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A Brief History Of Winchester, VA

Winchester and Frederick County, at the top of the Shenandoah Valley and Virginia, was once Shawnee Indian camping grounds to which Pennsylvania Quakers came to settle in 1732. Today the population of the city is approximately 21,000 and the county is 35,000. The town was named Frederick Town after Frederick, father of George III of England. In 1752 the name was changed to Winchester in honor of the ancient English capital.

In the mid-1700's, Frederick County became the military and political training ground for George Washington, who came here at the age of sixteen to survey the lands of Thomas, the Sixth lord Fairfax. Washington built Fort Loudoun during the French and Indian War and, at twenty-six, was elected to his first public office as the county's representative to the House of Burgesses.

During the Revolutionary War, Daniel Morgan's Rifleman from Frederick County were among the first who came to Washington's aid against the British. War prisoners were housed in Winchester and the neighboring countryside.

Winchester was a strategic prize of great importance during the Civil War. In Confederate hands, on excellent roads to the north and east, it was a serious threat to the supply lines of the Union armies trying to reach Richmond - the heart of the Confederacy. In the hands of the Union army, Winchester made Confederate raids and invasion of the north risky and opened a protected avenue for Union troop movements south through a valley from which they could attack on the flanks and rear of Lee's main armies. Thus, Winchester and Frederick County became the scene of six battles during the Civil War, and the city itself changed flags around seventy times during the four year conflict, it is said thirteen times in one day. General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson demonstrated his military leadership in the Valley Campaign. Winchester was familiar to him not only as a military objective, but also as his home during the winter of 1861-1862. Here he enjoyed the companionship of his wife for the last winter. His headquarters is located on North Braddock Street and is open in the spring and summer months.



In Winchester and Frederick County the visitor will see many relics of the area's history: the tomb of Lord Fairfax in the yard of Christ Episcopal Church; the home and grave of General Daniel Morgan, hero of the Revolutionary War; George Washington's headquarters: the headquarters of "Stonewall"

Jackson: the headquarters of the Union General Philip Sheridan, from which he started his 12 mile ride on October 19, 1864, to rally his retreating army at Cedar Creek- the ride made famous by Thomas Buchanan Read's poem, "Sheridan's Ride"; the Hollingsworth house, Abram's Delight, built in 1754 and now completely furnished with relics of the 18th century; houses of the Revolutionary era; the National Cemetery and the Confederate Cemetery with thousands of heros graves; the ruins of an old church used as barracks during the Revolutionary War; the Hopewell Meeting House, established in 1734: Belle Grove Plantation, 1794; and many others.



The Wayside Theatre at Middletown, Virginia, presents a fine repertoire of plays during a long summer and early fall season. Shenandoah University also offers summer and winter theatre seasons.

Each spring Winchester plays host for four days to over 250,000 visitors who converge upon the town to witness the famous Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival, usually held the first few days in May. Winchester also hosts the world's largest Fireman's parade the friday before the main event.

Winchester has long been known as the "Apple Capital" surrounded as it is by vast orchards and constituting one of the largest apple export markets of the nation and the largest producing area in Virginia.

(From The Winchester-Frederick County Chamber of Commerce)

A Virginia Main Street Community Since 1985

Winchester's concentrated downtown revitalization effort began with its' designation as a Virginia Main Street Community in 1985 by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. It was one of the first five localities in Virginia to receive this designation. The Main Street Approach provides a flexible framework that puts the traditional assets of downtown, such as unique architecture and locally-owned businesses, to work as a catalyst for economic growth and community pride. The four-point approach to Main Street is a comprehensive approach using four key interconnected areas: Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring.

The efforts of the Winchester Old Town Development Board have earned it recognition for excellence in the field of downtown revitalization by meeting high standards of performance set by the Virginia Main Street Program and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center. The Winchester Old Town Development Board nationally joins 412 other Main Street revitalization programs designated as Certified National Main Street Communities.

The national certification program annually evaluates downtown revitalization programs based on strict criteria such as: broad based public support, historic preservation ethic, active board of directors, adequate funding, a paid professional manager and reporting of economic progress by providing statistical information. The program's performance was evaluated by Virginia Main Street Program, which is the statewide coordinating organization for Main Street programs in Virginia.

"A successful, well-run Main Street program creates a vibrant downtown of many uses, where people come not only to shop but to meet or even live. By increasing economic vitality and focusing on reusing historic buildings, it creates a place that defines the community," says Kennedy Smith, director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center. "The certification for the Winchester Old Town Development Board reflects a well-run downtown revitalization initiative, and the citizens of Winchester should be proud of their efforts, and maintain their commitment to revitalizing the downtown area."

Since its inception as a Main Street Program in 1985, Winchester leads Virginia Main Street Communities with more than \$19 million dollars in private investment toward preserving the historic character of downtown Winchester. Over 190 new businesses have opened and over 600 new jobs have been created.

The Main Street program has been successful due in part to a partnership between Virginia Main Street Program

and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center.

(From The [Old Town Development Board](#))

Winchester Online
How The World Views Winchester, Virginia