

Rockbridge Anecdotes

Springfield in Rockbridge County

By Reed Belden

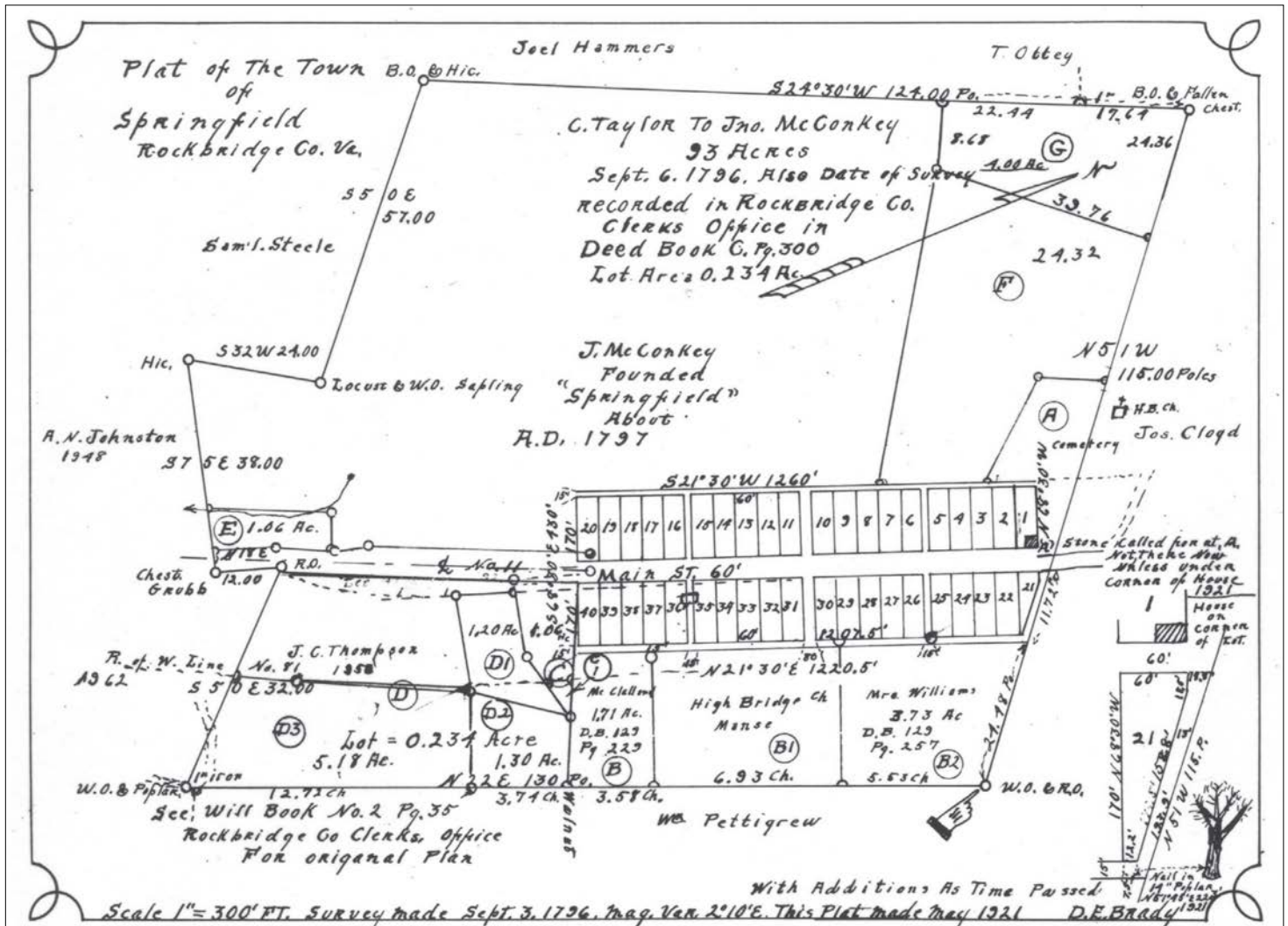


SPRINGFIELD was founded in 1797, when John McClelland purchased 33 acres of land adjacent to the Great Wagon Road from one C. Taylor. Clearly Mc-

Clelland intended this new village would serve residents in the area but also travelers as they moved south and west.

There were 100 commercial lots, each slightly less than a quarter-acre in size, as well as some

larger lots. One lot, at the south end of town, was the home of Audry Paul, said to have been the brother of John Paul Jones, who supposedly added the Jones to his name in order to prevent the English from finding him when he deserted from the British



This plat was drawn in 1921 by D. E. Brady Sr. (1882-1971). From the Brady papers, Rockbridge Historical Society.

navy. Across from this home Audry Paul ran a large store. Another of the larger lots was the manse of the Highbridge Presbyterian Church, just west of the town.

On lot 1, an R. L. Northern ran a tailor shop. On lot 11, Joseph Baker had a hatters shop, and on lots 16 and 17 stood a tavern where three American presidents, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk and Martin Van Buren, stayed on their travels to or from their homes in Tennessee. On lot 32 George Hill ran a blacksmith shop; he also sold coal and made and sold charcoal.

On lot 34 Jacob Siler ran a gun shop. He made Daniel Boone's guns. When the Indians burned Boone's cabin on the Yadkin River, the stock

of his gun burned, and Boone brought the gun back to Siler to have it restocked.

On lot 38 was a boat shop where batteaux were made and then hauled to Pattonburg, now Buchanan, to be launched in the James River. Lot 39 was a wagon and rope shop built with logs from the first High Bridge Presbyterian Church. The shop was run from 1812 to 1862 by Daniel Heck, whose son became the first Ford dealer in Lexington. Prairie schooners made in this shop are known to have traveled to Indiana, Texas and California, and it made the one in which David Hech, Harvey Self

See also "From Springfield to Zack" by D. E. Brady, Rockbridge Epilogues, Summer 2017.

and Jonathan Icenhauser emigrated to Ohio in early 1800. They founded Springfield Ohio, which they named after their home, Springfield Virginia.

In 1965 Springfield was covered by Interstate 81 between mile markers 175.3 and 175.2. The overpass at that point is known as Highbridge Church bridge.

This information was dictated in 1943 by the late John Heck McClelland, lifetime resident of Springfield.

Mr. Belden has lived in Rockbridge since 1993 and has been a leader in both Historic Lexington Foundation and the Rockbridge Historical Society. He is a historian interested in the lost villages of Rockbridge.