The Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor

A Survey of Cultural and Natural Resources

Valley Conservation Council
Cover Photos (from top)

a. Middlebrook late winter evening, looking northeast. Robert P. Brown III

b. Adult male wild turkey, a game species dependent on extensive tracts of forest land such as those of Little North Mountain. Bob Lea

c. Eidson Creek, Augusta County, near junction of Routes 708 and 710. Robert P. Brown III

d. Jump Mountain and Maxwelton Farm from Route 602, Rockbridge County. Robert P. Brown III

e. Middlebrook Road (Route 252) and Dutch Hollow Road (Route 726) intersection, between Newport and Brownsburg. Robert P. Brown III

About the Valley Conservation Council

Established in 1990, the Valley Conservation Council (VCC), a non-profit citizens’ organization, promotes land use that sustains the farms, forests, open spaces, and cultural heritage of the Valley of Virginia. Its efforts focus primarily on private citizen involvement in voluntary land conservation measures and the establishment of sound land use policy throughout its 11-county service area, from Frederick in the north to Botetourt in the south.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ 3

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5
  Purpose of Study ........................................................................................................... 5
  The Project Area .......................................................................................................... 6
  Study Components ....................................................................................................... 6

Cultural Resources ........................................................................................................ 7
  Native American Settlement .......................................................................................... 7
  PaleoIndian Period ....................................................................................................... 8
  Archaic Period ............................................................................................................... 8
  Woodland Period .......................................................................................................... 8

Historic Resources ......................................................................................................... 9
  The Frontier: Taking Up Land, 1730–1760 ................................................................... 9
    The Great Migration .................................................................................................... 11
    Germans in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor .................................................. 12
    The Church of England in the Upper Valley .............................................................. 12
    Early Farms: Size and Land Use Patterns ................................................................... 12
    Early Commercial Crops and Industry ...................................................................... 13
  Frontier Architecture .................................................................................................... 14
  Native and Settler Interactions of the Frontier ............................................................. 14

Era of Classic Grain and Livestock Agriculture, 1760–1860 ...................................... 16
  The Revolutionary War Years in Augusta and Rockbridge ......................................... 16
  The Development of the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike ............................................... 17
  The Impact of Commercial Farming ............................................................................ 17
  Farming, Soil Depletion, and Early Conservation Measures ....................................... 18
  The African-American Presence in the Upper Valley .................................................... 19

The Growth of Towns and Crossroads ......................................................................... 21
  Arbor Hill ..................................................................................................................... 21
  Middlebrook ............................................................................................................... 21
  Summerdean ............................................................................................................... 23
  Shemariah ................................................................................................................... 23
  McKinley ..................................................................................................................... 23
  Newport ....................................................................................................................... 24
  Brownsburg ................................................................................................................ 25
  Zack ............................................................................................................................ 26
  Wilson’s Springs and Rockbridge Baths ........................................................................ 26
  Jump Mountain .......................................................................................................... 27
  Bustleburg ................................................................................................................... 28
  Fredericksburg .......................................................................................................... 28
  The North River Navigation, the Iron Industry, and Cedar Grove .............................. 28
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The Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor:

A Survey of Cultural and Natural Resources

Introduction

The Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor is a priceless example of the rural landscape of the Valley of Virginia. Winding its way through historic and pastoral southern Augusta and northern Rockbridge counties, Route 252 (alternately known as the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike and the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike) has served as an important corridor between Staunton and Lexington for more than 175 years. The villages and crossroads that grew up along Route 252 provided local markets and necessary services to farmers living in the surrounding countryside. Today, the descendants of many of those early farmers and newcomers live in the area, tending to one of the most beautiful and well-conserved farming regions of the Commonwealth.

Route 252 is more than a scenic road through the past. The families who live on the farms and in the communities along this byway face many of the same issues foremost in the minds of their more urbanized neighbors—how to plan for a future that includes population growth and increased demand on resources, yet allows for the conservation of the rural character and agricultural way of life that have defined this area since the mid 1700s.

Purpose of the Study

This study showcases and describes the many outstanding natural and cultural features of this unspoiled area. Its purpose is to both raise awareness of these resources among residents and government officials and to encourage locally initiated land conservation efforts. The goal is to provide information that can be used in making public and private land use decisions. It is hoped that the timing
of this compilation will enable the region to protect its uniqueness as it faces development pressures.

The Project Area

The study area, referred to as the “Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor,” lies in southern Augusta and northern Rockbridge counties. The general boundaries for the area include Arbor Hill on the north, Route 11 on the east, Rockbridge Baths on the south, and Little North Mountain on the west. Characterized by long parallel ridges and intervening valleys, the study area is part of the Valley of Virginia. The northernmost portion of the study area lies in the upper Shenandoah Valley, while the southern portion is in the James River basin. The major transportation route is the north-south Route 252 (the former Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike).

The specific boundaries for the project area are determined by watersheds. Within the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor is the watershed divide between the upper Shenandoah River and the upper James River basins. The three major watersheds in the project area are the upper Middle River in the Shenandoah basin and Hays Creek and upper Maury River in the James River basin. These watersheds are the basis on which much of the information for this report was gathered.

Study Components

This study is presented in three parts: I. Cultural Resources; II. Natural Resources; and III. Conservation Options.

- Cultural Resources include archaeological sites, historic structures, and local history. Information sources include residents and scholars, architectural surveys of the two counties, local histories, and other library and government records.

- Natural Resources include water, geology and soils, forests, and wildlife. Information was gathered from natural resource professionals from local, state, and federal agencies as well as from published materials.

- The Conservation Options section describes a number of conservation tools that can be applied in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, as well as current local land use policies.
Cultural Resources

LITTLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORICAL RESEARCH focusing on the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor has been published. Written histories of Augusta and Rockbridge counties contain bits and pieces of information about Native American sites, European frontier settlements, and the establishment of several communities. Families with longstanding ties to the project area share a rich oral tradition, as well as personal documents and photographs, and their stories and remembrances have enriched this overview.

Native American Settlement

Numerous archaeological sites known to local residents are reminders of the first people to inhabit the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor. Collections of spearheads from plowed fields indicate the travel and trading patterns of the first people thousands of years ago: in addition to local materials, chert from eastern West Virginia was carried by native Americans through the saddles and gaps of Little North Mountain, and even rhyolite from the Maryland Blue Ridge appears in some collections.1

Only nine Native American sites are formally recorded with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) for the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor.2 Based on archaeological studies of other parts of the Ridge and Valley, predictive models for site locations indicate that Native American settlement in the project area should be intensive in places, particularly along water courses and near springs and gaps. Although poorly known at present, these sites are our primary link to a people who lived in the upper James and Shenandoah valleys for approximately 12,000 years.

Archaeologists divide the era of Native American occupation prior to European contact into three cultural periods tied to the changing ecology of the region: PaleoIndian (ca. 9500–8000 B.C.); Archaic (ca. 8000–1500 B.C.); and A small selection of prehistoric Native American artifacts from the Swoope area. Spanning several thousand years, stone and clay artifacts such as these have been found on many farms in the Route 252 Corridor and mark the past settlements of Native cultures in the upper Valley. Cultural Resources
Woodland (ca. 1500 B.C.–A.D. 1500). These are identified by characteristics unique to the particular period, including spearhead shape and size, pottery decorations, tool types, and site locations.

**PaleoIndian Period**

The PaleoIndian period marks the initial immigration of people into North America. Sites from this period are rare, and to date, none have been documented in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region. Affected by a climate much cooler than ours today, small bands of hunters and gatherers moved with seasons, probably settling at one place for no more than a few months.

**Archaic Period**

Most of the Native sites documented in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region were inhabited for thousands of years, and five date to the Archaic period. In fact, three were first occupied around 8000 B.C. at the beginning of the period. Large scatters of debris (chips) from tool making have been located on small stream terraces, and these date to the end of the period.

By the end of the ice age, the climate in the eastern United States became more seasonally diversified. Grasslands were invaded by forests, and the numbers of smaller mammals increased. During the early and middle portions of this period (around 7500–4000 B.C.), the boreal forests (fir, spruce, and pine) were replaced by deciduous forests (chestnut, oak, hickory). For Native peoples there was a shift from hunting to more generalized foraging.

Meandering rivers in the Shenandoah Valley created broad, open floodplains which allowed for the growth of edible plants. Large base camps, home to several hundred people, were located on terraces overlooking rivers. Because of the development of food storage techniques, as well as more predictable food sources, Native Americans of the Late Archaic period developed a more sedentary lifestyle. Increases in population from 3000–1500 B.C. are believed by archaeologists to have led to the beginnings of social rank and territorialism; throughout the Shenandoah and James valleys, Native peoples began establishing group boundaries which would carry through to the time of European contact.

**Woodland Period**

The Woodland period, beginning at approximately 1500 B.C., marked the introduction of clay pottery and ended just before contact with early European explorers and settlers. By the end of the period, pottery composition and design were regionalized and could indicate tribal affiliations.

One of the most outstanding features of the Woodland period is the burial mound. Early in the period, mounds contained only a few burials, probably the remains of people of high rank. Later mounds were accretional, meaning that they began at ground level and burials were added periodically until the mound contained as many as 2,500 burials. One of the best known accretional mounds in western Virginia, the Valentine Mound, is located in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region near the confluence of Hays and Walkers creeks. In 1901, Edward P. Valentine of the Valentine Museum in Richmond excavated this mound, identifying 80 human skulls, over 400 human skeletons, beads, pendants, pottery, and dog skeletons. As a consequence of these and later excavations and the cultivation of the mound, only a faint rise is now visible on the floodplain. More recent archaeological studies associated with the realignment of Route 602 resulted in the location of a probable village site associated with the mound, as well as several outlying campsites.
The bow and arrow was introduced into the eastern United States during the middle of this period (A.D. 700), and the true 'arrowheads' (triangular points) are common in local artifact collections. Agricultural tools such as hoes and axes were made of greenstone, and grinding stones were widely used. By A.D. 1000, corn, beans, and squash were introduced into the region, and agriculture became a way of life, although hunting and gathering was not entirely abandoned.

The sedentary lifestyle resulted in the establishment of major settlements near rivers, surrounded by smaller hamlets along streams and springs. Woodland period sites are often located on levees or terraces above floodplains. By the end of the period, the central settlement was palisaded or encircled by a high fence of posts set closely together and chinked with brush. Cultivated fields were located outside the stockade, and harvested crops were kept inside in storage pits similar to root cellars. Village sites were periodically moved due to soil depletion and lack of game.

The Little Ice Ag., which began around A.D. 1300, must have affected the ability of the Native peoples to grow the necessary corn to feed their growing populations. Late in the period, a cooling trend led to the expansion of grasslands and the reappearance of small herds of bison. By the end of the period groups of Iroquois from the Northeast were traveling to the Valley to hunt for meat, hides, and furs. Trade networks along the Appalachians connected indigenous peoples throughout the eastern United States, and when the Spanish settled the Southeast in the 16th century, and the English in the 17th century, their trade goods were moved along these routes. In addition to glass beads, copper, and other objects, these routes conducted diseases against which the Natives had no immunity. All of these factors led to a depopulation of the settled peoples of the Shenandoah Valley by the time of European settlement.6

**Historic Resources**

A total of 245 standing structures (houses, farming complexes, mills, churches, stores, and schools) and 11 cemeteries are on record with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) for the Middlebrook-Brownsburg study area.7 The bulk of the information comes from the work of architectural historians Ann McCleary and Pamela Simpson, who researched Augusta and Rockbridge counties, respectively, in the 1980s. Seven structures in the Route 252 Corridor are individually listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, as are two cemeteries. Four schoolhouses are included in a thematic nomination for Augusta County Public Schools. The village of Middlebrook, which reached the height of its prosperity in the 1880s, is designated as a historic district, the only one in rural Augusta County. Brownsburg in northern Rockbridge County has also been designated a historic district, as has the Wade’s Mill Complex near Raphine. A list of nationally registered and surveyed historic properties is included in Appendix I.

**The Frontier: Taking Up Land, 1730–1760**

In 1701, the Colonial Virginia Council devised a policy whereby settlers would receive land in exchange for strengthening the British presence on the frontier. The Virginia colony envisioned the Shenandoah Valley as a buffer against attacks by dispossessed Native peoples, including those of the Iroquois Confederacy to the north, as well as refugees from the tribes that only 100 years earlier had populated the Piedmont.
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Tidewater and out-of-colony speculators began forming land companies and petitioned the colonial government for land grants in the west. A few families were beginning to trickle into the upper Valley from the north. By 1732, John Lewis and several families had settled near present-day Staunton, but they did not possess a claim of title to their land. Colonial officials in the Tidewater, to gain revenue and assure allegiance of these settlers to the Virginia Colony, began to grant patents to reaffirm Crown control.

On August 12, 1736, Governor William Gooch granted a patent for 118,491 acres to a prominent Tidewater resident and land speculator, William Beverley. Known as Beverley Manor, the grant was located in what is now the center of Augusta County, from Middle River near Verona south to the present-day Rockbridge County line. Beverley was certified to sell land to future settlers as well as those who already occupied lands within the grant boundaries, and early records show that the Lewis family and their contemporaries received formal title by paying Beverley one English pound per forty acres. In his petition for the grant, Beverley wrote that he could people the upper Shenandoah ("Shenadore") with immigrants from Pennsylvania. Within ten years the grant was so heavily settled by the Scots-Irish from northern Ireland that it became known as the "Irish Tract."

In 1736 a land grant of 100,000 acres was offered to Benjamin Borden, a New Jersey land speculator. Borden's grant encompassed much of present-day Rockbridge County and adjoined the Beverley Manor grant in Augusta County. Borden offered tracts of 100 acres to anyone who would build a cabin, with the opportunity to purchase more at fifty shillings per acre. Within three years, he claimed a patent of 92,000 acres.

Settlement had apparently begun in this area by 1733 when the Hays and Walker families settled along the creeks that bear their names today. When the Borden patent was formally issued in 1739, Hays Creek was used as a reference point in describing the tract, indicating that Borden dealt with earlier settlers when dividing the land. The John Walker family from Pennsylvania is reported to have settled near the base of Jump Mountain, and a home and mill were located along Walkers Creek Road (Route 602). As was the case with the Beverley Patent, most of the "squatters" on Borden's land had their land
surveyed, purchased the property, and received legal title. Ephraim McDowell and his son John were probably the first to build on Borden’s grant, the latter receiving 1000 acres in exchange for surveying Borden’s land. McDowell’s tract was near Timber Ridge, on the west side of the “Indian Road.”

Augusta County was created from Orange County in 1738 and until 1770 included all the land west of the Blue Ridge to the “utmost limits of Virginia,” well beyond the Ohio Valley. Rockbridge County was eventually formed from Augusta and Botetourt counties in 1777.

Sections of the road now known as Route 252 probably developed from bridle paths soon after European immigrants came to the area. No such road is depicted on Fry and Jefferson’s 1775 “Map of the Most Inhabited Parts of Virginia,” but by 1807, a road from Staunton to Lexington by way of the towns of Middlebrook and Brownsburg was depicted on the map of Virginia commissioned by James Madison.

The Great Migration

The search for land and religious freedom and, by the early 1740s, famine, sparked a wave of Scots-Irish migration that ultimately led many to the Valley of Virginia. “Scots-Irish” refers to those whose families migrated from Lowland Scotland to Northern Ireland (Ulster) after 1610 and then emigrated to America between 1717 and the time of the Revolutionary War. The large majority could not afford their passage and entered the country as indentured servants, or redemptioners. They sold their services in return for passage, receiving food, shelter, medical attention, and clothing for the period of indenture. The usual price was $65, and the average period of indenture was about five years.

The Scots-Irish were dissenters from the Church of England, and their Presbyterianism soon became the primary denomination of the upper Valley. Its importance is reflected in the many early Presbyterian churches in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region. The North Mountain Meeting House was organized by 1740 in the headwaters of Folly Mills Creek. Bethel, located at the present-day intersection of Routes 693 and 701, became home to this congregation about 1779, and the North Mountain Meeting House fell into disuse. By 1748, Brown’s Meeting House (later Hebron) was formed from the North Mountain congregation; it was located near present-day Swoope.

The earliest house of worship in Rockbridge County was Timber Grove Meeting House, located near Fairfield. In 1741, Presbyterian minister John Craig, who helped organize thirteen congregations in the upper Valley, baptized several children there. Within five years, another log meeting house was built three miles south of the original building near present-day Timber Ridge Stone Church. It had split log seats and an earthen floor. In 1755, this was replaced with a stone structure; some of its walls are incorporated into the existing church. In 1746, the Court of Augusta recognized the log New Providence Meeting House as a house of worship. It was originally located near Greenville, but was moved to its present location in northern Rockbridge County sometime after 1754. The brick building near the intersection of Routes 726 and 252 is the fourth structure built by the congregation at this location. The Old Providence Stone Church, located near present-day Timber Ridge, is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

New Providence Presbyterian Church, north of Brownsburg. The brick building near the intersection of Routes 726 and 252 is the fourth structure built by the congregation (organized in 1746) at this location, and is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Cultural Resources
erected in 1793 at the intersection of Routes 620 and 613 northwest of Spottswood, is located at the site of the South Mountain Meeting House. The Old Providence congregation was part of the New Providence Meeting House until a rift occurred in 1789. The members who separated met there until 1859 when a new church was built. Afterwards, it was used as a school, residence, general store, and social hall.15

**Germans in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor**

In addition to the Scots-Irish, small numbers of Germans who migrated from the Rhineland and Palatinate also settled in the upper Valley, as did a few English who traveled across the Blue Ridge and up the James River drainage. By 1769, families with German names (Hanger, Gabbert, Olinger) had purchased land on Eidson Creek. Enough German families came to the Dutch Hollow Branch area that this tributary to Walker Creek was named for them.16 By 1789, a sufficient German community was established so that a log Meeting House (used by Lutheran and Reformed congregations) was constructed near the present-day St. John’s United Church of Christ in Middlebrook. The families of German heritage maintained their identity in their tight-knit settlements, such as the one located at Sugar Loaf Mountain.17

**The Church of England in the Upper Valley**

The official Church of England maintained a presence in Augusta County through the Revolutionary War period. The Virginia colony was laid off into Episcopal parishes, as much for administrative as religious purposes. Vestrymen were elected by qualified voters (freeholders), and played an important role in overseeing public morals, the care of the poor, and resolving boundary disputes between landowners.

While the church was in Staunton, the glebe, or farm to support the minister, was a 200-acre tract at the base of Little North Mountain near present-day Hebron. Farm buildings were constructed and a plot was laid off as a public burying ground. This cemetery, which contains some of the earliest European graves in the upper Valley, is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.19 In 1762, the vestry authorized the purchase of 100 acres within ten miles of Staunton for the construction of a poor house. Located on Route 252 between present-day Arbor Hill and Middlebrook, this facility was opened in 1766 and was taken over by the county after the vestry was dissolved in 1780.18

**Early Farms: Size and Land Use Patterns**

Most of the farms within the Beverley and Borden patents averaged 300 acres. A few landholders amassed large parcels of 1000 acres or more, and much of their acreage was rented out to those who could not afford land of their own. The earliest tracts were centered around arable land on river bottom terraces; by 1760, all land along the major watercourses had been purchased.

The original Beverley and Borden settlements followed the classic “backcountry” pattern of tracts sharing common boundaries, dispersed farms, mixed grain-livestock farming, and regional self-sufficiency with a minimum of outside contact.19 The initial communities often were separated by sparsely populated upland areas, and connected by a road system built around local exchanges of goods and services. Even the Great Wagon Road (Route 11) was narrow and rutted. The Augusta County court ordered freeholders to report to an overseer or surveyor for six days of labor each year to cut and maintain the public roads. In 1750, such a road was ordered by the Augusta court from John Hays’ mill to Providence Meeting House. Today portions of that early road are
probably incorporated into Routes 731 (East Field Road) and 726 (Providence Road). In 1752, a road was ordered from Kennedy’s Mill to John Houston’s land; portions of this road are probably traveled on present-day Route 606, the Raphine Road. Hundreds of such orders are listed in the early Augusta records.20

By 1750, a few wealthier families such as the Walkers, Hays, Youngs, and Trimbles, held numerous, widely dispersed tracts of land. As the land was improved, adult children took up nearby parcels and developed extended economic units with their parents. Marriages between families also allowed for the consolidation of property. The large landowners typically lived on one property, known as their “seat,” leasing other lands to tenants or farmers who contracted to use the land in return for a portion of the crop grown. Once a renter, becoming a landowner was very difficult. Records show that few renters or former indentured servants ever acquired land.21

The primary money-making enterprise for early farmers involved livestock, especially cattle and horses. In the fall, herds of cattle were driven along the Great Wagon Road to sale at markets in Winchester and Pennsylvania. Later, local towns like Staunton and Lexington became the destination of these drives.

The type of agriculture practiced by the early European farmers was “infield/outfield,” involving the fencing of small gardens and crops around the farmstead and leaving extensive open range across property boundaries for livestock.22 Most herd owners registered a brand with the Augusta County Court. The amount of tilled acreage was small, and corn and flax were the first crops to be planted. Flax was important for its fibers, which were spun to make linen and linsey-woolsey, and its oil, which was used in making household products and medicines. Tobacco was also important to the early economy and functioned as a currency, demonstrated by the fact that the earliest taxes collected in the region were paid in this crop. It became a cash crop, primarily for Rockbridge County farmers, after the development of the North (Maury) River navigation in the late 18th century. Other cultivars included cotton, barley, hemp (which would become the number one cash crop by the time of the Revolution), oats, rye, wheat, hay, and cotton.

Early Commercial Crops and Industry
The first industry in the Route 252 Corridor was milling. Relying on a swift current or fall of water, mills were a natural addition to the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region, and they are mentioned in some of the earliest records. Used not only for grinding flour, mills ground pigments for paint, sawed wood, and fulled cloth. It was standard practice to have several different enterprises fueled by the same wheel.23

Gristmills were the most important of the rural mills. Family farmers relied on the services of their local miller to grind their harvests of wheat, corn, and rye into the flour that was the mainstay of the diet throughout the year. Within the first two years of settlement, two mills were in operation in current-day Rockbridge County: Hays Mill and James Young’s Mill on Whistle Creek (Route 669). By 1751, at least seven other farmers requested permission from the court to build gristmills. In Augusta County, the first mill was in operation by 1737 at Beverley’s Mill Place, with three more following by 1746, including
John Trimble's in the far northwestern corner of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, south of Swoope. According to some accounts, Hays Creek Mill (on Route 724 west of 726) was operating at its present location by 1760, although the present structure was constructed in 1819. Enlarged in the 1870s, it served the community as a grist mill until 1957. It is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The Hays Creek Mill that stands today at the junction of Routes 724 and 726 is not the original Hays Creek Mill said to be the earliest in Rockbridge County. That mill, along with the original Hays family settlement, is probably located along East Field Road (Route 731).

Another early household-based activity became an industry later in the century: the distillery. The Scots-Irish had a strong tradition of distilling whiskey, and corn, rye, and barley grown on their American farms provided a ready source of grain. In the early days of settlement, every farm had its own still and corn liquor was enjoyed at every social gathering. Whiskey was easily marketable, and in the days when the cost of transportation for surplus grains was prohibitive, converting these grains into whiskey lessened their bulk and increased the farmer's profit.

Frontier Architecture

Until the early 19th century, the most common house type in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor was the log cabin. The first structures were probably temporary, earthen floor, one-room shelters replaced by more substantial cabins within a few years. Such structures had roofs of split clapboard, weight poles, and split puncheon floors. The largest were 16 by 20 feet and two stories tall, with two rooms downstairs. Log construction was also used for farm buildings and barns.

The Scots-Irish learned the building form from the Pennsylvania Germans. Logs were usually chinked with oak slabs covered with a daub of clay and lime. Notches were usually V-shaped in early cabins, with the dovetail and half-dovetail notching used on structures by the end of the 18th century. However, the Scots-Irish put their signature on this building form: the entire structure was often whitewashed, inside and out, perhaps to make the house resemble the whitewashed, stucco-covered stone buildings of Northern Ireland. Few, if any, of these early homes are believed to have survived into the present day, although portions of some may remain under later renovations.

Native and Settler Interactions on the Frontier

While the settled Native populations of the upper Valley appear to have either left or been forced out of the Route 252 Corridor many years before the granting of the Beverley and Borden patents, early Augusta court records mention small parties of 15–20 Indians regularly stopping at Staunton. It was commonly believed that the Iroquois confederacy (Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Mohawk, Cayuga) claimed control of the region and would regularly send hunting parties south.

According to the records of Minister John Craig the Indians were “generally civil,” but by 1740, some settlers had been murdered by them. However, so few primary documents from this period have survived that it is difficult to disentangle accounts and be assured of their accuracy.

By 1742 Augusta County had formed a militia of 12 companies of 50 men each. These militia, under the local command of Colonel James Patton, were meant to keep the peace throughout the region, both among the settlers and between them and the Natives. In 1744 the Governors of Virginia, New York,
and Pennsylvania mediated the Treaty of Lancaster by which the Iroquois relinquished their claims to Virginia.\textsuperscript{30}

After relative peace between the Europeans and Natives for almost ten years after this treaty, the relationship broke down in the early 1750s when the “Great War for Empire” between France and England brought the conflict between those two powers to a head. The French and Indian War began in 1753 and lasted until 1764, stretching from the Canadian border to Georgia. The highly mobile Shawnee and other Algonquian-speaking tribes (Delaware, Mingo, Wyandot and Miami) were allies of the French, who challenged the English for control of the western frontier. The Shawnee conducted intermittent raids on Valley settlers from their villages between the Allegheny Mountains and the Ohio River Valley, attempting to destabilize the English presence in the region. Immigration into the Valley slowed during these years, and in some places, frontier settlers fled east of the Blue Ridge to the safer Piedmont or Carolinas.\textsuperscript{31}

Block houses, or what came to be known as “forts,” were built by settlers in the Beverley and Borden grants. Sometimes made of stone, these were not the true defensive forts ordered built by Governor Dinwiddie along the frontier; rather, they were built by the settlers as communal safe houses to be used during time of attack. The transformation of the Timber Ridge Meeting House to Stone Church in 1755 was probably in direct response to the hostilities.\textsuperscript{32}

It is difficult to determine the amount of disruption brought to the Route 252 Corridor by the French and Indian War. The few records still in existence demonstrate pulses of activity in the upper Valley. Many of the men who settled the Beverley and Borden grants are listed as members of the Augusta
The Augusta agricultural community played an important role in supplying the Continental army. By 1770, Augusta County farmers were producing more than 100,000 pounds of hemp per year, which replaced cattle and horses as the primary commodity in the region. Used for the manufacture of rope, twine, and cloth, hemp was encouraged as a crop, first by the colonial government, and later, by the state legislature. During the Revolutionary War, much of the crop from the upper Valley was sold to a rope factory on the James River.37

The Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor: A Survey
County Militia, and they received no pay for the time they spent away from their homes, families, and farms. The settlers appear to have been in a state of panic at some times; at others, their lives carried on as usual. Word of Braddock’s defeat at Fort DuQuesne (near Pittsburgh) in 1755 brought “dreadful confusion” to Staunton, according to Minister John Craig, as did the 1756 attack on Fort Dinwiddie in Bath County.33

While no such attacks were recorded within the Corridor proper, there was enough activity directly to the north near Buffalo Gap (with the murders of the Gardiner, Trimble, and Crawford families) and to the southwest at Kerrs Creek (two massacres), so that a general state of unease existed among the Beverley and Borden settlers until the war ended in 1764.34 After peace was restored to the frontier, immigration to the region dramatically increased.

Era of Classic Grain and Livestock Agriculture, 1760–1860

By the late 1760s, rising flour prices offset transportation costs from the Valley to fall line port towns like Alexandria, Fredericksburg, and Richmond. Upper Valley farmers turned to grain production, especially wheat, to take advantage of the market. Rural settlements in the Valley began to expand as farming shifted from self-sufficiency and local exchange to a more commercial enterprise. Surplus grain production increased by 210% in the years following the French and Indian War.35 Along with this increase came the growth of milling operations throughout the Valley, and market towns like Staunton and Winchester became central places from which regional commerce was conducted. This marked the beginning of the town-country pattern of settlement and economic exchange, a revolution in trade and travel that greatly influenced the modern Valley.

The Revolutionary War Years in Augusta and Rockbridge

The decade after the end of the French and Indian War saw continued discussion of the rights of all freeholders on American soil, who felt they had little say in the development of regulations imposed on them by England. Several militia companies were raised during the American Revolution, and the surnames of many Beverley and Borden grant settlers appear on the registration lists.36 No Revolutionary War engagements occurred in the Valley.

The Augusta agricultural community played an important role in supplying the Continental army. By 1770, Augusta County farmers were producing more than 100,000 pounds of hemp per year, which replaced cattle and horses as the primary commodity in the region. Used for the manufacture of rope, twine, and cloth, hemp was encouraged as a crop, first by the colonial government, and later, by the state legislature. During the Revolutionary War, much of the crop from the upper Valley was sold to a rope factory on the James River.37
Until the time of the Revolution, large quantities of linen had been imported from Ireland, but that trade was interrupted by the war. During the first session of the legislature, an act was passed in support of the construction of a factory for making sail duck for Virginia’s navy. Two Staunton men, Sampson Matthews and Alexander St. Clair, were appointed trustees of this enterprise, probably because of the potential for flax production in the upper Valley. Whether (or where) this operation developed is not known. However, by 1810, 5,000,000 yards of homespun linen were manufactured in Virginia, and the bulk of this came from the counties west of the Blue Ridge. From time to time, the Virginia legislature would call for quotas of clothing, wagons, and provisions for the soldiers. After the war ended, the Valley experienced a fairly rapid financial recovery, owing to the agricultural backbone of the economy.

**The Development of the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike**

To provide funds for much-needed roads, petitions for privately funded turnpikes were presented to the Virginia General Assembly beginning in the 1770s. The turnpike was so named for its toll gate, a turnstile of two crossed bars turned on a vertical pole. Travelers were required to pay a gate keeper a sum based on the amount and kind of goods carried. The monies collected were to be used in maintaining the road, which was often a muddy, rutted trail.

The road now known as Route 252 had a relatively late official start during the Turnpike Era. The General Assembly voted on March 17, 1851 to incorporate the Middlebrook and Brownsburg Turnpike Company “for the purpose of constructing a turnpike road from Staunton in the County of Augusta, by the way of Middlebrook and Brownsburg, to Lexington in the County of Rockbridge.” According to the Act of Incorporation, the road could cost no more than $400 per mile! Perhaps indicative of the road’s use by local residents for agricultural purposes (moving crops and timber to mills and on to market), a provision was entered into the record: the toll company could not “charge toll on cattle moving over said road.”

**The Impact of Commercial Farming**

The development of commercial farming operations significantly altered the character of life in the Valley. An increasing amount of acreage was cleared, profoundly changing the natural landscape. The old system of infield-outfield agriculture was replaced by a system of enclosed farming operations in which crop rotation played a key element. By the 1780s, Augusta and Rockbridge counties had become a “middlecountry” between the older society east of the Blue Ridge and the newly opened lands in Kentucky and Tennessee. The upper Valley was the starting point for the original settlers’ grandchildren, many of whom moved west beyond the Appalachians. This offset the practice of subdividing property through inheritance.

By the early 19th century, most upper Valley farmers were practicing mixed farming, with wheat and corn emerging as primary commercial crops. Homegrown items also were traded in local networks of barter. By 1850, Rockbridge County farmers were growing twice as much wheat (200,000 bushels) as needed for home consumption, and corn production had increased to 23 bushels per acre. According to the 1860 Agricultural Census, about one-half of the farms in Augusta County were 100–499 acres in size. Wheat, corn,
and oats were the primary crops produced on these farms; together they
accounted for over one million bushels of grain. One crop that declined in
importance was flax: in 1840, almost 25,000 pounds were produced, but by
1860, that number decreased by four-fifths. Maple sugar and molasses (syrup)
were also produced in the two counties, with 1860 being the best year on
record prior to the Civil War.

Livestock played an important role. The 1840 Agricultural Census of
Augusta County indicates that swine, cattle, horses, and sheep were raised in
large numbers (almost 84,000 animals). Over the course of the century, the
number of livestock declined, with more acreage being devoted to grain
production. However, as early as 1860 it is possible to see the impact of im-
proved livestock breeding. For example, between 1840 and 1850, the number
of sheep declined by almost 20%, but the amount of wool produced increased
by 25%. Similarly, between 1840 and 1850, the number of dairy cattle in-
creased only 4%, but the amount of butter produced increased by 39%.

The marketing requirements of cattle, wheat, and flour were many and
demanded the services of supporting craftsmen like blacksmiths, coopers,
wagoners, and wheelwrights. A network of farms, mills, storage warehouses,
towns, and transportation routes developed. What most marked the agricultural
history of the upper Valley in the hundred years before the Civil War was the
large number of mills, a few of which are standing today. In 1835, 24 gristmills
were in operation in Rockbridge County and Augusta County had 41. By
1860, the number of Augusta County businesses producing flour and meal
increased to 62, and 22 sawmills were in business. As a result of the increase
in wheat production, a new kind of milling enterprise developed in the late
18th century: the merchant mill. These operations purchased grain from
farmers, ground it, and marketed it under their own trade name. Perhaps the
most well-known is the Kennedy-Wade Mill, on Route 606 near Raphine.
Located on Otts Creek, this gristmill was built about 1800 by Andrew Kennedy
and acquired by the Wade family in 1882. It is the only mill in Rockbridge
County still in operation, and is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and
the National Register of Historic Places. Today it is simply known as “Wade’s
Mill” and produces a variety of flours and meals. Another such operation
known as the “Old Merchant Mill” was in business by 1835 in Brownsburg.
The Jacob Bowman Mill and Miller’s House (Sugarloaf Mill and Miller’s
House), built in 1790 on the headwaters of Eidson Creek, is one of the very
small number of Augusta County gristmills that survived the Civil War. It
operated until 1949.

After the Revolution, distilleries continued as a cottage industry in the
upper Valley. By 1800, George Clemmer was manufacturing Clemmer Whiskey
on his farm just off the turnpike south of Middlebrook. Clemmer was one of
many 19th century commercial distillers in Augusta County; fifteen other liquor
manufacturers were operating in the county by 1884. Perhaps the best known
was the Bumgardner Distillery southwest of Chestnut Ridge near Folly Mills.
Constructed in 1820 by M. J. Bumgardner, the distillery produced whiskey
under that name, advertising its quality with the claim, “Wherever it goes it
goes to stay.” His sons took over the business and expanded it into the
Bumgardner and McQuade Wholesale Liquor House in 1878.

Farming, Soil Depletion, and Early Conservation Measures

The early upland frontier approach to farming was well-suited to corn cultiva-
tion, as fields were still filled with girdled trees and stumps, and the corn plants
could be easily planted and hoed among these. However, even in the fertile
limestone soils of the Valley, corn crop yields declined after several years of
planting. Once commercial wheat farming became common, the problem of soil exhaustion increased. By the end of the 18th century, the amount of cleared land on a Valley farm increased from 10% of the farm's total acreage to 20-25%, and the practice of planting upland fields increased erosion.51

Unfortunately, the techniques of wheat cultivation in the years after the Revolutionary War exacerbated the problems farmers were experiencing with soil exhaustion and erosion. Wheat was typically sown (broadcast) over broken ground, increasing the use of plows and draft animals. Fields were typically prepared in the summer for fall planting and left open to summer deluges.

Farmers recognized the need for conservation measures by the 1770s, a point that became more urgent with the decreasing availability of farmland. Tidewater tobacco planters began experimenting with crop rotation, planting clover, alfalfa, and other nitrogen-fixing legumes in fields exhausted by tobacco and corn. This technique grew in popularity in the Valley, as well, and by the 1830s, farmers in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor were practicing rotation and marling (liming).52 In addition, the iron plow allowed farmers to build up ridges in their fields to slow erosion.

The African-American Presence in the Upper Valley

It is believed that a small number of the more wealthy Scots-Irish settlers who came to the Beverley and Borden grants were slaveholders who brought African slaves with them when they settled. Augusta County records indicate that several freeholders listed slaves in their property inventories in 1750.53 The study of the history of slavery and slave life in Augusta and Rockbridge counties is in its infancy. While it is relatively easy to follow the development of laws that governed slave life, the particular details of daily life are missing.

A 1756 report on the population and nativity of the Valley population notes 80 slaves in all of Augusta County, less than 5% of the total population.54 A tax list compiled in 1787 indicates that freeholders living in the portion of the county from Staunton south to Rockbridge County and west into what are now Bath and Pendleton counties owned 450 slaves.55 While the assessor counted only one or two slaves for most households, thirteen freeholders owned eight or more. By 1790, 10% of the population of Augusta County was enslaved.56 The 1810 Census substantiates that ratio for Middlebrook. In 1850 30% of the taxable households in Augusta County owned slaves.57 By the time of the Civil War, almost 21% of the population of Augusta, and almost 24% of Rockbridge, was comprised of slaves.58

The ideal of small Valley farmers who relied on the labor of their family members and a diversified (as opposed to a one-crop) agricultural economy has been taken by historians as evidence for a poorly developed slavery system here. However, more recent research into the agricultural and social history of the Valley has shown that slaves were fundamental to the transition to commercial farming. The first major increase in the number of slaves was seen during...
Asbury United Methodist congregation, Brownsburg, 1938–39. This church, rebuilt after a ca. 1914 fire, is included in the Brownsburg Historic District. Courtesy of Mrs. Frances Porterfield.

The years of the hemp boom. In Rockbridge County, intensive tobacco cultivation was a factor in the increase of the number of slaves after 1780. By 1860, Rockbridge farmers were producing 400,000 pounds of tobacco a year, with most of it being sent down the North (Maury) River to Richmond on canal boats. The largest tobacco operations required about 60 slaves.59

The majority of slaves worked on farms, local businesses, or the iron and canal industry that developed after the Revolutionary War, alternating tasks with the seasons. Records indicate that from 1833–36, Gibraltar Forge near Cedar Grove depended on slaves, many of whom were hired out from larger farms. Hired out slaves also worked at the Cedar Grove mills in the 1840s and 1850s.60

A recent study by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources points out that few landmarks of pre-Civil War African-American history have survived.61 Slaves contributed significantly to the construction of the substantial houses and outbuildings of their masters, many of which exist today. However, slave quarters were typically small log cabins, and two known quarters survive in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, one of brick and one of frame, both dating to ca. 1840. Slave cabins typically housed a single family and were clustered together. A separate cemetery was sometimes maintained for black members, although burial in slave cemeteries on the farms where they lived was common.

A substantial number of “free” blacks lived in the upper Valley, and were recorded separately in a register kept by the court clerk. Between 1803 and 1865, 706 free blacks were registered in Augusta County and Staunton.62 They supported themselves as wage laborers, although a few opened their own businesses.

With the end of the Civil War came emancipation for all slaves, and while there was a general migration out of the south to northern cities, some African-American families remained in the upper Valley. After 1865, there was a steady decline in the number of African-Americans living in Augusta and Rockbridge counties, a trend that continued until the 1960s.63

African-Americans who remained in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg area established churches and schools, as evidenced by the Oak Hill Baptist Church in Newport, Newport School House No. 2, Mount Edward Baptist Church (now Mt. Airy) in Middlebrook, and Middlebrook School House No. 22, all recorded on maps in 1885.64 Several African-American settlements and businesses in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor were also established by this time, including the Smoky Row area north of Sugarloaf Mountain, the southwest end of Middlebrook, and the northeastern side of Newport. Shadrach Brown, a Middlebrook wagonmaker, was among a few ex-slaves skilled at a trade. In their “Notes on the History of Middlebrook,” Mrs. Beulah Heizer and Mrs. Rusmisel remembered several families of ex-slaves who came to live in that town, including a midwife, Aunt Susan Black, and Samuel Blackburn who “bought his wife after he was free.”65 Irwin Rosen, a lifelong resident of McKinley, recalls an African-American family living west of the village on the eastern slope of Little North Mountain. Every day, the father, Jake Anderson,
would walk across the mountain to Augusta Springs (Pond Gap), where he was employed at a tannery.

**The Growth of Towns and Crossroads**

At the turn of the 19th century, while Staunton and Lexington were growing as the primary market centers of the upper Valley, towns like Middlebrook, Brownsburg, and Moffatts Creek (Newport) were also established to cater to the needs of the farming community. These villages became transportation and commercial hubs from which outside goods were sold and local goods traded and sold.

**Arbor Hill.** Named for the ca. 1820 home of William Young (Arbor Hill Farm on Route 695 west), the hamlet of Arbor Hill was established along the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike. The oldest standing structure in the area is Sleepy Hollow Farm (ca. 1780) on Route 695 east. Several additional homes were constructed in the area between 1820 and 1830. A post office was established in Arbor Hill in 1857. In 1882, Peyton referred to Arbor Hill as "a pretty little hamlet," noting the "mercantile establishment" (Palmer's Store in 1875 and Hündley's Store in 1884) along the turnpike, now at the intersection of Routes 252 and 695. Several churches were within easy travel distance, including Hebron Presbyterian Church and Bethlehem United Methodist Church (organized in 1852; present structure built in 1917) south of Swoope. Smoky Row Baptist Church, established in the early 1900s for the African-American community, is located on Route 709. Today, the Arbor Hill Church of the Brethren is found just north of Arbor Hill on Route 252. A post office was in operation at Arbor Hill in 1884, as was a wheelwright and blacksmith's shop. According to some accounts, two turnpike tollbooths were located at Arbor Hill, each charging ten cents per wagon (and later, automobile) to pass north or south.

**Middlebrook.** In his *Augusta County History, 1865–1980*, Richard MacMaster referred to Middlebrook as an example of the rural trading centers that dotted the region in the 19th century. Probably a crossroads since the 1750s, Middlebrook was one of three muster points in Augusta County. The village was organized in 1799 according to a town plat, which was drawn by property owners William and Nancy Scott. Middlebrook was a stop on the stage coach line from Staunton to Lexington, and one of the first businesses established was an ordinary (tavern), dating to ca. 1800. A mail stop was established at the same time, and a tannery was in operation by 1805. By 1810, the village had a population of 66. At this time, there were thirteen occupied and improved lots. Several brick and stone houses were built around log frames or cores between 1810 and 1830. By 1836, Middlebrook was one of six polling places in the county, and a post office was established by 1840, along with other businesses which supported the farming community and the stage line. In 1848, the Howardville and Rockfish Turnpike from Nelson County was extended to Greenville, and soon afterwards, to Middlebrook. A toll booth was established after the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike was incorporated in 1851, and the town grew quickly. In 1855, the town had 60 dwellings.
On the eve of the Civil War, Middlebrook could boast a tan yard and leather-making establishment, two cabinet-maker shops, a hatter’s shop, a wagon manufactory, a boot and shoe shop, a harness-maker’s shop, and two of the largest mercantile stores in Augusta County. These stores supplied most necessities, and local craftsmen could make what the farmers needed. In 1882, it had a population of 274, and Peyton referred to it as “one of the most prosperous and enterprising villages in the county.” Soon after the Civil War, a substantial African-American community was established at the west end of town. By 1884, Middlebrook was a “hive of industry,” as would be noted by a correspondent to the Staunton Spectator. In addition to the businesses already listed in 1860 were two additional carriage/wagon makers, one additional store, two blacksmith shops, a sawmill, and two physicians, an undertaker, a tinner, and two builders. Five furniture and cabinet makers also manufactured coffins. The town influenced settlement in the surrounding countryside, with several businesses locating on the old road to Summerdean (Route 876).

The village continued to be an important center to the surrounding community well into the 20th century. Churches played a central role, with Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church, northeast of Middlebrook on Route 694, already established in 1785. The present building was constructed in 1886. St. John’s German Reformed Church (now the site of St. John’s Church of Christ) on Route 695 east of Middlebrook, was founded in 1780 and shared its building with Lutheran congregations until the time of the Civil War. Three churches were located in town in 1884: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (established 1883), Grace German Reformed Church (established 1879), and Mt. Edward Baptist Church (established in the 1870s for the African-American community). The latter, known today as Mount Airy Baptist Church, maintains the only African-American cemetery in continuous use since the late 19th century in the Middlebrook area. Oak Hill Cemetery, with gravestones dating to the early 20th century, is located south of Middlebrook on Route 670, adjacent to Oak Hill Baptist Church.

In the 1890s, the citizens of Middlebrook organized a baseball team and the Middlebrook String Band. Another institution that sustained the community was the public high school, which included a community assembly room. Funds for the facility were raised by Middlebrook area residents, who also helped in the actual construction. The school was used for meetings by every kind of local group, including churches, and was used until the 1970s.
By the 1890s, some of Middlebrook’s businesses were closing and families were moving away. Greenville had become the commercial center between Staunton and Lexington, and in the same Spectator article, the author wrote that small craftsmen were losing work to the factories, which could make goods cheaper than by hand. The general stores were losing business to mail-order companies, but Irwin Rosen remembers four such stores in operation in the 1920s. Mrs. Theodore Webb recalls that on coming to Middlebrook in 1937, she found it to be “a bustling town.” Middlebrook is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It is recognized for its “19th century vernacular architecture” whose character and scale have been maintained as they “appeared during the height of its prosperity in the 1880s.” In addition to the structures lining Route 252, approximately 55 archaeological sites are included in the historic district. Most of these are the foundations and remains of outbuildings and features associated with the town in the 19th century.

Summerdean. Another once-bustling village in the shadow of Little North Mountain is Summerdean, situated at the crossroads of two major trails providing access to the mountain, Routes 602 and 603. Route 602 runs along the base of Little North Mountain in the project area, and prior to the establishment of the Little North Wildlife Management Area, Route 603 connected Middlebrook (and the turnpike) with Augusta Springs by way of Pond Gap. Summerdean developed as a trade center and small market village by the mid-19th century. One of the many remaining questions about this settlement is the origin of its name.

The Summerdean Store and Post Office is one of the earliest brick store buildings in the county, dating from 1840–60, and prosperous farmers in the area built several large brick homes and a brick church. The post office was operating by 1857. The community became the focus of local industry by 1884. Businesses included a tannery, four mills, two blacksmiths’ shops, and a wagon shop. A public school (Summerdean School House No. 4) was established in the 1870s.

Shemariah. Shemariah is located at the crossroads of Routes 602 and 677 between Summerdean and McKinley. This small community developed at the base of Little North Mountain where an old road from Estaline Furnace came across Miller Gap and intersected Route 602. Shemariah received its name from Shemariah Presbyterian Church, which was organized in 1833 from the Bethel congregation. “Shemariah” is derived from the Hebrew “Yah(weh) has guarded.” The structure that stands today was constructed between 1870 and 1890.

During its first years, the church established a private school “for the education of pious youth.” By 1841, it was known as Shemariah Academy, and reading, philosophy, and music courses were offered. By 1866, the school had 29 pupils (21 female, 8 male), most of them enrolled as day students and drawn from the Summerdean and Middlebrook areas. Tuition was $18 a year for the primary grades and $27 a year for the upper grades. By the 1870s, Shemariah School House No. 20 was established as a public facility west of the church.

McKinley. Known to locals as “Gravelly Hill,” McKinley was officially named in 1896 after its newly opened post office and the current president. Located on Route 682, this small community contained a union church, built in 1842 by local

Cultural Resources
residents of different denominations and shared among them. Three congregations used the log structure: United Brethren, Lutheran, and Reformed. It burned in 1870, and by 1872, the Lutherans built St. Mark’s (now Redeemer). On the site of the burned church, the United Brethrens built a frame church in 1873; this was replaced in 1903 and is now the McKinley United Methodist Church. A public school was established here in 1877 and operated until 1933.77

McKinley was probably established as a settlement because of its location at the convergence of two trails through Little North Mountain: Waskey Gap Trail and Troxel Gap Trail. Both ended in the Estaline Valley, connecting to what is now Route 601 along Smith Creek. As such, McKinley served as a stopover for locals traveling from Estaline to the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike.

The post office was operated out of Robert Arehart’s store, a small establishment that carried cloth, notions, and groceries, according to Irvin Rosen, lifetime resident and clockmaker. Irvin’s father, Finley, bought the store and ran it until 1908, when the post office closed. Two more stores were opened in the 1920s, providing the community with basic necessities and gasoline. A blacksmith, barber, and shoemaker maintained businesses in the community, and there were also saw mills and cider mills in the area. According to Mr. Rosen, the McKinley area was considered “chestnut land,” as stands of these trees covered the hills of area, and stumps can still be seen here today.

Newport. The southernmost Augusta County community along Route 252, Newport was also known as “Moffatts Creek” for the stream around which it developed. Two prominent land forms, Newport Hill and Laurel Hill, mark the hamlet’s eastern border. Located on the stage coach line between Staunton and Lexington, Newport may have become a stop because of Halfway Spring, a water source on the south end, still protected by a cement trough. The hamlet boasted a post office by 1855.78 Early maps indicate that it was not planned as were Middlebrook and Brownsburg, and no toll booth operated there.

The oldest standing houses in Newport date from the Civil War era. Newport was a direct extension of the surrounding farm community, providing important services, but not offering the commerce or social life of the larger villages. This is not to say that Newport wasn’t a busy place: approximately 100 people called Newport home in the 1880s, and by 1884, two sawmills and a gristmill were located here, as well as a blacksmith shop, a tanyard, several small stores, and a post office. A public cattle scale, the only one on the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike in Augusta County, was also found here.79 Several churches served the community, including Mt. Herman Lutheran Church (established 1850), Oak Hill Baptist Church (established in the 1870s), and St. Paul’s German Reformed Church (established as New Bethany in 1845). The foundation remains of St. Paul’s, as well as those of the nearby bridge, can still be seen at the base of
Laurel Hill, and are recorded as archaeological sites with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Newport Public School House No. 2 was operated for African-American students on Route 679 northwest of the settlement. In 1873, the Newport Public School House No. 1 was located west of town on Route 681, and is included in the “Public Schools in Augusta County, Virginia, 1870–1940” thematic nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Sandys Store and Service Station was established in the late 19th century, and was one of the first gas stations in the area.

**Brownsburg.** The village of Brownsburg was officially recognized by the General Assembly in 1793, when the first lots were divided from property belonging to Robert Wardlaw and Samuel McChesney. Although it would be another 58 years before the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike was incorporated, the town was identified in 1793 as a stop on an established stage coach line. Coachmen would stop in Brownsburg and change horses there, given its midpoint location between Staunton and Lexington.

Brownsburg may have been named for the Reverend John Brown, first pastor of New Providence Presbyterian Church, and one of the first property owners in the town. By 1794, 24 lots had been sold and recorded in the Rockbridge County deed books, and a pattern of settlement was emerging. Architectural surveys indicate that several of the standing structures have log cores, and probably date to the 1820s.

*The Diary of Henry Boswell Jones of Brownsburg* offers insight into everyday life in the Brownsburg area from 1842–1871. A progressive farmer, Jones was involved in many businesses, including milling, contract hauling, storekeeping, and surveying. He was well-known throughout Rockbridge County, and was especially active in the development of transportation. He served as an officer and director of the North River Navigation Company, and was involved in surveying the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike, which he viewed as a convenient connection to the boat landings at Cedar Grove. He was a superintendent of the turnpike, and kept records of the tolls collected at Brownsburg.

Brownsburg became an important center of commerce during the early years of the 19th century. A private school was built in 1823 near the intersection of Main Street (Route 252) and Fairfield Road. In fact, the town had so grown by 1835 that it was home to twenty dwellings, three stores, two shoe factories, a tavern, a tanyard, a gristmill, a mercantile flour mill, three wheelwrights, two blacksmiths, two tailors, a hatter, a saddler, a cabinet maker, and a carpenter. At that time, 120 people lived there including three physicians. More families made their homes in town by 1840, when thirty dwellings were listed. In 1849, citizens organized to form a joint stock company that would fund the construction of a private high school for boys; by September 1850, the Brownsburg Academy (or “Presbyterian High School”) opened as a “classical school.” It operated until 1877, when the building was sold to the newly formed public school district in the area.
Hotel at Wilson's Springs, just west of Rockbridge Baths, early 1900s. Now a private residence, this resort was known for its sulphur waters and was a favorite picnic spot for locals. Courtesy of Royster Lyle.

As a market town, Brownburg reached its heyday by the time of the Civil War. While businesses continued to flourish there until the 1880s, the fact that it was bypassed by the Valley Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad caused the town to lose its commercial importance. However, it continued to serve as a social hub for the community. Lifelong resident Ed Patterson remembers five stores in town when he was growing up in the 1930s, and says it was hard to find a place to park on Saturday night. Brownburg has 42 major buildings included in a historic district recognized by the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1973 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Most of the houses date from the first half of the 19th century, with several dating from 1870–1910. The town celebrated its bicentennial in 1993.

**Zack.** Located on Walkers Creek Road (Route 602) just south of the Augusta/Rockbridge County line, this tiny village sits against Little North Mountain. It may have begun as a settlement around Kennedy's Mill, which operated from 1808–1949. The name “Zack” was appended to the community in the early 20th century, when a post office was opened there and named for President Zachary Taylor.

Two churches serve the community: Walkers Creek United Methodist and Immanuel Presbyterian. Walkers Creek was organized in 1850, and the building incorporates a log core. It was used as a school and a place of worship for several denominations. Immanuel Presbyterian was built in 1879; the present structure dates from 1904. At one time this crossroads also had a store, service station, and two-room schoolhouse.

**Wilson's Springs and Rockbridge Baths.** After the Revolutionary War, well-to-do residents from East Coast cities began engaging in recreational activities away from home, some of which were meant as a palliative for body and soul. Extended trips to the “medicinal” springs of western Virginia became very popular among this set. Local residents had known of these places for many years, and frequented them in the late summer months. Two such springs existed at the southern boundary of the Middlebrook-Brownburg project area in Rockbridge County: Wilson's Springs and Rockbridge Baths.

Wilson's Springs, located on a small island in the Maury River at the mouth of Goshen Pass, was made accessible by a log footbridge. A house was already standing there in 1775 when the Daniel Strickler family purchased the property as a farm, and the area became known as Strickler's Springs. In 1843, William Wilson II bought the property from Strickler, and enlarged the house so that it also served as a hotel. The same Wilson family owned a store and boatyard in the area, which came to be known as Wilson's Springs. Local families would come in large numbers after the harvest, setting up camp around covered wagons or picnicking for the day. By the time of the Civil War, approximately thirty cabins had been built near the sulphur spring. Six of
which are still standing), and Wilson's Springs was a social hub for the local community. During the war years, Confederate soldiers guarding Goshen Pass were quartered in the cabins. After the war, several families of Rockbridge County built summer homes near the cabins.

The 1880s through World War I marked the heyday of Wilson's Springs. The Wilson family built a bowling alley, and the hotel was enlarged so that it could house 70 guests. It is estimated that the cabins could hold 250 guests. In addition to taking the waters, activities included swimming, riding, and fishing. Unfortunately, when Route 39 was relocated, many of the cottages were destroyed. Today the property remains in the Wilson family, and the hotel is now a private residence.

Rockbridge Baths, located one mile downriver from Wilson's Springs, was more known for its thermal springs (a constant temperature of 72 degrees F), magnesia waters, and algae poultices used to heal skin disorders. In 1789 John Letcher, Sr. purchased the property where the springs are found, naming it Letcher's Spring. The Methodists established a “preaching point” on a farm to the west around 1800. In 1821, Bethesda Presbyterian Church was organized, and a building dedicated in 1843. (McElwee Chapel, near Oak Hill on Route 726, was established in 1905 by Bethesda as a preaching point.) By 1830, Lucinda Smith of Lexington opened a hotel across from the springs, enlarging the baths and enclosing them with planks. In 1834, the Ebenezer United Methodist Church was organized in the Rockbridge Baths area, and the structure that stands today near the intersection of Routes 39 and 732 was constructed in 1908. In the 1840s, the community coalesced when the Jordan family bought the property, opened a store and post office, and re-named it Jordan's Spring. Jordan and others formed the Rockbridge Baths Company in 1857, which oversaw the construction of a new hotel and changed the name again, this time to Rockbridge Baths. The post office also took this name, although Civil War-era maps still refer to the area as Jordan’s Spring.

After the Civil War, Robert E. Lee, then president of Washington College and a resident of Lexington, would ride to the baths, sometimes accompanied by his wife. By this time, separate “spas” (bathhouses) were established for men and women, and it is believed that the latter still stands along Route 39. Baths, good meals, parties, billiards, bowling, boating, riding, and musical entertainment were enjoyed by the guests of the hotel.

In 1874, Dr. S.B. Morrison, a Confederate Army doctor, rented the hotel, operating it as a sanitarium. Both the hotel and the village flourished during the twenty-five years that marked the Morrison era. Reflecting the growth of the community, the congregation of Bethesda Presbyterian Church constructed a new building in 1876. The Anderson family opened a store in the 1870s and continued to operate it until the 1960s; today, Route 712 is named for them. In 1883, two gristmills were located in the area: Foutz Mill and Jordan Heirs Mill. The latter, known more recently as Mast Mill, operated until 1949 and stood until the 1960s, when it burned.

After Morrison ended his association with the Baths in 1900, the hotel was sold several times. It was purchased by Virginia Military Institute in 1922 and was used as a summer school. Much of the hotel burned in 1926, and it was never reopened. The post office has remained in operation, and today, the Maury River Mercantile [old Anderson General Store] is located in the building that was once part of a dance hall for the resort. It is one of the oldest stores in the county in continuous use.

Jump Mountain. Jump Mountain, one of the landmarks of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, has long been referenced in local histories. The name derives from a number of “lover’s leap” stories, all sharing the same motif: a
distraught woman, learning of her lover’s death, jumps to her own death from the prominent summit. The most popular rendition marks a Shawnee maiden as the main character. According to legend, she watched her beloved warrior die in battle in the Walker's Creek valley below, and jumped to follow him in death. Whatever the origin of the name, “Jump Mountain” does not appear on maps until 1860.

Jump Mountain Road (Route 724), which now terminates close to the summit, once continued westward into the Little Calpasture River valley. A small, dispersed settlement developed where this road intersects Route 602 on the east side of Jump Mountain. Several early 19th century structures and important landmarks remain today, including Maxwelton (Stuart House), ca. 1815. Walkers Creek Cemetery, which includes several Walker family graves and those of their early neighbors, is located on this property. Walker Mill was in operation near the intersection of Routes 602 and 724 in 1860; by 1883, it was known as “Frances Mill.” While never an organized community, a post office named for the mountain operated out of Gardner Reid’s Store in 1915. Much of the Maxwelton Farm is now devoted to Camp Maxwelton, in operation since 1953.

Bustleburg. Bustleburg, now a small crossroads near the southern boundary of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, is the most recently named community. Located at the intersection of Routes 252 and 712, Bustleburg was named by a well-known landowner, Ollie T. Wade, in 1928. Wade opened a general store at the intersection that year, and it served the community until the 1980s. A voting precinct since the 1950s, today Bustleburg is home to a recreation center established by the Wade family.

Fredericksburg. The southernmost named community in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor is Fredericksburg, located along Route 623 on the south side of the Maury River. A one-room schoolhouse served the children of this area from 1885 until the late 1920s. The name of this community is thought to refer to a local musician in the 1880s, Frederick Snider, a member of a local landholding family.

Located at the eastern base of Hog Back Mountain, Fredericksburg was a crossroads of mountain paths. Today, several jeep trails from Hog Back converge here, indicating that at one time there were overland paths from the Fredericksburg area westward, connecting at Cooper’s Knob and continuing to Goshen. These may pre-date the Maury River Road (Route 39), marking the paths between mountain farmsteads and the Maury River valley. A large parcel of land near Fredericksburg, known as the “Maple Swamp” (Route 624) was owned by the Firebaughs, and is believed to be the location of the clay deposits used by this family of potters.

The North River Navigation, the Iron Industry, and Cedar Grove

Early 19th century community leaders began looking toward rivers as a means of cheap and fast transportation to get their crops to market. Although not considered commercially navigable today, just less than a hundred years ago, the Maury (North) River was a major route on which goods and people moved from southern Augusta and Rockbridge counties down the James River toward Richmond. For the better part of the 19th century, the Maury was a bateau and canal boat navigation, and many of the “improvements” from that time are recognizable today as the remains of locks, dams, and canals. Usually manned by a crew of three and a skillful steersman, the bateau was propelled by poles, and operated only when the river was high enough to allow safe passage over the rocks. Aside from taking advantage of freshets, regular bateau traffic depended on channels cut through the rock beds, as well as low dams that diverted water into the main channel.
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By 1801, the head of navigation on the river was Cedar Grove (also called Flumen), ten miles above Lexington at the foot of Goshen Pass rapids. Cedar Grove was the destination of wagons carrying loads of cast-iron bars, or “pigs” from the furnaces west of Goshen Pass, as well as wrought-iron from the forges of this area. In the beginning, the products of these operations were hauled by wagon over the Blue Ridge to Scottsville, where they were transported down the James River to Richmond. With iron ore deposits in the western flanks of the Blue Ridge and west of Little North Mountain, Rockbridge County became the center of an iron industry that literally fueled the growth of the region from the 1760s until a few years after the Civil War. At least 21 forges, foundries, and furnaces operated in the county, several in close proximity to the southern boundary of the Route 252 Corridor. The production of pig iron was also of considerable importance in Augusta County, where three furnaces and six forges were in operation by 1835. Given its quick development and potential for profit, the iron industry was the major force behind the development of the river navigation in Rockbridge County. Once in place, the canal system was used by local farmers to send flour, tobacco, wool, flax, and other products downriver, where they were sold at markets in Lexington, Lynchburg, and Richmond. Between 1801 and the completion of the James River and Kanawha Canal to Lexington in the 1850s, Cedar Grove was known as “the metropolis of Rockbridge.” Today, this crossroads at the intersection of Routes 39 and 252 is little known, often left off current maps.

Cedar Grove grew up around the batteau traffic on the river and the industries necessary to support it. Several mills and warehouses were established in the Cedar Grove vicinity, including Randolph’s Mill and Lindsay’s Mill and Sawmill, both in operation by 1837. Near Rockbridge Baths and the conjunction of Hays Creek and the Maury River, several sawmills, iron forges, and gristmills were in operation by 1830. A post office was established in 1833 under the name “Cedar Grove Mills.” Local farmers living in the Hays Creek and Upper Maury drainages came to rely on Cedar Grove as a market town.
Batteaux used on the upper reaches of the Maury were “disposable”; they were constructed for a one-way trip down the river and then sold as lumber at their destination. Some were poled upriver with goods from town markets, but such work was extremely difficult. According to the Virginia Canals and Navigations Society, several boatyards operated in the vicinity of Cedar Grove to keep up with the demand for batteaux.\textsuperscript{96} In addition to such places, the Society hypothesizes that there should be a few sunken batteaux on the Maury, preserved in a mudbank or island. Records indicate that batteaux and their cargo were lost from time to time; local lore has it that several loads (8–10 tons each) of pig iron were lost in the river when the batteaux carrying them broke up on the rocks near Copper’s Bottom, now a well-known swimming hole.

In an 1839 court hearing, the ironmaster of Gibraltar Forge complained that the batteaux ran only six months out of the year, leaving him with unwanted stockpiles of iron. Rockbridge citizens renewed their call for the construction of a canal to Lexington, especially after the James River and Kanawha Company completed a canal from Richmond to Lynchburg by 1840. The canal to Lexington was realized in the 1850s, and was used extensively for over twenty years, carrying freight and passengers.

Freight costs were paid to the boat owner, and the canal was paid a toll for every canal boat or batteau. Passenger boats (packets) left Lexington for Richmond three times a week, traveling at an average speed of four miles per hour, helped along by horses on tow paths. During the decade prior to the Civil War, the canal was the commercial artery for Rockbridge County. Records indicate that in 1853, 150,000 bushels of corn and 60,000 gallons of whiskey made their way down the canal. In 1855, 18,879 barrels of flour, 7,500 bushels of wheat, and 2,226 tons of pig and bar iron were shipped on the fifteen-lock North River Canal.\textsuperscript{99}

With Lexington as the head of navigation on the canal, the “metropolis” of Cedar Grove continued to be a shipping point for southern Augusta/northern Rockbridge counties. In 1880, a gristmill, sawmill, blacksmith shop, stores, and post office were still in operation, but most of the canal-related businesses had moved to East Lexington. After this time, Cedar Grove disappeared almost as quickly as it developed. The canal remained important through the early 1880s, when it was eclipsed by the railroads.

The history of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike (Route 252) is probably closely tied to that of the James River and Kanawha Canal and the North River Road (Route 39). Boye’s 1825 map clearly indicates that Route 252 ran directly between Staunton and Lexington. Sections of the North River Road are depicted on this map, but the road did not extend as far east as it does today. However, by 1860, the North River Road became more pronounced on maps and intersected the turnpike at Cedar Grove. With the increased use of the North River Road by ironmasters west of Goshen Pass, and with the development of the Cedar Grove as head of navigation, the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Turnpike functioned as a main feeder route to the canal. It is also at this time that the turnpike was truncated at the present intersection of Routes 39 and 252, probably not long after the latter road was incorporated. After 1860, all maps of the area indicate that the North River Road was a main artery into Lexington and that Route 252 ended at its present location of Cedar Grove.

The Pottery Industry

The manufacture of pottery, especially for domestic, utilitarian uses, was practiced by Valley crafters during the 19th century. According to archaeolo-
gists Kurt Russ and John McDaniel, eight potters were in business in Rockbridge County between 1775 and 1880, and two of their potteries were located in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor. The Rockbridge Pottery operated at Rockbridge Baths from 1832-1882, producing salt-glazed stonewares and lead-glazed earthenwares. This pottery, including an updraft kiln, a potter's shed, and a clay-processing area, was excavated in the 1980s. Records and artifacts indicate that churns, water coolers, storage jars, jugs, milk pans, and bowls were produced here, as well as reed-stem pipe bowls. The Firebaugh Pottery was located near Bustleburg along Back Creek (Cedar Grove Branch). An archaeological study of the Firebaugh property revealed what is believed to be the location of the pottery, marked by concentrations of pottery sherds, glazed bricks, reed-stem pipe bowls, and kiln-related artifacts. In addition to these establishments, a potter named J. L. Hallman ran a pottery southwest of Sugarloaf, near Mt. Tabor Church, in the 1880s, as did D. Grimm north of Middlebrook. By the 1890s, the pottery manufacturing industry in the upper Valley was no longer viable, as local wares could no longer be produced as cheaply as those from larger potteries outside the region.

Architecture of the Grain and Livestock Era

Of the approximately 245 structures in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor included in the VDHR survey, 167 were either started or completely constructed during the seventy years preceding the Civil War. All dwellings included in the survey are detailed in Appendix I. While this high number reflects, in part, the pre-20th century focus of the study, it also reflects the more substantial building materials and techniques of the era (combinations of stone, brick, frame, and log), as compared to those of the frontier era. In addition, the number serves as an indication of the financial capability of owners to make a more lasting mark on the landscape. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the distinct ethnic styles of frontier period architecture began to blend to form a vernacular American architecture.

Common Late 18th/Early 19th-Century Building Styles. Four basic house types reflecting the three primary ethnic groups are represented in the upper Valley architecture of the late 18th and early 19th centuries: the Scots-Irish rectangular form; the German Flurkuchenhaus; the English hall-parlor plan; and the Quaker plan. The floor plan of these structures, and not the building material, is key to understanding the relationship between these early house types and the ethnicity of the builder. Many of these houses were originally constructed of log, but eventually were covered over and incorporated into later structures. Thus, they are a challenge to document, and are overshadowed in the architectural record by more substantial, larger forms.

The one-room Scots-Irish form, the basis for many of the early log cabins of the frontier period, was probably one of the most common housing forms in the upper Valley. Farmers of more modest means continued to build them well into the 19th century. Only fourteen examples of this plan (usually part of an enlarged structure) have been documented in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor.

The second type, characteristic of German influence, was the Flurkuchenhaus, the three-room house plan with a central chimney. More common in the lower Valley, only two examples of this house type survive in Augusta County. Both are in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor: Sleepy Hollow Farm (ca. 1780), near Arbor Hill; and the Lewis Shuey House (ca.1795) on Route 713 near Swoope. Both are of log construction, covered in weatherboards to project a more refined image. No surviving examples of this house type are known from Rockbridge County.
The third type, the two-room English hall-and-parlor plan, was a dominant folk form throughout the 19th century. With 52 standing examples, it is the second-most common house form in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor. The hall served the traditional function of as the outward, or public, room, while the inner parlor provided private space for the family. Only the parlor was heated by a single end chimney. Most examples are two rooms wide, one room deep, and a story and a half tall. Of the hall-and-parlor houses in the Corridor, 45 are log, six are brick, and one is frame.

The two-room plan also found another expression in the upper Valley: the two heated rooms/two chimney form. A total of 21 of these houses are recorded for the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor. Thirteen of these are brick, but this may be more a reflection of the preservation of masonry houses than the preference of building material. The brick Middlebrook Tavern (ca. 1825–1835) is a good example of this plan, as is the frame Mulberry Grove (ca. 1790), east of Brownsburg on Route 724.

The fourth type, the Quaker Plan, was a three-room plan of Scots-Irish and English heritage. The chimneys are on the end walls, and the one serving two rooms has diagonally-situated fireplaces. Only two examples survive in the Corridor: the Arehart House (ca. 1820–1840) west of Middlebrook on Route 682; and Elm Farm (ca. 1800), south of Wades Mill on Route 721.

Vernacular Architecture and the Georgian Influence. After the Revolutionary War, ethnic influences became less distinct as local builders incorporated new forms. English in origin, the Georgian style used symmetrical plans with a central passage and emphasized classical details learned from architectural building manuals, or pattern books. In the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor, the Georgian influence is seen in the I-house and the double-pile plan (both three and four rooms). As opposed to the owner-built folk houses of the early years of settlement, these new forms required greater effort, both in terms of design and execution.

Local expressions of the Georgian style are the Kennedy-Lunsford Farm (ca. 1796), southeast of Wade’s Mill on Route 606 and the McFadden House (ca. 1793), a two-story brick structure included in the Kennedy-Wade’s Mill Historic District on Route 606.

The I-House. By the turn of the 19th century, well-off landowners in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor began building two-story, brick structures with simple, but fine, interior and exterior detailing. Known as the “Valley of Virginia House,” the I-house became the most common pre-20th century style in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor. A total of 54 I-houses stand in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor today.

The letter “I” describes the shape and plan to the main body, as typical I-houses are two-rooms-wide by one-room-deep, and often exhibit a central hall and gable end chimneys. Some of the more substantial brick I-houses were
Lithograph of the George Mish Farm, northeast of Middlebrook on Route 876. The barn, which figures so prominently in the left side of the image, is now listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It is the only pre-Civil War brick bank barn in Augusta County to have survived the barn-burning campaigns of the Union forces. 1885 Atlas of Augusta County. Courtesy of Augusta Historical Society, Staunton.

decorated with porticos, molded brick cornices, and glazed bricks forming patterns in the walls, as well as detailed interior carving, painting, and marbleizing.104

The earliest brick I-house in the Corridor, Locust Grove (ca. 1810–1830), was built along the coach road from Staunton to Lexington, and today stands just off Route 252, south of Middlebrook. Level Loop (ca. 1819), west of Brownsburg on Route 724, is another early brick I-House in the project area. Now a 145-acre farm, Level Loop is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, and is noted for its carved mantel and other fine interior woodworking. Mid- to late 19th-century outbuildings survive, including a smokehouse with a small cupola. The George (Henry) Mish House (ca. 1830), on Route 876 near Middlebrook, is part of a significant farmstead where a good collection of farm and domestic buildings survive intact. The brick barn, constructed in 1849, is listed as the only upper Valley pre-Civil War bank barn to have survived the 1864 barn-burning campaigns by forces under Union General Sheridan. A total of fourteen brick and three frame pre-Civil War I-houses are listed for the Corridor in the VDHR surveys. The single stone pre-Civil War I-house is the McCutcheon-Dunlap House (ca. 1825–1850), near Summerdean on Route 603.

The popularity of the I-house continued, with 35 from the mid-19th century through 1910 standing today. As the style was adopted by town dwellers and less affluent farmers, brick was replaced by frame and log.

The Double-Pile House. The brick double-pile four-over-four house, two rooms deep and two rooms wide with a central hall, was an expensive house form for the upper Valley.105 The largest house of its day, it appeared in the region during the first construction boom of substantial houses. The best known example in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor is Bethel Green (ca. 1854–1856), on Route 693 east between Arbor Hill and Middlebrook. Built for distiller and farmer James Bumgardner, it is embellished with Gothic-style porches and Italianate cornices, reflecting a mid-century interest in classical details. Eight additional houses of this plan are found in the Corridor, as well as two examples of a three-room variation (with central passage) and one Palladian house (single story/three part), Rosemont (ca. 1840–1850).

After the Civil War, the double-pile four-room house was built in smaller numbers. One of the five examples is the A. J. Miller House, or Miller-Hemp (ca. 1884), southeast of Middlebrook on Route 693, which contains the well-preserved work of the 19th century rural itinerant painter, Green Berry Jones. Jones painted large landscapes and hunting scenes and vignettes in the central hallway.
Pages from the 1862 diary of William Scott Sproul of Middlebrook. A member of the 93rd Regiment, Col. Sproul was stationed in the Valley during the spring of 1862, moving between New Market, Staunton, Port Republic, and Rockfish Gap. As with many Valley farmers, he came home on furlough from time to time to take care of farm business. Courtesy of Alex Sproul, Middlebrook.

The side passage plan became popular among more wealthy farmers during the second housing boom in the 1820s and 1830s. Usually brick or log in construction, it is exclusively a pre-Civil War form. Only ten stand within the project area, the best known being the brick Charles Berry House (ca. 1800–1820), north of Newport on Route 252. Two frame and two log side-passage examples also remain.

The Civil War Years in the Route 252 Corridor

As soon as Virginia seceded from the Union in April 1861, eight infantry companies from Augusta County organized for a march to Harpers Ferry. One, under the command of Captain Williams, left from Middlebrook. Several companies from Rockbridge County joined them, including the Rockbridge Guards from Brownsburg, forming the Fifth and Twenty-Fifth Virginia Regiments. The Second Dragoons of Brownsburg went on to join the Fourteenth Virginia Cavalry.

The Staunton-Lexington Turnpike was the focus of military action for a brief period during June 1864. After defeating Confederate forces at the Battle of Piedmont near New Hope, almost 12,000 Federal troops under General David Hunter entered Staunton on June 6th, burning the railroad for three miles on each side, the depot, and various mills. After the defeat at Piedmont, Confederate General John McCausland and 1,400 cavalry fell back to Goshen. They followed the Virginia Central Railroad to Staunton, camping at Bell’s Valley along the way, and arrived at Buffalo Gap on June 6th. They skirted
Pages from the 1862 diary of William Scott Sproul of Middlebrook. A member of the 93rd Regiment, Col. Sproul was stationed in the Valley during the spring of 1862, moving between New Market, Staunton, Port Republic, and Rockfish Gap. As with many Valley farmers, he came home on furlough from time to time to take care of farm business. Courtesy of Alex Sproul, Middlebrook.

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Staunton and took the Middlebrook Road to Brownsburg. According to local lore, a band accompanying McCausland presented a short concert for the residents of the town before moving north again to Arbor Hill.\textsuperscript{108}

Joined by forces under generals Crook and Averill, Hunter's command moved on to Lexington, shelling and burning the buildings at Virginia Military Institute, the residence of Governor Letcher, and the library of Washington College on June 10th. Between June 6th and 10th, skirmishes between Confederate and Union troops took place, many along the turnpike between Middlebrook and Brownsburg. "Hit and run" fighting took place between Walkers Creek and Hays Creek. There were reports of "puddles of blood" on the Middlebrook Road, as well as casualties. Camps of soldiers from both sides sprang up throughout the area, and several families who live along Route 252 today tell stories of their ancestors caring for the sick and wounded.

Although General Hunter was ultimately defeated, freeing the Valley of Federal troops, the Confederate victory was short-lived. By August, General Grant replaced Hunter with General Philip Sheridan as commander of Federal forces in the Valley, ordering him to destroy the "bread basket of the Confederacy." As Sheridan reported in October 1864 prior to the Battle of Cedar Creek in Frederick County, "The whole country, from the Blue Ridge to North Mountain, has been made entirely untenable for a rebel army. I have destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements; over 70 mills filled with flour and grain; have driven in front of the army four herds of stock; have killed and issued to the troops no less than 3,000 sheep; and a large number of horses have been obtained."\textsuperscript{109}

**Setting the Modern Pattern: 1865–Present**

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**Setting the Modern Pattern: 1865–Present**

After the war, agriculture tended toward specialization due to the greater commercialization in the farm economy. Wage labor became important to the farm economy. Farm prices fell significantly in the early 1870s, marking the
beginning of an agricultural depression that would last for a generation. The local grain economy was undermined by a market flooded with cheaper wheat from the Midwest and prairie lands. While wheat and corn remained staples from 1870-1930 (with Augusta County leading Virginia in wheat production almost every year), it was difficult for small farming operations to turn a profit.10

The Modernization of Farming

Those who could invested in machinery and fertilizers to increase their yields. In 1875, A. J. Miller of Middlebrook offered a testimonial for Zell's Celebrated Ammoniated Super Bone Phosphate in a local paper.11 Farmers formed organizations devoted to sharing information on new farming techniques. The Rockbridge Agricultural and Mechanical Society had its roots prior to the Civil War.12 In Augusta County, agricultural clubs sprang up in many communities during the 1870s, and the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, a nationwide organization devoted to voicing the plight of farmers, was active in the county during the 1880s. Its members were especially concerned with the lack of regulation over railroads and the exorbitant prices being charged to haul freight. Granges were organized in Newport, Summerdean, and Arbor Hill, the latter being one of the few still active in the state after 1880.13

By the mid-1890s, the combine-harvester was introduced, reducing the amount of labor needed to harvest wheat by 80%. During this decade, gasoline and diesel-powered tractors replaced steam-powered tractors. In August 1895, J.W. Mish of Middlebrook advertised to hire out his new traction engine bailing machine and hay press to local farmers. Silos also appeared on the landscape during this period.14 By 1885, twenty-five mills were again in operation in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg region.

Before the 1880s, fruit production was largely confined to home orchards, with small surpluses being sold at market. Between 1883 and 1890, the first commercial orchards were planted, and the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor was central to this new endeavor.15 Well-known orchards included the William McComb Orchard near Arbor Hill, the Fulcher Orchard and the Imperial Orchard on Middlebrook Road, the Bowman Orchard near Sugar Loaf, the Martin Orchard at Newport, and the Sproul Orchard south of Middlebrook. The Fulcher Orchard reportedly shipped carloads of apples to London for the 1891 winter market. Around 1898, large commercial orchards were planted. In 1907, the Augusta County Fruit Growers Association was established to assist with marketing, with the Arbor Hill-Middlebrook orchardists leading the way. In 1919, three-quarters of a million trees were planted and almost 850,000 bushels harvested at an average of $1.46 per bushel. Irvin Rosen recalls wagons of apples lining up along Route 682, waiting for the cider presses at McKinley in the 1920s. Common apple varieties included Gano, Black, Ben, Twig, Stayman, Winesap, King David, Rome Beauty, Yellow Transparent, York Imperial, Lowry, Grimes Golden, Jonathan, Ben Davis, and Albemarle Pippin.

The number of farms in Augusta and Rockbridge counties increased steadily through the last quarter of the 19th century. However, the average farm size decreased from 226 to 111 acres, indicating that farmers were subdividing their property. A 1929 study reporting this trend, "An Economic and Social Survey of Augusta County," claimed that the average farm of that decade was too small to operate efficiently, and that a farmer could make more money by hiring out his labor.16

In the early decades of the 20th century, the percentage of farms operated by tenants increased as did the percentage of mortgaged farms. By 1920, one-fifth of the farmers in August County had encumbered their property, probably
reflecting the need to modernize and invest in machinery, improve buildings, and purchase fertilizers to increase production. Indeed, in 1920, the value of farm machinery was greater in Augusta than in any other county in the state.\footnote{17}

The World War I years were marked by increased demand for food, resulting in increases in farm production and soaring farm prices. However, the decreased demand and overproduction that followed the war also had the effect of lowering the price of wheat, so that by the early 1920s, upper Valley farmers were losing anywhere from $3.50 to $10 on every acre harvested. By 1930, one out of every three Augusta County farmers who had been in business in 1920 had given up.\footnote{18} In the same decade, the number of mortgaged farms increased to one-half. The upper Valley farming community experienced an economic depression almost a decade before the Great Depression threatened the well-being of the country.

As wheat production declined during the 1920s and 1930s, dairying increased. In 1930, Augusta County ranked first in Virginia in dairy cattle. Livestock operations, in general, came to make up 50\% of the farm economy by 1940. The number of mortgaged farms had dropped to one-third, but 42\% of Augusta County farmers were working at off-farm jobs, and considered themselves to be part-time farmers. Significantly, 61\% of the farm households in the county were not producing for the commercial market, but for themselves. The average farm size dropped to 98 acres in 1939, and on the eve of World War II, 60\% of all the farms in the county were 30 acres or less. However, most of the farms at this time were owner-operated.\footnote{19}

The impact of World War II on the economy of the Upper Valley was positive, as demand for food increased and farm prices rose. By 1945, Augusta County farmers were concentrating their efforts on beef and dairy cattle, poultry, and to a lesser extent, fruit.\footnote{20} By the 1950s, small grain production had declined in importance in both Augusta and Rockbridge counties. Agricultural land was primarily devoted to pasture, hay, small grain, and corn, with pasture acreage surpassing the total of all other crops combined. Beef cattle and sheep were the most important elements of the agricultural economy in Rockbridge, which had turned from small grain production to livestock between the 1920s and 1940s. Between 1949 and 1954, the contribution of poultry and poultry products to farm income increased by almost 50\%. A 1959 Virginia Tech study of land use in Rockbridge County showed a trend similar to the one documented in Augusta in the 1940s: 70\% of the farms in Rockbridge County were described as “small, part time,” with an average size of 50 acres or less.\footnote{21} While the number of these part-time farms was increasing, the size of the remaining full-time farms was increasing. As in Augusta, part-time Rockbridge farms were producing for home consumption. The “very good to excellent” farms (those which were most economically successful) accounted for almost one-third of the farm land acreage in the county, and many were located near Brownsburg.

Between 1960 and the present, the number of farmers has continued to decrease in both Augusta and Rockbridge counties, as has the number of farms.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Zack Franklin (left) and James Brown (right), butchering hogs on the Hamilton Wade farm, south of New Providence Church, 1948–50. Courtesy of Daniel Franklin.}
\end{figure}
Livestock (poultry, dairy cattle, sheep, and beef cattle) is now the focus of the farm economy here.

Analysis of the 1992 Agricultural Census provides information on 184 farms that are included in the zip codes of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor: Middlebrook, Newport, Brownsburg, and Rockbridge Baths. Almost all (95%) were owner-operated and 168 (91%) reported commercial sales of livestock, poultry, and their products. The large majority of farms 159 (86%) in these zip codes focus their activities on the beef industry. Of the 184 farms in the sample, 85 operators (46%) considered farming to be their principal occupation. While over half of the operators in the corridor considered themselves to be “part-time farmers,” almost all the farms were owner-operated and involved in commercial production. The trend toward livestock as the focus of commercial production has continued since mid-century. Buffalo Springs Herb Farm near Raphine on Route 606 is an example of a relatively new kind of agricultural endeavor in the corridor; only two farms in the sample are identified as commercial greenhouse/nursery growers. By 1992, only two farms marketed fruit, and in contrast to the previous 200 years, only one farm marketed wheat.

**Post-Civil War Architecture**

The studies of local architecture carried out by VDHR in the 1980s do not include much information on late-19th- and 20th-century forms, but they clearly show that many residents of the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor enlarged their early- to mid-19th-century homes after the Civil War. In the Revival and eclectic traditions of the Victorian era, it became popular to add stylish details to earlier, plain houses. The well-known “gingerbread” decoration dates to this time. Much of the new house construction that occurred was based on earlier vernacular designs. Of the structures in the Corridor surveyed by VDHR in the 1980s, approximately 48 were started in the years following the Civil War. Of these, only one represents a departure from earlier plans: the H. M. Clemmer House (ca. 1900) at Arbor Hill. Built by the Eustler Brothers of Grottoes, this frame house is a good example of the Queen Anne style popular during the Victorian period.

**Public Schools**

Several small, church-run private schools and many “common,” locally funded schools existed in Augusta and Rockbridge counties prior to the Civil War. One of the changes brought about during Reconstruction was the mandate for a well-organized system of separate, free schools for both black and white students. By 1871, 88 such schools were in operation in Augusta County and 86 had been established in Rockbridge County. In Augusta, many of the schools were one or two-room log structures, presumably still in use from the pre-Civil War era. They provided elementary-level instruction. In Rockbridge, where there were fewer schools before the war, the free system was implemented in new, frame structures. By 1885, 15 free schools were located between Arbor Hill and Newport, and by 1887 the Brownsburg Academy was sold to Rockbridge County to become Brownsburg High School, which operated until 1935. By the 1890s, the county systems began the process of consolidation, developing larger, graded schools in more centralized locations; children who lived too far to walk were transported on school wagons.

A thematic nomination to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register for Historic Places for the Augusta County Public Schools recognizes the importance of free schools to the rural county, and includes five schools in the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor: the Glebe Schoolhouse,
Walkers Creek (McCutchens’s) Schoolhouse, Moffetts Creek Schoolhouse, Middlebrook Grade School, and Middlebrook High School.

**Railroads and the Demise of the Turnpike**

While no rail lines ran directly through the Route 252 Corridor, both the Virginia Central Railroad (later acquired by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad) and the Valley Railroad (the Valley Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad) skirted the northern and eastern boundaries, respectively. The Virginia Central was built across the Blue Ridge to Staunton by 1854, and track was laid to Swoope and into northwest Rockbridge County by 1856. The CSX Corporation still runs freight on this line today. The Valley Railroad, organized after the Civil War when local businessmen attempted to raise the capital necessary to extend the line from Harrisonburg to Salem, was influential in the history of the region during the latter quarter of the 19th century. By 1874, the line to Staunton was completed, with Lexington seeing service by 1883. According to some accounts, the 36-mile line from Staunton to Lexington cost $1,250,000 to complete, and the railroad was never finished to Salem. It became an isolated operation, carrying passengers between the county seats, boarding them at whistlestops and small towns. It operated until 1942 when the B & O gave up its Staunton-Lexington service and removed its tracks.

During the decades of its operation, the railroad was the impetus for the development of several small communities, including Decatur, Fairfield Station, Mountain View, Raphine, Davis, and Timber Ridge Village. Decatur (located on Route 712 in northeast Rockbridge County) was originally named Aqua when the B & O constructed a watering tank there. The first train stopped at Aqua station on November 1, 1883, and in the following years the community grew up around a post office, school, store, and chapel connected with Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church. Today, portions of the old railroad bed are still visible in the vicinity of Davis, Fairfield, Decatur, Timber Ridge, and East Lexington.

In 1891, the General Assembly approved the incorporation of the Middlebrook-Newport Railway and Electric Company. Organized by a group from the Middlebrook area and led by W. M. Sproul, the company was authorized to sell $10,000 of capital stock. Plans included the extension of a line from Staunton to Newport through Middlebrook, with a later expansion to Rockbridge Baths. As with so many local railroad companies that sprang up in the 1890s, the MNR was never realized.

Storekeepers in small towns like Middlebrook and Brownsburg relied on railroads to maintain a large and varied stock, which they ordered from Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and Richmond. Aside from the railroad, the newly invented telephone allowed rural residents to maintain regular contact with their neighbors and urban counterparts. The Middlebrook Telephone Company, headquartered in that town and established in 1895, was the first company to offer connections between Staunton and other communities in the county.

By the 1880s, Staunton had truly developed into the central community for most of Augusta County. The Middlebrook Road was a major corridor connecting the residents in the southwestern section of the county and the commission merchants of Staunton. Most of Staunton’s blacksmiths, carpenters and builders, wholesale tobacco dealers, wood and coal yards, and wool dealers were located along the Middlebrook Road on the outskirts of town. Large warehouses were also located in this section, and farmers from Arbor Hill, Summerdean, and Middlebrook would bring their flour, grain, and produce here for shipment on the railroad.
The bulk of public funding for internal improvements in Virginia was given to the railroads in the post-Civil War years. An 1874 amendment to the Virginia Constitution prohibited the state government from further investing in turnpike company stock. This was a blow to the turnpike companies, which had come to rely on the state for road maintenance funds. Forced to rely on private monies instead, many of the turnpike companies went out of business and the roads deteriorated. By 1882, the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike was in poor shape and a meeting was held in Middlebrook that year to discuss its condition.

With the development of the “horseless carriage” in the 1890s, the Federal government turned its attention to the country’s road system. “Good Roads” societies were organized throughout the eastern United States, and Augusta and Rockbridge counties were no exception. In 1891, the Augusta County Alliance, a group of 500 farmers and businessmen, successfully lobbied the county for a road tax, and in the summer of 1892, the Middlebrook Road was macadamized to the Rockbridge County line for a cost of $6,000. Convicts living at road camps did the work, a practice that continued well into the 20th century. By 1896 the “Middlebrook Road” was again reported to be the most neglected in the county. The Middlebrook and Newport Farmers’ Association led the county in endorsing a “Good Roads Bill” that was introduced into the General Assembly in that year. After almost two decades, paving of the Middlebrook Road finally began in 1913. However, the Rockbridge County section of the road was not paved until the 1940s. Ed Patterson of Brownsburg remembers his father keeping a team of horses at the ready to pull automobiles out of the muddy ruts that plagued travelers in that area.

Between 1928 and 1935, the Staunton-Lexington Turnpike became known as “Route 252.” This designation of a road number was part of the standard road identification program in Virginia, and was necessary for alleviating the confusion of the growing number of drivers.