

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: HOW HAS THE EVOLUTION OF PAVED ROAD
SYSTEMS IMPACTED RURAL HISTORIC
DISTRICTS? WATERFORD VIRGINIA: CASE STUDY

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One of the birthmarks of civilization, roads have played a pivotal role in influencing the relationships between people and their environment. This thesis investigates one of those relationships: the evolution of paved roads and their effects upon the fabric of rural historic districts.

It begins with a brief history of our transportation systems, and proceeds to consider their roles in shaping our society and the country's development. It traces the evolution of our nation's roads from their beginnings as pathways followed by Native

Americans, to the highways of our present autocentric world. Focused on the evolution of roads that traverse the rural regions of Virginia through what are now rural historic districts, it investigates the issues surrounding their financing and construction during the Great Depression, when limited funds and engineering expertise fashioned the methods used for their improvement.

The thesis establishes that the roads of Loudoun County's rural historic districts have been paved repeatedly, without the benefit of a comprehensive road drainage maintenance and management plan, and that successive layers of paving have raised road grades to heights that now impact the natural and constructed environments of these historic districts. More specifically, the failure to provide and maintain proper drainage has created environments that accelerate deterioration of building materials, and in some cases has led directly to structural failures. Improper drainage also has expanded the dispersion of water with damaging effects to the landscape. These consequences have skewed understanding of the districts' evolution, their historic resources and interpretation of the characteristics that warranted historic designation. The thesis concludes with recommendations for procedural and substantive standards for recovering and retaining the qualities that contribute to district integrity. Implementation of these recommendations would accomplish both short- and long-term goals for returning and maintaining district roadways to a condition that protects and enhances the qualities that contribute to district integrity and significance.