

A JOURNEY THROUGH AMISSVILLE'S HISTORY

Present-day Amissville was first settled in the mid-1700s on tracts of land granted by Thomas Lord Fairfax. Joseph Amiss and Edmond Bayse each purchased significant acreage from those tracts.

EVERY VOTE COUNTS

As the Amiss and Bayse families grew and acquired more land, and new settlers arrived in the area, residents asked the government for a post office. But there was no name for the new village.

As the story goes, both the Amiss and Bayse families wanted to claim the name of the village. To settle the dispute, it was decided that landowners in the area should put it to a vote. The Amiss family won by one vote. Thomas Amiss, one of four sons of Joseph Amiss, was appointed first postmaster of newly named Amissville in 1810.

Through the mid-1800s the village grew. The United Methodist Church on Route 211 was founded in 1829. Construction of the Sperryville-Rappahannock Turnpike provided access for farmers to transport their goods by four- and six-horse wagons to canals on the Rappahannock River and roads to Warrenton and Falmouth near Fredericksburg.

CIVIL WAR

Although Amissville did not see major action during the Civil War, two minor engagements are worth noting.

In November 1862, following the Battle of Antietam in Maryland, Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart and his cavalry units were in the vicinity of Amissville, traveling to Culpeper. At Corbin's Crossroads (now the intersection of Seven Ponds Road and Viewtown Road), about a mile south of Amissville, Stuart came upon Union cavalry forces. During the engagement he narrowly escaped death. Just as Stuart turned his head, a bullet whizzed past, clipping off half of his mustache.

Following the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, thousands



of Confederate troops were retreating through Chester Gap and south to Culpeper on Richmond Road. Union Gen. George A. Custer, left, and his Michigan cavalry and artillery battery

were camped in Amissville. They scouted the Confederate forces not realizing about two-thirds of the Army of Northern Virginia was moving through the area. Custer stationed his troops on the southern shoulder of Battle Mountain about five miles west of Amissville. As his cavalry and artillery units engaged the Confederate forces, Custer realized he was vastly outnumbered and retreated to Amissville, bushwhacking his way back to camp.

LATE 1800'S

After the Civil War the village continued to grow. It boasted merchandise stores, sawmills, grist mills, carriage makers, wheelwrights, tanners, a doctor and a dentist.

Around the turn of the century, churches, small one- and two-room schools, homes, stores, garages — even an undertaker — sprouted along Viewtown Road and the old turnpike, which would later become U.S. Route 211.

SKYLINE DRIVE



THE LOM-BAR-DY RESTAURANT TODAY
BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

With the opening of Shenandoah National Park in 1935, Rappahannock County was a primary access point to the park. Amissville became a major tourist stop along the way. Tourist homes and restaurants such as Lom-Bar-Dy Tourist Court and Lunch Room, Bel Air Tourist Cabins, and Mountain View Tea Room and Tourist Cabins did a brisk business. As visitations to the park increased, especially in the fall months, Sunday traffic returning to Washington, D.C., would often back up all the way to Warrenton.

In the mid-1970s, Lee Highway was widened to four lanes. Many homes, businesses, and other buildings on the northern side of the road, were torn down or relocated to make way for the expansion, including the fire house which was rebuilt on its present location in 1974.

— Bob Hurley

WHAT IS FOOTHILLS FORUM?



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nonprofit tackling the need for in-depth research and reporting on Rappahannock County issues. The group has an agreement with Rappahannock Media, owner of the Rappahannock News, to present this and other reporting projects.

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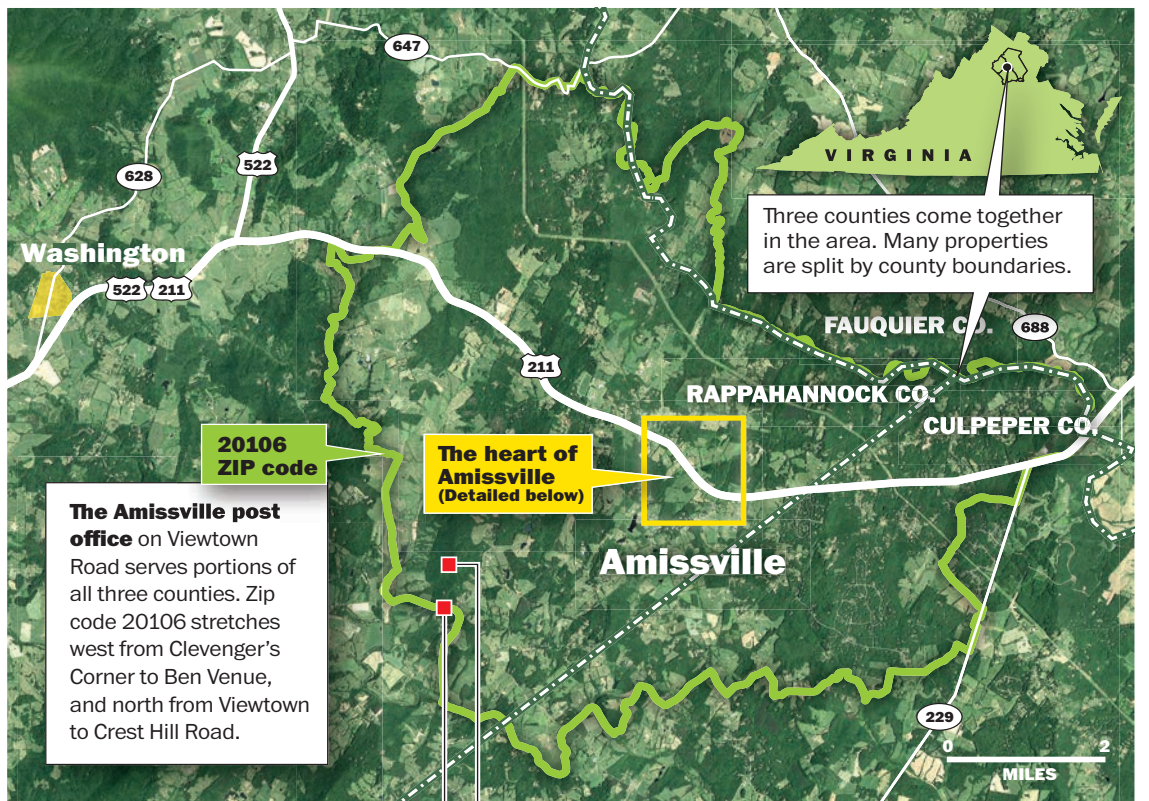
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About Amissville

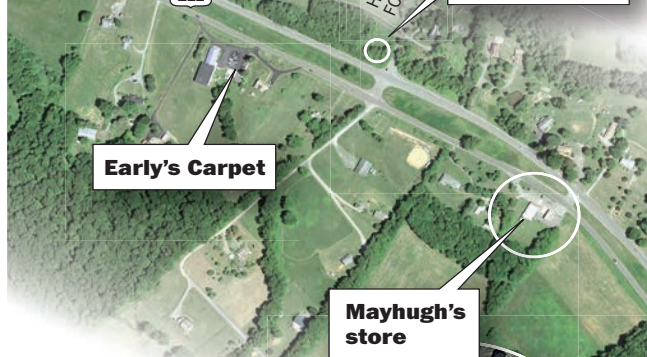
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As the Amiss and Bayse families grew and acquired more land, and new settlers arrived in the area, a post office was needed. But there was no name for the new village. Legend has it, both the Amiss and Bayse families wanted to claim the name of the village. It was decided that landowners in the area should put it to a vote. The Amiss family won by one vote. Hence the name "Amissville."



Many people think **Battle Mountain** is named for General George Custer's attack on Confederate troops in 1863. Not so. The Batailles, a French Huguenot family that settled in Amissville, changed their name to "Battle" when they arrived in America.

From 1889 until 1960, **Tapp's general store**, located at the corner of Hinson's Ford Road and Route 211, ran an undertaking business. Bodies were transported in a fringe-topped, horse-drawn hearse.



What is now **Mayhugh's store** and gas station once housed the **Bel-Air Restaurant**, a popular bar and dance hall. It was also a general store and gun shop. The faint lettering "GUNS" is still visible on the roof.



The two-room, one-story **Amissville public school** was built in the early 1900s. Ira Beatty, father of movie stars Warren Beatty and Shirley Maclaine, taught there around 1925. Amissville also had several "graded" schools for African American students, built with financial assistance from the Rosenwald Foundation. Today, compared to other areas of the county, **Amissville sends the most kids to Rappahannock public schools** – some 25% of the student body. Some suggest housing in Amissville may be more affordable, and working parents are able to live closer to their jobs in Warrenton, and areas in Northern Virginia.



Site of the Amissville public school

Stewart Field

Organized in early 1870s, **Bethel Baptist Church** on Viewtown Road was likely the first African American church in the county.



When the new **Amissville fire and rescue station** was finished in 1974, country music singer and sausage mogul Jimmy Dean performed at the opening. The Amissville Volunteer Fire and Rescue company serves portions of Rappahannock, Culpeper and Fauquier counties.



Amissville Post Office



Sources: Rappahannock Historical Society; map prepared by Eugene M. Scheel. Satellite images: @TerraMetrics, Map data @2022 Google; Photos @2022 Google

By Bob Hurley and Laura Stanton for Foothills Forum