

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:  
VLR 06/17/2010  
NRHP 09/24/2010

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Lee Hall Depot  
other names/site number VDHR Number 121-0014

## 2. Location

street & number 9 Elmhurst Street  not for publication  
city or town Newport News  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county N/A code 700 zip code 23603

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   X   local

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

[Signature]  
Date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1            | 0               | buildings    |
| 0            | 0               | sites        |
| 0            | 0               | structures   |
| 0            | 0               | objects      |
| 0            | 0               | buildings    |
| 1            | 0               | <b>Total</b> |

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Stick/Eastlake

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: brick  
walls: weatherboard  
roof: asphalt  
other:

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

See Continuation Sheets

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**Narrative Description**

See Continuation Sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

Ca. 1881-1960

**Significant Dates**

Ca. 1881, 1893, 1918, ca. 1932

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

C&O Railway Engineering Department

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance starts with the construction of the first section of the depot in 1881 and ends in 1960, the fifty-year cut-off, as the railroad continued passenger service into the late 1970s.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The Lee Hall Depot was moved from its original location in 2009 to prevent it from being demolished by the CSX Railroad, which no longer had a use for it and had deemed it unsafe (too close to the tracks) for non-railroad uses. However, the Depot's primary significance is derived from its architecture and its importance as the last remaining building associated with this early period of transportation in Newport News. Additional discussion follows in Section 8 (see continuation sheets).

Lee Hall Depot  
Name of Property

Newport News, Virginia  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See Continuation Sheets

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See Continuation Sheets

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheets

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

**Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources,**

Name of repository: **Richmond, VA**

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Lee Hall Depot  
Name of Property

Newport News, Virginia  
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):    DHR # 121-0014   

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

|   |                           |                              |                               |   |                           |                              |                               |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | <u>18 S</u><br>Zone       | <u>360405</u><br>Easting     | <u>4117635</u><br>Northing    | 3 | <u>          </u><br>Zone | <u>          </u><br>Easting | <u>          </u><br>Northing |
| 2 | <u>          </u><br>Zone | <u>          </u><br>Easting | <u>          </u><br>Northing | 4 | <u>          </u><br>Zone | <u>          </u><br>Easting | <u>          </u><br>Northing |

### Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Lee Hall Depot was originally located along the eastbound track at the corner of Elmhurst Street and Warwick Boulevard. No address or parcel number was assigned to the building by the City of Newport News. It was relocated to 9 Elmhurst Street in Newport News, Virginia. It is now denoted within the City of Newport News Real Estate Assessor's Office as Parcel 017.00-04-08.

### Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The building faces Yorktown Road and is bordered by the Verizon office. The rear side runs parallel to the CSX tracks. The east side is parallel to Elmhurst Street. The west side is bordered by a grass lot belonging to Verizon. The boundaries encompass the entirety of the lot purchased by the City of Newport News to accommodate the relocation of the Lee Hall Depot.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Mary Kayaselcuk, Lee Hall Depot Historic Site Coordinator  
organization City of Newport News date July 2009  
street & number 14415 Old Courthouse Way telephone 757-886-2715  
city or town Newport News state VA zip code 23608  
e-mail mkayaselcuk@nngov.com

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

The following information is common to all photographs:

**Name of Property:** Lee Hall Depot

**Location:** Newport News, VA

**Photographer:** Mary Kayaselcuk

**Date of Photograph:** 2009

Description: Relocated building, south and east elevations  
Photograph Number: 1 of 11

Description: Relocated building, south and east elevations showing train tracks  
Photograph Number: 2 of 11

Description: Relocated building, east and north elevations  
Photograph Number: 3 of 11

Description: Relocated building, north and west elevations  
Photograph Number: 4 of 11

Description: Relocated building, north elevation ticket office detail  
Photograph Number: 5 of 11

Description: Relocated building, north elevation detail  
Photograph Number: 6 of 11

Description: Relocated building, west elevation  
Photograph Number: 7 of 11

Description: Waiting room/ticket office interior  
Photograph Number: 8 of 11

Description: Second floor kitchen above ticket office  
Photograph Number: 9 of 11

Description: Second floor sleeping quarters above ticket office  
Photograph Number: 10 of 11

Description: Express office interior  
Photograph Number: 11 of 11

**Property Owner**

Name: City of Newport News

Street & Number: 2400 Washington Avenue Telephone: 757-926-8411

City: Newport News State: VA Zip Code: 23607

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Lee Hall Depot

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Newport News, VA

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Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
N/A

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### Summary Description

The Lee Hall Depot is a frame structure built ca. 1881 in the Stick style located in the village of Lee Hall at 9 Elmhurst Street within a semi-rural section of the City of Newport News, Virginia. It has a central two-story segment flanked by one-story wings and a loading platform. The walls are covered with board and batten weatherboard; the overhanging shed roof has asphalt shingles over the original tin; the foundation piers and four chimneys are brick. It was constructed on the south side of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway line, but was moved across the tracks in 2009 to a site 165 feet away. This measure, undertaken by the City of Newport News, was to preserve the structure from demolition by CSX, and to restore and adaptively reuse the building as a museum.

### Architectural Description:

The original single bay structure facing Newport News was erected sometime between 1881 and the turn of the nineteenth century; one source specified the date as 1883.<sup>1</sup> It was a simple, one story building with board and batten siding set off by vertical and diagonally slatted wainscoting. The interior consisted of an open freight room measuring 25 feet x 50 feet x 14 feet high. Five sets of sliding double doors provided access from the loading platforms. Two asymmetrically placed 2/2 windows were positioned on the east side. Structural elements such as ceiling joists, 2x4s, conduits carrying electrical lines and receptacles were exposed on the interior. A freight scale that yet remains, was embedded in the wide planked pine floor. Its design was based on a standard C&O Railway company plan.

A two-story midsection was added in 1893. It featured a pentagonal two-story bay along the trackside facade and Stick style embellishments of the exterior wall surfaces, gable trusses and functional support brackets beneath deep overhangs.

The depot's 1893 midsection was divided into areas for the Railway Express Agency (REA), an operator, and baggage.<sup>2</sup> The ground floor express office could be accessed from the freight room by a short flight of steps or by an exterior door on the south side. It could also be entered by two trackside exterior doors and two pass-through doors. The REA's L-shaped ticket counter remains intact. The operator room was connected to the baggage area by a door and also had a separate outside entrance; this space has two 4/4 windows and retains its original open shelving units. The upstairs of the midsection provided living quarters for the stationmaster. These barracks consisted of four rooms: a kitchen/dining area, showers/toilet facilities and sleep quarters. The rooms were lighted by a single, unshaded incandescent bulb suspended from the center of the ceiling on its electrical cord. Original kitchen fixtures in situ at the time this application was prepared consisted of a dual basin ceramic farmhouse sink enclosed in a wooden bead-board cabinet and a wall hung hot water heater. The narrow staircase leading upstairs no longer has its handrails.

Construction drawings and plans from the C&O railroad depict a variety of changes to both the facade and layout of the depot throughout its life. A plan dating from 1918 (C&O drawing 4340) depicted a proposed one-

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story addition to the north end of the depot. This was drawn in 1918 soon after the opening of Camp Eustis, making increased traffic through Lee Hall a certainty. The addition drawing called for deep overhangs, eave brackets and other Stick style detailing of the depot's earlier construction. Photographic evidence however, showed that with the exception of the overhangs the extension as built did not include many of the embellishments shown on the drawing. A revised plan from 1932 depicted changes made to the layout of the ticketing office, although the 1918 layout can still be discerned from the patches to the wooden beaded board ceiling.<sup>3</sup>

The 1918 wing provided separate waiting rooms and toilets for white and "colored" patrons; a new ticket office straddled these segregated spaces. The white waiting room on the west side of the building was twice as large as the one for blacks. Entrance to the white waiting room could be had from the ticket office and opposing outside doors. The space has four 4/4 windows; three of which retain interior shutters (two of metal and one of wooden louvers). Remnants of two screw type light fixtures remain in the ceiling. Mounted on the west wall outside the toilets is a framed panoramic map of the C&O line on the Virginia Peninsula. A short triangular raised wooden platform is in one corner and an announcements chalkboard hangs to its right. By contrast, the smaller black waiting room had two 4/4 windows. It also connected to the ticket office and had two outside doors. The glass ticket windows remain in place on both sides. The interior of the 1918 wing retains its painted beaded board on the walls, pine tongue and groove flooring, raised panel doors with bull's eye corner blocks and double-paned transoms. Late twentieth century fixtures installed in this wing include suspended fluorescent lights and a gas heater in the white waiting room. The wall that originally separated the ticket office and black waiting room has been removed. Likewise, the configuration and access to the operator's office and baggage room have been modified over the years. C&O engineering records, along with photos from the period, show that at some point between 1955 and 1956 the two-story bay was removed. Finally, although intact for the national Yorktown Bicentennial celebration and the C&O Centennial celebrations in October 1981, the deep overhangs and supporting brackets were removed from the depot since that time.<sup>4</sup>

By 2009, the depot was in dilapidated condition. The ticket office bay and decorative gable trussing (on the north elevation) is gone, but photos exist that would permit an accurate reconstruction of these elements. Windows are boarded up and have many broken panes. Siding and skirting have missing boards. The platform steps and railings which were in disrepair were taken off the building prior to its relocation. The exterior paint is alligatored or down to bare wood. The building has experienced vandalism and graffiti in the last ten years. Presently, all utilities are disconnected and the building is vacant in preparation for its restoration. The structure was divided into two sections for its move; these were reunited on a new foundation as part of the master plan to rehabilitate the depot as a museum.

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**Endnotes Section 7**

<sup>1</sup> Lyon, Ed, "C&O Chronology in Newport News," Chesapeake and Ohio Magazine, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, March 1996, 6-7; Traser, Donald R., "Virginia Railway Depots," (Richmond: Old Dominion Chapter, National Railroad Historical Society, 1998), 31.

<sup>2</sup> PMA Planner & Architects, "Relocate and Restore the Historic Lee Hall Depot," (Newport News: Department of Planning & Development, Department of Parks & Recreation, March 2004), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 7; personal observation.

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N/A

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**Summary:**

The Lee Hall Depot was constructed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway's efforts to establish its Atlantic terminus at Newport News, thereby linking the Ohio River Valley with the sea. The station was sited on Warwick Road, now Warwick Boulevard, connecting the Warwick County Courthouse with Williamsburg and Yorktown. Traditionally, the depot served the Yorktown, Lee Hall, and lower James City County communities and was the social and economic focal point of the village of Lee Hall that grew around the station. The depot is the only remaining station on the Lower Virginia Peninsula from the railroad's expansion into Warwick County. Five stations (Lee Hall, Oriana, Oyster Point, Morrison, and Newport News) once served the county. It is a symbol of Newport News' early development from the agrarian Warwick County into the modern City of Newport News and of the history of transportation. The first passenger train from Newport News took local residents and national officials to the Cornwallis Surrender Centennial Celebration on October 19, 1881, on a temporary track laid from Lee Hall to Yorktown. During World War I, the depot served as the initial rail link for several military installations constructed in 1918, including Camp Eustis on Mulberry Island and the Yorktown Navy Mine Depot at Lackey. Passenger service ended in the late 1970s. In 1993, CSX, formerly the C&O Railroad, decided that the location of the depot was unsafe because it was too close to the tracks. They donated the structure to the City of Newport News in 2008. The city relocated the station across the tracks that year with the intent to restore it for use as a museum featuring the dynamic impact of the railroad on the community's transition from farmland to an industrial city. The depot is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Transportation and Criterion C for Architecture, exemplifying the Stick style and Railroad-related Architecture. Criterion Consideration B applies as the building has been relocated. The period of significance is ca. 1881 to 1960 (50 year mark). The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) has been extensively involved with this project and approved the pre-move plans. Indeed, the move was the recipient of General Assembly funding for this purpose.

**Transportation**

Historically, railroad stations have played a significant role in our nation's development. The railroad was the country's primary transportation network from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries and a major source of innovation in technology and architecture. They stimulated industrial and commercial growth. The local railroad station served as gateway both into and out of every town or city fortunate enough to be located along a rail line. The economic vitality of small towns often depended totally on rail transportation for carrying goods to market, and a location with major rail access was essential to any community with aspirations to become a trade center. By the second half of the nineteenth century, every town of consequence warranted a station of sufficient size for passengers, hauling freight, and a telegraph office.

Stations needed to handle people moving in different directions, package and freight deliveries, and workspace for railroad employees. To accommodate this, one or two passenger waiting rooms, baggage and freight rooms, an agent's office and occasionally agent's living quarters were required. The agent's office was usually

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located in a central projecting bay to enable him to view oncoming trains up and down the line. Another common distinguishing external feature of most stations was the overhanging roof designed to shelter passengers and workers. The majority of depots constructed during the railroad's heyday in the late nineteenth century were simple one-story frame buildings with a projecting bay and overhanging roof. Most depots were designed by the railroad company's engineering department and were stamped out across the country.

Of the approximately 40,000 stations that served the nation during the height of the railroad building era, an estimated 20,000 still remain, of which most await rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup> Changes in transportation and communication technology since World War II left many depots obsolete. By the 1950s, passenger trains were on the decline as the automobile gained dominance and air transportation improved. Many railroad companies discontinued passenger service in favor of freight. As a result, depots built to accommodate passenger traffic were no longer needed and were eventually abandoned. This was nearly the case with the Lee Hall Depot.

The story of the Lee Hall Depot begins with America's love affair with the iron horse, and the vision and drive of railroad magnet Collis Potter Huntington. Mr. Huntington had completed the Central Pacific Railroad, a link in the first transcontinental rail line, in 1869, and in the same year he and associates took charge of the Virginia Central Railroad, the predecessor of the Chesapeake & Ohio. They acquired property under an agreement to extend the rails across West Virginia to the Ohio River. This portion of the line, which opened the rich coalfields of West Virginia, was completed in 1873. The eastern terminus of the expanding system was at Richmond, at the head of tidewater navigation on the James River. It was realized from the outset, however, that an eastern terminus easily accessible to ocean-going ships must be established if the traffic potentialities of the railroad's territory were to be fully developed. Surveys were made, accordingly, to a number of points on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries where good harbors with adequate depth of water were available. Possible locations included Norfolk, West Point, Yorktown, Mathews County, Middlesex County and Warwick County.<sup>2</sup>

As a young man Huntington had visited the Lower Virginia Peninsula and immediately recognized the great potential of the deep-water harbor. In his words, "I was first there in 1837, and thought then that there was no better place in this country for a city, which should sometime be the greatest in the United States. This is a point so designed and adapted by nature that it will require comparatively little at the hands of man to fit it for our purpose. The roadstead, well known to all maritime circles, is large enough to float the ocean commerce of the world." When some 30 years hence he established the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, he chose the southern tip of Warwick County as the Atlantic terminus of his intercontinental line to take advantage of the site that nature had so bountifully gifted. As early as 1872 agents of Huntington began to buy tracts through the newly organized Old Dominion Land Company; this was done in secret over a number of years to prevent real estate speculators from escalating the price of the acreage.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in December 1880, a desperately toiling track crew of the C&O commenced construction at Newport News on the "Peninsula Extension" of the main line. Shortly thereafter in February 1881, another gang in Richmond hastily started laying their portion of the 74 miles of rail. The teams worked day and night with the

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segments being joined on October 16, 1881 at a point one and one-quarter miles west of Williamsburg, present day Mile Post 38.<sup>4</sup> The final spike was driven by John H. Morrison, the chief engineer. The great urgency was so that trains might transport visitors, troops and supplies to the Yorktown Centennial occurring October 16-19, 1881.

“The rails from both directions came together twenty minutes to 2 o’clock and kissed, and I thought to myself that morning and evening stars sang in happy euphony in honor of the occasion.”

E.H. Lively commenting in October 1881 on the occasion of the completion of the C&O line on the Lower Virginia Peninsula near Lee Hall<sup>5</sup>

Huntington had promised Federal and Virginia officials that the C&O would convey them by rail to Yorktown. This national celebration was in recognition of the termination of the Revolutionary War with the 1781 victory of General George Washington and the allied forces over British General Cornwallis. To permit trains to reach the colonial battlefield, a spur line was laid to Yorktown, terminating near the Civil War cemetery, from a point on the main line about 4600 feet west of Lee Hall. Only hours after the rails were united, a supply train from Richmond was the first to traverse the line through Lee Hall on its way to Newport News. At this time, the “depot” at MP 27.6 was probably little more than a cinder path or raised platform beside the tracks with a sign designating it as Lee Hall. On the morning of October 19, a special train consisting of a 4-0-0 steam locomotive, tender and two well-filled passenger cars carried enthusiastic Newport News and Warwick County residents to participate in the historic commemoration at the Surrender Grounds. The engine had arrived at the fledgling port of Newport News via schooner just four days prior to this trip.<sup>6</sup>

One of the passengers was young Charles William Baines, who accompanied his mother and father. Sixty-five years later in 1946 he described the occasion. “It was a gala day in the fishing village of Newport News,” Baines recalled. “Everybody turned out--men, women, boys and girls, and the babies--both black and white--who made their way down to the waterfront to that first C&O passenger ‘depot’--then an uncovered railroad switch track leading to the edge of the James River.”<sup>7</sup>

The C&O had transformed the village of Newport News into a boomtown. Invited by Huntington to make the first trip were leading citizens, all dressed in Victorian finery for the occasion. Foremost of the passengers was George Benjamin West, who had sold Huntington land for his rail terminal and become wealthy overnight. Other newly made moguls of the pioneer town were also riders.

When the train pulled out of Newport News, young Baines was ecstatic. “I will never forget the strange thrill and emotions as that locomotive began to puff, snort and screech.” Moving along the single track toward Richmond, the Centennial Special soon reached Lee Hall. There it switched onto the temporary spur, which Huntington had ordered to permit other special trains, coming east via Richmond and Williamsburg, to reach the Centennial site. Along with Baines and the Newport News contingent, 20,000 guests assembled for the three-day gathering to watch President Chester Arthur lay the cornerstone for the Yorktown Victory Monument.

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On hand for the occasion were General William Tecumseh Sherman, General Fitzhugh Lee, CSA, ambassadors, supreme court justices and other dignitaries.<sup>8</sup>

The Yorktown centennial cast its shadow on coming events--the establishment of the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company in 1886 and the incorporation of Newport News as an independent city in 1896--both a direct result of the railroad connection to Richmond. It also resulted in the transformation of Warwick County from a series of farms and small villages into a metropolitan area where business and industries flourish. In fact, this seminal event is considered to be the date that the city, or rather town, then in process of being built, really began.

The ceremonial 1881 trip had an odd sequel. When residents of York County realized that the spur track was only temporary, they indignantly prepared to file suit for a court injunction forbidding the C&O to abandon service to Yorktown. But Collis Huntington had never planned to offer permanent service to Yorktown and he refused to be forced to do so. Accordingly, wrote Baines, "the railway company, without fuss or notice, assembled their forces and suddenly swooped down on the unsuspecting community. They took up the entire trackage from Yorktown to the line of the C&O at Lee Hall on a certain Sunday night, loaded the materials on freight cars and took it to the main line tracks at Lee Hall so to complete the removal job before the court had an opportunity to act."<sup>9</sup>

Added Baines, "Imagine the chagrin of the Yorktown men on that Monday morning when they awakened to find not only the railroad service abandoned but the railroad itself gone! It was equal to that staid old town's disappointment some years before when it learned that Collis P. Huntington had decided to locate the C&O terminal at Newport News instead of at Yorktown, as had been originally planned."<sup>10</sup>

Regular passenger and freight service between Newport News and Richmond and points beyond was begun on May 1, 1882. While the roadbed and track were being finalized, the railroad was also constructing the necessary facilities for servicing rolling stock at Newport News, and was erecting coal and merchandise piers on the banks of the James River. Hand in hand with this operation was the establishment of passenger and freight depots in the countryside. In addition to the main station at Newport News, depots were built at Morrison, Oriana, Oyster Point and Lee Hall. The role of the C&O would prove vital to the prosperity of the community during the next century.<sup>11</sup>

In 1886 a simple one-room wooden freight station was constructed in the countryside of upper Warwick County. The depot was designated as Lee Hall, deriving its name from a nearby 1850 antebellum manse that had formerly been the home of planter Richard Decatur Lee. The structure was modeled on one of the standard C&O designs produced by the line's Richmond engineers.<sup>12</sup>

A two-story midsection was added in 1893 to accommodate passenger service with a ticket counter and baggage area, and to provide space for the Railway Express Agency and living quarters for the station operator. As passenger and freight activity became significant, the village of Lee Hall developed around the station at the turn of the twentieth century. Numerous places of business sprang up to support the activity

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generated by the depot. H.M. Clements' store provided residents with a meat shop, grocery, dry goods and other materials, as well as a home to salesmen renting upstairs apartments. Buildings erected on either side—a bar, bowling alley and barber shop—supported his business and added entertainment. Emma Curtis' cafe and tavern next door fed residents and travelers.<sup>13</sup>

The Simon Reid Curtis House (DHR file #121-5031, listed on VLR June 18, 2009, NR listed August 20, 2009), constructed c. 1896, was a graceful frame mansion that became the hub of county political activities. Curtis served as postmaster, road commissioner and county treasurer (holding the latter office for 45 years); he would often hold court in his study. As a confidant of governors, senators, and congressman, his word influenced elections. It is unknown whether Curtis used his political connections to locate Camp Eustis Army base on his own property at Mulberry Island, but the benefits to Lee Hall Village, himself, and especially the depot were real. Once the camp was established in the spring of 1918, Lee Hall depot became an important link for World War I troops from around the country, as evidenced by the construction of a "wye" connection from the station to the camp in September 1918. Curtis' residence provided a general store, post office and occasional lodging for train passengers. During WW I, he rented rooms to Army officers and their wives assigned to Camp Eustis. Among the prominent guests the "Curtis Hotel" accommodated were General "Blackjack" Pershing and comedian W.C. Fields.<sup>14</sup>

The small size of the village fostered a close-knit feeling of community. Vada Curtis opened her home as a hostess house and dance hall during the war to welcome returning soldiers, while Dozier's farm and dairy provided milk and meat for residents. As the village expanded, other businesses were established: a Maxwell Car Company dealership (later Ford), tomato packing plant, pickle factory, Esso station, telephone exchange and D.P. Pender chain store. A schoolhouse was built to provide instruction to the children living at Lee Hall.<sup>15</sup>

During its heyday, the depot enjoyed heavy traffic from nearby Camp Eustis. Reflecting and perhaps to some extent anticipating its expanding role in the transport of military personnel, a wing was added to the north end of the depot in 1918 to handle the influx. It included waiting rooms, indoor toilets and a ticket office. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Lee Hall Depot continued to play a prominent role in both coal and troop transport. For Lee Hall residents, it was commonplace to see soldiers and prisoners of war passing through their village enroute to and from camp.<sup>16</sup>

However, the village's economic vitality and the depot's importance as a transportation link began to fade after World War II. Cars, trucks and airplanes replaced trains as the prime movers of products and people and the depot began a slow decline of patronage. Carrying coal instead of riders, there was no reason for trains to stop at Lee Hall. The automation of many functions that previously required a human operator meant that the station no longer needed to be manned. In 1960, CSX ended passenger service and converted the building to a storage facility for track maintenance. The building gradually slipped into disrepair and lost many of its distinctive elements that gave it character. The paint peeled, the windows were smashed and the depot was all but forgotten except by area residents.<sup>17</sup>

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However, in 1981, the depot experienced a brief revival in order to celebrate the centennial of Peninsula rail service and the Yorktown Bicentennial. Under the auspices of the City of Newport News, the Chessie System, the C&O Historical Society and the Newport News Centennial Railroad Celebration Committee, the station was refurbished for the occasion. The depot was painted in a traditional C&O color scheme of colonial buff, terra cotta, and white, commonly used from 1918-1923. In addition, a new Amtrak station in lower Newport News, dubbed Lafayette Square (to honor the French General Marquis de Lafayette who helped defeat the British at Yorktown), was dedicated on October 16, 1981. Five hundred twenty-five persons boarded a 22-car train pulled by a 1948 classic steam-driven engine for a symbolic re-enactment ride to Lee Hall. There, speeches, patriotic music, awards and other fanfare marked the occasion. Nostalgia came face to face with innovation when the old locomotive met a modern diesel from Richmond bearing Gov. John Dalton. Also, on hand were CSX Corporation President Hays T. Watkins, representatives of the French government and area politicians. Dignitaries drove four silver spikes to commemorate the completion of the line in 1881.<sup>18</sup> A post office was set up at the station and the old Lee Hall postmark was reactivated. A deluge of stamp collectors had 15,000 pieces of mail cancelled with a special one-day only postmark depicting the Peninsula's first train.<sup>19</sup> In addition, a 4 foot x 8 foot mural by Virginia historical painter Sidney E. King depicting the 1881 train trip was unveiled and placed on display at the site. The scene showed the train turning off the main line at Lee Hall on temporary tracks leading to Yorktown.<sup>20</sup> Souvenir programs, educational slide shows for school presentations and museum exhibits rounded out the anniversary observance.

### **Railroad Architecture**

Most railroads developed standard drawings that ranged from large station structures down to such things as standard water towers and pump houses. The Chesapeake & Ohio had hundreds of standards. Most of these designs originated in the period from the late 1880s to the early 1920s, when the C&O was developing as a major railway. This was the era when the C&O was expanding by building coal and lumber branches, and when the population along the main line required stations every few miles because of poor or nonexistent highways.

In 1893 the seminal work in the field of standard railway structures was written by Richard Berg, who had been consulting engineer on the Richmond & Alleghany Railway in the 1880s. (The R&A became the C&O's James River Line, its water-level route through Virginia, in 1890.) Berg's book was called *American Railway Structures* and gave plans and descriptions of various types of structures then in use on various important railroads in the United States. The book obtained a wide circulation among railroad officials, especially in their engineering departments. As a result many lines adopted or adapted Berg's examples to their own needs. Many of the C&O's standard freight and passenger depots were exactly like those seen on other lines.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to Berg's book, railroad engineers freely traded designs. Engineers, as well, would often move from one line to another, and would take with them designs that they had used at a previous job, translating a standard concept to another line. The C&O's standard structures were not much different in general context from those of any railroad of the period. Stations were modified to fit the need of freight and passenger service from a handful of uniform designs. Rural localities such as Warwick County were well served by these

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drawings because these could be built quickly without regard for further planning. No doubt one of these standard blueprints was used to construct the Lee Hall Depot. Evidence of the use of standard drawings was a nearly identical station at Providence Forge (in New Kent County); this “sister” station no longer stands.<sup>22</sup>

Other C&O depots established in Warwick County at the same time were Oriana, Oyster Point, Morrison and Newport News. None of these remain. Local stations were also constructed in James City County along the new railroad at Diascund, Toano, Vaiden’s Siding (Norge), Kelton (Lightfoot), Ewell, Williamsburg, and Grove. As of 2010, Lee Hall and Williamsburg were extant, with the last still receiving intercity passenger rail service from Amtrak. The former C&O station from Ewell survives, and is in adaptative reuse as a residence. A bit further west, another historic C&O station, built in 1908 for Norge has been preserved for use as a community center. It was relocated in 2006 to the site of the Croaker Branch of the Williamsburg Regional Library.

### **Stick Style**

Popular during the latter half of the 19th century, the Stick style grew from the picturesque Gothic ideals of A.J. Downing and flourished in pattern books of the 1860s and 1870s. The style was defined primarily by “decorative detailing...highly textured wall surfaced and roof trusses whose stick work faintly mimicked the exposed structure members of medieval half-timbered houses.”<sup>23</sup> The elaborate wainscoting of Lee Hall’s exterior board and batten walls, gable end picket fence style siding used as trim under the eave line and decorative trusses were textbook examples of this style.

Use of the Stick style for commercial and industrial buildings was not common in the state. In VDHR’s Data Sharing System (DSS), there are only 93 records for all of Virginia, including the Lee Hall Depot. Other than the station, the only Stick style buildings that are not residences are three other depots and two churches. The Lee Hall Depot is the only building classified as “Stick Style/Eastlake” for Newport News, and there are no other examples in DSS for Williamsburg or James City County. There is one example, a house, in Hampton (307 E. Pembroke – DHR #114-0118-0022 in the Pasture Point Historic District), and no examples in York County, Isle of Wight County, or Surry County.

### **Criterion Consideration B**

Once the festivities had concluded, the depot again slipped into oblivion. From the late 1990s to 2005, the space was being partially used by the Peninsula Model Railroad Club to house their dioramas. At the same time, CSX Transportation (the former C&O/Chessie System) determined that it no longer needed the station and deemed its trackside location at the intersection of Warwick Boulevard and Elmhurst Street on a 1.12 acre lot, including the CSX right-of-way along the tracks, unsafe. (The property had no specific street address originally because it was owned by CSX and in their right-of-way in Newport News, Virginia 23603.) They agreed to transfer ownership of the depot to the City of Newport News, if the city would move it off CSX property. The city, along with citizens and community groups, accepted the challenge to not only relocate the

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structure, but to restore the depot as one of the last train stations of its era remaining in the Tidewater region. An early vision of the project was to return the depot to the elegant form it enjoyed in the early 1900s in order to re-establish it as a focal point in the community at Lee Hall. To facilitate this, a nonprofit organization called The Friends of the Lee Hall Depot, Inc. organized in 2000 to preserve this rare, significant link to the Peninsula's past. The depot was included in the City of Newport News' 2002 long-range master plan "Framework for the Future" as one of the key components in the revitalization of the Lee Hall area.<sup>21</sup>

### **2009 Move**

The Newport News architectural firm of PMA was hired to coordinate the details of the move and restoration with oversight from the city's Division of Museums & Historic Services. Almost 10 years elapsed to accommodate fundraising efforts and the many bureaucratic hurdles to be overcome in preparation for the relocation. In 2008, the Phoenix Corporation, a local business, was awarded the contracts for both the new foundation and move, to be performed at a cost of \$511,000. The bid packet specified that the mover be experienced with historic buildings, and specifically train stations. Expert House Movers, the firm that relocated the Hatteras, North Carolina Lighthouse, the Waterman's Museum at Yorktown, the Dora Armistead House in Colonial Williamsburg and other significant projects was selected as the subcontractor for the challenging move.

The project greatly benefitted from the involvement of VDHR at both the state and local levels. The regional architectural historian was available to provide guidance in preparation for the building's relocation by attending monthly planning meetings with city staff, the architectural firm and contractors. In addition to plan review, VDHR requirements regarding archaeological exploration of the old and new sites were followed as per the state archaeologist's approval. City archaeology staff did a Phase I survey of these locations prior to the move, and also examined the space after the building had been shifted to glean any possible information. The original location yielded about 150 items including glass bottles, metal artifacts and coal pieces, primarily extracted from under the foundation.

The new location, on a 83 foot by 200 foot lot measuring 0.38 acres, was less fruitful. It had been disturbed by earlier construction of the 20th century H.L. Clements store and of a subsequent asphalt parking lot belonging to Verizon. The archaeological report on the investigations at the original and new locations was approved by the state archaeologist.

During the course of the lifting of the 1918 waiting room addition onto the flatbed truck and removal of the foundations at the original site, a distinctive feature of the station was discovered--a well, below the 1918 waiting room addition. Unfortunately, one division of CSX filled the well with concrete the day before another division of CSX granted permission for an archaeological investigation of it.

The building was excavated from its foundation by Expert House Movers, then sliced into two sections with supportive I-beams placed under them. VDHR personnel visited the depot at intervals to offer critical advice, to observe the salvage and storage of historic building materials (dismantlement of a crumbling brick chimney, removal of skirting, shoring up of foundation timbers, etc.) Likewise, they were present to witness and

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document the move. On June 24 and 25, 2009, the physical transfer was accomplished. Each segment was towed over the grade crossing at Elmhurst Street. Public interest, spurred by media coverage, was strong, with the result that a large crowd of observers was on hand to watch the sections being reunited on the newly constructed foundation.

On September 9, 2009, a public observance was held to celebrate this long-awaited accomplishment. Some 300 persons attended including dignitaries, foundation members, school children, rail fans and citizens. Fittingly, VDHR staff were on hand to applaud this moment in the life of the depot. A ceremonial golden spike was driven to recognize the move and a new challenge issued to secure \$2.3 million for restoration. The building is currently being stabilized. The long-range plan is to utilize it as a museum documenting the impact of the C&O on the community. It is anticipated to require five years to 10 years.<sup>22</sup>

Relocated only 165 feet from its original location, the Lee Hall Depot retains a close proximity to railroad tracks and could be revived as a railroad depot if needed. The moved station occupies the same north-south orientation; however, its western elevation (rather than its east side) now faces the CSX rails. This concurrence makes its suitable as a potential light rail stop should such a project go forward on the Lower Virginia Peninsula. The station remains near the Lee Hall businesses that were important in its transportation history, such as the Simon Reid Curtis House that included the tax assessor's office for Warwick County, which is now part of Newport News. One element of the depot's restoration is a faux track section that would be built next to the structure to elucidate its historic relationship to the tracks with a stationary display of a locomotive or rail car. Just as the depot anchored the village of Lee Hall in its days as an active station, it will again one day be a vital economic part of the community.

**Endnotes Section 8**

<sup>1</sup> "Railroad Depot Acquisition and Development," (National Trust for Historical Preservation Information Series, No. 44, 1991), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, Alexander Crosby, "Newport News' 325 Years: A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community," (Newport News: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946), 57; West, George Benjamin and Rouse, Parke, Jr., ed., "When the Yankees Came: Civil War and Reconstruction on the Virginia Peninsula" (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1978 ), 137.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Alexander Crosby, "Newport News' Historical Markers and Memorials," (Newport News: Newport News Historical Committee, 1979), 39.

<sup>4</sup> "Railway Serving Newport News...Growing Together," 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Broadside announcing the completion of the C&O eastern extension at Williamsburg, Oct. 16, 1981, Newport News Historical Committee Records.

<sup>6</sup> West and Rouse, 141, 147-8.

<sup>7</sup> "Centennial Victory Monument Ceremony is Revisited." Daily Press. July 15, 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; West and Rouse, 147.

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<sup>9</sup> "Centennial Victory Monument Ceremony is Revisited." Daily Press. July 15, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, "325 Years", 150.

<sup>12</sup> PMA Planner & Architects, "Relocate and Restore the Historic Lee Hall Depot," (Newport News: Department of Planning & Development, Department of Parks & Recreation, March 2004), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Quarstein, John and Rouse, Parke, Jr., "Newport News: A Centennial History," (Newport News: City of Newport, 1996), 55, 97.

<sup>15</sup> Lee Hall Depot files, City of Newport News.

<sup>16</sup> PMA, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>18</sup> "Railroad commemoration links past with present to begin celebrations." Daily Press. October 16, 1981.

<sup>19</sup> "Rail Centennial." Daily Press. October 9, 1981.

<sup>20</sup> "Newport News to celebrate its railroad centennial." Times-Herald. August 17, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Personal knowledge; "Framework for the Future," (Newport News: Department of Planning & Development and Newport News City Planning Commission, September 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Personal knowledge; Calonico, Rebecca; Lamb, Aaron; Norcutt-Eley, Tracy, "Phase I Investigation of the Lee Hall Relocation Area," (Newport News: Division of Museums & Historic Services, 2006); "Historic station gets a lift." Daily Press. June 21, 2009; "19th century train depot makes its move." Daily Press. June 24, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Dixon, Thomas W., Jr., "Chesapeake & Ohio Standard Structures," (Clifton Forge: Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society, Inc., 1981), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 3,5.

<sup>23</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee, "A Field Guide to American Houses," (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 167-9.

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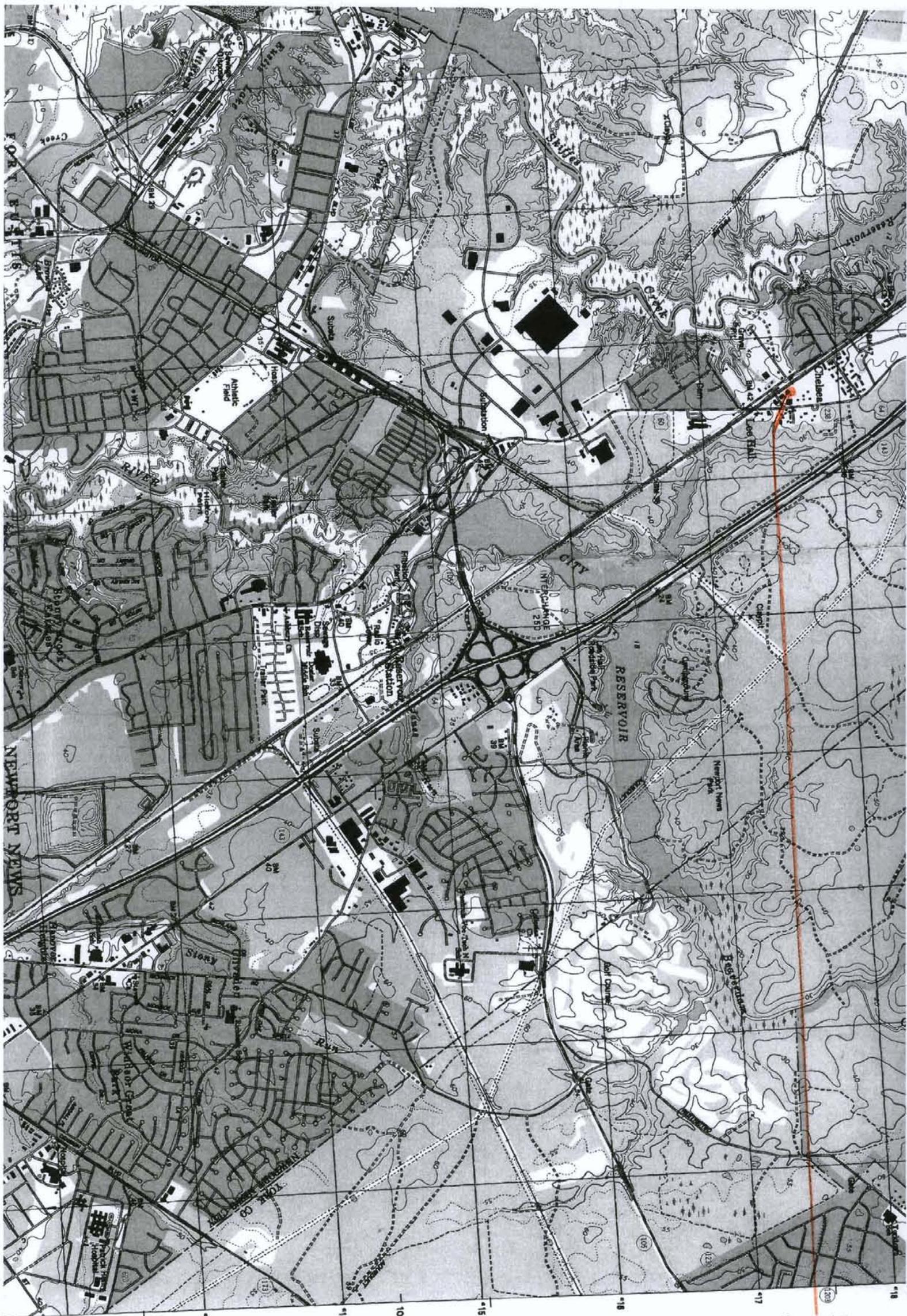
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