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The Early Stanardsville

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THE EARLY STANARDSVILLE

Donald D. Covey

At its bicentennial there are those who can remember the past seventy-five years of history in Stanardsville. Newspapers record its history for most of the twentieth century. There are pictures, some letters and other records back to Civil War times; but relatively little information exists about the earlier years.

At its beginnings it was forty-five acres surrounded by the property of William Stanard. It stretched out for about three quarters of a mile along a dirt road leading east to Gordonsville (eventually to Richmond) and west over the mountains to Harrisonburg. Its residents expected to make a two day trip going to and from Orange or Charlottesville. In turn east or west travelers expected to stay in Stanardsville over night.

About 1835 Stanardsville had 142 residents five stores, two taverns, one tanyard, a saddler, one boot and shoe shop, a tailor, two blacksmiths, a wheelwright, one hatter, a gunsmith and a physician.¹ It is in this early period that we would like to find where people lived and worked.

As early as 1798 Thomas Bartlett advertised his tavern for sale or rent. He described it as "two stories high, with a portico on the side and end, four rooms below stairs and four above, a good kitchen, dairy, and meat house, a good granary, corn house, cutting room, all under one roof, just newly-done, and good stable."² It was located on Lot # 2. The original lines have long since been lost for that part of Stanardsville; but it probably stood very near the site of the former fire house on U.S. 33.

In 1805 Robert Branham took out fire insurance on his tavern located on Lot # 12, the present site of the NationsBank. While we can't trace a complete trail of deeds, this lot apparently contained a tavern down through years (owned by such men as James Blakey, Alfred Eddins and William Dunn)³ to the time of the Eagle Hotel, which a number of long time residents remember.

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In 1815 Thomas Sorrille took out fire insurance on his tavern;⁴ and in 1823 James Blakey took out fire insurance on his tavern.⁵ Conceivably these were all on the same lot; but the description of the bounding lots disagree and the drawings on the policies do not portray the same buildings. Thus it is possible that the little town of Stanardsville contained four taverns within a time frame of twenty-five years.

A few years later in 1833 James Blakey bought Lot # 13,⁶ a house and the half acre lot which now contains the Shifflett Garage and the United Meth-odist Church. The building was being used as a tavern at that time.

That, of course, was not the end of it. About 1840 the present Lafayette Hotel was built. It was used as a hotel, until well into this century; and on the opposite corner to the north the Spottswood hotel continued just as long.

Travelers, and of course local residents, needed to buy various supplies and food for the trip. John Graves bought Lots 7 & 8 In 1811.⁷ In 1817 he purchased fire insurance on a dwelling house and a store house. They were located approximately on the present IGA parking lot. In 1823 the drawing on his insurance policy shows a dwelling and store built end to end suspiciously like the house and store of James Blakey one hundred years later.⁸

We learn that William H. Stanard had a store on the east end of the block that now contains the IOOF building in 1833.⁹ Since Stanard lived only a short time longer, it is reasonable to believe that he had a store there much earlier. (He had owned his plantation just to the north since 1803.)¹⁰

Then about 1840 George W. Price built his store (now the IOOF building).¹¹ Only 21 years later Thomas Gibbons built his store building (now the Herring Realty building).¹² Nor should we forget that John Sorrille had a store in his house (now the Rosa Taylor house).¹³ He lived there from 1822 until his death in the 1850's.

We cannot be sure who was the tailor in 1835; but in 1841 Joseph Ham bought what is known as the Southard House.¹⁴ He undoubtedly conducted his tailoring business from his home until the early 1860's when he built the one-story brick building just

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to the east. Here he also sold sewing machines.¹⁵

In 1837 Dr. L.B. Goodwin sold his property (now occupied by a house which in recent years has been used as both a restaurant and a beauty shop).¹⁶ We can only wish we knew more about Dr. Goodwin.

A number of the tradesmen mentioned have left no clues to follow. They probably followed their trade in their homes or in a small out building. Their business would not be mentioned in a deed or in a fire insurance policy. Some were not actually within the bounds of Stanardsville. The Tannery, for instance, was on the property of George Price just west of the town.

A few years later Waller Fishback issued a small catalogue of agricultural implements which he manufactured "near Stanardsville, VA."¹⁷

In the 1850 census the George W. Price family includes Albert Hudson, teacher, and two young grandchildren. Though there was no school, we may suppose that he taught other children.

John Sorrille was not only a store keeper but also the home secretary to President Madison.¹⁸ There were other similarly equipped men. Robert Pritchett, soon to be the first County Clerk of Greene County, probably lived in a house on the present site of the Lafayette Hotel.¹⁹ In 1840 William Mills, a lawyer, bought the land now occupied by the Evergreene Retirement Village and built the house which still stands there.²⁰

Some of the most influential men in town owned hundreds of acres, often adjacent to the town. Such men as George Price, George W. Price, Thomas Sorrille, Robert Miller and William Sims probably considered themselves farmers.²¹ Some of these had other businesses; and we would probably call all of them gentlemen farmers.

So far as we know the Methodist Church (1858) was the first to be built in Stanardsville; but surely Methodists worshipped somewhere before that time. The Stanards were Episcopalians; and there must have been Baptists. A meeting house lot is mentioned more than once in deeds. (It seems to have been where

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the Shiloh Baptist Church now stands.) Perhaps there was a shared building. In Charlottesville, VA. the Court House was shared as a place of worship for a number of years; but out in the country concerned families often used their homes, or a small building nearby, for collective worship. We simply do not know what happened in Stanardsville.

We can locate a number of dwelling houses through deeds or fire insurance policies. We place these various buildings on a map knowing how limited our information really is.

George Price had his home just on the north side of the highway just west of Stanardsville.²² In 1812 several members of the Golding family sold a "House & Lot" # 3 to George Price.²³ In 1819 George Price sold a house and lot in Stanardsville to Bezabel Brown. This lot (# 4) and house was located just to the west of the present Grover Morris House.²⁴ The present Ollie Morris House (just west of the Southard House on the south side of Main Street) may not have been the first house on this lot. George Pulliam owned the lot (# 5) from 1799 to 1845.²⁵ The present house was presumably built in the early 1840's.²⁶ In 1803 Robert Beadles transferred lot # 6 "with house" to John Beadles.²⁷

We have already noted that John Graves insured his dwelling and store in 1823. This was lot # 8. In 1802 William H. Stanard purchased fire insurance on his house located on the present site of Miss Violette Moyer's home.²⁸ When Robert Branham sold lot # 10 (the lot where the Greene County Court House is now located) to Robert Stringfellow, it was the "lot on which Branham lives."²⁹ In 1838 Absolam Hand sold "one half of a certain houses & lots in the town of Stanardsville"(Lot # 14).³⁰ When David Henderson purchased a lot from Robert Stringfellow in 1802, it was the "lot adjoining where Stringfellow now lives (lot # 22).³¹ The Rosa Taylor house, just east of the Run on the north side of Main Street, is commonly believed to be the oldest house in Stanardsville and a WPA report suggests that it was built in 1815.³² The "Mitchell House" (now owned by Trader Mike) is commonly believed to be almost as old. The main part of the house is log-bodied; and the property was owned by Andrew Fleck from 1795 till 1823.³³ One might suppose that he needed a home during that period. In 1823 John Melone insured his house against fire.³⁴ In 1795 John Melone purchased lot # 46 at the east end of Stanardsville on the south side of Main Street.³⁵ These are fourteen houses which can fairly

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well be authenticated and do not include taverns, where the owners may well have lived. There are several possible - even probable houses. In 1823 George W. Price insured a house on the south side of Main St. The only lot we know he owned at that time and in that location is lot # 40.³⁶ Just across the street Dr. L.B. Goodwin owned two lots until 1837 (see End Note 16). It seems likely that a doctor would have built on the only property recorded in his name. Benjamin Pritchett bought Lots # 19 & 20 in 1797.³⁷ The property passed on to Robert Pritchett; and at his death became part of the dower property of his wife, Laura. It was not sold till 1897.³⁸ A house on this lot seems probable. Thomas Sorrille bought Lot # 9 in 1811.³⁹ It was not finally disposed of until 1859.⁴⁰ A house on this lot seems probable.

We know that Stanardsville in these early days was a busy little village able to care for its own welfare and accommodate travelers; and we can determine where a good number of them lived; but we cannot locate a saddler, a shoemaker, a blacksmith, etc. We cannot quite make the village come to life. We can only hope that future study will make this possible.

1. In an article, "1838: The Formation of Greene County, written for the Greene County Magazine (The Greene County Historical Society, Vol.6,) p. 2 Woodie Parrott quotes Joseph Martin, New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia, (Charlottesville, VA.:Joseph Martin, Moseley & Thompkins, 1835), p. 225.

2. Virginia Herald, printed: Orange County, Virginia, April 28, 1798, and August 3, 1798.

3. Orange County D.B. 32, p. 441; 10/24/1828. This deed to the sale of Lot # 11 from William H. Stanard to Samuel Ames placed James Blakey's tavern (Lot # 12) to the south.

Orange County D.B. 34, p. 249; 11/7/1832.

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This deed to the sale of Lot # 11 from Samuel Ames to George W. Price places it opposite tavern now occupied by William Sims, Jr. (Lot # 12).

Greene County D.B. 2, p. 345; 4/21/1844.
This deed to Lot # 6 has "Alfred Eddins tavern adjoining on east (lot # 12) with a cross street between."

Greene County D.B. 2, p. 287; 10/4/1843.
This deed records the sale of Lot # 12 by Alfred Eddins to Garland and William Dunn.

4. Mutual Assurance Society Policy # 1923, Revaluation Declaration # 157. December 20, 1815.

5. Mutual Assurance Society Policy # 5296, Revaluation Declaration # 1923. August 21, 1823.

6. Orange County D.B. 34, p. 419; 6/6/1833.

7. Orange County D. B. p. 153; 5/23/1811.

8. Mutual Assurance Society Policy # unclear, Revaluation Declaration # unclear; 10/3/1817.

Mutual Assurance Society Policy # unclear, Revaluation declartaion # 1158; 8/25, 1823.

9. Greene County D.B. 34, p. 419; 6/6/1833.
This deed of sale or Lot # 13 from James Melone to James Blakey places the lot "opposite Store Housse of William H. Stanard."

10. Orange County D.B. 23, p. 14; 2/26/1803.
Mutual Assurance Society Policy # unclear, Revaluation Declaration # unclear; 11/12/1802.

11. Refer to "Lots in Stanardsville", pp. 6 & 7 in this publication.

12. Greene County D.B. 5, p. 116; 2/1/1861.

13. from a WPA report. A copy may be seen in the Greene County Historical Museum.

14. Greene County D.B. 4, p. 27; 1/20/1848.

15. Greene County D.B. 5, p. 629; 4/12/1875.

16. Greene County D.B. 3, p. 79; 7/23/1839.

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17. Waller Fishback, Practical Machinist, and Manufacturer of Agricultural Implements, &c., near Stanardsville, VA. Richmond, Charles H. Wynne, Printer, 1857. This little catalogue can now be found at the Virginia State Historical Society, Richmond, Va.
18. WPA report written by John Sorrille's niece, Mrs. James A. Blakey, and available at the Greene County Historical Museum.
19. Greene County D. B. 3, p. 63; 6/15/1838. When Absolam Hand sold this property to Robert Pritchett, it was "now occuppied by Pritchett".
20. Greene County D.B. 2, p. 45; March 23, 1842.
21. "The 1850 Census of Greene County, Virginia. Transcribed by Nancy H. Morris. Greene County Magazine, (Greene County Historical Society, Vol. 8, pp. 39 - 56. In this first census of the county several of these men listed themselves as farmers.
22. Long time residents of Stanardsville have recognized the picture of a house identified as belonging to George Price, probably taken as part of a WPA Project, and now available at the Virginia State Library, Richmond, VA., as having been located directly opposite of the Greene County Schools on the north side of U.S. 33.
23. Unrecorded deed at the Clerk's Office in Orange County, Orange County, VA. dated 8/28,1812.
24. Orange County Deed Book 28, p. 195; 4/6/1819.
25. An unrecorded deed in the Orange County Clerk's Office has George Pulliam purchasing the lot in 1799. Greene County D.B. 2, p. 481; 6/17/1845 records his sale of the lot.
26. WPA reports available in microfilm at the Virginia State Library, Richmond, VA.
27. Orange County D.B. 23, p. 19; 4/25/1803.
28. Mutual Assurance Society Policy # undecipherable, Revaluation Declaration # undecipherable. 11/12/1802.

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29. Orange County D. B. 25, p. 37; 12/6/1810.
30. Greene county D.B. 3, p. 63; 6/15/1838.
31. Orange County D.B. 22, p. 84; 2/22/1802.
32. from a WPA report which may be seen in the Greene County Historical Museum.
33. Orange County D.B. 20, p. 403; 4/27/1795.
Orange County D.B. 30, p. 170; 8/25/1823.
34. The Mutual Assurance Society Posicy # 5300
Revaluation Declaration # 165; 8/25/1823.
35. Orange County D.B. 21, p. 235; 4/20/1795.
36. George W. Price bought this lot in 1820 and
did not sell it until 1851.
Orange County D.B. 30, p. 279; 2/22/1820.
Greene County D.B. 4, p. 158; 1/12/1851.
37. Orange County D.B. 21, p. 309; 9/1/1797.
38. Greene couonty D.B. 11, p. 231; 12/11/1897.
39. Orange County D.B. 26, p. 399; 10/16/1811.
40. Greene County D.B. 4, p. 785; 3/8/1859.