



Courtesy of Purcellville Gateway Holdings, LLC c/o Roadside Development
2009



The Cole Farm Purcellville, Virginia



Circa 1885 Cole Farmhouse

Named for the family who owned and operated a dairy farm on the property for much of the 20th century, the Cole Farm (also known as Shadowlawn) reflected the evolution of Loudoun County's agriculture during the 19th and 20th centuries. The farm incorporated a circa-1885 house along with a dairy barn, silo, dairy, and other out-buildings necessary for a thriving dairy operation.

The Cole Farm stood on land that was farmed since the 18th century. The 15-acre property was once encompassed within 88 acres situated between the Leesburg and Snickers Gap Turnpike (Route 7) and the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad. These two transportation corridors through western Loudoun County ensured that local farmers had good access to markets in Alexandria, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The Cole Farm and Its Buildings, 1882-2005

In 1882, Jonah Nichols Hampton and his brother James Frank Hampton purchased an 88-acre parcel that extended from the Leesburg and Snickers' Gap Turnpike (Route 7) on the south to the Washington and Ohio Railroad (what would become the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad) on the north. James Frank Hampton lived on the farm and, in 1884, married Rose Jane Dillon, a member of a prominent Quaker family from the Purcellville area. In the mid-1880s, the Hamptons constructed a two-and-one-half-story house (1) with Italianate details that was a substantial house for the locality. It still stands on the property today.

In 1889, Samuel A. Arthur acquired the 88-acre property; he farmed it for the next twenty years. While it is possible that the Hamptons constructed the large barn (9) (also extant) and the corncrib (7) at the same time as the house, most

likely it was Arthur who made these substantial additions to the agricultural out-buildings.

In 1909, Phoebe E. Cole purchased the farm which would be operated by her son, Samuel. During Samuel Cole's operation of the farm, it is likely that one or more of the out-buildings like the workshop (5), privy (6), poultry house (4), or the garage (2) was added.



Large Barn



Corn crib



Workshop



Acknowledgements:

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Selected Sources:

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Illustrations:

History Matters, LLC: Photographs, Building Exteriors

Rounds VanDuzer Architects PC: Photographs, Cole House and Large Barn

Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division:

Map, Northern Virginia with adjacent parts of Maryland and West Virginia] / copied by J. Paul Hoffman, Topl. Office, A.N. Va., 1865.

Map, U.S. Post Office Rural Delivery Routes—Loudoun County, 1925.

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority:

W&OD Milk Train
W&OD Milk Wagons at Rosslyn

Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, Virginia, Winslow Williams Photograph Collection (VC 0003):

Dairy Herd Improvement Association Officers
Curtis and Maxine Cole Family
Cole Holstein Cow

Google Books (digitalization)

The James Way Catalog No. 22

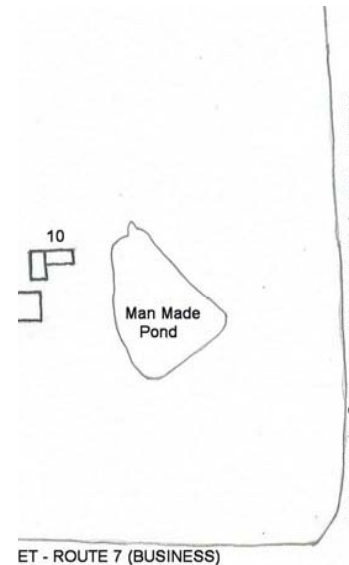
In 1917, William Samson Cole and Katherine Virginia Cole acquired the 88-acre tract they named Shadowlawn Farm. To facilitate its operation as a working dairy farm, the Coles constructed and renovated the specialized buildings necessary for a modern, hygienic dairy operation. They altered the circa-1890 large barn (9) by inserting a milking par-



Dairy

lor in the west portion, and may have added or enlarged the roof ventilation cupolas at this time. They also added a concrete stave silo (9) (possibly constructed on an earlier, stone-foundation silo) and a dairy (8) for storing milk at controlled temperatures. The hay barn (10) and another garage (11) most likely were constructed during the Coles' ownership as well.

In 1951, widower W.S. Cole conveyed Shadowlawn to his son, Curtis, and Curtis's wife Maxine. The last outbuilding constructed on the property—the equipment shed (3)—was added during their ownership of the farm. In 2005, the Cole family sold the property.



Hay Barn and Loafing Shed

Farming in the Purcellville Area, 1860-1920

In the first half of the 19th century, what is now known as the Cole Farm was farmed by the Mahlon Taylor family. Slightly larger in size than the Cole Farm, the Taylor farm's location on the Leesburg and Snicker's Gap Turnpike (Route 7) about one mile east of Purcellville provided good access to local markets for their livestock, grain and other crops. In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, the farmers in Loudoun County had over 220,000 acres under cultivation, and the value of the farmland was greater than nearly all other counties in Virginia.

During the Civil War (1861-1865), skirmishing between Union and Confederate troops took place near but not within the present day boundaries of Purcellville; however, both armies successively occupied Loudoun County throughout the war years. Both armies destroyed or confiscated residents' foodstuffs, livestock, and personal property in order to support their troops or to ensure that the supplies did not benefit enemy forces. In contrast to areas where heavy fighting took place, significant economic activity returned to Loudoun County relatively quickly after the war's end and western Loudoun farms quickly restarted wheat and dairy production.

Cattle farmer Isaac Wilson owned the Cole Farm from the late 1860s to 1882. According to the 1880 U.S. Agricultural Census, he possessed two milk cows that produced 500 pounds of butter in addition to owning 160 head of cattle, 90 of which were sold and 6 that were slaughtered that year. Wilson also produced 500 bushels of Indian corn, 100 bushels of oats, 50 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 20 pounds of beeswax.

Cole Farm dairy barn, silo, and hay barn, 2009



Wilson's farm products were typical for Loudoun County. By 1880, the county produced

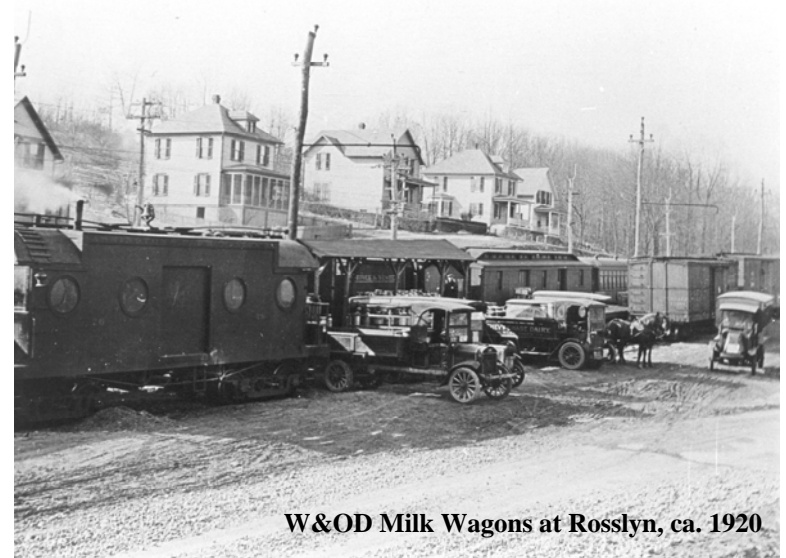
more corn, butter, eggs, and wool, and raised more milk cows and sheep than any other county in Virginia. Loudoun County farmers also raised cattle and bred horses in large numbers.



W&OD Milk Train, ca. 1920

By 1916, the Washington & Old Dominion Railway (W&OD) was picking up milk in Purcellville for delivery to markets in Washington, D.C. and Alexandria. The Cole Farm's location next to the railroad tracks and close to the Purcellville depot made it convenient to get the fresh milk on the W&OD morning "milk train." Sometimes farms located along the railroad tracks would build platforms for the train to stop and pick up their milk.

The formation of the Maryland-Virginia Milk Producers' Association in 1920 produced a cooperative marketing effort in the Washington area to keep competition from driving prices down. Improved refrigeration in rail cars and a regular rail schedule provided a steady market for Loudoun County dairy products in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. Beginning in the 1920s with the development of better roads and trucks, transporting agricultural products by road began to compete with the railroad.



W&OD Milk Wagons at Rosslyn, ca. 1920

Transporting Agricultural Products to Market

The Cole Farm stood along transportation corridors that provided good access to markets at every period of its existence. In the first half of the 19th century, the farm's location along the Leesburg and Snickers' Gap Turnpike (now Route 7) meant that it was situated along the major east-west route for commercial traffic through Loudoun County. By 1860, agricultural products travelled by wagon to various train lines located in larger towns, including Winchester to the west; Berlin (later renamed Brunswick), Maryland to the north; and Leesburg and Alexandria, Virginia and Georgetown and Washington, DC to the east.



Train service to Purcellville arrived in March 1874, when the Washington and Ohio Railroad, later operated as the Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD), extended its line from Alexandria another three miles west from Hamilton to Purcellville. The goods that were shipped from Purcellville on the train indicate the town's role in the local agricultural economy. In May 1874, the *Democratic Mirror* noted that the following loads were shipped from Purcellville: "8576 bus. [bushels] of wheat; 110 bus. of potatoes; 37 bales of hay; 116 calves; 64 barrels of eggs; 3 barrels of brandy; 2 barrels of wine. In addition quantities of butter, lard, cider, vinegar, chickens and geese were 'sent off.'" U.S. Post Office Rural Delivery Routes—Loudoun County, detail, 1925



During the last quarter of the 19th century, farmers developed breeders' associations in Loudoun County that focused on improving the quality of their herds as a means to control disease and to maximize output. One such local group was the Farmer and Dairyman Association that several farmers organized at Hamilton in the early 1870s.

In 1911, local farmers formed the Loudoun Valley Cow Testing Association (LVCTA) to provide a testing service to farmers that accurately determined the percentage of butterfat in the milk; this was important since dairy farmers were paid on the butterfat content. The LVCTA was part of an early 20th-century movement to increase milk production and promote hygiene in dairies.

Westmoreland Davis (Virginia governor 1918-1922) of Morven Park near Leesburg helped found the Virginia State Dairymen's Association (VSDA) in 1907, which lobbied for the creation of state regulations to promote hygiene. In the 1910s, state health departments and the VSDA advocated the pasteurization of milk and inspection of dairies for sanitary conditions. First developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1908, plans for modern dairy buildings featured ventilation systems with air intakes and roof vents for air outtakes. The plans, which included concrete floors to make sanitary conditions easier to maintain, were in general circulation in Virginia by the 1920s. In addition, silos to maintain good quality feed and milk houses constructed separate from the barn became intrinsic to dairy farm operations.

In 1915, the Blue Bell Creamery was founded in Purcellville. Before 1915, milk could be shipped by road or train to creameries in Hamilton or Leesburg where it was chilled to separate the cream from the milk; the cream was then churned to separate the buttermilk from the butter.

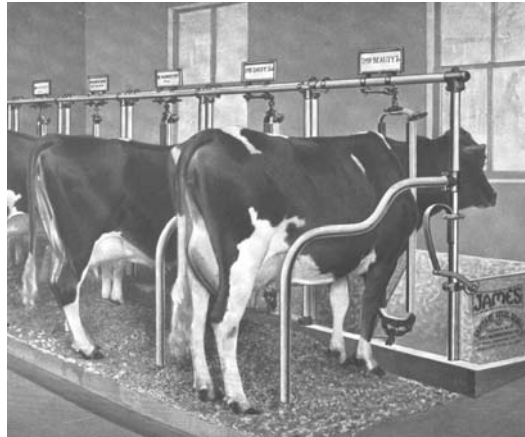
Cole Farm and Holstein Cow, circa 1949



Dairying at Shadowlawn Farm, 1920-1970

Converted to a modern dairy operation by 1920 by owners William Sampson and Katherine Virginia Cole, the 88-acre farm contained the specialized buildings necessary for a hygienic dairy operation. Before acquiring the farm that they named "Shadowlawn" in 1917, the Coles owned a farm in the Mt. Gilead District of Loudoun County. W.S. Cole was active in dairy farming in the county and helped to establish the Loudoun Valley Cow Testing Association.

At Shadowlawn Farm, the Coles renovated the large barn by inserting a poured-concrete floor with cow stalls in the west portion; they may have added or enlarged the roof ventilation cupolas at this time. The Coles added the concrete stave silo and the dairy for storing the milk at controlled temperatures.



The James Way Catalog illustrating the use of cow stalls, 1917

W.S. Cole's son, William Curtis Cole, focused on the development of Holstein herds. In 1928, by the age of fifteen, Curtis Cole participated in Vocational Agriculture in high school and was involved in stock judging contests. By 1944, Curtis was a member of the board of directors of the Loudoun County Dairy Herd Improvement Association. Two years later, he helped form and was a director of the Loudoun Breeders Association, an artificial breeding organization.

Officers of the Dairy Herd Improvement Association, 1947. Curtis Cole stands second from the left.



During World War II (1941-1945), Loudoun County's income and farm production doubled. The military build-up and the numbers of people moving to the Washington metropolitan area to fill new civilian jobs created a need for additional farm products such as milk.

Curtis Cole married Maxine Miller in 1946; they lived at Shadowlawn Farm after their marriage. In 1951, after the death of his wife Katherine, William S. Cole conveyed the farm to Curtis and Maxine. Curtis continued his involvement with the Loudoun Holstein Association through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1955, his entry in the first Loudoun Holstein Friesian Show earned awards.

Curtis and Maxine Cole with their children, 1957

In 1963-1964, Cole was the president of the Loudoun-Fairfax Holstein Club, and was a Virginia Holstein Director representing Loudoun and Fairfax Counties in 1968. The Coles children were involved in 4-H Club and junior Holstein activities while growing up at Shadowlawn.



The Demise of Dairy Farming in Loudoun County

The history of Shadowlawn Farm reflects the pattern of dairy farming in Loudoun County after World War II. Following the war, Purcellville continued as the core of western Loudoun County's agricultural economy even as fewer people in western Loudoun worked and lived on farms. Improvements to local roads and the ever-increasing use and affordability of automobiles caused a fundamental shift in the way all Loudouners lived and worked. Though the trend was more dramatic in the eastern part of the county, the Purcellville area began to witness a new demographic pattern as residents from nearby cities like Washington, D.C. began to make their homes there and commute to jobs in the region's larger urban areas. By 1970, forty percent of all Loudoun County residents commuted to jobs outside the county.

In the 1970s, the Coles dispersed their registered herd. In 1986, the Coles subdivided their 88-acre farm and sold all except the 15-acre parcel that contained the house and outbuildings. The land that was sold became the Kingsbridge development which now surrounds the Cole Farm on the west and north sides. Like Shadowlawn, other farms were sold and developed as planned residential communities. The number of dairy farms in the county dropped from 405 in 1949 to 76 in 1978 and to only one in 2006; this reflected not only the influx of suburbanites, but also the movement of younger generations away from dairy farming to other professions.