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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

VLR-3/15/00  
NRHP-Pending

**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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line

other names/site number Manassas Gap R.R. Eastern Extension, Manassas Gap R.R. Historic Site; DHR Site #029-5013

**2. Location**

street & number 7504 Royce Street N/A not for publication  
city or town Annandale vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code 059 county Fairfax zip code 22003

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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     nationally     statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Signature of certifying official April 17, 2001 Date

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

    Signature of commenting or other official     Date

    State or Federal agency and bureau

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/>	entered in the National Register	_____	_____
	See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	determined eligible for the	_____	_____
	National Register		
	See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	determined not eligible for the	_____	_____
	National Register		
<input type="checkbox"/>	removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (explain): _____		
		_____	_____
		Signature of Keeper	Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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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
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>  3  </u>	<u>  1  </u> structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>  3  </u>	<u>  1  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

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

  N/A  

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>Transportation</u>	Sub:	<u>rail-related</u>
	<u>Defense</u>		<u>battle site</u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>Transportation</u>	Sub:	<u>pedestrian-related</u>
	<u>Landscape</u>		<u>park</u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style  
   
 

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
roof N/A  
walls N/A  
other Cut stone culverts; earthen roadbed  
 

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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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.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a grave.
- d a cemetery.
- e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- f a commemorative property.
- g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Economics

Military

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1850-1865 Significant Dates 1854, 1857  
1861, 1862

Significant Person  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder John McD. Goldsborough, Chief  
Engineer of Manassas Gap R.R. Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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

Name of repository: Resource Management Division, Fairfax County Park Authority; Fairfax County Public Library, Virginia Room

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 11.94 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	18	308490	4301025	3	18	308690	4300770
2	18	308730	4300950	4	18	308965	4300525

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Howe, Ronald D., contractor; Richard Sacchi, FCPA  
organization Fairfax County Park Authority; Resource Management Division  
date 30 April 1999 telephone 703-827-8672  
street & number 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 927  
city or town Fairfax state VA zip code 22035-1118

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Fairfax County Park Authority, Suite 927  
street & number 12055 Government Center Parkway telephone 703-827-8672  
city or town Fairfax state VA zip code 22035-1118

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**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line  
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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

While the company's immediate prospects did improve, events soon proved Marshall's optimism to be unfounded. The Manassas Gap Railroad completed its line to Mt. Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley and quickly contracted out the work on the entire remaining length of the line to Harrisonburg. The company even managed to reduce its floating debt by nearly a third, greatly improving its overall financial situation. By late 1860, both President Marshall and Chief Engineer Goldsborough were publicly anticipating the eventual resumption of work on the Independent Line and Loudoun Branch, stating that this required only that "tranquility be restored and the financial operations of the country resume their wonted channels..." (Alexandria Gazette, 16 November 1860, 2:5). But tranquility was farther away than any of these men anticipated. Rather, the region and the entire country would soon become engulfed in a bloody civil war.

As fate would have it, the Manassas Gap Railroad became a featured element in two of this war's most noted battles. The strategic importance of the Manassas Gap Railroad, linking as it did the Shenandoah Valley to the rest of Virginia, impelled the Confederates to station General Pierre G. T. Beauregard and his troops in Manassas Junction in the spring of 1861. This is reported to be the first time that a military force was ever deployed with the mission of protecting a railroad. It was the presence of these troops that attracted the attention of Union generals and led to the Battle of First Manassas (First Bull Run) in July 1861. During this battle, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston used the Manassas Gap Railroad to move troops to Manassas Junction from the Shenandoah Valley, thereby garnering the distinction of being the first railroad ever to carry troops into battle. Then again in August 1862, the Manassas Gap Railroad's unfinished Independent Line became a central feature in battle. During the Battle of Second Manassas (Second Bull Run), Stonewall Jackson used the unfinished roadbed near Sudley Springs to conceal his troops while he waited for reinforcements. In one place in particular, known as "Deep Cut," Jackson's men repelled repeated Union assaults and thereby defeated the numerically superior forces of General John Pope.

Nor was the Battle of Second Manassas the only instance in which the Independent Line was used during the war; the unfinished roadbed played a more extensive if less spectacular role in many other military engagements throughout the war. One noted instance occurred during the fall of 1861 when Brigadier General Louis Blenker and his Forty-fifth New York Infantry established a picket line along the Independent Line near Annandale as part of the extension of Union forces back into Northern Virginia. On 2 December 1861, two hundred Confederate cavalymen attacked these pickets, killing one Union soldier and capturing fourteen others. Other evidence strongly suggests that John Singleton Mosby and his Forty-third Virginia Partisan Rangers used the unfinished Independent Line

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

and Loudoun Branch as a means to evade Union pickets and ambushes while raiding in Northern Virginia. Mosby, not particularly forthcoming in his reports to Confederate commanders, did report in August 1863 that he and his men were often "compelled to travel narrow, unfrequented paths." And at least one of Mosby's men would have been familiar with the Manassas Gap Railroad's unfinished roadbeds -- John H. Thomas was the son of Henry Wirt Thomas, the company's only identified stockholder in Fairfax County and an immediate neighbor to the roadbed itself.

In the end, the Manassas Gap Railroad never recovered from the Civil War and was never able to complete its ambitious agenda. Both Union and Confederate troops had taken turns smashing the tracks and confiscating its rolling stock, depending upon which side needed to use the rails at any particular time. As President Marshall reported to the stockholders in November 1866, the war had left the railroad devastated and the company was frankly unable to resume normal operations. Thus early in 1867, the Manassas Gap Railroad formally merged with the Orange and Alexandria Railroad to become the Orange, Alexandria and Manassas Railroad; and eventually the whole network was absorbed into the present day Southern Railway System. Of course these mergers made the Independent Line completely unnecessary, and the line was effectively abandoned. Even the line's right of way was relinquished as the Southern Railway began to issue quit-claim deeds to many of the landowners across whose land the Independent Line ran. Inevitably, large stretches of the roadbed were reclaimed for other uses and erased from the landscape, especially where the line was a legal more than a physical object. In some places, however, notably where deep cuts, high fills, or substantial masonry work existed, the roadbed lingered on. In the case of that portion of the roadbed contained within the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site, the course of the Civil War helped to preserve the roadbed. The land's owner, James S. Purdy, had been one of only four men in the Annandale precinct to vote against secession, an act that raised suspicions among many of his neighbors. By mid-1861, Purdy felt impelled to depart the area in favor of his native New York, leaving behind much of his personal property in the process. With Purdy gone and the chaos of war engulfing Northern Virginia, the land sat fallow. Only after Purdy sold the property to Christian H. Seaman in March 1871 did it once again become an operating farm, but by then the land surrounding the roadbed had already begun to revert to forest. Subsequent landowners seem to have accepted it as such; and the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line's culverts and fills, sheltered by trees and forgotten by time, simply endured.



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**Major Bibliographic References**

Primary Sources

Alexandria Gazette (Alexandria, Virginia). 1850-1860.

Fairfax County Minute Books, 1852-1855. Fairfax, Virginia: Fairfax County Court Records.

"Map of Northeastern Virginia and Vicinity of Washington, Compiled in Topographical Engineers Office at Division Headquarters of General Irvin McDowell, Arlington, January 1, 1862." Official Atlas of the Civil War. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1958, plate VII.

"Map of the State of Virginia Containing the Counties, Principal Towns, Railroads & All Other Improvements." Richmond: Lithograph Published by Ritchie and Dunnivant, 1858. [Copy in the Virginia Room, Fairfax County Library, Fairfax, Virginia.]

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Manassas Gap Railroad Company. Alexandria, Virginia: Printed at the Alexandria Gazette Office, 1851-1860.

Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Stockholders of the Manassas Gap Railroad Company, Together with the Charter, General Law, and By-laws. Alexandria, Virginia: Printed at the Alexandria Gazette Office, 1850.

Sprouse, Edith M., compiler. Fairfax County in 1860: A Collective Biography. Fairfax, Virginia: Published by Author, 1996.

United States War Department. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1880-1900.

Virginia Board of Public Works. Report of the Board of Public Works to the General Assembly of Virginia, with the Accompanying Documents (Volumes 38-41).

"Yardley Taylor's 1853 Map of Loudoun County, Virginia from Actual Surveys." The Cartography of Northern Virginia: Facsimile Reproductions of Maps Dating from 1608 to 1915. Fairfax County, Virginia: Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1981, Plates 32-34.

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Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line  
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**Major Bibliographic References (continued)**

Secondary Sources

- Alvarez, Eugene. Travel on Southern Antebellum Railroads, 1828-1860. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1974.
- Davis, Burke. The Southern Railway: Road of the Innovators. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Douglas, H. H. "The Unfinished Independent Line of the Manassas Gap Railroad." Echoes of History (November 1975): 53-59.
- "Edward Carrington Marshall and His Manassas Gap Railroad." Ties: The Southern Railway System Magazine (July 1959): 7-10.
- Geddes, Jean. Fairfax County: Historical Highlights From 1607. Middleburg, Virginia: Denlinger's, 1967.
- Glaab, Charles N. and A. Theodore Brown. A History of Urban America. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983.
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- McCarty, Clara S., editor. The Foothills of the Blue Ridge in Fauquier County, Virginia. Berryville, Virginia: Virginia Book Company, 1974.
- Moxham, Robert M. Annandale, Virginia: A Brief History. Fairfax, Virginia: Fairfax County History Commission, 1992.
- Naisawald, L. VanLoan. "The Manassas Gap Railroad." Virginia Cavalcade (Spring 1970): 30-41.
- Noble, Susan Jane. "Remnants of the Independent Line of the Manassas Gap Railroad." Echoes of History (April 1975): 22-25.
- Turner, Charles W. "Early Virginia Railroad Entrepreneurs and Personnel." The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (July 1950): 325-34.
- Railroad Service to Virginia Farmers, 1828-1860. Reprinted from Agricultural History (October 1948): 239-48.
- Virginia Railroad Development, 1845-1860. Reprinted from The Historian (Autumn 1947).

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**Major Bibliographic References (continued)**

Young, B. E. "Unfinished Railroad." Ties: The Southern Railway System  
Magazine. (July 1954): 6-7.

**UTM References (continued)**

- 5. 18 308525 4300825
- 6. 18 308470 4300795
- 7. 18 308430 4300815
- 8. 18 308460 4300850
- 9. 18 308455 4300890

**Verbal Boundary Description**

See map entitled "Manassas Gap: Historical Railroad," page 1 of 4.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary for the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line as it exists within the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site includes sufficient land to encompass the historic resource and provide it with sufficient setting for protection and interpretation. While the roadbed and its immediate environs originally extended over a much larger area, much of this has been and will continue to be altered by development in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia. In order to preserve and protect the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line as it exists within the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site, the Fairfax County Park Authority acquired ownership of 11.94 acres of land containing the roadbed as it crosses the Coon Branch Valley for use as a park and pedestrian walkway. The boundary coincides with the legal boundaries of six separate parcels transferred to Fairfax County between the years 1975 and 1981 which is now designated as the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site.

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**Photographs**

- #1 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-24.  
6. The roadbed of the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line facing west  
from the north side of the bed near the intersection of Woodland Road  
and the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site.
- #2 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-3.  
6. The roadbed of the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line facing east.
- #3 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-7.  
6. The roadbed of the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line facing east  
from near the east end of the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site.
- #4 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-1.  
6. The interior facing north of the western culvert at the Manassas Gap  
Railroad Historic Site.
- #5 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-0.  
6. The southern opening of the western culvert at the Manassas Gap Railroad  
Historic Site.
- #6 - 3. Richard Sacchi  
4. 9 December 1999  
5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA,  
negative #17790-4.  
6. The northern opening of the eastern culvert at the Manassas Gap Railroad  
Historic Site.



1. Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line
2. Fairfax County, Virginia
7. Photograph #1

S. 53 0010 0700 41000 09912736 R2090000

1. Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line
2. Fairfax County, Virginia
7. Photograph #2

S. 53 0010 0700 41000 09912736 R2090000

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**Summary Description**

The Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line as it exists at the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site in Annandale, Virginia, consists of 1,870 feet of railroad bed, including high fill areas, shallow cuts, and two historic culverts, all constructed during the 1850s. This roadbed, now in use as a pedestrian trail connecting Royce Court to Medford Drive, is in the Piedmont Uplands physiographic province and is situated in a small stream valley containing Coon Branch, a tributary of Accotink Creek and part of the Occoquan Basin. The roadbed's average elevation is approximately 310 feet above sea level, but the site includes elevations nearing 320 feet above sea level and the Coon Branch Valley that slopes down to 276 feet above sea level. The site also contains the remnants of an unrelated house with outbuildings, built after 1894 and removed in the early 1980s. The entire area is covered by secondary and tertiary forest comprised of a mixed selection of Uplands Hardwoods. The roadbed and its constituent elements still retain substantial site integrity, having suffered only minor to moderate damage from natural erosion and one breach caused by the installation of a water line.

**Detailed Description**

Roadbed

Beginning at its westernmost end, the roadbed is a paved trail but reverts to hard-packed dirt at approximately the 130 foot mark (see map entitled "Manassas Gap: Historical Railroad," page 2 of 4). For the next 500 feet, the roadbed is a fill area standing more than twenty feet above the Coon Branch Valley. The fill measures from 18 to 22 feet wide at its top, roughly 60 feet thick at its base, and has slopes down to the valley in excess of 30 degrees (see photograph #1). The roadbed runs level with the surrounding ground from approximately the 600 foot mark to the 660 foot mark, whereupon it becomes a shallow cut through slightly higher ground. To the south of this cut sits a small rise and to the north lies a knoll, both with an elevation of 318 feet above sea level. Significantly, between the cut and the knoll lies a deeper cut area, the probable source for some of the fill used nearby. From the 870 foot mark until the 1300 foot mark, the roadbed crosses an upper section of the Coon Branch Valley (see map entitled "Manassas Gap: Historical Railroad," page 3 of 4). The roadbed here becomes a fill area standing 6 to 12 feet above the valley and measuring 5 to 15 feet wide at its top, roughly 45 feet thick at its base, and again has slopes down to the valley in excess of 30 degrees (see photograph #2). To the east of the valley, the roadbed runs across generally level ground and thus becomes little more than a dirt trail only 2 to 3 feet wide in many places (see photograph #3). At the eastern boundary of the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site, the roadbed enters property owned by the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, where it has become eroded into an intermittent

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**Description (continued)**

stream running along the north side of Medford Drive (see map entitled "Manassas Gap: Historical Railroad," page 4 of 4). An earlier survey of this portion of the railroad bed reported the possible existence of submerged railroad ties.

Historic Culverts

Embedded within the two main fill areas, and necessitated by the presence of Coon Branch which twice crosses the roadbed, are two historic culverts. Both are still functioning as culverts and have substantial structural integrity; but each culvert has experienced some degree of erosion damage, especially at their intake openings. The interior of both culverts measures approximately three and a half feet wide by five and a half feet tall and is constructed from large hand-hewn stones. Large flat stones have been laid as flooring; rectangular stones of varied sizes have been stacked to form walls; and large stone lintels have been laid over the walls to support the weight of the roadbed above. The western culvert, transporting the lower Coon Branch, is approximately 90 feet long with a starting drainage elevation of 277 feet above sea level and an ending drainage elevation of 276 feet above sea level (see attachment entitled "Cross-section of Culvert # 1"). At its intake opening on the north side of the roadbed, the culvert's retaining wall has collapsed and erosion from the fill area has washed down to create a sunken creek. The culvert's interior is in remarkably good shape, however, and continues both to drain Coon Branch and support the roadbed above (see photograph #4). Likewise, its southern opening has suffered only minor damage from erosion with its twenty-foot long retaining wall still largely intact (see photograph #5). The eastern culvert, transporting the upper Coon Branch, has a much shorter length, stretching only about 40 feet from opening to opening (see attachment entitled "Cross-section of Culvert # 2"). Its beginning drainage elevation is 298 feet above sea level, and its final drainage elevation is 297 feet above sea level. The culvert's retaining wall at its intake opening on the south side of the roadbed has collapsed, and erosion from the fill area has washed down to partially obstruct its flow. The immediate area has also been affected by the placement of a modern round concrete culvert immediately to the east. The interior of the historic culvert does retain its structural integrity, however, and continues to drain some portion of Coon Branch support the roadbed above. Likewise, its northern opening has suffered only moderate damage from erosion and the placement of the modern culvert, with its retaining wall essentially intact (see photograph #6).



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**Statement of Significance**

The Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line, a representative portion of which is contained in the Fairfax County Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site in Annandale, Virginia, is historically significant because it is directly connected to important events in American technological, economic, and military history. The Manassas Gap Railroad, of which the Independent Line was an unfinished extension, was one of several railroads built during the Ante-bellum era to replace the older wagon and river transport of agricultural products from the Shenandoah and Ohio valleys to competing centers of business in the upper Chesapeake. Incorporated in 1850, the Manassas Gap Railroad represented the effort of Alexandria merchants to recapture the upper Shenandoah wheat trade from the Baltimore market. The later Independent Line of the Manassas Gap was conceived of as a means of expanding the Northern Virginia market and increasing the profitability of the original line. The failure to complete the Independent Line and the ultimate failure of the Manassas Gap venture were the results of the economic turbulence, with its recurrent periods of boom and bust, that the creation of the railroads and a larger market economy fostered. Finally, the Manassas Gap Railroad and its unfinished Independent Line played important roles in the United States Civil War, serving both as a means of transporting troops into battle and as a site for battle.

**Historical background and significance**

The Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site in Annandale, Virginia is located upon property that was originally granted to Thomas, Lord Culpeper in 1649 as a reward for his support of King Charles II. Ownership of the land passed through Lord Culpeper's daughter to Thomas, the Fifth Lord Fairfax. During the 1690s, Lord Fairfax's administrator in the Virginia Colony, William Fitzhugh, began to acquire much of the land that now comprises Fairfax County, including that portion containing the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site. By the mid-eighteenth century, the property had passed to Henry Fitzhugh of Stafford County, Virginia. Fitzhugh's estate, which he named Ravensworth, encompassed 12,000 acres and was home to thirty-eight of Fitzhugh's slaves and forty tenant planters. In 1797, following Henry's death, Ravensworth was divided among his five youngest sons, with Giles Fitzhugh taking possession of the 1,668-acre section lying east of Accotink Creek and surrounding the Alexandria Road.

By the early nineteenth century, the county's population was growing at a rapid pace and the land of central Fairfax County was attracting a wave of land speculators, many of them from the prospering city of Alexandria. Thus in February 1814 Giles Fitzhugh sold his portion of Ravensworth to Andrew and Jonathan Scholfield of Alexandria for \$12,952 due in three payments over the course of the next three years. Just three months later, the Scholfields legally subdivided the land: Andrew assumed ownership of a 294-acre tract of

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the land in the east, and Jonathan sold the resale rights of the remaining land to Robert Taylor and Elisha Talbot of Alexandria while retaining actual possession of the land and its rents until resale was made necessary by his agreement with Giles Fitzhugh. In 1821, Taylor and Talbot made agreements with at least three families, John and Rebecca Weaver of Georgetown, Henry and Lydia Burdick of Georgetown, and John and Ann Lloyd of Alexandria, to sell the land for \$9600 due in nine payments over nine years. But after the Weavers and Burdicks failed to make their payments in 1822 and 1823, Taylor made arrangements to sell the property at public auction, advertising its sale in the Alexandria Gazette for twelve weeks at the end of 1823 and beginning of 1824. John Lloyd was able to secure rights to some of this land on 6 January 1824 and to purchase other parts at the public auction held at Catt's Tavern on 16 January 1824, including a 35-acre tract containing the mill at Accotink Creek and an 88-acre tract lying north of Little River Turnpike. Lloyd would acquire another one hundred acres of the old Ravensworth estate in July 1827 to comprise a total estate of four hundred and sixty acres lying on the north side of the Little River Turnpike five miles east of Fairfax Courthouse. Lloyd then farmed the land for the following twenty years.

On 15 May 1847, John Lloyd sold three hundred and sixty of these acres and the buildings included thereon to James S. Purdy, originally from New York but now a resident of Fairfax County, for the sum of \$3,315. Under Purdy's ownership, the land that was to become the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site became a prosperous farm and the home of a middling-status planter family. Purdy almost immediately sold thirty-three and a half acres, possibly to raise cash for the substantial improvements he began to add to his property. County tax records show that between 1847 and 1850 the value of Purdy's land increased by more than a third and that the value of the buildings thereon more than quadrupled. The U.S. Federal Census of 1850 reports that John Purdy of Fairfax County, Virginia was a farmer worth \$4890 in property. This Census further shows that he resided with his wife, Anna, his one year old daughter, Josephine, his one month old son, William, a twenty-seven year old laborer named Mark Lloyd, a fourteen year old male slave, and an eleven year old male slave. County court records also suggest that slaves hired on from neighboring farms supplied at least some of the farm's labor. All of which places Purdy as a respectable if middling-status planter in Fairfax County, Virginia in the Ante-bellum period.

Even as Purdy was creating a prosperous farm in Northern Virginia, the region was undergoing the profound changes that were endemic to the entire nation during the Ante-bellum period, not the least of which was the creation of a substantial railroad system where none had existed before. Whereas rivers had shaped the earliest settlement of the inland portions of the United States, nineteenth century Americans were increasingly relying on engineered modes of

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city held a public referendum on whether the people of Alexandria should help fund such a project and again the voters overwhelmingly demonstrated their support, voting by 501 to 7 in the affirmative.

At the Manassas Gap Railroad Company's first public meeting, held in Alexandria on 30 July 1850, stockholders quickly agreed that the railroad would "be constructed from some convenient point on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad...through the Thoroughfare Gap." During this first meeting, the stockholders also overwhelmingly elected Edward Carrington Marshall to be the company's president, a post he was to hold for the next sixteen years. Besides being the youngest son of the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Edward Marshall was himself a noted Virginian and politician - a rich planter, the founder of a turnpike company, and a former state representative. In 1850 he was a forty-five year old, Harvard-educated lawyer and a prosperous planter in the Ashby District of Fauquier County, worth \$120,000 in real property according to the U.S. Census of 1850. Long a booster of internal improvements, Marshall had quickly realized that his section of Fauquier County would not be served by the O & A Railroad. He accordingly decided to organize his own, which he dubbed the Manassas Gap Railroad.

Marshall was not alone in this project, however; a number of his prosperous neighbors joined with him to advance this venture. Of the many men named in the Proceedings of the...Annual Meeting of the Stockholders as stockowners and/or company officials, twenty-two were citizens of Fauquier County. Significantly, these were some of the county's leading citizens, with family names such as Ambler, Ashby, Carter, and Marshall (see Appendix A). Data from the U.S. Census of 1850 clearly shows that these men were extremely wealthy by the standards of that era, owning an average of \$22,300 in real property with a median wealth of \$14,700. This group included not only rich planters but also two doctors, a lawyer, an editor, and a business manager.

Working with this group of citizens from Fauquier were some of the leading merchants of Alexandria. Such noted men as Lewis A. Cazenove, Henry Dangerfield, William H. Fowle, William H. Irwin, William D. Massey, Lewis McKenzie, Robert H. Miller, and Hugh Smith all subscribed to Marshall's plan. Indeed, the list of merchants who backed the Manassas Gap Railroad reads like a who's who of Ante-bellum Alexandria. Together, these men owned many of the city's wharves, warehouses, shops, and mansions, including the Bayne-Fowle House (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) that stands today at 811 Prince Street. They controlled the Mount Vernon Cotton Manufacturing Company, the Alexandria Flour Mill Company, the Alexandria Savings Institute, the Potomac Bank of Alexandria, the Alexandria Canal, the Alexandria Water Company, the city's largest brewery, and a number of the city's fertilizer plants. They

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transportation. At first this meant the creation of ambitious turnpike and canal networks, but the inherent limitations of such systems and the advent of steam-powered engines soon inspired the construction of railroads to connect the fertile farms of the expanding West to the traditional markets and business hubs along the East Coast. Beginning in the late 1820s as the first railroads were being constructed, Americans quickly developed a mania for the railroad. As Debow's Review later opined in an article in 1858, Americans of that era were "born, not with silver spoons, but with iron rails in their mouths." By 1844, American railroads contained some 3,668 miles of track while England, where the railroad had first been developed, possessed only 2,069 miles of track.

This trend was manifestly evident in the upper Chesapeake Bay region, where such established business centers as Alexandria, Georgetown, and Baltimore began to vie for economic access to the productive farms of the Shenandoah and lower Ohio Valleys. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, chartered in 1827, was originally intended to wrest the Ohio trade away from New York's Erie Canal but was soon threatening the economic viability of cities all along the Mid-Atlantic coast. When the B & O opened a branch line to Winchester, Virginia via Harper's Ferry in 1836, the prosperous merchants of Alexandria became convinced that they were losing their crucial wagon trade with the Shenandoah. Feeling slighted by the District of Columbia and interested in the Virginia government's greater willingness to fund railroad construction, these merchants organized to win the retrocession of the city away from the District of Columbia and back to the State of Virginia, which they accomplished in 1846. True to their expectations, the Orange and Alexandria Railroad was chartered by the Virginia legislature just two years later to run from Alexandria to Gordonsville in Orange County, Virginia. More importantly, the State of Virginia agreed to pay sixty percent of the rail line's construction costs. The City of Alexandria likewise demonstrated its support of the venture through a public referendum, voting by a margin of 416 to 3 to help fund the project. The O & A reached Manassas Junction in December 1851, and the entire line was in operation by March 1854.

Alexandria merchants were not content to merely tap the wheat trade of a few Virginia counties, however. On one hand, the directors of the O & A began to petition the state to authorize an extension of their line to Lynchburg even before it became operational to Gordonsville. Such an extension would link Alexandria both to the lower Shenandoah Valley and to the more inland Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. At the same time, even as the O & A was under construction, other Alexandrians were joining with Virginia farmers to build a rail line along a more northern route. Incorporated as the Manassas Gap Railroad by the Virginia State Legislature on 9 March 1850, the goal of this railroad was to recapture the wheat trade of the upper Shenandoah Valley which the B & O had successfully acquired through its Winchester branch. Again the

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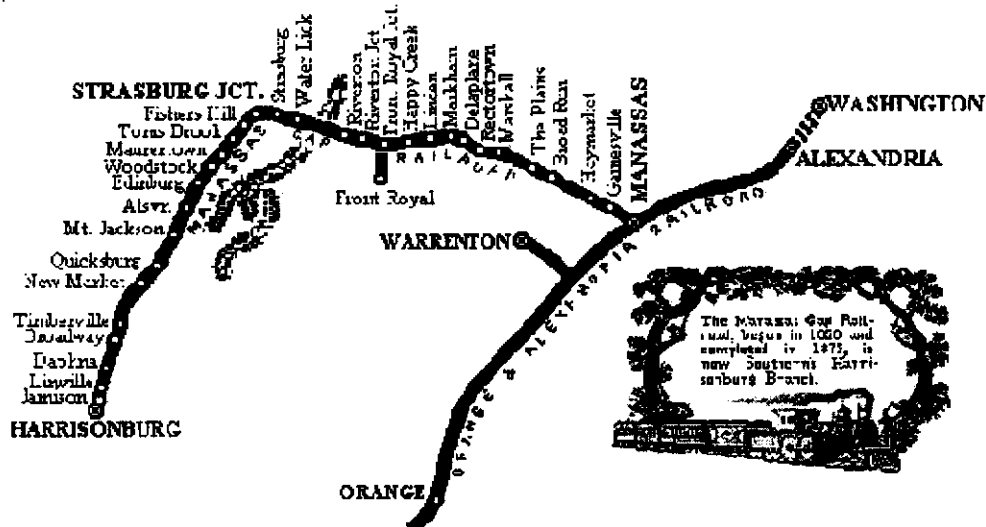
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contributed to such philanthropic organizations as the Alexandria Lyceum, the Orphan Asylum, and the Female Orphan Asylum. Their status in the community was also evident in their political lives. Predominantly Whigs in the Ante-bellum period before dabbling in the American or Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s, this group of men included a number of Alexandria's Common Council, a past and a future mayor of the city, and a future member of the United States House of Representatives. And, above all else, these men were wealthy; the U.S. Census of 1850 reveals that measured in real estate alone these men were worth an average of \$18,000 with a median wealth of \$10,000.

**Manassas Gap Railroad System in 1873**



\*By 1873, the Manassas Gap Railroad had become a subsystem of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad.

With the initial organization accomplished, the Manassas Gap Railroad Company immediately started the real work of constructing a rail line. In the latter half of 1850, Edward Marshall acting as president began to hold meetings and to authorize agents to sell the company stock, particularly in areas through which the railroad was to pass. At the same time, John McD. Goldsborough acting as the company's chief engineer began the surveying to determine the best possible route. By the next stockholder meeting on 2 September 1851, held in Salem in Fauquier County (soon renamed Marshall in honor of Edward Marshall), President Marshall was able to report that the route had been determined as far as Shenandoah County: beginning at Tudor Hall (thereafter to be known as Manassas

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Junction), the line would pass west through Gainesville, through Salem, past Front Royal, through the Manassas Gap, and on to Strasburg (see "Manassas Gap Railroad System in 1873" below). Marshall also reported during this meeting that the actual grading had been completed to Markham at the edge of the Blue Ridge and that the company's first shipment of iron "T" rails was already on order from a Welsh iron mill.

The actual construction began in Manassas Junction in November 1851, and freight and passenger service was in operation as far as Rectortown by September 1852 and as far as Markham by December of that year. In October 1853, the line reached Summit Cut at the top of the Blue Ridge, requiring the removal of many tons of earth and rock and the creation of some cuts seventy feet deep into solid stone. Such deep cuts were made necessary by the fact that contemporary engines were not powerful enough to pull laden trains up even moderate grades. By late 1854, both the line to Strasburg and a branch line south to Front Royal had been completed. This occasion prompted President Marshall to announce:

The iron horse of Manassas this day takes his first draft of Limestone water. It is the first occasion of business exchange between the Counties of Shenandoah and Rockingham with their old and natural market of Alexandria for many long years... Manassas has passed the Jordan, and reached into the promised-land... She now stands ready to minister to the wants of the valley and the city. She will enhance by millions the property of the one, and will restore to the other, her long lost trade by means of the iron rail..." ("Manassas Gap Railroad," Alexandria Gazette, 20 October 1854, 3:1).

Both Marshall and the merchants of Alexandria had larger ambitions than merely reconnecting old trading partners, however. Even as the Manassas Gap Railroad was extending its line into the Blue Ridge and surveying its route deeper into the Shenandoah Valley, Marshall and the company's Board of Directors were planning to extend the reach of the railroad beyond the Valley. In January 1853, the company's stockholders authorized the company to petition the State of Virginia to allow the construction of a branch line into Loudoun County, Virginia, which the Virginia Legislature approved on 8 March 1853. By the time the petition was submitted, however, the company was proposing a far greater building agenda. The Virginia State Legislature was also asked to authorize an extension from the main line east to Alexandria (approved on 10 March 1853) and to authorize a connecting line between the Westernport and Alexandria Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad (approved 18 March 1853). Nor was the Manassas Gap Railroad Company acting without state support; the Virginia legislature promised to pay fully sixty percent of the construction costs on these lines just as soon as investors in Fairfax, Prince William, and Fauquier Counties paid

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the first forty percent. To this end, the company's stockholders in October 1853 authorized the Board to issue \$600,000 in bonds at six percent interest to gain the needed money.

When constructed, this rail network would have greatly expanded the reach of the Manassas Gap Railroad. The company would have direct access not only to the farms of the Shenandoah but through its Loudoun Branch would also have been able to compete with Georgetown for much of the farm trade of Northern Virginia. Additionally, the connecting line would have provided an uninterrupted link to the expanding coal-fields of northwest Virginia (now West Virginia) and allowed the Manassas Gap Railroad Company, through the ports of Alexandria, an entry into the increasingly lucrative coal trade all along the East Coast. At the same time, the construction of an Independent Line east to Alexandria promised to increase the company's overall profitability. From the beginning, the Manassas Gap Railroad had been wholly dependent upon the O & A for its connection to Alexandria; and this granted the O & A considerable control over freight rates and usage fees. It did not take long for Marshall and the Board of Directors to conclude that the yearly rent (amounting to \$33,500 in the fiscal year of 1854) which they paid for use of the O & A's tracks was excessive. By Marshall's calculations, such a fee allowed the O & A to earn just as much in hauling a barrel of wheat the twenty-eight miles from Manassas Junction to Alexandria as the Manassas Gap Railroad would make in hauling the barrel the sixty miles from Strasburg to Manassas Junction.

Survey work on the new lines began almost immediately. One eight-man team headed by Engineer R. H. Middleton surveyed the Loudoun Branch, mapping out four possible routes by late 1853. Of the four proposed, the company selected the twenty-seven mile long course known as the Purcellville Route, which connected to the proposed Independent Line about twenty-seven miles west of Alexandria (or at a point to the southwest of Chantilly in Fairfax County, Virginia). From there, the Loudoun Branch ran parallel to the Little River Turnpike into Loudoun County before turning to the northeast just before Aldie, Virginia. It then turned due north, crossed the Little River, and turned northwest to pass through the Blue Ridge Mountains along the Goose Creek Valley. Beyond the mountains, the roadbed again turned north and ran in winding curves to Purcellville, Virginia. This route allowed the company to tap the center of Loudoun County's rich farm area and placed them within reach of traffic with the lower Ohio Valley. One major implication of the Loudoun Branch's route, connecting as it did through the proposed Independent Line, was that a very substantial portion of the Manassas Gap Railroad Company's agenda for expansion rested upon its successful completion of its Independent Line.

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Beginning at about the same time, Chief Engineer John McD. Goldsborough took personal command of the ten-man team charged with mapping out the Independent Line, finishing the work by early 1854. The route determined by Goldsborough measured some thirty-four miles in length and ran from a junction with the company's main line just east of Gainesville in Prince William County to a depot on Jones' Point immediately south of Alexandria (see "Map of the Manassas Gap Railroad Unfinished Independent Line with a Portion of Its Loudoun Branch" on page 13). Between these two points, the Independent Line crossed the Bull Run to the west of Chantilly and crossed the Cub Run just below its fork with Elk Lick Run. The line then made a long sweeping curve and crossed the Warrenton Turnpike approximately two miles west of Fairfax Courthouse, turned east, crossed the Little River Turnpike, and passed through the northern section of Providence (now known as the city of Fairfax). That the Fairfax County Court approved the company's request for a right of way through the city in May 1854 was quite an accomplishment as very few communities in that era allowed railways to be built through them, and even Alexandria did not allow railways within its city limits. From there, the roadbed ran east to above the village of Annandale, curved south to cross the Little River Turnpike, ran southeast through the Indian Run Valley, and intersected with the O & A's railroad bed five and three-tenths miles west of Jones' Point. After crossing over the O & A, the Independent Line turned sharply east, paralleled the O & A to the edge of Alexandria, and then detoured around the city to a small peninsula which jutted into the Potomac.

Even as the surveying was being conducted, the Manassas Gap Railroad Company began the legal process whereby they obtained the land needed for their roadbed. In November 1853, after having applied for a hearing and publicizing their intent for four weeks, the company appeared before the Fairfax County Court so as to have five commissioners appointed who would determine the compensation to be awarded to those local landowners whose land was to be taken. During the course of the next nine months, the company acquired its right of way whether the landowners agreed with the commissioners' appraisal or not. The first court cases were filed in June 1854 when the Manassas Gap Railroad Company brought suit against fifty-eight Fairfax County landowners, including James S. Purdy who owned the tract of land that is now the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site and who stood to lose eight acres of his land. Because of the complicated nature of the process and because some of the appointed commissioners failed to act within the allotted time period, eighteen of these cases were resubmitted in July and fourteen others were resubmitted in August. A large number of these suits were resubmitted as the year progressed, including the case against Purdy who was named as a defendant in three separate suits; and another seventeen landowners were added to those cases already pending. By the time these suits were settled in March 1855, the Manassas Gap Railroad Company had lodged one



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hundred and seventy-nine lawsuits against seventy-five separate defendants in Fairfax County alone.

At the same time that the company was acquiring a right of way through the county, it was also putting much of the construction of the Independent Line under contract. In May 1854, the company awarded contracts on nine "difficult sections" of the bed -- such as the Bull Run Valley, near Sudley, the Germantown Summit, the slopes of the Accotink, Annandale Summit, the Orange crossing, and the company's depot at Jones' Point -- and by September the actual work of grading had begun near Annandale and at Jones' Point. At the stockholders' meeting in October 1854, President Marshall and Chief Engineer Goldsborough were able to report that work was progressing rapidly and that the contracts for the Loudoun Branch had likewise been awarded and that construction had commenced on its more difficult sections. Goldsborough stated that the total estimated cost for the two lines was \$1,232,117 broken down as follows:

Independent Line		Loudoun Branch	
Road bed	\$436,117	Road bed	\$272,000
Superstructure	\$300,000	Superstructure	\$190,000
Water Stations	\$5,000	Water Stations	\$3,000
Engineering Account	\$15,000	Engineering Account	\$11,000
<u>Total costs</u>	<u>\$756,117</u>	<u>Total costs</u>	<u>\$476,000</u>

But it was not all good-news; already the company was beginning to experience the money problems that would obstruct its larger agenda. President Marshall was forced to report during the stockholders' meeting of October 1854 that the company was woefully short of the capital needed to complete the Independent Line's roadbed, having raised only \$300,000. This also meant that the company was \$60,000 short of meeting the funding level needed to qualify for the promised state railroad funds. Moreover, the company's alternative plan to pay the unfunded portion of the cost by giving stock to the roadbed contractors had been rejected by the Virginia Board of Public Works. Marshall now proposed another solution to this problem: dividends on the main line for the next year would be paid in stock issued on the Independent Line. But the company's current stockholders rejected this plan. Instead, they passed a resolution authorizing the Board to borrow \$400,000 in short-term loans, thereby increasing the company's debt ceiling to one million dollars.

For a time, this solution seemed to work. The Manassas Gap Railroad Company incurred a larger floating debt, but the work on the Independent Line and the Loudoun Branch progressed. In May 1855, the company reported both that "a very considerable force" was at work on the Loudoun Branch and that the company would

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try to complete the depot at Jones' Point so as to have use of it during the fall season (Alexandria Gazette 8 May 1855, 3:2; 17 May 1855, 3:3). During that summer, a number of the "difficult sections" of the Independent Line were nearing completion and engineer Goldsborough expanded the grading work to several other points along the route. It may well have been at this point, either as part of the work on the Annandale Summit or as a result of the completion of the work at the Annandale Summit, that the high fill areas and culverts were constructed at what is now the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site. In fact, this portion of the Independent Line is particularly representative of the line as a whole. Unlike the work in the Shenandoah where heavy blasting was needed, the construction in Prince William and Fairfax Counties required "deep excavations and heavy fills to maintain a proper grade" through the area's rolling hills and stream valleys (John McD. Goldsborough, Alexandria Gazette, 20 October 1854, 3:4).

While existing records do not describe the company's construction techniques, the general engineering practices used can be determined from a close inspection of the finished and unfinished sites themselves. Three sites are particularly informative: that portion of the Independent Line contained within the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site, that portion of the Loudoun Branch now contained within Sully Plantation Park, and the unfinished bridge abutment over Cub Run in the Cub Run Stream Valley Park. Together, these sites suggest that at any one site cuts were done first and were also used as the source of fill material, that the stone work for abutments and culverts was a second priority, and that the actual process of building a fill was last. Also, one record indicates that the abutments and culverts were constructed using "a fine grained substantial granite, lately discovered in Fairfax" (Alexandria Gazette, 17 October 1856, 3:5). The stonework itself indicates that the large stones were brought to each site in rough-cut blocks, where they were then individually sized and shaped to fit into the advancing work. Stones that broke during this process were discarded or used in fill. Once an abutment or culvert was assembled in place, then stonecutters reworked the facing stones, smoothing them and cutting a straight edge onto the corners. Only after all of this work was complete was the fill added to complete the roadbed.

Since the actual construction work was done by contractors about whom little is known, it is nearly impossible to say for certain who really built the Independent Line's roadbed. Information concerning the Manassas Gap Railroad's main line and the number of other railroads built in that area during that period does strongly suggest, however, that the work was done by a diverse group of men. Native white artisans performed the most skilled tasks, quarrying, cutting, and laying the stone for the abutments and culverts. Native white and recently arrived Irish laborers from Alexandria performed the semi-skilled

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tasks, building the worker houses and storage sheds that supported the construction and maintaining the company's equipment. The worst and most tedious tasks were reserved for gangs of rented black slaves, who through their manual labor shifted the tons of earth required to make the many cuts and fills. These slaves, owned by local masters, were hired on by the year at a cost of between eighty and one hundred dollars, with the company responsible for feeding and housing them during that time. In one instance in June 1853, slaves in the employ of the Manassas Gap Railroad Company rioted and seriously impeded the construction of the main line through the Summit Cut. Only the arrival of Captain Turner Ashby and his cavalry militia, later of Civil War fame, prevented the loss of all the hands and allowed the work to continue.

Worker dissatisfaction was far from the company's most pressing problem, however. By late 1854, the economic situation in the entire region had worsened greatly. The Alexandria Gazette publicly lamented "the depression which has existed in all branches of business" and which has resulted in the "scarcity of provisions and the stringency of the money market" ("Local Items," 14 August 1855, 3:3). This economic bust, a feature of the new American market economy, was particularly hard on new railroad-related businesses. On 30 March 1855, the most prominent manufacturing company in Alexandria, the Virginia Locomotive and Car Works, announced that it was closing its doors. In September, the recently chartered Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad was complaining that Virginia land-owners were not buying stock in the new company. The Manassas Gap Railroad was likewise suffering. At the fifth stockholders meeting in Alexandria in October 1855, President Marshall bewailed that:

"work in all departments has felt severely the influence of the character of the past rail road year, memorable for its money pressure and drought. By both causes the business of the road in operation has been diminished, the work under contract retarded, and the management of the finances made difficult."

Their problems were not helped by the financial situation in which they found themselves. Of primary concern was the heavy floating debt the company had incurred, partly through their Independent Line and Loudoun Branch and partly through the extension of their main line into the Shenandoah Valley. The debt was so bad that the company was forced to slow its work on the Independent Line and Loudoun Branch so that it could concentrate on finishing the tracks to Strasburg in the Shenandoah Valley, which contributed immediately to the company's profits. Another financial problem that confronted the company at this time was the lack of public support the Independent Line was receiving from the farmers of Fairfax County. Whereas the city of Alexandria had bought \$80,000 in stock in the Independent Line, Fairfax County residents did not seem

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to be interested in the new line's fate. Only one Fairfax County resident, Henry Wirt Thomas, can be confirmed as an investor. A Whig and former member of the Virginia House of Delegates, Thomas at this time was a lawyer and gentleman planter with \$10,000 in real estate according to the Census of 1860. He later became a Democrat, serving as an auditor for the Confederate government in Richmond during the Civil War and being elected lieutenant governor of Virginia in the years after the war. Faced with such a debt and lacking local support, President Marshall publicly pleaded for financial assistance in October 1855, asking that current stockholders from the main line help defray the cost of the Independent Line. He was seconded by Chief Engineer Goldsborough, who asserted that the Independent Line was "now in a situation to increase the force employed." The stockholders responded simply by authorizing the Board "to raise a subscription for finishing the construction of the Independent Line of the Manassas Gap Railroad" (Alexandria Gazette, 27 October 1855, 2:2).

Increased funding was not forthcoming, however. The economic downturn eased, but capital and credit both remained tight in Northern Virginia. And while the company was able to extend its reach into the Shenandoah Valley, opening the line to Woodstock and nearing completion of twelve miles of track to Mt. Jackson, it was still unable to raise construction funds in Fairfax County. At the same time, it was unable to use funds from elsewhere to construct the Independent Line because the company at its first meeting had dictated that no funds raised west of the Blue Ridge could be used to construct the line east of the Blue Ridge. All that the company could do was consolidate its floating debt, which still consumed too large a percentage of the company's annual revenues, and press on with the funds available. This greatly limited the amount of work that the company could do on the Independent Line, and in fact only \$31,294 was actually expended on this project in fiscal 1856. Yet the company still believed that it was poised for greatness. Even after hearing all of these dire reports, the stockholders overwhelmingly authorized the company to build an extension on the Loudoun Branch from Purcelville to Harper's Ferry, which would have truly extended the company's reach into the Ohio Valley trade.

But the Manassas Gap Railroad's ambitious agenda finally began to unravel in 1857. After months of financial turmoil, the company was forced to stop all work on the Independent Line and the Loudoun Branch in May and was even compelled to cease work on its main line in the Shenandoah Valley in June. As President Marshall related at the seventh annual stockholders meeting, "the Company now finds itself stalled, and embarrassed with a debt incurred in the prosecution of the work - though the debt is small in comparison with the amount invested" (Alexandria Gazette, 30 October 1857, 3:1). The financial crisis that had begun in 1854 had reduced the value of Virginia railroad stocks from \$108 a share down to \$87 a share and undercut the entire market for railroad bonds.

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Without the ability to sell bonds, the company had been forced to borrow money at higher interest rates, since paying high interest rates was preferable to having the company bonds lose their value; and these debts had accumulated to an unbearable burden. By early 1857, the company had a floating debt amounting to \$520,000. The interest on this debt alone cost a full million dollars, or equal to the interest on all of the company's regular bonds put together. Some stockholders charged that Marshall and the Board of Directors had squandered money on the Independent Line, but Marshall countered that the floating debt had been incurred only on the Valley Line as the Independent Line and Loudoun Branch had been constructed predominantly with subscribed capital. Such a statement seems to be at odds with the resolution passed three years earlier that authorized the company to borrow up to \$400,000 to construct the Independent Line, but an examining committee substantiated Marshall's claims. Whatever the truth of the matter, the company was now in dire straights. Some stockholders proposed petitioning the Virginia State Legislature for immediate financial assistance, but President Marshall counseled caution in so doing since it was unlikely to succeed and might cause the public to lose confidence in the company. In the end, the issue was set aside.

Thus in late 1857, the Independent Line of the Manassas Gap Railroad Company stood half finished and virtually abandoned. The most difficult grading and masonry work had been substantially completed, and the rest of the required grading was reported to be of "a light character." Indeed, Chief Engineer Goldsborough asserted that the line was only one good work season away from being ready to lay the rails. But the company was never again in a position to resume the work. Drought in the Shenandoah Valley and a continuing scarcity of money hampered the company's immediate construction plans. And even the eventual intervention of the Virginia State Legislature, which helped lower the company's floating debt from \$550,000 to \$300,000, was not enough to make the company truly profitable again. The Manassas Gap Railroad was able to resume construction in the Shenandoah Valley, but this was accomplished only after the stockholders accepted the inevitability of selling bonds at a lowered rate, cheapening all of their bonds. After spending \$244,929 on the Independent Line, President Marshall was forced to admit at the eighth annual stockholders' meeting in October 1858 that completing the Independent line would require an additional \$900,000, "a sum greatly exceeding the means of the Company." He persisted in believing that "a persevering will...may find the way," however, stating that:

"...it is a just source of confidence that the past achievement of the Company...authorizes the conviction that the entire completion of this work is a question of time and not of fact" (Alexandria Gazette, 22 October 1858, 3:2).

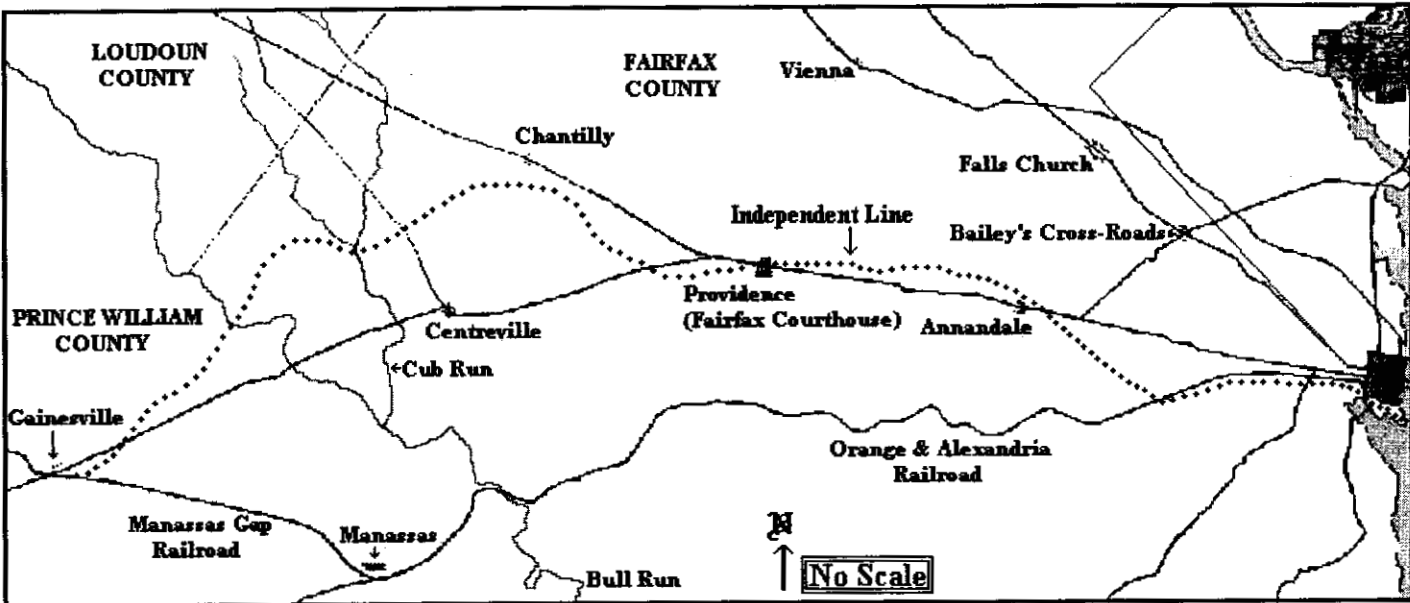
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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name of property  
Fairfax, Virginia  
county and state

**Map of the Manassas Gap Railroad's  
Unfinished Independent Line with a  
Portion of Its Loudoun Branch\***



\*Map compiled from data contained on the following maps: "Map of Northeastern Virginia and Vicinity of Washington, Compiled in Topographical Engineers Office at Division Headquarters of General Irvin McDowell, Arlington, January 1, 1862"; "Yardley Taylor's 1853 Map of Loudoun County, Virginia from Actual Surveys"; and "Map of the State of Virginia Containing the Counties, Principal Towns, Railroads & All Other Improvements."

Manassas Gap Railroad  
 Independent Line  
 Annandale, Fairfax Co,  
 Virginia

UTM Coordinates

- |    |    |        |         |
|----|----|--------|---------|
| 1. | 18 | 308490 | 4301025 |
| 2. | 18 | 308730 | 4300950 |
| 3. | 18 | 308640 | 4300770 |
| 4. | 18 | 308965 | 4300525 |
| 5. | 18 | 308525 | 4300825 |
| 6. | 18 | 308470 | 4300745 |
| 7. | 18 | 308430 | 4300815 |
| 8. | 18 | 308460 | 4300850 |
| 9. | 18 | 308455 | 4300840 |

