairs.

Neither the roadside interpretation nor the self-guiding trails
would require guide literature. However, a guide booklet would be an
effective supplementary interpretive tool if a convenient outlet for
its sale is provided. Its theme should be the same as that of the
roadside interpretation devices and should be keyed to these, but the
booklet could enlarge upon the information presented by the signs and
exhibits. (See Appendix B - Biologist's Report.)
VISITOR USE FACILITIES

Visitors to the Nation's Capital will be attracted to the historic sites and natural areas along the Potomac River, described in this report, just as they are attracted to Mount Vernon and other memorials to our first President. An attending benefit would be a reduction in the concentration of visitors in the city.

The development of picnic and camping facilities, and possibly other facilities for day and overnight use, in or near some of the areas of interest are proposed because these conveniences will give the visitors more time to see and understand the areas. Boating facilities would provide an opportunity to travel on the historic Potomac River to areas of interest not readily accessible by land in Virginia or to those on the Maryland shore.

The distribution and kind of visitor use facilities for the areas shown in green on the accompanying map might be developed according to the following description:

**Area A.** Located two miles south of Pohick Church. This 470-acre tract is now a private nature preserve and is proposed for a regional park by Fairfax County. It is understood that the nature preserve will be perpetuated under public control and that visitor use facilities will be kept to a minimum consistent with that purpose.

**Area B.** Mason Neck. An area of about 3,000 acres under the ownership of a comparatively few persons. It is for the most part timbered, and fronts on Belmont and Occoquan Bays and the Potomac River.
The area could be developed for camping, picnicking, and boating, and a beach area could be reserved for future swimming. An area of 2,000 or more acres of Mason Neck could be preserved as a natural area, including the large marsh on the southern shore, access to which would be only by foot trails.

**Area C.** This tract is, at this time, an Army Communication Center. If present communication methods are made obsolete or the area otherwise becomes surplus to the needs of the armed services, it should be considered for acquisition for park purposes.

**Area D.** The marsh, tidal flat and open water of Neabsco Creek are valuable as a wildlife refuge. No development is contemplated except perhaps a parking area or two from which visitors may observe the wildlife.

**Area E.** Freestone Point. This area of about 1,400 acres of wooded hill is relatively undeveloped. The area east of the railroad is occupied by an abandoned private recreation development and gambling resort. This portion could be developed into a day use area including picnicking and boating. The area west of the railroad could be reserved for wildlife refuge and possibly a part of it for future camping, if the need arose.

**Area F.** The marsh, tidal flat and open water of Powell Creek are valuable as a wildlife refuge. No development is contemplated except possibly a parking area or two from which visitors could observe the wildlife.
Areas D, E, and F. would be contiguous and thus preserve a natural area of open water, marsh, lowland and wooded hill.

Area G. The marsh, tidal flat and open water of Quantico Creek are valuable as a wildlife refuge. No development is contemplated except possibly a parking area or two from which visitors could observe the wildlife.

Area H. A small area just north of Widewater on the bank of the Potomac that could be developed as a picnic wayside. The area contains historic and geological interest.

Area J. The Aquia Creek—Marlborough Point—Bull Bluff area. The area south of Aquia Creek is, for the most part, a fine wooded bluff. Sufficient bottom land exists for development of picnicking, swimming, and boating facilities. Camping could possibly be provided for on the bluff.

Marlborough Point is suggested for acquisition to be developed for its historical and archeological values.

Bull Bluff could be made accessible by foot trail to develop its natural and palaeontological values and the views available from this prominence.

Area K. Metomkin Point—Chotank area. This area is a bird haven and should be made available to the public only by foot trail to observe the wildlife and view the Potomac River.

Area L. Nomini Cliffs—Currioman Bay area. This area contains such important palaeontological, wildlife, scenic and other
natural values it is recommended for acquisition at this time for preservation.

The Nomini Cliffs area adjoins the Stratford Hall lands which in turn abut on Westmoreland State Park lands. The latter two areas include the westernmost 3 miles of a 5-mile line of bluffs. The addition of the 2-mile stretch of Nomini Cliffs would complete the preservation of this 5-mile bluff unit. The Currioman Bay area extends south and east of Nomini Cliffs.

If agreeable to the administrators of Westmoreland State Park and Stratford Hall, the Nomini Cliffs—Currioman Bay area could be made available to the public by foot trail.

Public preservation at an early date of this area is strongly recommended.

Existing visitor use facilities include the following:

Woodlawn: Snacks.
Prince William Forest Park: Picnicking, camping and hiking.


Westmoreland State Park: Camping, picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking, cabins, restaurant and two refreshment stands.

Stratford Hall: Luncheons are served.
THE CONNECTING CORRIDOR

The previously described areas of historical and natural interest and those suggested for visitor use facilities are accessible over existing roads. These roads vary from high-speed commercial highways to those of a primitive wagon-trail character. There is no continuity. They lack safety devices. Travel over them would be inconvenient, discouraging, and uninteresting, except to a hardy few.

This corridor would be, in its own right, an avenue in which scenery, natural values and cultural objects would be preserved while providing space for safe and leisurely motor travel and access to the larger interests previously described. Such a parkway could be considered an extension of the George Washington Memorial Parkway because of its close proximity to historic homes and areas associated with George Washington.

Only about 14 miles of the Parkway route can be located now on the river bank in four different locations. However, numerous views of the river can be obtained over the coves and tidal flats from the inland portions of the route. Acquisition of the natural areas and those for recreation development would add another 12 miles of Potomac River frontage for public use.

Distribution of the mileage of the main route of the Parkway extension between Mount Vernon and George Washington Birthplace National Monument would be, by counties, as follows:
APPENDIX A

Important Historic Places
Down the Potomac River

George Washington Grist Mill, Fairfax County
to
Stratford Hall, Westmoreland County
APPENDIX A

1. George Washington Cist Mill, (A-W), Fairfax County. A reconstruction of the mill built by George Washington, 1760-1770, on the site of an earlier one built by his father. Flour from this mill supplied the needs of Washington and his neighbors, and the surplus was sent to distant markets.

2. Woodlawn, (A-W), Fairfax County. Georgian Mansion house designed by Dr. William Thornton in 1805 and constructed on the estate which George Washington carved out of Mount Vernon and willed to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis, who married Nellie Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington, on Washington's last birthday, February 22, 1799.

3. Pohick Church, (A-W), Fairfax County, Georgian Church, completed in 1774, renovated in 1874 and 1906. It was George Washington's Church for many years and he was a vestryman here.

4. Gunston Hall, (A-W), Fairfax County. Home of George Mason, author of the Virginia Bill of Rights, which influenced the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the first ten amendments to the Federal Constitution that constitute our Federal Bill of Rights. William Buckland was the architect of the house which was constructed for George Mason, 1755-58.

6. **Bel Air** (A-W), Prince William County. Brick house, built about 1740 by Maj. Charles Ewell; his daughter, Marianne, was married in the house to Dr. James Craik, chief physician and surgeon of the Continental Army and one of the attending physicians at Washington’s death; and 35 years later, in 1795, the builder’s granddaughter was married to Mason Locke Weems, author of the cherry tree story, who is buried on the grounds.

7. **Leeysylvania** (C), Prince William County. Site of the house in which "Light Horse Harry" Lee, father of Robert E. Lee, was born on January 29, 1756; site undisturbed.

8. **Stagecoach Inn** (D), Prince William County. A two-story brick building, constructed before the American Revolution, known first as William’s Ordinary and later as Love’s Tavern; exterior trimmed with stone quoins; adversely altered and now used for commercial purposes.

9. **Aquila Church** (C), Stafford County. The church of Overwharton Parish, constructed in 1757 on the site of an earlier church, and restored in the late nineteenth century; a stone-trimmed brick building of architectural interest.
10. **Marlboro Point** (D), Stafford County. Site of a port town authorized in 1680 and laid out in 1691, serving as county seat of Stafford County for several years; town gradually declined and land was sold to John Mercer in 1747; now a small resort community, the site was excavated by the Smithsonian Institution several years ago.

11. **Accokeek Furnace** (B-W), Stafford County. Site of the iron mine and furnace on Accokeek Run operated by Augustine Washington, father of George, from 1727 until his death in 1743; site now marked by scattered ore and slag heap.

12. **Ferry Farm** (A-W). Stafford County. Modern house on the site of the one in which Washington lived from 1738 to 1743 and again from 1747 to 1748, locale of the Weems cherry tree and silver dollar stories; the upper portion of the farm has been subdivided, and efforts to save the remaining 100 acres appear to be unsuccessful.


15. **Mary Washington House** (A-W), Fredericksburg. Home of Washington's mother from 1773 until her death in 1789, purchased by her son and the scene of their last meeting just before he left to assume the presidency in the latter year; open to the public.

16. "**James Monroe Law Office**" (A-W), Fredericksburg. From 1786-1790, during which time he was practicing law in Fredericksburg, James Monroe owned the lot on which the present building is located. The building itself, of undetermined age, contains a collection of Monroe items and is called the "James Monroe Law Office."

17. **Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park** (C) Spotsylvania County. A 2,500-acre park around Fredericksburg containing portions of the Civil War battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House, the scene of heavy fighting between 1862 and 1864.

18. **Stafford Heights** (C), Stafford County. High ground on the east bank of the Rappahannock River opposite Fredericksburg, important in the battle of December 13, 1862; the most suitable remaining spot for interpretive purposes is Greenway, a modern house on the site of the dwelling which Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, commander of the Union Army, utilized as headquarters during the battle; now a private residence.
19. Eagle's Nest (D-W), King George County. Modern dwelling on the site of a house built by Henry Fitzhugh in the early eighteenth century, on high ground affording a grand view of the Potomac Valley; Washington was a guest here several times; now a private residence not open to visitors.

20. Marmion (A-W), King George County. Built about 1750 by Col. William Fitzhugh, and later owned by Maj. George Washington Lewis, Washington's nephew; a relatively plain exterior, distinguished only by a jerkinhead roof, belies the elegance of the interior; the exquisite parlor paneling has been displayed for years in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

21. Caledon (D), King George County. A later story-and-a-half dwelling on the site of the home of Col. John Alexander, for whom the city of Alexandria was named; now a private residence, not open to visitors.

22. Port Conway, Birthplace of James Madison (A-W), King George County. Undisturbed site of the Conway house, on Rappahannock River, in which the future president was born on March 5, 1752.

23. St. Paul's Church (B-W), King George County. Built about 1750 and restored after the War of 1812, the building is of fine brickwork in the form of a perfect Greek cross; George Washington attended services here several times.
24. **Waterloo, formerly Chotank (B-W), King George County.** Modern dwelling on the site of the boyhood home of Augustine Washington, father of George; Washington himself frequently visited his cousins here during his youth and manhood; John Washington, first cousin to George's grandfather, acquired the estate in the late seventeenth century.

25. **Monrovia, Birthplace of James Monroe (A-W), Westmoreland County.** Undisturbed site of the house in which the future president was born on April 28, 1758; the land was patented by his great-great-grandfather, Andrew Monroe, between 1650 and 1652.

26. **Washington's Mill on Rozier's Creek (B-W), Westmoreland County.** Site of a mill built about 1665 by John Washington, great-grandfather of the president, and property of the Washington family until 1808; site undisturbed.

27. **Leedstown (A-W), Westmoreland County.** A thriving colonial port on the Rappahannock River; scene of the meeting which produced the "Leedstown Resolutions" in 1766, first of the colonial boycotting measures taken in protest against the passage of the Stamp Act; the resolutions, written by Richard Henry Lee, and endorsed by three of George Washington's brothers.
28. **George Washington Birthplace National Monument** (A-W), Westmoreland County. Reconstruction of a colonial-type mansion on the approximate site of the house in which Washington was born on February 22, 1732; land acquired by his father, Augustine Washington, in 1717-1718, and called Wakefield.

29. **Washington’s Mill on Pope’s Creek** (B-W), Westmoreland County. Reconstructed building on the site of a mill built by Nathaniel Pope in 1713 and purchased by George Washington’s father in 1728; the present building, an operating mill, is a rather unsightly structure covered with galvanized iron.

30. **Pope’s Creek Church** (B-W), Westmoreland County. Undisturbed site of church built in 1742 under the influence of Col. Thomas Lee, of Stratford Hall; one of three churches of Washington Parish in the late colonial period, it was attended by the Lees of Stratford Hall and the Washingtons of Wakefield.

31. **Westmoreland State Park** (B-W), Westmoreland County. A 1200-acre tract along the Potomac which was a part of Clift’s Plantation, patented by Col. Nathaniel Pope about 1650, and later of Stratford Hall Plantation, acquired by Col. Thomas Lee from the Pope family in 1716.

32. **Stratford Hall** (A-W), Westmoreland County. Built by Col. Thomas Lee, 1725-30, and seat of the Lee family until 1821; birthplace of the Signers, Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee, of Robert Edward Lee, of three governors of Virginia and other prominent persons; a splendid example of
early Georgian architecture; open to the public under the auspices of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation.

CRITERIA

A. Washington sites in original condition; or buildings or sites of outstanding national, historical, or architectural importance.

B. Washington sites not in original condition; or non-Washington sites or buildings of importance in original condition.

C. Non-Washington sites or buildings not in original condition but essentially unspoiled for interpretive purposes.

D. Minor sites or buildings worthy of National Park Service interpretation or deserving of protection.

NOTE: Sites with Washington associations are indicated by the initial "W" following the category letter.
APPENDIX B

BIOLOGICAL REPORT
THE REGION IN GENERAL

The Geologic Picture

The area treated in this report lies entirely within the Atlantic Coastal Plain and is characterized by the estuarine waters of the Potomac and its tributary rivers and creeks. The submergence of the coastal plain and subsequent drowning of these water courses has resulted in the Potomac's being a wide, tidal river from Washington, D. C. downstream to its confluence with Chesapeake Bay. The tributary waters indent the Potomac shoreline as wide bays near their mouths, thus diversifying the natural scene.

The materials forming the Coastal Plain are all of sedimentary origin and include boulders, gravel, sand clays, silt, diatomaceous earth, sandstones, conglomerates and marls. They range in age from Cretaceous time to the present, and the various formations are marked by unconformities where they join one another.

Through submergences and subsequent re-emergence of portions of the Coastal Plain, a series of terraces may be defined. One lies at about 42 feet above sea level; a second, more recent terrace occurs at 12 feet above sea level. The general topography of this region is characterized by flat-topped ridges, rather deeply incised by streams. These numerous streams are steeply pitched at their headwaters, and subsequent erosion is filling their tidal reaches. Thus marshes and swamps drained by meandering stream
channels lying between steep bluffs are a distinctive feature of the area.

In places, the Potomac has carved sheer bluffs or banks in the Coastal Plain deposits, and though the land back from the river occasionally rises over 200 feet above sea level, the commoner elevation is nearer 100 feet. In the Horsehead Cliffs of Westmoreland State Park and the Nomini Cliffs to the east, nearly vertical exposures of over 200 feet may be seen.

The Forest Cover

It is difficult to envision what the original forest cover of the area was like. Roughly 300 years of settlement have passed, and with their passing the old climax stands have vanished. No virgin forest remains. In spite of lumbering and agriculture, the forest cover of the Potomac shore has remained a continuous—if somewhat moth-eaten—blanket. This has been made possible by the amazing stability of rural conditions in the area.

In a few locations large block ownerships have preserved fine stands of second growth timber which, if preserved and unaltered, might be expected to approximate the climax type for that particular area. Though diverse in composition, the forest is essentially the oak–pine region described by Braun,* falling within the Chesapeake Bay area of the Coastal Plain district.

Of much smaller areal extent than the forests are the marshes and brushy swamps of the bays, creeks, coves and inlets. The marshes range from fresh water near Mount Vernon to brackish at Currioman Bay. Every stream has some marsh associated with it where it enters the Potomac, and considerable marsh fronts on the Potomac along the upper reaches of the study area. Alder, rose, and willow thickets often fringe the landward margin of marshes and may merge into swamp forest of sweet gum, red maple, willow oak and other species.

The Wildlife Resources

Difficult as it may be to comprehend today, Chesapeake Bay and the surrounding land was once one of the great wildlife regions of the continent. Great schools of anadromous fish surged up the Potomac in the annual spring spawning cycle. The fresh to brackish waters were a meeting ground for many fresh water and marine species of fishes. Blue crabs, oysters and other shellfish must have abounded. Great sturgeons nosed up the unpolluted waters of the sunken river.

In the myriad bays, coves, inlets, marshes and swamps, waterfowl in fantastic numbers stopped off in their migrations or wintered in the area. Herons, egrets, eagles, osprey and vultures frequented the marshes and shoreline. The forests hosted numerous other birds including the passenger pigeon and the Carolina parakeet. Fur bearers, predators and game animals including the elk and buffalo moved along the streams and in the forest fastness.
The larger game mammals have been largely extirpated through overhunting and loss of continuous range. The fur bearers have been trapped out and the predators destroyed. Some of the birds are extinct. Pollution and other factors have cut into the populations of fish life. Diminishing northern nesting grounds, hunting pressure and other factors have reduced the waterfowl population. The egret, after near extermination by the plume hunters, is slowly returning to its previous breeding range.

Though the wildlife of the Potomac may never regain its old glory, much that remains can be preserved for the enjoyment of mankind provided necessary habitat can be saved.
SPECIFIC AREAS OF NATURAL HISTORY INTEREST

The Mason Neck Area

The first area downstream from Mount Vernon possessing significant natural values is Mason Neck. It consists of approximately 3,000 acres, mostly in forest, but with a small amount of cleared land around the few existing farms. Along the Potomac for over a mile is a fringe of excellent cattail marsh lying against a scenic backdrop of heavily forested, 40-foot bluffs. The forested portions of the neck vary greatly, but in general tend to white oak and hickory on the higher, better drained sites; to yellow poplar, oaks and beech on steep, moist ravine slopes; and to sweet gum, willow oak, black gum, red maple and other species on the more poorly drained sites.

Additionally, cover varies from small acreages where no apparent cutting has taken place in recent years to extensive areas of excellent second growth forest where overmature loblolly and Virginia pine are going out of the overstory to areas recently, though probably selectively cut. Logging is definitely going on at the present time. In terms of tree species, the area is very rich. Twenty-one species were counted in a most cursory examination of the area, including a flourishing stand of hemlock on a north facing slope adjoining the marsh near Sycamore Point. Various stages of growth from seedlings to large trees support the theory that this is a relic coastal plain grove, distinctly disjunctal to the trees' normal range.
Bald eagles were seen on two occasions over the marsh. Great blue herons were seen on the shallow tidal flats fronting the marsh. Muskrat occurs in the marsh, and grey squirrel is common in the forest near the south edge of the marsh. Birds seen in and around the marsh, besides those above, were yellow-billed cuckoo, prothonotary warbler, parula warbler, bob-white, crow, red-winged blackbird, barn swallow, towhee and cardinal.

**Mason Neck to Quantico**

South of Mason Neck and Belmont Bay are three necks of land, high ridges separated from each other and the lands north and south by Neabsco, Powell, Quantico and Chopawamsic creeks.

The northernmost neck of land is terminated by Freestone Point, a former gambling resort now largely abandoned. The land back of it is second growth of the general pattern, varying from small stands of large timber to heavily cutover sections. The Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad lies only a short distance inland from the Potomac and crosses the above mentioned streams near their junction with the Potomac.

The middlemost neck is over two miles wide, has a maximum elevation of about 200 feet, and has a small rural community known as Cherry Hill. This neck has a fine section of marsh near Cockpit Point, where also may be found a bluff exposing the oldest of the Coastal Plain deposits, the Potomac formation. The third neck is part of the Quantico Marine Base.
Widewater

From the standpoint of natural history, the most prominent feature of the Widewater area is the occurrence of Potomac formation sandstones along a 300-yard stretch of the Potomac. Immediately south of these 20 to 30-foot high rock outcrops are the ruins of an old house built from this same sandstone. Leading into this old plantation is about a half mile of sunken road, richly lined with old trees of the sort which characterize these narrow, depressed lanes: persimmon, red cedar, black locust, black cherry and mulberry. In this quaint old road is a blending of history and botany.

Aquia Creek and Bull Bluff

Near the mouth of Aquia Creek on the high south banks overlooking the estuary is an area of rich, moist forest. Large beech, yellow poplar, a host of rich forest floor species, and an ample shrub layer make these banks highly attractive. The south banks of Aquia Creek are rich in fossils as is Bull Bluff at the south side of Potomac Creek. These areas are considered in more detail in the section on scientific significance.

East of Fairview Beach

To the east of Fairview Beach the land is low terrace formation, but bluffs up to 40 feet high occur. The forest cover is largely of lowland type mentioned for Mason Neck. Fine beach groves occur in
some of the ravines breaking through to the river. At other places there are excellent mixed stands with attractive understories of flowering dogwood, holly and papaw.

Along the entire shore is a continuous, though narrow beach. At the time this correspondent observed it, before high tide, it appeared to be about 20 feet wide and composed of sand and gravel.

Only in this area did we see white-tailed deer. Three were seen in the forest back of Chotank Creek. Squirrel and cottontail were also seen. Most interesting from the wildlife point of view, however, was the great number of great blue herons, American egrets, ospreys and bald eagles seen along the shore from Mathias Point to west of Metomkin Point. On the aerial survey 30 or more egrets were seen at the pond at Metomkin Point, and well in excess of 100 great blue herons were seen lining the beach at the pond during the boat and car trips into the area. Time did not permit finding if a nesting colony was located in the immediate vicinity, though none was observed from the helicopter. Along this entire shoreline, herons and egrets were common. Four bald eagles and two osprey were observed along this area on the boat trip.

**Nomini Cliffs-Currioman Bay**

Westmoreland State Park and the Stratford Estate preserve the Horsehead Cliffs and most of the western half of the Nomini Cliffs. These towering bluffs which are well over 100 feet high, are the boldest feature on the Potomac within the study area. Their interpretative value
suggests it desirable to maintain them inviolate as a unit if possible.

The water of Currioman Bay is partially closed off from the main Potomac by a sand spit and a line of sand bar islands. The bay is a refuge for waterfowl throughout the year, but especially in late fall, winter and early spring when great numbers of ducks, geese and other water birds resort to this area. The bay bottom is largely covered with vegetation and is sheltered. While in the area, a bald eagle and an osprey were seen over the sand bar islands of the bay.

Scientific Significance

Apart from the possibility of giving pleasure and appreciation to people, natural interests along the Potomac River may serve as an area of scientific significance. This can be done through the preservation of outstanding geologic formations, of representative portions of the vegetative scene—marsh and forest, and in the preservation of wildlife habitat for the perpetuation of our vanishing wildlife species. These areas thus preserved become available outdoor laboratories without which textbook teaching of the natural sciences has no reality.

At Widewater are interesting exposures of sandstone of Cretaceous age -- the oldest of Coastal Plain formations. A few miles to the north at Cockpit Point, other exposures of this so called Potomac formation occur. Since it is the oldest of the Coastal Plain deposits, it is best exposed near the fall line where it overlies the crystalline rocks of the Piedmont. In clay beds of this formation
between Aquia Creek and Brooke along the railway, lignitized and silicified wood occurs. Leaves and stems of plants are preserved as well as distinct leaf impressions.

In the area suggested for park type development on the south side of Aquia Creek, exposures of the Pamunkey formation overlie the Potomac formation, forming sheer banks along the Potomac south of Marlboro Point and again at the south side of the mouth of Potomac Creek at Bull Bluff. Composed of layers of sand and clay, glauconitic beds and some limy layers, the formation is of marine origin. The cliffs at Bull Bluff are rich in fossils, containing shells, sharks' teeth, bone fragments, and a screw-like shell, *Turritella mortoni*. Great numbers of these shells, washed from the cliffs, lined the beaches at Belvidere Beach during June 1959.

Above the Pamunkey formation are layers of sands, clays and diatomaceous earth of the Chesapeake formation. These deposits are offshore marine in origin and are widespread throughout the region though usually obscured by the overlying Lafayette formation. However, in the Nomini Cliff region from Popes Creek to Currituck Bay, imposing cliffs of this material, well over 100 feet high, occur. Fossils of various kinds occur: diatoms make up the diatomaceous earth, shells occur in marly beds, and bones are also found.

Nearly everywhere, obscuring the Chesapeake formation is a series of sandy and gravelly loams, usually of yellow color, exposed on all of the ridge tops south of Metomkin Point. It may be seen in
contact with the Chesapeake beds at Nomini to good advantage. The soils are water washed, stream transported materials arranged by longshore currents and provide a record of past submergence and subsequent uplift. Most of the agriculture of the area occurs in this and the Columbia or recent terrace formations.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The area from Mt. Vernon to George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Virginia, possesses a number of significant natural history features which should be considered for preservation. Several of these features are of geologic interest, several relate to the preservation of outstanding sections of forests and marshes, and other areas are important for the preservation of wildlife and their habitat.

Therefore it is recommended that:

1. In the Mason Neck area, attention be given to preservation of the fine marsh near Sycamore Point and to the preservation of the surrounding forest as a natural area to which interpretative trails would provide the only access.

2. Attention be given to the significance of the various features at Widewater with the thought of setting up a small interpretive wayside.

3. A competent geologist study the various fossil outcrops and geologic features of the entire area.

4. The area on the south side of Aquia Creek be given serious consideration for park status on the basis of its botanic and geologic significance.

5. Bull Bluff be added to the above suggested park area because of the scientific interests.
6. Certain areas east of Fairview Beach be set aside as largely as possible as a wildlife preserve, or similar situation where even if limited hunting is permitted, the wildlife habitat may be preserved.

7. The remaining portions of the Nomini Cliffs not already preserved be acquired.

8. The high bluffs overlooking Currioman Bay, and the sand spit and island sand bars of the bay be included in federal ownership to make the area a safe refuge for the considerable numbers of waterfowl that use the area in migration and during the winter months.

9. Because of the necessary haste with which the present investigation was made, a biologist be given ample time to go over the entire area thoroughly to guarantee a complete inventory of important natural features.
APPENDIX C

ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORT
While it is known that a great many archeological sites exist along the Potomac River in Virginia, there are very few that have been located definitely. The State of Virginia has no state-wide archeological survey. Evidence indicates that, within the general area of this study, materials are to be found ranging from the Paleo-Indian of perhaps 10,000 years ago, through the intervening cultural periods, and into historic times.

In general, archeological sites in this portion of the country are not spectacular. Despite their potential scientific value, they do not present aspects designed to attract attention. The following three documented sites (Dr. McCary) are located in the Stafford County-Westmoreland County area:

**Patawomeke (Potomac), a large tribe (population about 750)** from which it is believed the name of the Potomac River was derived. Their principal village site was in Stafford County at the mouth of Potomac Creek. It was here that Captain Argall kidnapped Pocahontas in April, 1613.

**Pisseasock**, Chief's village just above Leedstown in Westmoreland County.

**Onsammanient**, tribe about Nomin Bay in Westmoreland County.

The Smithsonian Institute has made an archeological dig at Marlboro Point at the mouth of Potomac Creek. An Indian village and a former seat of Stafford County were explored. Subsequent study is desirable to determine the most advantageous manner in which these and other scientific interests associated with this general area might be presented to the visiting public.