

Loudoun Valley Milling To the east of the station is Loudoun Valley Milling, now Magnolia's at the Mill Restaurant. Originally owned by Smith and Hirst, the Mill



was the anchor business of the town. In the early to mid-20th century when orchard grass was the hottest cash crop that Loudoun Valley had ever known, this mill and its grain elevator was where the action was. The building you see today was built in 1905 replacing an earlier structure destroyed by fire.

Dillon Building, 1874 The four-story red building you see to the west was another one of many buildings to spring up in this area of town upon the arrival of the railroad. Seed, fertilizer and other agricultural tools were sold here. Later, it was the home of Contee Adams Seed Company. Orchard grass seed was processed here, and when the price was right, sent to the grain elevator across the street for transport to market.

1st "Depot" Street It was soon after the railroad came to town that folk realized the business opportunity along the road that led to the station. The trains came to pick up mill, orchard grass seed, cattle and other products from Purcellville area farms and it was at this time that the farmers would do their shopping.



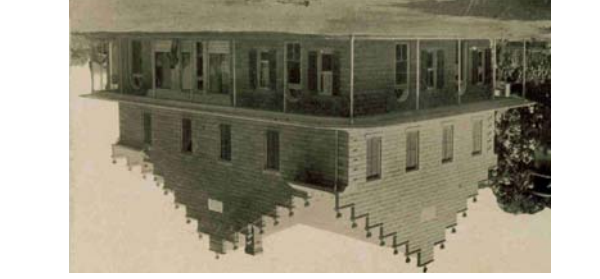
Nichols' Hardware Store has been an anchor store on 1st Street since its doors opened in 1914. It is still owned by the Nichols family who tend to the varied needs of its customers; selling hardware, paint, and furnishings tallied on handwritten receipts; providing services and distributing advice. In the early 20th century, the store opened at gam as the town electricity was turned in the town when dairy farmers brought their milk to town to be shipped out on the morning train.

Livery Stable Now used as a storehouse for Nichols Hardware, the Livery Stable was built by J.W. "Nick" Hampton in 1908. Horses and carriages were rented to visiting businessmen and vacationers arriving in Purcellville at the nearby depot until 1926. Note the height of the doors that allowed carriages to pass into the building.

O Street: The Working-Man's Neighborhood (heading west towards the back of the red mill building) Many working men lived nearby the train depot (West O Street), ready and waiting for a job loading, unloading or whatever they could do to make a buck. Notice how the houses on this street sit close to where the railroad tracks were. The more wealthy residents of Purcellville had finer homes further away along Main Street, away from the soot and grime kicked up from the trains rolling down the tracks.

Historic Settler's Home Looking north from Hall Avenue down towards Route 690 / Hillsboro Road, across from Southern States The timeworn stucco house before you is one of the oldest standing buildings in Purcellville, erected in 1795. The building was the second home of James and Rebekah Dillon, the first settlers of what is now Purcellville. They and other Pennsylvania Quakers had arrived in the summer of 1764. The Treaty of Paris ended the French and Indian War at the previous year and with the threat of Indian raids now gone, families throughout the colonies were prompted to move west.

Their first home was well back on the low hill behind you. The Dillons were likely attracted to this piece of land because of the water and power available from the South Fork of Catoctin Creek behind the house. Perhaps they noticed the same stunning prospect of the Blue Ridge you see!



Hampton's Hall—Purcellville's Social Heyday A remarkable piece of architecture made of local block, Hampton's Hall, built in 1908 by local entrepreneur J.H. "Nick" Hampton. It served many of the needs of the recently incorporated Town of Purcellville: town hall, post office and community meeting place with commercial spaces on the first floor. Additionally, both Episcopal and Baptist congregations met here for some years before building their own churches. For 25 cents on Friday nights, residents could enjoy the earliest motion pictures. Many businesses operated on the street level through the years. The well-known White Palace Restaurant, western Loudoun's longest-running eatery, opened here in 1929.

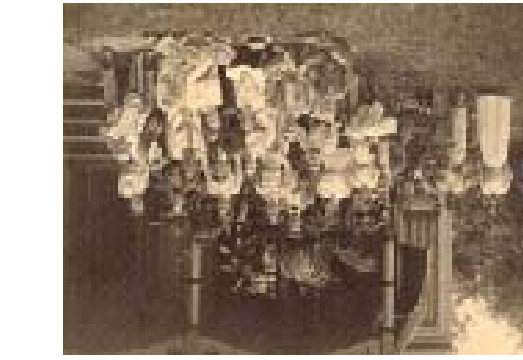
The Great 1914 Fire (across the street from The White Palace, on the opposite corner, "bank block" at 1st Street and Main Street) If you were standing on this site on the evening of November 22, 1914, you would have been in the midst of the greatest fire in Purcellville's history. So many events in town are measured as before or after the great 1914 fire, which destroyed most downtown buildings (except those nearest the train station). The blaze began in Tyler's Plumbing Supply which stood behind you, and rapidly spread to an adjacent three-story hardware store and bank. It then jumped across Main Street to the buildings on the north side of 1st Street. Purcellville had no fire company in 1914, only two hand-drawn carts with large fire extinguishers. Firefighters from Washington, DC came by train with apparatus to extinguish the blaze.



Schools of Purcellville There are two historic schools in town (one further down 20th Street on Willie Palmer Way ~ The Carver School, now home the Carver Center ~ and the other further down Nursery Avenue ~ Purcellville's Grade School, now home to Loudoun Valley Community Center.) The Carver School was the grade school for African American children in the area with continuing education at Douglas High School in Leesburg (also now a community center). Purcellville's Grade School was for the white children in town with continuing education at the Lincoln High School (now Lincoln Elementary). Many older members remember the days of catching the bus at the "bank building" after venturing from their farms on horseback to continue the journey to school or even a horse-drawn school bus!



Victorian Boom Days (from O Street, continue up Hall Avenue, heading south towards Main Street) Purcellville is known for its eye-catching Victorian homes along Main Street where they tell a key part of the story of Purcellville's "boom days. With the advent of the railroad to Purcellville in 1874, the village flourished with new commerce. Houses along Main Street, built in the 1890s and first decade of the 20th century, are fine illustrations of the town's prosperity. They are classic examples of Victorian architecture, and exhibit many of the features so loved at that time - wraparound porches, turrets, gables, gingerbread trim and a variety of roof and siding textures.

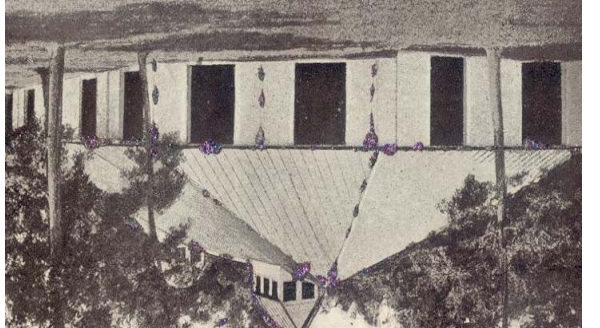


These homes belonged to those who daily walked down the commercial district to make a living selling to the farmers of this fertile agricultural region. In a small town like Purcellville, businesses and homes can be easily matched with their owner. It is easy to imagine the pride felt by those who built them. The porches allowed a good bit of practice in the refined art of "porch sittin'." A walk down Purcellville's Main Street on a summer evening could lead to many stops and perhaps a shared lemonade up on the porch!

Bush Meeting Grounds For some sixty years, the Bush Meeting in Dillon's Woods was Purcellville's "claim to fame" in Northern Virginia. On this site, the Purcellville Prohibition and Evangelical Society held its "Bush Meeting" each summer from 1870-1931, attracting thousands of visitors. The ten-day gathering included musical entertainment and inspirational speakers with a religious bent on topics ranging from prohibition to politics. The most famous nominee and then Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who repeated his famous "Cross of Gold" speech here in 1913. In 1904 permanent tabernacle, now the Purcellville Skate Rink, was built to hold 3,000 people. It replaced a tent destroyed the previous year by a freak tornado that struck during one of the meetings.

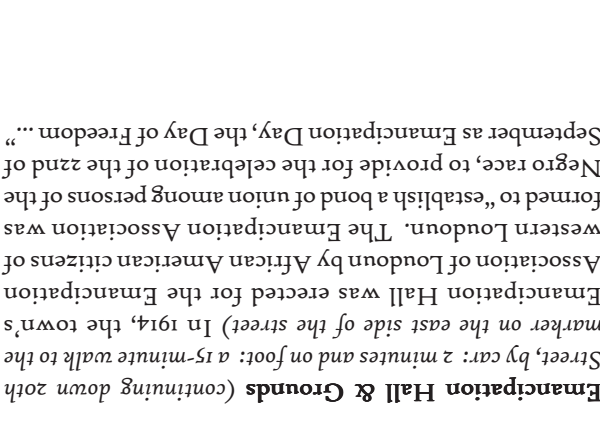
Can you still smell the peanuts and popcorn sold by the vendors and the fried chicken lunches being passed around? Do you hear the jumbled conversations as a huge crowd visits with casual conversation? If you look carefully, over in the woods, just beyond sight, local moonshiners are taking advantage of the hot summer weather to sell their wares...

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Churches of Purcellville (from Main Street, heading south on 20th Street) When some of those in town did make it big, a lot of their money went towards building a church for a congregation of their religion. Clearly, the Methodist were doing quite well based on the size and fine materials of Bethany Methodist Church at Main and 20th Street, Hall Funeral Home (formerly a chapel that was home to the Episcopal and Methodist congregations on a rotating schedule) and Purcellville Baptist Church.

Emancipation Hall & Grounds (continuing down 20th Street, by car: 2 minutes and on foot: a 15-minute walk to the marker on the east side of the street) In 1914, the town's Emancipation Hall was erected for the Emancipation Association of Loudoun by African American citizens of western Loudoun. The Emancipation Association was formed to "establish a bond of union among persons of the Negro race, to provide for the celebration of the 22nd of September as Emancipation Day, the Day of Freedom..."



"By feeling a connection to our past, there grows a sense of pride and the need to preserve what is historically significant ..." TOM RANKIN, FOLKLORIST



Map & Route of Tour



Historic Sites on Tour

What's so great about Purcellville is that you can envision how a town really works -

On your walk through Purcellville today, you will learn about the history of the town and have the opportunity to see first-hand how a town grows and works. The phases of physical development were driven by agriculture, business and transportation. You will see these clearly defined as you visit the agricultural-commercial center of the village, the business district, and residential areas. Each area tells its own story of how people lived and did business here. The tour will probably take you approximately one hour (if you include the historic schools, the Emancipation Grounds and Bush Meeting Grounds; the tour will take longer but will be a very nice stroll along our side streets!)

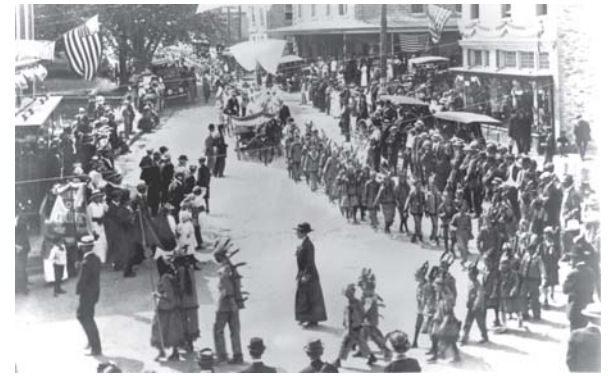
THE TRAIN STATION, MILL AND WAREHOUSE AREA
 Purcellville Train Station



The depot now standing as the Purcellville Train Station was built by the Southern Railway in 1904 and was later owned by the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad. It is the second oldest train station on this location (the first depot was burned in 1903). Inside were freight storage areas and both a white and black waiting room. The arrival of the railroad in 1874 immediately changed the face of Purcellville. The center of business shifted from Purcell's Store on the main highway to this bustling, agri-business center. Nearby, you can still see a grain mill, grain elevator, and hardware store that were built shortly after the railroad arrived. On any morning at the turn of the century when milk was "king," it would be crowded with farm wagons waiting the "milk train."

While passenger service to Washington ended in 1951, the W&OD continued to glide into Purcellville at the town-requited 8mph until 1968. The station sign has since been replaced (the original is displayed at the Smithsonian Museum of American History).

Historic Walking Tour



Purcellville, VA

Discovering the gems of town.

Rich in history, Purcellville has evolved from a crossroads settlement on the Leesburg and Snickers Gap Turnpike into a thriving 20th century agricultural hub for western Loudoun. Today Purcellville is one of the fastest growing suburbs of the Washington Metro Area with Loudoun the second fastest growing county in the nation.

The Purcellville Preservation Association is dedicated to promoting community pride and awareness of the historical and natural resources as well as enhancing the town through preservation and beautification.



visit us!
ppa-va.org



Thousands of celebrants came to participate in activities ~ band performances, pageants, contests and speeches by prominent black leaders and professionals to applaud and encourage "the progress of race." Many came on the special excursion train from Washington, DC for the day.

Emancipation Day was a great celebration, and brought pride and inspiration to the black community at a time of segregation and inequality. Interest in the celebrations faded in the late 1960s with major gains in civil rights; they were discontinued in 1970.

Purcell's Store: The First Village Center A step back in time to a forgotten village... It was here, in 1822, Valentine "Vol" Purcell, opened Purcell's Store and the village's first post office. On July 9, 1852, the post office was renamed Purcellville, giving the community its modern name. Imagine this building in the in the mid-19th century, a bustling store piled high with goods and the center of life in the tiny village. Situated on the turnpike connecting Alexandria and Winchester, the store was a stagecoach stop until 1874 when the railroad came.

The Purcell family continued to operate the store until 1901. Since that time, it has had several other uses, including a stint as the Purcellville town office.

Purcellville & the Civil War at Purcell's Store

The vote that would decide secession for Virginia was held locally at Purcell's Store on May 23, 1861. Typical of divided Loudoun, the precinct voted 82 to 31 to support secession and the joining of the Confederacy. Soon, young Purcellville men were enlisting in Confederate units, including the son of Rodney Purcell, storekeeper. Company A of the 8th Virginia Volunteer Infantry was the unit of choice for many local men. Young Joe Janney, who lived in the double-chimneyed white house just east of us at 330 East Main Street, lost a leg at First Manassas just weeks after he joined.

During the war, Purcellville found itself a busy thoroughfare for troops, with encampments of both sides nearby. Commanders such as Stuart, Early, Mosby, McClellan, Burnside and Hooker all saw the straggling little village along the turnpike. On November 1, 1862, most of the Union's Army of the Potomac encamped at Heaton's Crossroads at the east end of town, roughly where Loudoun Valley High School is today. General George B. McClellan stayed the night at Rodney Purcell's home still standing beside his store.

The Hampton Hotel (from Purcell's Store, across the street, on the south side) As the first hotel in Purcellville, built in 1838 by Samuel Purcell, this was a key stage stop on the road from Alexandria to Winchester. The small east wing of the hotel is the oldest, built in 1838 by the Samuel Purcell for the stagecoach trade. Later, the enlarged hotel served businessmen and vacationers visiting Purcellville. At the turn of the century, heat-spent city folk could travel to Purcellville by train to enjoy what the railroad called a "region of inspiring scenery, pure, bracing air and healthful climate... calculated to favorably respond to the desire for rest, pleasure, health and recreation."

Later, Nick Hampton and his wife ran the hotel, offering boarding rooms to meet this need. One could relax on the porch, read in the shade, go for a hike, take a carriage ride out into the country, play croquet, or go for a swim... the possibilities were many. Some would take the train for a day trip to Bluemont and hike up to Bears' Den on the Blue Ridge. Others would stay to attend the popular midsummer "Bush Meetings." The hotel has been closed for many years.

