



The architect of post-World War II Europe, George C. Marshall was an avid horseman and foxhunter when he lived in Leesburg in the 1940s and '50s. Photo courtesy of Dodona Manor

LEESBURG

A CROSSROADS TOWN
WHERE THE FUTURE MEETS THE PAST

by
Phil Audibert

Every day at around noon, Stanley Caulkins, 83, walks out of his jewelry store on King Street to have lunch at the Leesburg Restaurant a few doors down. In the back of this classic countertop-and-booths, small-town Mom-and-Pop restaurant sits a long wooden table. Known as the “boys’ table,” Stanley takes his place here with his buddies to play dice...every day.

Some things never change. But here in downtown Leesburg you can palpably feel the pressure of growth and change all around you. If you walk further down King Street to the intersection of Market, you will be standing at the crossroads of the old Carolina and Alexandria Roads, the place where this town began almost 250 years ago. This is the intersection of Routes 15 and 7 today. Walk east, past the magnificent courthouse on your left, past Dodona, George C. Marshall’s home, and just over the brow of the hill, you will see the legions of new houses seemingly marching towards you. Historic downtown Leesburg is an oasis in this desert of rooftops.

Talk about change: Stanley Caulkins has seen it all. Coming to Leesburg in the late 1930s as a 12-year-



A 1940s-era postcard of downtown Leesburg. In 1940 the population of Leesburg was 1,800 people. Today that number stands at 37,000.

Photo courtesy of the Leesburg Department of Tourism and Marketing

old, he has served this community as a watchmaker/jeweler and small-business promoter since the end of World War II. He remembers when the town was surrounded by dairy farms. Today there is only one dairy farm left.

“You can’t buy an aspirin in downtown Leesburg anymore,” sniffs Stanley as he points to the upscale clothing stores, antique shops and gourmet restaurants that occupy the carefully restored 18th, 19th and early 20th century buildings lining the streets of Leesburg today. If you want to buy an aspirin, go to a shopping center on the outskirts of the old town.

He can remember when the town’s water supply came from an artesian

well near his home. Today the source is the nearby Potomac River. He remembers the 1940 census: 1,800 hardy souls. Today that number is 37,000, and Leesburg has stretched its boundaries from a sleepy little village to an 11-square-mile metropolis. Leesburg today is close to Charlottesville in both area and population.

Marantha Edwards is Leesburg’s tourism and marketing manager. She has called Leesburg home since 1969. In fact, she once worked as a waitress in the same restaurant where Stanley has lunch every day. She says that at one point Leesburg was the fastest growing community in the nation.

It all started with the building

of Dulles Airport in 1960. Leesburg became a bedroom community for Washington, DC. Construction of the Dulles Greenway toll road made it even easier to commute from Leesburg to the metropolitan area. The growth rate skyrocketed, something like 350 percent from 1993 to 2005. Housing boomed, traffic choked and before you knew it, old downtown Leesburg was hemmed in.

But recently, Marantha Edwards has sensed a new wind blowing, a trend that she calls “the new Leesburg.” She explains: “For years, Leesburg was a bedroom community: Folks lived here but had to leave to go to work for good-paying jobs.” She points east to Tysons Corner, Reston, Alexandria, and the District of Columbia. “In the last five or 10 years, we’ve seen a shift where it becomes a place

where people can live and work here. So we don’t have to export jobs.”

We walk into the Blue Ridge Grill for lunch. It’s a weekday, but the booths and barstools in this busy eatery are occupied mostly by locals, not visitors.

This is where deals are made over ahi tuna salad and “Leesburgers.” Marantha explains that being a town and not a city is something of a blessing for Leesburg. A town is responsible for providing water, sewer, and fire and rescue to its residents.

Longtime Leesburg jeweler Stanley Caulkins stands outside his shop on King Street with the town’s Tourism and Marketing Manager, Marantha Edwards.

Photo by Susie Audibert



The heart of Leesburg today is still where the major north/south Carolina Road (Rt. 15) crossed the equally important east/west Alexandria Road (Rt. 7) 250 years ago. Photo by Susie Audibert





Built in 1885 and reconstructed in 1905, the old People's National Bank building on North King Street is now home to Lightfoot Restaurant. Owned and operated by two sisters, this restaurant in seven years quintupled its seating capacity. Photo by Phil Audibert

But it is not responsible for their education; that is Loudoun County's job. As a result, Leesburg's biggest employer is government: Loudoun County itself, its school system, and the Federal Aviation Administration (which lies within the town limits) hold the top three employment spots. The fourth largest employer is the Town of Leesburg itself, with 425 workers and an annual budget of \$110 million.

Traffic, of course, is predictably snarled. Currently under construction is an extension of Battlefield Parkway, a bypass that connects the residential communities of north Leesburg to the Dulles Road in south Leesburg. This venture is being jointly funded by the town and the developers, not the Virginia Department of Transportation. It is hoped the parkway will ease bumper-to-bumper traffic on the

Route 15 bypass, which goes past Leesburg Corner Premium Outlets, a mall that draws three to five million shoppers and visitors annually. That's right—three to five million.

So what's in the crystal ball for Leesburg? Marantha Edwards ponders that question. "We're approaching residential build-out. What has to happen is infill." In other words, you fill in the gaps; you build up, not out. She cites an example where a three-story office building was constructed on a vacant lot in the old historic district. Thanks to a prevailing sense of preservation and history and an active architectural review board, the structure looks like it could have been built in the 19th century.

Marantha also hopes that Leesburg "would continue to be a marketplace where good solid jobs are available. Leesburg has become a unique location for

entrepreneurs and start-up groups."

That's where one of the town's proudest accomplishments plays a significant role: the Leesburg Executive Airport. The brand-spanking new terminal, complete with conference facilities and transportation into town, is designed to lure those entrepreneurs and start-up groups. It is aptly named after—who else?—Stanley Caulkins.

A Tour of Leesburg

First, some history: Shortly after the establishment of Loudoun County in 1757, Nicholas Minor purchased 326 acres and a small cluster of log cabins at the intersection of two roads. A year later, Minor hired a surveyor to lay out six streets and subdivide it into 70 half-acre lots. Leesburg was off and running.

The new town was destined to

prosper because it sat on the crossroads of the Carolina Road (Route 15), which ran from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, and the Alexandria Road (Route 7), which connected the port of Alexandria (and later Georgetown) to the Shenandoah Valley.

In those early days, Leesburg consisted of sturdy log buildings, and indeed some still stand. In fact, Minor was Leesburg's first architectural review board when he specified minimum building and roof pitch dimensions. He also specified that all chimneys be made of brick or stone, not wood. And so Leesburg was spared the ravages of fire that claimed so many other colonial era towns.

By the early 1800s most of these structures were being replaced or swallowed up by larger brick and stone Colonial Georgian and new Federal-style buildings. These buildings line the streets of historic downtown Leesburg today. And thanks mostly to the Loudoun Restoration and Preservation Society, this downtown area has been permanently preserved and protected. Well worth the money (\$5) is a guidebook named *Exploring Leesburg, A Guide to History and Architecture*. It lays out five walking tours of the downtown area and provides brief histories of 149 significant buildings and sites.

Back to our story. By 1835, a visitor referred to Leesburg as "a well built and neat village...the streets are well paved and the town supplied with fine water," with public buildings "large, convenient, handsome, and substantial." Today, Leesburg sits at the halfway point along the Journey Through Hallowed Ground from Gettysburg to Monticello.

Speaking of the Civil War, in October of 1861 federal troops crossed the nearby Potomac River, climbed the bluffs and spied what they thought were the tents of a Confederate encampment. What they actually saw, however, were haystacks in the gathering gloom of dusk. What ensued the next day was the Battle of Ball's Bluff, a disaster for the federals. Confederates



A unique wrought iron revolving gate on East Market Street controls access to the Academy Building. Built in 1844, this structure is located next to the Loudoun County Courthouse. It has housed the County Clerk's office since 1879. Further up East Market Street is the old Bank of the Valley building (c. 1810), which now houses government offices. Photo by Phil Audibert

The Stanley F. Caulkins Terminal Building at the Leesburg Executive Airport honors the octogenarian jeweler who has championed and lived and worked in Leesburg since he was a 12-year-old boy. Photo by Susie Audibert



forced the Yankees back. Many bluecoats hurled themselves from the bluff, where, laden down by heavy gear, they sank like stones and drowned. Federals suffered 100 killed and 500 captured. To make matters worse, Colonel Edward Baker, a US senator and close personal friend to President Lincoln, was killed, triggering an inquiry.

Today, the Ball's Bluff Civil War Battlefield features a self-guided walking trail and the smallest national cemetery in the country. To access it, you have to drive through a housing development.

Mention of cemeteries brings thoughts of ancestors to mind. In 1995, the Thomas Balch Library was converted into



Built in 1750 and extensively remodeled in 1870, Morven Park is closed for renovations and should reopen by April 2009.

Dodona, built in the 1820s with mid-19th century additions, was career military man and NATO creator George C. Marshall's first permanent home. Photo by Susie Audibert



a genealogical research facility second to none. Here you can find archives, manuscripts, cemetery records, deeds, wills, census records, family files, historic house files, maps, newspapers, oral histories, tax rolls, photographs, vital records...well, you get the idea. Most importantly, the library is connected to a worldwide genealogical computer network. Be sure to check out the round-the-room mural depicting Leesburg's history.

That white mansion you see is Morven Park, located on 1,200 acres at the edge of town and bordering Ida Lee Park

and the Marion DuPont Scott Medical Equine Center. Originally built in 1750 and extensively remodeled in 1870, the estate today serves double duty as a historic mansion and museum and as an equestrian events center. Two governors called Morven Park home: Thomas Swann of Maryland in the early 1800s and Virginia Governor Westmoreland Davis, the farmer's champion, in the early 1900s.

Davis was married to New York socialite Marguerite Inman. Both were ardent foxhunters; she always rode sidesaddle and briefly served as Master of

Foxhounds. To this day, Morven Park houses the Museum of Hounds and Hunting, but regrettably it is off limits to visitors while the mansion undergoes extensive renovations, due to be completed by the spring of 2009.

Also located at Morven Park is the Winmill Carriage Collection. In 1928, Robert Winmill of Warrenton gave his wife Viola a carriage and four driving horses. One day, with the coach loaded to the gills, Viola and the four horses had a difference of opinion about which direction they should take. The top-heavy carriage overturned; her husband suffered a broken hip. Three years later, she had another coaching accident resulting in her father breaking his collarbone. Yielding to pressure, Viola obtained General Tom Thumb's tiny carriage and hooked it to six ponies. For years, she was a familiar sight at horse events in this diminutive coach and six.

Viola amassed quite a collection of carriages, and in 1967 she gave the lot to Morven Park. The last carriage in the exhibit is a hearse, in which Viola rode to her final resting place in 1975. The two draft horses pulling the hearse to the cemetery were photographed with heads bowed in grief.

Back in the town of Leesburg, at the top of a hill sits Dodona, the country home of General George C. Marshall, author of the Marshall Plan, the blueprint that reorganized and revitalized Europe in the wake of World War II. During his distinguished and lengthy career, Marshall served as Chief of Staff of the Army, Special Envoy to China, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953, he is credited for creating NATO. Dodona is where he came to unwind.

Purchased by his wife in 1941, Marshall saw the house for the first time some six months later. The career military man is quoted as saying, "This is a home,



What happens when you combine an old mill with an old railroad depot? You get Market Street Station, an eclectic collection of restaurants and shops in Leesburg. Photo by Susie Audibert

Jasmine offers a wide variety of Szechwan and Hunan favorites in a clean contemporary setting in Old town Leesburg's Market Station



a real home after 41 years of wandering.” Regular visitors included President Truman and other dignitaries. An avid vegetable gardener, Marshall would often recruit lunch guests, such as Madame Chiang Kai-shek, to hoe a row or two. In fact at the Potsdam Conference between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, a diplomatic pouch arrived full of red ripe Dodona-grown tomatoes.

Marshall lived at Dodona until his death in 1959. By the mid 1990s, Dodona had slipped into serious disrepair. One of Marshall's staffers, B. Powell Harrison, came to the rescue and organized

an effort to preserve the house and its contents as a memorial to the man. The house has been fully restored with original furnishings and is open for tours daily.

But enough of all this; it's time to eat! And herein lies the rub: so many restaurants, so little time. If you want to brush shoulders with the “new Leesburg,” try the Blue Ridge Grill (Edwards Ferry Road) with its selection of inventive sandwiches, burgers and salads. Or you might want a taste of old Leesburg and sit at the counter of the Leesburg Restaurant on King Street. Just don't take Stanley Caulkins' seat at the boys' table unless, of course, you're invited.

Then there's the Tuscarora Grill (nouveau-American), known by the locals as “Tuskies,” with its outstanding offering of international beers. Housed in a shopping and dining complex created from an old mill and railroad depot (Market Station), you should also try Fireworks (gourmet pizza), Nido Ristorante Italiano (southern Italian), Jasmine (Asian fusion) and South Street Under (fresh bread and pastries). Or hop across Harrison Street to sample the award winning BBQ at the Mighty Midget, where you can see a portion of the original fuselage of a WWII-era B-29 of the same name. It used to be a famous hot dog and burger stand in the old days.

But whatever you do, save room for desert at Mom's Apple Pie, located in an old-fashioned renovated gas station at the Y of Loudoun and East Market Streets. These folks grow their own rhubarb and strawberries for their made-fresh-daily pies.

Time to work off all that food. How about a bike ride down the Washington and Old Dominion trail (W & OD)? Never much of a success as a railroad line, this 45-mile-long footpath/horse trail/bike lane that runs from Alexandria to Purcellville draws thousands of visitors to Leesburg on weekends.

Or if that sounds too strenuous,

Jasmine Chinese Cuisine

Located at 110 South Street
Market Station
703-737-2288



For a better Oriental dining experience
Monday - Thursday 11:00am to 9:00pm
Friday and Saturday 11:00am to 10:00pm
www.jasminecuisine.com

GIFT FOR EVERY OCCASION



CAULKINS JEWELERS, INC.

STANLEY F. CAULKINS
ROGER W. CAULKINS

11 SOUTH KING STREET
LEESBURG, VIRGINIA 20175

PHONE 703-777-1108
FAX 703-777-8557

“Worries go
down better
with soup.”
An old proverb


Lunch • Dinner • Evening Bar Menu
Plano Bar • Daily & Nightly Specials



LIGHTFOOT
RESTAURANT

11 North King Street
Leesburg Virginia
703.771.2233

Virtual Tour & Menus on
lightfootrestaurant.com



Your destination?
Financial freedom.

Let us help you get there.

A one-to-one relationship combined with our independent, disciplined, investment approach makes us the best partner for reaching your financial goals. We orchestrate our client's financial affairs to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to wealth management. From investment growth to asset protection, we create an individual strategy that blends achievement of goals with peace of mind.

**A.N. CULBERTSON
& COMPANY, INC.**

**INDEPENDENT WEALTH MANAGERS
(434) 972-7766**

One Boar's Head Pointe
Charlottesville, Virginia
www.anculbertson.com

ALAN N. CULBERTSON ■ GEORGE L. PAYNE, JR. ■ GEORGE H. KIDDER, JR.

go shopping instead. Antique stores? There are nine in Leesburg, five of them within one block of each other on King Street. Or if power shopping is your gig, go to Leesburg Corner Premium Outlets with its 110 stores offering name brand and designer labels for 25 to 65 percent off.

Look, it's time for dinner already. Make your way to North King Street, to the "seasonal American with ethnic accents" cuisine of Lightfoot. Owned and operated by two sisters, this is a downtown Leesburg investment success story. Carrie and Ingrid Gustavson first opened the Lightfoot Cafe in 1992: capacity, 60 diners. Within seven years they'd converted and renovated the People's Bank building into a restaurant seating 349, with a fine menu and a fine collection of turn-of-the-last-century Parisian poster art on the walls.

Try their signature fried green tomatoes topped with jalapeno cheddar cheese and sautéed shrimp with Szechwan chili cream, or the Lightfoot spicy creamy tomato soup with roasted garlic and sweet basil topped with parmesan cheese and pumpernickel croutons.

After dinner, sip a brandy at their elevated piano bar before you head around the corner for a just-released screening at the Tally Ho movie theatre. Sit up in the balcony and admire the huge mural of Duke Ellington and ponder the fact that in the old days, folks of color had to sit up here. Today, the Tally Ho is owned and operated by an African-American woman, and you can sit anywhere you want.

Phil Audibert has been, since age 16, a feature writer and photographer. Living on the same Orange County, Virginia farm since 1957, Phil and his wife Susie, a photographer in her own right, spend their time between dogs, horses, vintage cars, land preservation, gourmet cooking and following the Keswick foxhunt on foot.