



Legend

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Welcome to Rockville. We hope you enjoy the walking tour you are about to take and learn much about our city and its history.

Metered public parking is available at the Montgomery County parking garage on Fleet Street and at the Rockville Metro Station at Hungerford Drive and Middle Lane.

The following organizations offer guided tours by appointment and have research facilities to help you find out more about Rockville history. A fee may apply:

Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.
29 Courthouse Square- Room 110
301-762-0096

Courthouse and Rockville tours

Montgomery County Archives
29 Courthouse Square- Room G-09
301-279-1218

Montgomery County Historical Society
103 West Montgomery Avenue
301-762-1492

Beall-Dawson Museum tours, Stonestreet Medical Museum, school curriculum tours

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City of Rockville Historic District Commission

The Mayor and Council of Rockville created the Rockville Historic District Commission (HDC) in 1967 and designated the first three historic districts in 1974. The Historic District Commission is charged by the Mayor and Council with protecting the character of the historic districts through review and approval of exterior changes. It also acts as an advisory panel on historical issues in the city. Commission members must be qualified by professional experience or education in such fields as history, architecture, preservation, or urban design.

Although the primary function of the HDC is to regulate change in historic districts and advise the Mayor and Council, the Commission also is charged with promoting the use and preservation of historic districts for the education, welfare, and pleasure of the residents of the community. The "Lost Rockville" historical plaque and tour brochure project is the HDC's contribution to the celebration of the City's 200th anniversary in 2001. The HDC hopes you enjoy your glimpse into the earliest years of our city.

Historic District Commission Members serving during this project:

Craig Moloney, 1999 Chair
Andrea Hartranft, 2000 Chair
Anita Neal-Powell
Dean Brenneman

Bruce Noble
Elizabeth Rodgers



*Site 1. Saint Mary's Church
520 Veirs Mill Road*

St. Mary's Church, built in 1817, is the oldest church still in use in Rockville. Rockville was chosen for the church location for its relatively large concentration of Catholics, its central location, and its prominence as the County seat. St. Mary's became the church from which other upcounty mission churches sprang.

Father James Redmond established an eight-member congregation here in 1816. A member of the congregation

sold four acres of land to the church for \$300. Parishioners helped construct the Georgian-style building, which was the first brick Catholic church in the county. The brick arches were hand rubbed to create a contrasting color and texture to the brick walls. The main building was 53-feet long by 36-feet wide. A 15-foot square extension in the rear included a small sacristy and the pastor's living quarters. Father Redmond offered the first mass in St. Mary's Church on December 14, 1817.

Although the church has been remodeled and enlarged several times, most of the original church remains today and seats approximately 150. In the 1960s, a new church was built next to it, and a demolition permit was issued for the old church in 1966. It was saved at the last moment by parishioners and concerned citizens. The American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, his wife Zelda, and members of his family are buried in the adjacent cemetery.



*Site 2. Montgomery County Jail
Maryland Avenue at Fleet Street*

In 1777, seven commissioners were appointed to purchase a plot of land not exceeding four acres, for building a court house and prison for Montgomery County. In 1777, both court and jail were located in the former Hungerford Tavern on South Washington Street. The jail was in another location after 1779. Benjamin Ray provided stocks, a whipping post, and pillory for the jail in 1780. Between 1786 and 1789, Sheriff William Robertson used his new house at 101 South Washington Street for his office and jail, or "gaol." The present house replaced the Robertson house and jail in 1884.



In 1801, the County received funds to build a jail house at the site of the County Office Building on the east side of Maryland Avenue, then known as Perry Street. In 1807, Joseph Scott described "Montgomery Court House, erected by the General Assembly under the name Rockville," saying, "The public buildings are a brick court-house, and jail, without either taste or elegance." This jail burned in 1861 and the two-story stone building pictured was built in 1862. The jailer, Mr. Trail, lived there with his family. The jail capacity was 20 inmates. There was a large yard behind the building where the last hanging in the county occurred on April 15, 1921. This jail was used until the new grey courthouse was built in 1931 with jail cells on the top floor. The old jail was demolished at this time.





*Site 3. Boundary Stone of Rockville
Vinson Street at Maryland Avenue*

Rockville began when Owen's Ordinary, an inn and tavern, was established in this area around 1750. It functioned as the seat of lower Frederick County and in 1776 became the seat of Montgomery County when it was created. In 1784, William P. Williams subdivided 45 acres of his land into building lots and called it "Williamsburgh." Fifteen years later, structures had been built on 38 lots. The Williamsburgh plat had legal problems and in November 1801, the Maryland General Assembly directed that the lots be resurveyed and a town erected "to be called Rockville." The town plan was recorded in 1803.

This boundary stone, with the letters "B.R." incised, marks the "Beginning of Rockville" shown in the lower right of the plan at the southeast corner of Block I, lot 1. The plan has a grid pattern of six streets, 19 blocks, and a total of 85 lots. The Court House lot fits into the notch on the right border in Block VIII.

For many years, the boundary stone was neglected, half-buried in the weeds of an undeveloped lot. It resurfaced when the Rockville Library was built in the 1950s. It was placed near its original location in 1961 where it serves as an everyday reminder of the modest beginnings of Rockville.



*Site 4. Christ Episcopal Church
109 South Washington Street*

The first Episcopal church in or near Rockville was built in 1739 on a two-acre parcel of land, part of which is now the Rockville Cemetery. It was constructed of clapboards and logs and was called both the "Chapel of Ease" and Rock Creek Chapel. The latter name was the same as that of the Mother Church of Prince George's Parish, located 12 miles to the south. The Parish was divided twice in the 1740s, following which the Chapel of Ease (and Rockville) became part of Frederick County.

Additions were made to the Chapel of Ease in the 1750s, and a transept was added in 1770, which completed its cruciform plan. The result was said to be "considerably handsomer and more church-like" than the brick church which replaced it in 1808. By 1796, the Chapel of Ease was found to be badly decayed and the vestry contracted in 1802 for a large two-story brick building to replace it. This building was completed in 1808 and was consecrated as Christ Church by Bishop Thomas John Claggett.

A new church was built on South Washington Street in 1822. In 1830, Christ Church became the Parish Church with the establishment of Rock Creek Parish. Soon afterward, a rectory was built on Montgomery Avenue. In 1863, Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart and 8,000 soldiers briefly captured Rockville. Union sympathizers sought sanctuary in Christ Episcopal Church and were seized with several members of the vestry. The captives were taken to Brookeville before release.



The Gothic Revival-style church that stands here today was completed in 1887. It was almost destroyed by a hurricane in 1896.



*Site 5. Hungerford Tavern/Susan Russell
House NW Corner of West Jefferson &
South Washington Streets*

Charles Hungerford's tavern was the site of some of the most important events in the history of Montgomery County. Three months prior to the Continental Congress in 1774, local citizens met at Hungerford Tavern to protest oppressive actions of the British Parliament. The first election of County officials was held here when the County was organized in 1776, and the tavern was the location of the first County court from 1777 to 1779.

Hungerford Tavern was owned by Joseph Willson from 1786 to 1791 and by his granddaughter, Susan Russell, in the 1840s. Archeological digs were conducted at this site in 1973 and 1987. Artifacts retrieved from these digs are displayed by Peerless Rockville in the Red Brick Courthouse.

Hungerford Tavern was 1 1/2 stories and made of logs chinked with clay. There were four rooms in the main building, one of which had a large fireplace with a hook to hang pots for cooking food. Whipping posts, a pillory, and stocks were located behind the tavern before a jail was built. Hungerford Tavern continued to be a landmark for more than 100 years, serving at different times as an inn, meeting place, election place, and, eventually, a private home. The building was demolished in 1913 for a new Baptist church and parsonage.



*Site 6. "Out of Robb's Window. Montgomery
Court House." Pen and wash drawing by
Benjamin Latrobe, 1811*



Architect Benjamin Latrobe came to "Montgomery Court House" in 1811 hoping that the fresh air would help his ailing young son recover his health. He stayed at Adam Robb's tavern that may have been located on Lot 4 on Jefferson Street across from the Court House lot. Its precise location is unknown. His drawing is the earliest known view of Rockville.

Early 19th century Rockville had rutted dirt roads shared with pigs and livestock in 1811. This drawing shows a pig at the steps of the house across the street and a covered wagon on the cross street down the block. Small log or frame houses predominated. They were built anywhere on the lot that the owner chose because there were no zoning regulations. Note that the houses had glass windows, which showed that it was close to civilization. There were no sidewalks, streetlights, or storm drainage. Offensive odors often came from manure piles, pig pens, unclean privies, and slops thrown in the street. Since drinking water generally came from a well by the house, basic sanitation and disease were constant problems.

Like other towns, Rockville incorporated to collect taxes and provide the amenities and comforts that citizens needed and wanted. Rockville incorporated in 1860 to build sidewalks and respond to citizen needs.



*Site 7. Montgomery County Court House
Courthouse Square*

There have been four court houses in Rockville since it was established as the County seat in 1776. Court was originally held at Hungerford Tavern. A frame court house existed in the late 18th century but was sufficiently outgrown by 1810 to necessitate a new building for the Clerk and his records.

In 1835, the County petitioned the General Assembly for authorization of a new brick court house, which was completed in 1840. By that time, Rockville was an established residential, governmental, and market hub with a population of nearly 400. The original single-story wings of the court house were raised in 1872 to provide more space. One year later, however, the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad opened. Population and court house business increased significantly, and the court house building was again outgrown. It was demolished in 1890.

The General Assembly authorized another bond issue for the replacement brick and sandstone Romanesque Revival court house which was constructed in 1890-91 and which stands here today.

Montgomery County's growth continued, and the grey Neoclassical style court house was constructed and connected to the 1891 court house in 1931.



*Site 8. Business District
Montgomery Avenue and
Washington Street*



Rockville grew from a convenient crossroads meeting place in the 1750s to become the legal and market center of the county. The tiny village was selected as the seat of local government in 1776 for its central location and the presence of taverns and inns to accommodate those with court business. Rockville was incorporated in 1860.

Rockville's businesses were not separated from the residential areas as today. Craftspeople and merchants often lived on the second story or next to their businesses. However, proximity to the Court House influenced many hotels, inns, and businesses to locate along Montgomery Avenue, Commerce Lane (now West Montgomery Avenue), and Washington Street. The area consisted of a variety of uses, including brick institutional buildings, small frame residences, 19th century hotels, and small businesses. The area of North Washington Street just north of Middle Lane was the location of the earliest black settlement in the town.

In the 1950s, increased traffic, lack of parking, and economic problems led City officials to redevelop the 46-acre area by demolishing most of the old buildings and replacing them with an enclosed mall. The Rockville Mall was razed in 1995 in an effort to revitalize the Town Center.





*Site 9. Rockville Methodist Episcopal Church
Jerusalem/Mount Pleasant*

Rockville was an early center of Methodism in Montgomery County. Methodists first met in private homes with occasional visits from a "circuit rider" minister. In 1835, the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church purchased lot 82 of the Original Town of Rockville for \$40, where "they may erect and build...thereon a house or place of worship." The Rockville Circuit was established in 1845 to serve 715 white and 527 Negro Methodists. The

Rockville Methodist Episcopal Church incorporated in 1852 and erected a brick house of worship about 1858.

In 1845, a doctrinal dispute over slavery caused the Methodist Episcopal Church to separate into two factions, North and South. The southern faction in Rockville left the congregation and built a new church in 1868 on West Montgomery Avenue. The old church was left to the North, or non-slavery Methodists, and became a predominantly black congregation. In 1892, the church, now named Jerusalem Methodist Episcopal Church, was dismantled and enlarged.

It housed black students in 1912 when the Rockville Negro Elementary School burned and was the site of graduation ceremonies through the 1950s. It merged with Mount Pleasant Methodist Church in 1989. The belfry was removed, the stairs expanded, and the building was stuccoed in 1954.



*Site 10. North Adams and Middle Lane
Residential Area*

The area at North Adams Street and Middle Lane has four of the oldest surviving Rockville homes: 101, 106, and 5 North Adams, and the Beall-Dawson House.

The 1793 portion of the house at 5 North Adams is probably the oldest structure in Rockville. The original portion is the two-story, two-room attic and lean-to on its northwest corner. It was built by Philip Jenkins and rented out. The property was enlarged and had a stable by 1866. The Victorian addition on the south was added in 1887 by the Miller family. It is currently used as a law office.

The house pictured, 101 North Adams Street, is built around a log dwelling that dates to the late 18th century. Two lots with a small house were sold by W. P. Williams, the subdivider of "Williamsburgh," to Thomas Perry Willson in 1799 for 40 pounds. The log dwelling faced Middle Lane until remodeled in the 1920s to front upon Adams.

The front portion of 106 North Adams is a log-framed clapboard-covered dwelling built around 1825 by Rev. Joseph Jones of the recently-formed Bethel Baptist Church. It is a two-story, four-room Federal house with Greek Revival detailing. George Peters Jr. and his wife Lavinia added several 19th century additions to accommodate their seven children. It was again enlarged and restored in the 20th century.





*Site 11. Beall-Dawson House and Park
103 West Montgomery Avenue*

The Beall-Dawson property originally extended from Montgomery Avenue west to Forest Avenue and north to Martins Lane. The house was built in 1815 by Upton Beall, Clerk of the Montgomery County Court. It is a 2 1/2 story brick Federal-style home distinguished by elegant, high-style architecture that was more common in Georgetown

where the family first lived. It stood out from the more typical and smaller Rockville log and clapboard houses at the time. Now owned by the City of Rockville, it is operated as a museum by the Montgomery County Historical Society. The museum features period rooms containing 18th and 19th century furnishings and changing exhibitions on topics relating to Montgomery County history and material culture.

The Stonestreet Museum of 19th Century Medicine, ca. 1850, is a one-room doctor's office built for and used by Dr. Edward E. Stonestreet from 1852 to 1903. It contains exhibits on 19th century medicine and the life of a country doctor. The building originally stood in front of Dr. Stonestreet's home at Monroe Street and East Montgomery Avenue. It was donated to the Montgomery County Historical Society and moved to the complex in 1972. The building had many uses including a museum, the first public library in Rockville, and a ticket office for the Rockville Fair.



*Site 12. Baptist Church and Cemetery
West Jefferson Street & West
Montgomery Avenue*

In 1823, the deacons of the Bethel Baptist Church church and provide a burial ground. The original church was replaced in 1864, but a half century later, the Baptists demolished it and built a larger church and a parsonage at the corner of South Washington and West Jefferson Streets.

The cemetery remained and was enclosed with an iron fence. The church conveyed the cemetery to the Montgomery County Historical Society in 1973, and title was transferred to Peerless Rockville for caretaking in 1983. Peerless Rockville has added benches and a picket fence.

Gravestones in the cemetery date between 1839 and 1896. Late 19th century development of the West End and the opening of South Van Buren Street necessitated relocation of 16 graves to the Rockville Cemetery. Twenty-eight marble and sandstone grave markers remain.

Several persons notable in Rockville's history are buried here. Samuel Clark Veirs was postmaster of Rockville and Chief Judge of the Orphan's Court. He also operated Veirs Mill. Veirs' son-in-law, William Veirs Bouic, Jr. was a judge, farmer, State's Attorney, president of Rockville's Board of Commissioners, organizer of the Montgomery County Agricultural Society, trustee of the Rockville Academy, and a director of the C & O Canal Company.





*Site 13. The Prettyman House
104 West Jefferson Street*

This house was built on a 13.5-acre lot on the outskirts of Rockville in 1842. A stone marking the southwest corner of the original 1803 Rockville Plan is between this house and the adjacent Rockville Academy grounds. Matilda Holland, widow of Montgomery County Register of Wills, Solomon Holland, purchased the land in 1839. Her daughter Anne and her husband Capt. Zachariah Johnston, USN, built the Greek Revival-style house, which housed their five daughters and Matilda Holland. Its original design was a 1 1/2-story side-gabled dwelling with a pedimented front portico with classical columns. It had an attached west wing and a rear wing. It was enlarged to two full stories in 1876 and remodeled to a more Victorian style. A private lane led to the house and back to the stable and pasture along Falls Road.

The property was owned or occupied by five generations of the Johnston-Prettyman family for almost 150 years. The Johnstons' daughter, Lydia, married Elijah Barrett Prettyman in 1855. He later became Clerk of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County. Many members of this family were active in County and town politics, religious and educational affairs, and the military. Various family members and others purchased land along the stable lane, which became South Van Buren Street. The Prettyman family owned the house until 1968.



*Site 14. Rockville Academy
103 South Adams Street*

In 1805, the Maryland General Assembly appointed a commission to raise money for a school lot and a fire engine for Rockville. The Rockville Academy was chartered and authorized to hire teachers in 1809. In 1812 and 1813, a number of lots were purchased on Jefferson Street, and construction of the original rectangular brick Federal style building was completed in 1813. Tuition was \$10 a year, and students obtained room and board elsewhere.

The academy faced Jefferson Street and was five bays long with interior chimneys at either end. The building contained only classrooms. Thirty to 60 young men were enrolled annually, some of whom attended seasonally when farm work was light. They received a secondary school education. The academy was one of two secondary schools in the county.

Rockville Academy continued in the original building until 1890 when it was replaced by the present Queen Anne style school designed and built by Rockville builder Edwin West. Female students were first admitted in 1912. From 1917 to 1935, it housed the Rockville public elementary school for grades 1-3 and later, the Library Association. The building was vacant, deteriorated, and threatened with demolition when it was purchased and renovated for office use in 1980. The City of Rockville purchased the surrounding land with Project Open Space funds for a public park.





*Site 15. Bingham-Brewer House
307 Great Falls Road*

This two-story Federal structure is significant for its architecture and for its personal associations. The house is one of only two pre-1830 brick structures still intact in Rockville.

The front section is 24-feet high and 24-feet wide. It rests on brick foundations and is set in Flemish bond pattern brick. It is three bays across and one bay deep with a small porch sheltering the front door. Several additions were built in the 19th century. Outbuildings include a smokehouse, chicken house, a garage, and privy.

Julius Bingham, publisher of a weekly Rockville newspaper, built the house in 1821 and left an interior brick inscribed "JAB 1821." The house has been owned by several other prominent leaders of Rockville, including William McClenahan, organizer of the Rockville Christian Church and teacher at the Rockville Academy; the Veirs family, local landowners; and the Brewer family, members of which were influential in local government, legal, commercial, and educational affairs. At the turn of the 20th century, the Brewer household included 10 children living in the home.

The appearance of the front section of the house has been maintained as built and all modern additions constructed in the rear.

