

Brief History

1725- Settlers were moving through the area on the “Conestoga Path” on their way to Virginia. Lord Baltimore began offering grants to settlers to get families to settle in Western Maryland. In 1738, Captain George Beale patterned 100 acres which includes present-day Boonsboro.

1755- General Braddock and his army, accompanied by George Washington, passed through this area on their way to battle the French and Indians at Fort Duquesne. After their defeat most of the population was forced to leave the area because of Indian attacks.

1792- William Boone, with help from his brother George, established the town and sold the first of forty-four lots. A post office was opened in 1801, and by 1803 there were twenty-four houses. The 1820 census shows a population of 395 whites, 7 free blacks, and 26 slaves.

1810- An all-weather road was completed from Baltimore to Boonsboro, bringing rapid growth and prosperity to the area. The National Pike passed down Main Street. Many businesses were established to service the flourishing traffic. By 1830 the population had grown to 707.

1823- The first macadam surface in the United States was laid on the “Boonsborough Turnpike Road” between Boonsboro and Hagerstown.

1827- On July 4th, the citizens of Boonsboro erected the first monument in the nation dedicated to George Washington.

1831- Boonsboro became incorporated and held the first town election. Jonathan Shafer was elected as the first burgess (mayor).

1902- The Hagerstown-Frederick Electric Railroad Company began trolley service through Boonsboro. The station closed in 1938.

1939- Shafer Park was dedicated after being built during the Depression by the Work Progress Administration.

Also of Interest

Old South Mountain Inn: This colonial inn at the top of South Mountain was built around 1732. Located where the Appalachian Trail and Old Monocacy Road meet, the Inn likely began as an American Indian trading post and later was a popular wagon stop on the Old National Pike. After serving as the center of the Confederate line holding Turner’s Gap during the 1862 Battle of South Mountain, the Inn became a private residence in 1876. The site became a tavern again in 1925, later operating as a restaurant until 2023.

Dahlgren Chapel: This Gothic Revival stone chapel was built in 1881 for Madeleine Dahlgren, daughter of Congressman Samuel F. Vinton and wife of Admiral John A. Dahlgren. While most of the building materials came from the immediate area, the marble altar was imported from Italy. Mrs. Dahlgren purchased the former tavern at Turner’s Gap as a summer retreat in 1876, naming it Dahlgren Manor, and the chapel was built across the [National] road.

Crystal Grotto: The State Road Commission discovered these caverns in 1920 while quarrying limestone. Crystal Grottoes Caverns, opened to the public in 1922, is 54 degrees year-round. It has more formations per square foot than any other cave and is the most naturally kept cave in the world.

Washington Monument: On July 4, 1827, the citizens of Boonsboro hiked to the top of South Mountain to erect a monument dedicated to the memory of George Washington – the first in the nation! By the end of the day, the structure was 15 feet high with a 54-foot circular base. It was completed to a height of 30 feet in September 1827. The monument fell into disrepair several times and has been rebuilt at least twice – most recently in 1936. Maryland Park Service maintains Washington Monument today.

Appalachian Trail: The 40 miles of Appalachian Trail in Maryland feature scenic overlooks and historic sites. Popular options for day hikers include Greenbrier State Park to Annapolis Rock and Black Rock, and Greenbrier to Washington Monument State Park – all near Boonsboro. A long history of support for the trail, promotion of its resources and commitment to its protection led to Boonsboro receiving the Appalachian Trail Community™ designation in 2023 by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

This brochure is sponsored by: **Boonsboro Historical Society**



2023

See map with corresponding numbers on inside of brochure

1 1 North Main St.- Eagle Hotel: The front of this building was probably erected about 1796. It was the first stone building in Boonsboro, and one of the first five established sites. Peter Conn built and operated the Eagle Hotel – a popular hostelry during the boom years of the National Pike. This structure is an example of French Second Empire style.



2 7 North Main St.- one of first original sites: This is possibly the site of the first house in Boonsboro. An earlier structure was recorded as one of five houses existing when Christian Dagenhart arrived in 1796. The present building was built in 1828 as a store. In 1847, the Masonic Lodge began using the large hall on the second floor.



3 19 North Main St.- Bank: This buff brick Colonial Revival style structure was erected in 1905 or 1906 as the Boonsboro Bank. The Boonsboro Library was housed here from 1975-2008. It currently serves as the Town Hall Annex.



4 33 North Main St.- Dr. Edgar T. Smith: In the late 1880’s, this Queen Anne Victorian Era style home was built with beautiful detail by Dr. Edgar T. Smith, a Boonsboro physician. The Smith family was Irish Catholic and provided most of the funds to build a Catholic church in Boonsboro. After St. James Catholic Church closed in 1898, Mass was occasionally celebrated here. Twelve stylized crosses decorate the fascia of the uppermost gable.



5 103 North Main St.- Hamilton/Brining House: This log house was built circa 1794 and is situated over a spring. William Hamilton, Governor of Maryland from 1880-1884, spent his early years here. At a later date, John C. Brining purchased the house for his residence.



6 109 North Main St.- Bast Furniture: Until 2011, Bast of Boonsboro was the oldest continually operating retail furniture store in Maryland. It began as Brining’s Cabinet Shop in 1837. The original log structure was replaced by the present building in 1926. In the early 1900’s the town stable was torn down and materials from it were used to construct the warehouse in the rear. A reconstruction of the Brining cabinet maker’s shop can be seen in the Boonsborough Museum of History.



7 113 North Main St.- Boonsborough Museum of History: The original house on this site was used as Boonsboro’s second post office in 1809. The present Victorian structure, built around 1882, houses the Boonsborough Museum of History (boonsboroughmoh.org). This non-profit museum contains an extensive collection of historical objects, along with items of interest from around the world. Behind this structure stands the gravestone of Abraham Lemaster, owner of an earlier log house on the property. He is the first and only occupant buried in this lot which was intended to be the site of the Episcopal Church.



8 121 North Main St.- Welty House: One of the earliest houses in Boonsboro, this was the home of weaver John B. Welty. Welty wove cotton and wool coverlets that can be found in the Art Institute of Chicago and Smithsonian collections.



Historic BOONSBORO Walking Tour



Boonsboro, Maryland ~ An Appalachian Trail Community



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9 St. James Catholic Church: The founding of St. James is unique as it was sponsored by a lay family. The Smiths – Dr. Otho J. Smith, his brother Dr. Josiah Smith and his son Otho B. Smith – purchased land on the National Pike and erected a small brick church, completed in 1868. When the church closed in 1898, the Catholic community attended mass at Dahlgren Chapel and occasionally at the home of Dr. Edgar T. Smith. When permanent closing became imminent, the church experienced a rebirth again in 1938. Monsignor Francis J. Leary was empowered to reopen St. James and improve its facilities to serve over 200 young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps who were encamped outside Boonsboro. The church had to be torn down in 1968 due to structural issues caused by deteriorating scissor trusses. Bequests from relatives of Dr. O.B. Smith helped to build a new church and the first Mass was offered June 22, 1969.



10 323 North Main St.- Bowman House: Built in 1826, the Bowman House is typical of log houses built in Western Maryland during the first half of the nineteenth century. John Bowman purchased the house after he was mustered out of the Union Army in 1865 and it was his home until his death in 1906. Bowman operated his pottery business on the site. The property was given to the Boonsboro Historical Society in 1971 by Charles Smith, a grandson of John Bowman. The house has been restored and now serves as the Society’s headquarters. A carriage house and potter’s shed have also been erected on this site.



11 5 Stouffer Avenue- Lakin Farmhouse: Constructed in 1769, the Lakin Farmhouse is the oldest extant structure in Boonsboro. The original builder of the stone and log structure is believed to have been Robert Turner (Turner’s Gap). By 1877 the property was owned by John Nicodemus, a prominent citizen and businessman. In 1915, the 500- acre farm deeded as Nelson’s Folly, was purchased by Susan and David Lakin, then passed on to John W. Lakin in 1958. This house is an excellent example of early architecture in Boonsboro and has been associated for many years with the town’s prominent families.



Historic Boonsboro, Maryland

12 220 North Main St.- Trolley Station: The Hagerstown-Frederick Electric Railway Company operated a trolley station in Boonsboro from August 1902 through October 1938. The site included a lumber shed, freight house, coal shed and office. Over 500 roundtrip tickets were sold for the first excursion at a cost of 50 cents. The trolley provided passenger, freight, U.S. mail and parcel service to the community. The last surviving trolley station in Washington County was restored and opened as a museum in 2009. Boonsboro Trolley Station Museum tells the story of the entire trolley system using photographs and artifacts and is open select Sundays from May through October, during several town events and by appointment.



13 214 North Main St.- National Road Museum: The National Road Museum honors our nation's first federal highway system, built with the goal of expanding and populating America's untamed west. Winding directly through Boonsboro, the National Road paved the way for thousands of immigrants whose search for a better life spurred economic growth and helped unify our nation. Learn more about Maryland's only museum dedicated to the National Road at nationalrdrfoundation.org.



14 114/116 North Main St.- Bast Homestead: It was typical of the time for a buyer to divide his lot into two properties, building his house on one and selling the other. The original cabins were 1 ½ stories but later raised to two stories with an attic. The smokehouse and summer kitchen are still intact at the back of the property. The brick spring house at the rear of the site was built over one of the town's main springs. At one time the Bast Funeral Home hearses were stored here.



15 102 North Main St.- Shafer Tannery: In the early part of the nineteenth century, Jonathan Shafer operated a large tannery here. The left side of the building was an office and the land behind the house was the site of the tannery. Mary Shafer, a descendant, donated this site to the Town of Boonsboro for a park. It was built during the depression years by the Work Project Administration and dedicated in 1939.



16 44 North Main St.: This building was present in 1796 and began as a one-story structure. It was owned by the Boone family until 1812 and may have been the Boone store. In 1897 it was converted to a residential structure and raised to two stories.



17 42 North Main St.: The Boone's laid the town out in 1792 and retained ownership of a spring located under this structure. For many years it served as the town's primary water source. Originally this house set further out on the street, but it was moved back when the National Road widened.



18 32 North Main St.- Otho J. Smith/Dr. John Gaines: This fine stone house was built circa 1810. After the Battle of Antietam, Dr. John Gaines, a Confederate surgeon, was left in charge of the wounded Confederates. While performing his assignment, he met the daughter of Dr. Otho Smith, who lived here. The couple fell in love and when he returned after the War, they were married and resided in this house. Dr. Gaines practiced medicine in Boonsboro for twenty-eight years.



19 4 North Main St.- Stonebraker Building: Built in 1821, this building housed the highest volume store in Western Maryland at one time. Scharf reports in his History of Western Maryland that by 1831 Boonsboro had grown to be an important trade center for the surrounding area, with this store selling \$90,000 in merchandise annually. In 1924, a bank and a dwelling occupied this building. In 1940 the bank was replaced by a post office.



20 27 Potomac St.- Bomberger House: This brick structure built in the Greek Revival style in the mid-nineteenth century served as the parsonage for the Reformed Church next door. The house later became the private residence of Richard Bomberger, dean of Franklin and Marshall College and a prominent citizen of Boonsboro.



21 33 Potomac St.- Trinity Reformed Church (Salem): The congregation of Salem Church was established many years before the founding of Boonsboro. It met as early as 1750 in a log schoolhouse half a mile from the town, off the present-day Route 66, where a graveyard remains (Shunk's Church). The first church built on this site was completed in 1810 and dedicated as the Salem Church. Both the Reformed and Lutheran congregations met here until after the Civil War. A bell cast in 1812 was imported from England and placed in the belfry. Reformed members tore down the old church to build the present structure in the Gothic Romanesque style, completing it in 1870.



22 Old Salem Graveyard/Boone Gravesite: Located behind the Old Salem Church, this cemetery dates to 1802 when the church was planned. Many of the early citizens of the town are buried here. Most notable are town founders William and Susanna Boone. Their prominently marked graves are located in the northwest corner of the cemetery. Prior to 1780, the Boone family lived in a farm house on a knoll behind the graveyard.



23 Potomac Street: (formerly known as Church Street) Midway down the first block on the left (exact house unknown) lived two brothers who fought on opposite sides during the Civil War – Jacob Heck (Confederate) and John Heck (Union). It is recorded that they visited their mother and sister, and ate together, following the Battle of South Mountain and then rejoined their respective armies prior to the Battle of Antietam. Both survived the war.

24 24 Potomac St.- Dr. Wheeler House: This Victorian style house was built in 1880 as the residence of Dr. W.C. Wheeler. His driver lived in the house to the right, where John Stonesifer III had crafted and tested his famous Kentucky long rifles up until 1860.



25 2 South Main St.- U.S. Hotel: The U.S. Hotel was built in 1811 on the site of Mrs. Short's earlier log store. Dr. Slifer used it as a residence, and later as a female seminary. The building operated as the U.S. Hotel during the Civil War. Colonel Bassett French, a Confederate officer, was forced to hide in the basement coal bin when he was surprised by a contingent of Union troops. The original hotel bar is in the Boonsborough Museum of History. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, this was the residence and offices of Dr. Hubert Wade.



26 14 South Main St.- old grocery: One of the oldest log buildings in town was operated as a grocery in 1802. Dr. S.S. Davis opened a drug store in the small addition in 1910. It was operated as a grocery store until 1983. The original logs are exposed.



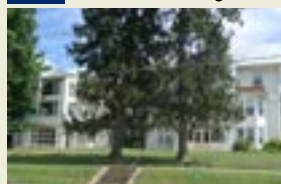
27 64 South Main St.- Trinity Lutheran Church: German Lutherans were among the first settlers in Boonsboro, worshipping at Ringer's Church (Peter Ringer's homestead) beginning in 1750. In 1812, the Lutheran and Reformed congregations jointly used a church on Potomac Street (then called Church Street). In 1870, the Lutherans purchased their current property on South Main Street. The cornerstone was laid that year and the church was dedicated in 1871.



28 134 South Main St.- Mt. Nebo Methodist Church: Mt. Nebo can trace its history back to a log building outside town limits where worship was held as early as 1750. However, 1832 is the date of organization generally given. That year, the old church was abandoned and the United Brethren erected a new church at this present-day site. The church was built of logs, roughcast on the outside and situated to the rear of the present building. A shrill blast of a shepherd's horn called the congregation to worship. The present brick building was completed in 1868.



29 141 South Main St.- Lilacs of Rose Hill: The southern-most building of these two structures was built circa 1809 as a private residence by Dr. Ezra Slifer. He named it 'Lilacs'. Since the hill was covered in wild roses at the time and called 'Rose Hill', the home became known as 'The Lilacs of Rose Hill'. This was the setting for David R. Belasco's Civil War play, Heart of Maryland. The play was made into a successful silent motion picture in 1915. In the mid-1940's the building was converted into a nursing home.



30 27 South Main St.- Odd Fellows Hall: This large brick building was erected by the International Order of Odd Fellows in 1852. Meetings were held on the second floor and the first floor housed several businesses. At one time a meat market was in the basement because it was cooler. The Hall served as a hospital during the Battles of South Mountain and Antietam. This structure is now known as Boonsboro's Clock Tower.



31 5-7 South Main St.- Cast Iron Building: In the first decade of the 1900's, an ornamental cast iron façade was attached to this building, representative of a fashion of the late Victorian period. This building has housed an emporium, tailor shop, post office, meat market and bar.



32 14 Saint Paul St.- First Christian Church (Disciples Church): Constructed in 1860, the principal exterior architectural feature is a deep two-story Colonial Revival portico. The church was available for use as a hospital during the Battles of South Mountain and Antietam and several soldiers are buried in the rear. Large porch columns were added in 1928.



33 40 Saint Paul St.- Weldon: This home is called Weldon after the original land grant "Well Done". It was probably built by the Weast family who acquired the property in 1806. In 1876, it became the home of the Bomberger family. Harvey Bomberger, a Maryland senator and co-founder and first chairman of the Washington County Historical Society lived here as a youth. Maude Bomberger, the daughter of Weldon's owner, published Colonial Recipes from Old Virginia and Maryland Manors in 1907, which included recipes from famous area families, Mount Vernon and the White House.



34 9 Saint Paul St.- Red Men's Hall: This structure was built in 1828 as a Methodist church and served as a hospital during the Civil War. It was purchased by the Red Men's Lodge in 1909, and another floor was added for meetings. The first floor was later rented out as a movie theater. The adjoining building, built in the Colonial Revival style, was originally the fire hall. Later it housed the town library on the first floor and the Boonsboro Town Hall on the second floor.

