

# Rappahannock News

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\$1

## Amissville A village without a Main Street



DRONE PHOTO COURTESY ROBERT STEPHENS

## Town mayor won't seek second term

Council member Whited running uncontested race for top office

BY BEN PETERS

Rappahannock News staff

Town of Washington Mayor Fred Catlin announced that he won't seek a second term leading Rappahannock County's seat, giving way for Town Council member Joe Whited to take his place in an uncontested race for the office.

In an interview, Catlin said he ran in 2018 after former Mayor John Fox Sullivan announced his intent to retire and no other viable candidates emerged in the town, which has a population of about 100 residents.

"I have no political aspirations," Catlin said. "I just did it because I have a strong belief in giving back to the community and there was a need for somebody to step up, so I did." The mayor noted that he likely would have sought a second term if another candidate hadn't emerged. Formerly a Town Council member, Catlin said he still

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Man indicted in connection to 2021 death of Rapp girl ▶ Page 6

BY BOB HURLEY  
For Foothills Forum

**F**ifty years ago, motorists traveled through Amissville on a two-lane road dotted with historic homes, small hardware and grocery stores, restaurants, tourist cabins, garages, and a post office. Today, most travelers on four-lane U.S. Route 211 buzz past the village's big green welcome signs that read, "Ensuring our Future by Preserving Our Past."

One of Rappahannock's key villages, Amissville is the eastern gateway to the county. There remain a handful of familiar landmarks along 211 — Hackley's Store, Settle's Cars & Trucks, Early's Carpet, Mayhugh's Store, Gray

**How does the area sustain and build community?**

A Foothills Forum • Rapp News Special Report

Ghost and Narmada wineries, the Amissville Volunteer Fire and Rescue department.

But what lies beyond?

The village has no defined boundaries and a zip code which covers Rappahannock, Culpeper, and Fauquier counties.

Twenty five percent of the students who attend Rappahannock County Public Schools come from the Amissville zip code — almost double the number from Washington, the next highest zip code area of the county.

Just four miles east of the 1,443-acre housing and retail development being built at Clevenger's Corner, Amissville residents will

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## ▲ THE CARNIVAL RETURNS

TO WATCH A VIDEO REPORT

and to see photos from last week's festivities, go to [rappnews.com/carnival2022](http://rappnews.com/carnival2022) or point your smartphone camera at the QR code below and tap the link



  
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## 'Farm plates' law could boost local tax revenue

A new state law regulating "farm use" license plates does more than just crack down on those who may be abusing the system that allows owners to not register some vehicles with the state. ▶ Page 8



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## AMISSVILLE

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have to contend with increased traffic and the potential for new growth.

“With the expansion of U.S. Route 211 from two to four lanes in the 1970s, we lost what was considered our Main Street,” said Lorraine Early, a third-generation resident who, with her husband John, started Early’s Carpet in 1966. “Businesses, homes, even the fire department were lost or relocated. People used to congregate at places along the road, but now all that’s gone,” she said.

Lois Settle, a direct descendant of Joseph Amiss, of the family for which the village is named, is one of the residents who had her home moved across Route 211 to make way for the new highway. “After they expanded (211) it was a whole lot different,” she said. “Before, there wasn’t nearly as much as traffic or as many houses.”

### ‘No village in the village’

Longtime resident Hal Hunter, who completed a project in 2000 to document Amissville through oral histories and photographs of historic buildings, recognizes the challenge of building a community where there is no central place to congregate. “The truth is there is no village in the village,” he said. “We need to continually look for ways to come together and talk with each other.”

In 1999, Hunter, along with Steve Miller, Jan Hackley Makela and others started an organization called the Amissville Area Community Association (AACA). According to Miller, who is now a part-time Amissville resident and served as AACA’s president, the organization’s goals were to better define the community, act as a forum for discussion of local issues, and identify improvement projects. “When Route 211 was expanded the village lost a lot of its identity and we were trying to help regain that,” he said.

In addition to sponsoring fall festivals, identifying historic structures, and working on a community planning process, AACA was responsible for erecting the welcome signs that are now found along Route 211.

Less successful was a proposal seeking funding for highway landscaping, historic markers, and a study of pedestrian access in the village area. In 2001, Miller presented the proposal to the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors seeking support for state funding under the federal TEA-21 highway law. Many village residents raised objections citing safety and tax issues and concerns about finding volunteers to sustain the proposed projects. Miller withdrew the proposal and it has never been reconsidered. The AACA disbanded in 2002. “Perhaps we were a little ahead of our time,” said Miller.

### Churches, fire and rescue, baseball

“When I think of what brings our community together, churches, the annual fireman’s carnival and parade, and baseball at Stewart Field immediately come to mind,” said John Wesley Mills, a technology consultant and Amissville resident who chairs the Rappahannock County School Board. An ordained minister, he is pastor of the Gathering Christian Church off Route 211. “Our village does not have a central gathering place, so these three things provide opportunities for residents to meet and enjoy each other’s fellowship,” he said.

As a child, J.B. Carter remembers music drifting from the windows of the fire hall on summer nights. “Our house was across the street from the old fire hall and they would host dances there once a month,” he said. “Growing up, there wasn’t a whole lot to do so the fire department supported a lot of activities for kids, like basketball and softball.”

Now chief of the Amissville Volunteer Fire and



PHOTOS BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER FOR Foothills Forum

**J.B. CARTER** Amissville Volunteer Fire and Rescue chief

**“I joined as a junior member when I was 14 years old,” Carter said. Now, it’s harder to recruit young members. “Those that do join often go off to college and can’t return because it is so expensive to live here.”**

Rescue company, Carter works to make sure the fire hall continues as a center of community life. “Covid suspended a lot of our activities like bingo, community dinners, and the big annual carnival,” he said, noting that the carnival and parade were held last week. “I know a lot of people enjoyed its return, as it is probably the village’s biggest annual event.”

Carter worries about the shrinking pool of young volunteers at the fire company in Amissville. “I joined as a junior member when I was 14 years old,” he said. “Now the age has been upped to 16, just when kids are getting their driver’s license. Between that and the distractions of the internet, it is hard to recruit junior members who will eventually become full-fledged volunteers. Those that do join often go off to college and can’t return because it is so expensive to live here.”

Amissville has no shortage of churches with five in the village area. “There is a crossover among the churches for community and outreach projects,” said Frank Fishback, an ordained minister and president of the Amissville Community Foundation.

For more than 50 years, it has sponsored the Amissville Christmas Project which prepares food baskets and gifts for 100 families in the area each year. “This is a very successful event, held at the United Methodist Church, that is sponsored by many of our local churches with dozens of people from all walks of life participating,” said Fishback. “No doubt, churches in Amissville play an important role in bringing people together.”

Another large community event has been an annual Thanksgiving service. “Each Sunday before Thanksgiving, churches in the area would join together and host a community service of Thanksgiving,” said James Pittman, pastor of the Full Gospel Church, located on Viewtown Road. “We’ve had to postpone the service the past few years because of Covid, but hope to start it up again this fall.”

“Since homes are spread out and somewhat secluded, people need places to enjoy fellowship and care for one another,” said Peter Witkowski, pastor at the Baptist Church, also on Viewtown Road. “Amissville’s churches provide those gathering places.”

Veterinarian Jana Froeling and spouse Melissa Scholer operate Full Circle Equine Services in Amissville. “We have a business here so it is much easier to meet and get to know people in the

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**JANA FROELING AND MELISSA SCHOLER**

Full Circle Equine Services

**“They couldn’t have been nicer or more helpful. It made us feel really good about the community here,” Froeling recalls when strangers stopped and helped out after their truck broke down on a local road.**

## VIDEO: THE AMISSVILLE CARNIVAL RETURNS



After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, one of the community's more popular long-standing traditions — the Amissville

Volunteer Fire and Rescue Carnival — returned last week.

It was another example of Rappahannock at its best, where families from all over the county came together to have fun and enjoy each other's company. Videographer Luke Christopher was there and captured many of the highlights, from the opening parade to the people behind the scenes who made it all happen.

### ▶ TO WATCH

Go to [rappnews.com/carnival2022](http://rappnews.com/carnival2022) or point your smartphone camera at the QR code above and tap the link

### THIS PLACE



The video is part of our ongoing This Place series, which will look at the things that both unite and divide us. Read the first story at [rappnews.com/thisplace](http://rappnews.com/thisplace)



PHOTOS BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER FOR FOOHILLS FORUM

**Carnival Queen Kierstin Mills, a 2022 RCHS grad, was one of the pageant winners, which also included contestants for Junior, Little and Tiny Miss, top right.**



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community,” said Froeling. “And of course, we’ve gotten to know people over the years through the Christmas project and fire hall activities,” added Schooler, who also serves as treasurer of Businesses of Rappahannock, the nonprofit group that represents Rappahannock’s business community.

A few years back they were carrying a load of wood in their pickup truck when it broke down on Viewtown Road. “A sheriff’s deputy arrived on the scene. Shortly after that, volunteers from the fire department were returning from a call and stopped to help us,” said Froeling. “They all pitched in to help us transfer the wood to another truck so we could have it towed. They couldn’t have been nicer or more helpful. It made us feel really good about the community here.”

## Field of dreams



STEWART FIELD  
COURTESY RAPP-CULPEPER BASEBALL

In 1975, John Early and Clarence “Boosie” Dodson asked retired U.S. Navy Capt. Luther B. “L.B.” Stewart if the Amissville Little League Baseball team

could play on some of his land. Stewart agreed, paving the way for what is now a five-field complex off Carter Lane hosting youth teams from Rappahannock and Culpeper counties.

Stewart passed away in 1980. A few years later his wife, Maybel, deeded the field complex to the Amissville Ruritan Club which transferred ownership to the county in 2008. The complex is managed and funded primarily by the Rappahannock Athletic Association (RAA), with some funding contributed by the county government.

“We started with just one field and now we have

five,” said Wayne Dodson, son of Boosie, who serves as RAA president. “I grew up playing ball there and never left. There isn’t a better place for kids of all ages, families, and friends to congregate during the baseball season. This place is our local ‘field of dreams’ and it adds so much to community life here,” he said.

Amissville resident Donna Comer has been going to games at Stewart Field since her 14-year-old son, Mason, was just five. “I challenge you to find another spot anywhere in the county, between mid-March through the end of October, where you might find more children and families gathered,” she said. “We’ve bonded with many families over the years watching their kids grow up playing ball. And stopping at Hackley’s Store for ice cream after a game is always a treat.”

## Hackley’s Store

Perhaps the most familiar landmark in Amissville is the Hackley’s Store building, located at the intersection of Viewtown Road and Route 211.

“As a kid, I loved Hackley’s Store, especially the candy bins,” said Christina Looch, who lives nearby on Viewtown Road. “My sister and I would walk there to buy penny candy and Mrs. Hackley would scoop an eighth of a pound of spice drops and an eighth of a pound of jelly beans into little brown paper bags.”

Hackley’s sold more than penny candy. “It was once a full-fledged general store selling clothing, groceries, hardware, animal feed — just about anything anyone living in the country needed,” said 97-year-old Dorothy Hackley, who ran the store with her husband Graham for 57 years.

The original store was built in 1908 by Graham’s

### SANDRA McCLELLAN AND CHUCK SHEWBRIDGE

Former operators of Route 211 Country Market

**“We opened just before the pandemic hit and we had to shelve our plans for indoor dining,” Shewbridge said of the now shuttered venture that operated out of Hackley’s Store.**

parents, L.E. and Rosalie Hackley, just across Viewtown Road from the current structure. It burned in the early 1930s and was rebuilt at its present location in 1934.

“Mr. and Mrs. Hackley were two of the finest people you could ever meet,” said Bill Anderson, a former member of the Board of Zoning Appeals and an Amissville resident since 1965. “They always helped anyone who needed it.”

“It was a central meeting spot where members of the community could find items they needed, then sit around the old wood stove or on the porch and





► **MORE PHOTOS:** Go to [rappnews.com/carnival2022](http://rappnews.com/carnival2022)



exchange news and gossip,” added Dorothy’s daughter, Jan Hackley Makela. “In later years, bluegrass bands and musicians would play on the porch and neighbors would come to listen or dance in the parking lot,” she said.

Late last month Chuck Shewbridge and Sandra McClellan, who operated Hackley’s Store under the name Route 211 Country Market, decided to close it.

The market had operated as a take-away eatery, although Shewbridge (who formerly operated Burgers n’ Things in Sperryville) had hoped to reopen the inside for dining and the sale of small food items. “We opened just before the pandemic hit and we had to shelve our plans for indoor dining,” he said. “The support the community showed us during our time here was just awesome.”

The Hackley family, which still owns the store, is in discussions with potential lessees interested in providing food service and reopening the store to indoor dining. “We hope to make a decision soon and reopen the store by mid-summer,” said Jan Makela. “We are looking forward to serving food inside and out.”

Across Viewtown, on the site of the first Hackley’s store, Pam and David Jenkins opened 211 Veggies and More in August 2020. “We used our savings to set up a small outdoor market selling vegetables and plants mainly on weekends,” said Pam Jenkins. “We felt a market like this was needed at this end of the county. With more people visiting the country during the pandemic, we’ve been able to make a go of it,” she said.

The Jenkins, who plan to operate their business after they retire, are updating the adjacent building and expect to sell handicrafts and specialty items inside later this summer.

A third-generation resident of Amissville, Pam Jenkins doesn’t feel there is enough for kids to do in the village. “If I hit the lottery, I’d build a recreation center for them,” she said.

McKenna Torosian, a 16-year-old high school student who lives on Goldfinch Lane, suggested a sidewalk along Viewtown Road. “Having a sidewalk where kids could stroll to Hackley’s Store or other places would be nice,” she said. “It is dangerous walking along the road.”

## Clevenger’s Corner

Just four miles east of Amissville sits Clevenger’s Corner — the intersection of Route 211 and Rixeyville Road in Culpeper County. Rising there now is Stonehaven, a mixed-use development with up to 776 units of housing. Sales for Lennar Corp. homes are underway with occupancy expected this fall. According to Saadeh Partners, responsible for building and leasing space for retail services, an initial phase with shops, restaurants and other services is expected within the next 30 months. Larger commercial projects such as a grocery store and hotel are planned for a later second phase.

Amissville residents have mixed views about the project’s impact on the village. Most express concern

about increased traffic and commute times into Warrenton and Northern Virginia. Of less concern is the potential of future development that would compromise the rural nature of Amissville. Many welcome the possibility of commercial services available closer to home.

Donald Brown, who lives on Battle Mountain Road and whose family roots in Amissville go back to the 1800s, shared concern about the possible increase in traffic but is pleased that restaurants and other services may be a little closer.

“Traffic is going to be a problem but most of us will end up shopping there,” he said. “The project might even spur some additional development in the Amissville village area. That would be great for the county’s tax base, but the people in Amissville have

to be included in any decisions affecting future growth. That hasn’t always been the case.”

Real estate agent Kaye Kohler, who lives on Sam Riley Lane off of Hinson’s Ford Road, isn’t overly concerned about development pressure migrating from Stonehaven to Amissville. “We have strong zoning laws and as long as we continue to follow them, we should be protected,” she said.

“Amissville is physically positioned such that growth, while at a slow pace, is coming,” said Donna Comer. “We need now, more than ever, to be very intentional and strategic in community planning,” she said.

“As more folks move into Culpeper and Fauquier and discover the beauty of the Shenandoah National Park, Amissville becomes the gateway to the mountains. What



**JAN HACKLEY MAKELA** Longtime Amissville resident

**“We were surrounded by friends and family who loved us, watched out for us, and really cared about us, and we always tried to return the favor,” Makela recalls about growing up in the village.**

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happens when this ‘sleeping giant’ awakens depends in large part on what county leaders do now.”

Noel Laing’s family moved to Amissville in the early 1920s and he grew up in the area. “It’s anybody’s guess on how property values will be affected, but it might put pressure on this end of the county for rezoning with reduced acreage requirements, or some moves to concentrate housing around what might be a village in Amissville,” he said.

Ron Makela, Amissville’s representative on the Board of Zoning Appeals, and its chair, knows of at least two 100 acre-plus parcels along Route 211 near the village area that could be developed. “Although they are zoned for agriculture, given their proximity to 211, a developer could apply, or even sue, for rezoning on the basis of satisfying a need for affordable housing,” he said. “The law requires we take steps to provide affordable housing. We know there is a shortage of it in the county, and other than the Rush River Commons, not much is being done to encourage it,” he said.

Last year, the Planning Commission brought in a consulting firm, The Berkley Group, to analyze the county’s zoning ordinances and make recommendations for updating land use rules. The report, which can be found on the county’s website, was presented to the Planning Commission earlier this

month. The Board of Supervisors is expected to convene a public meeting on Aug. 3 to review the report.

“Residents should pay close attention to this process,” said Makela. “It could have significant impacts on how we plan for future development, not just in Amissville, but the entire county.”

## Like a Norman Rockwell painting

Jan Makela continues to think about ways a village center might be created in Amissville. “It would be wonderful to define the boundaries of Amissville so we could have a small commercial center, a place for people to meet,” she said. “Maybe start with something small like a walking trail from Stewart Field over to Hackley’s, and up to the post office. I’d like to start a conversation about it.

“Before my brother Larry passed away last year, he was reflecting on growing up in Amissville. He said, ‘I feel like we grew up in a Norman Rockwell painting.’ I had to agree. We were surrounded by friends and family who loved us, watched out for us, and really cared about us, and we always tried to return the favor. That’s the joy of living in a small village like Amissville.”

# A JOURNEY THROUGH AMISSVILLE’S HISTORY

**P**resent-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

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## WHAT IS FOOTHILLS FORUM?



Foothills Forum is an independent, community-supported 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.

► More at [foothills-forum.org](http://foothills-forum.org)

## What do you think?

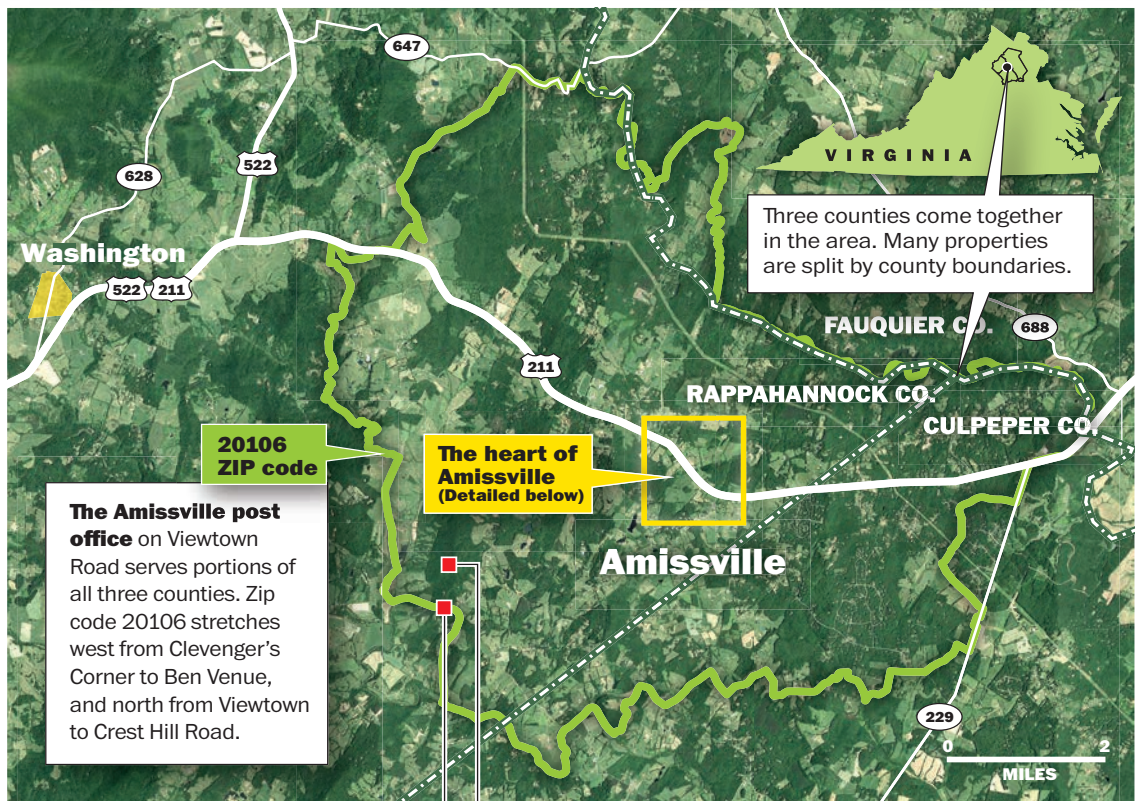
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## About Amissville

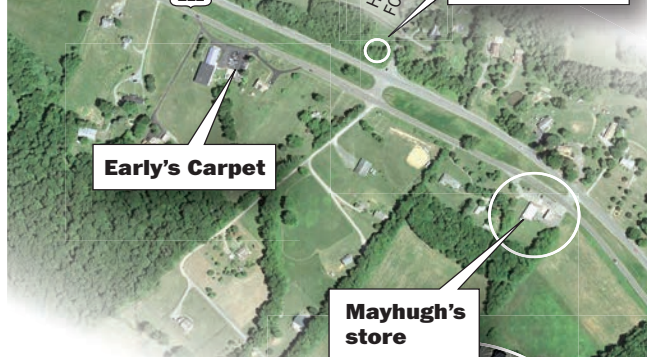
Present-day Amissville was first settled in the mid-1700s on tracts of land granted by Thomas Lord Fairfax. Joseph Amiss and Edmond Bayse each purchased significant acreage from those tracts.

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.

Settle's Cars and Trucks

Site of the Amissville public school

Stewart Field



Amissville Post Office



Bethel Baptist Church



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.