

Colchester

Colchester was founded in 1753 as a tobacco port on the Occoquan River and located on the old Post Road. Thomas Mason, son of George Mason, operated a ferry across the river here. In 1798, Mason built a bridge across the river which was washed away around 1807. Only one of the town's original buildings exist. *(I need to check*



if this is still there). The Fairfax Arms was used as an ordinary and became a private dwelling in later years. The decline of the tobacco trade, silting of the river, and the diversion of most shipping to the towns of Alexandria and Occoquan caused Colchester's decline.

Items Concerning Colchester Town – 1753 Compiled by Susan Annie Plaskett

An Indian trail 230 miles long was plainly visible. Starting near Williamsburg and passing thru the Counties of New Kent, King William, Caroline, Spottsylvania, Stafford, and Prince William, it crossed the Occoquan at Colchester into Fairfax.

From Colchester, it passed by way of Accotink, Washington's Old Mill, over the fords of Little and Great Hunting Creeks, into Alexandria.

From Alexandria by two ways varying from one to twelve miles apart, it passed on its course to the mountains.

One of these ways passed thru Fairfax County by Falls Church and Dranesville, and thru Loudon County by Leesburg and Clark's Gap in the Cotocton Mountains, and by Hillsboro to Key's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Sovereign Lord George II, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland—in the year of our Lord 1753, Entitled—

An act for erecting a Town at Occoquan in County of Fairfax and pursuant to the Direction of Wagener, Edward Washington, and John Barry, Gentlemen, by the said Act appointed Trustees of the Town to be called COLCHESTER, I, the Subscriber did survey and lay off 25 acres of land and divided the same into lotts”

Nothing remains of the once thriving town of Colchester but the old Fairfax Arms, storehouse of Peter Wagener, holes where foundations were old Potomac Street leading to the River, where once Dinwiddie, Braddock and Commodore Keppel, Mason and Washington, passed thru Colchester to ferry to the north.

Here was Occoquan Ferry, Ballantine's Forge, Occoquan Tobacco Warehouse, Bank Hotel and Town Market.

So important was this community that the General Assembly ordered the erection of commodious warehouses at Occoquan Ferry (Colchester) and on the Potomac River at the mouth of Great Hunting Creek.

First County Court of Fairfax held at the Iron Furnace and Forge of John Ballantine, who made cannon for the Revolution.

General Daniel Morgan, as a boy, hauled ore at a shilling a day.

Charter secured by Lawrence Washington, brother to George, who then represented Fairfax County in the House of Burgesses.