

Trail follows George Washington's footsteps

by **Jeanne Mozier**

The 80 miles of the Washington Heritage Trail National Scenic Byway in Morgan County has 15 stops chosen to highlight a geologic or historic treasure. Exploring the sites helps better understand George Washington's attraction to the area.

From the east, the initial site is Spruce Pine Hollow, a roadside park that marks a major entry for hikers to the Tuscarora Trail. From here, the trail climbs more than 1,000 feet up Sleepy Creek Mountain on old logging roads and new trails through the wilderness of Sleepy Creek Wildlife Area.

The noted 18th century inventor of the steamboat, James Rumsey, had a small sawmill and bloomery on the Meadow Branch where stone ruins and a flume remain. Boards for Washington's summer home in Berkeley Springs built by Rumsey may have been sawed here.

Rumsey is also connected with several sites in Berkeley Springs State Park. The world's first monument honoring Rumsey is a burlstone from a mill on Sleepy Creek — one of several that Rumsey built in the county. The monument was erected in 1908.

Historic records show that Rumsey successfully demonstrated a pole boat model to General George Washington nearby in 1784. He also conducted early tests of his steam-powered boat along Sir Johns Run. Several mill machine patents are pictured in a detailed Rumsey exhibit in the Museum of the Berkeley Springs in the Park.

The most popular monument in the park is George Washington's Bathtub, a reenactment of where Washington would have "taken the waters" during his various visits to the town. He

wrote that he thought they had "made a cure of me." During his time the bathing was primitive: springs-filled pools hollowed out from the natural terrain of the sandy hillside screened with woven brush.

Further west is Panorama Overlook. It provides a scenic view of three states and two rivers rated by National Geographic as one of the five best in the East.

The spot also looks over the C&O Canal and the B&O Railroad. The overlook marks the end of Cacapon Mountain, which runs through Morgan County. Composed of Oriskany sandstone, it plunges nearly 1,000 feet into the Potomac.

Higher on Cacapon Mountain, Prospect Rock offers the same spectacular view. It was a favorite day trip for visitors on horseback from colonial times to the early 20th century, including Washington. Today, the unique rock formations may be reached by a 12-mile fire road and flat hiking trail across Cacapon Mountain accessed from Cacapon State Park, another Heritage Trail site.

Washington records stopping at "Great Cacapehon" during his original surveying trip of this area in 1748, and surveyed in the area in 1750 and 51.

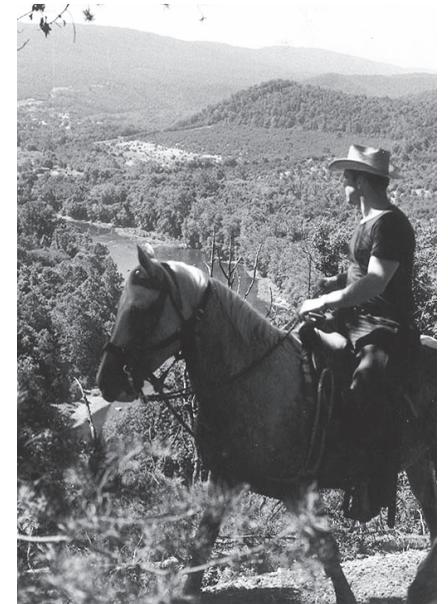
The town sits along the Potomac River just upstream from its juncture with the Cacapon River. It is visible from Panorama Overlook. Artifacts of a Native American town have been found along the Potomac in this area and Washington owned land nearby.

At Paw Paw, westernmost end of the Heritage Trail, there are several sites. Camp Hill Cemetery was an army encampment during the French & Indian War and a Civil War camp for more than 16,000 Union soldiers.

The canal and railroad town of Paw Paw is embraced in one of the Potomac River's notorious bends. The river here was navigated as early as 1750.

Paw Paw enjoyed prosperity over the decades from tanneries and orchards as well as the canal and railroad. The nearby Paw Paw Tunnel is the largest manmade structure on the C&O Canal. Beginning in 1836, it took 14 years to carve the 24-foot high, 3,118-foot tunnel lined with more than 6 million bricks. Dubbed by American promoters as a wonder of the world, the restored canal tow-path provides a way through the gaping mouth of the dry tunnel for bikers and walkers. There is also a hiking trail over it.

Self-guided maps are available at the Visitors Center and businesses around town or on berkeleysprings.com.



Archive photo of one of the Clatterbucks on a trail ride on top of Cacapon Mountain.



The Washington Heritage Trail has 15 stops for travelers who want to follow George's path through the area.

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