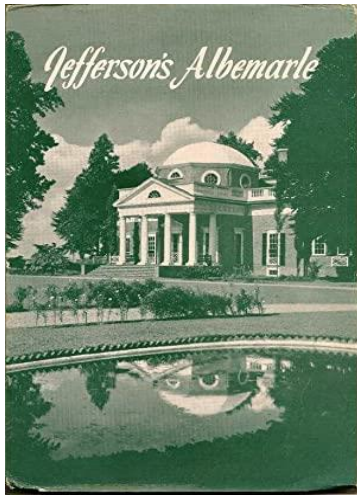


GCA History Article #4

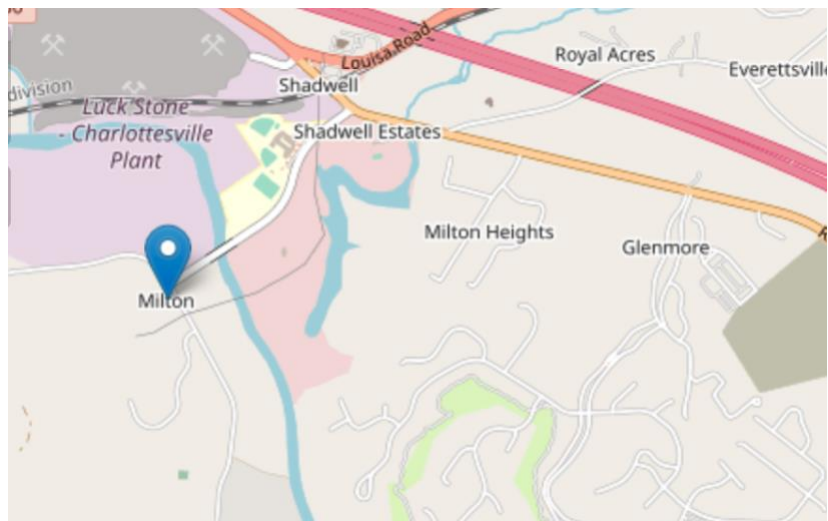
(This is the fourth in a series of articles to be published by the Glenmore Community Association in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of our community by Frank and Peggy Kessler. This article and future ones are intended to inform residents who have recently moved into Glenmore about the rich history of our community and its surrounding areas.)

The previous article described the possible relationship between the grants and patents of Glenmore properties and patents related to the surrounding areas of Belmont and Edgehill. In this



article an interesting story about one of these patents involving the town of Milton will be related. The bulk of the story comes from [*Jefferson's Albemarle: A Guide to Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville*](#), compiled in 1941 by workers of the Writer's Program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the State of Virginia. For those who are not familiar with the area, the site of Milton is located between Glenmore and Shadwell, eight-tenths of a mile south of the intersection of Route 250 and County Road 729, on the south bank of the Rivanna River.

As hard as it may be to believe, Glenmore's neighbor Milton was once a port, and the shipping center of Albemarle County. In 1789, the Virginia legislature passed an act providing for cutting into half-acre lots 100 acres of Bennett Henderson's land, at a place on the Rivanna River called The



Shadows. It should be recalled from a previous article that Bennett Henderson inherited property including Glenmore from his father, John Henderson, Jr., and that either John Henderson the elder or John Henderson, Jr. built the first house at Glenmore and probably became its first resident.

Following the Virginia legislature's action, the town of Milton was formed, and being at the head of navigation on the Rivanna River it became the shipping port of the County. At that time, marketing by road was long, tedious and expensive. Farmers wishing to reach Richmond from the Valley with crops had to cart them to Fredericksburg, and then to Richmond. When Milton was formed, several prominent men of the time became interested in chartering the Rivanna Navigation Company. They included George Divers, William D. Meriwether, Nimrod Branham, John Kelly and Dabney Minor, and Peter Minor who became the treasurer. Soon after the company was chartered long lines of wagons began coming from the Valley through Brown's and other gaps, with fat loads of grain, flour and tobacco to be shipped down the Rivanna River to the James River and then on to Richmond. A large tobacco warehouse, a merchant mill and other business ventures also came into being.

Flat-bottom boats, called

These boats were loaded and run

water mark. Since the river

took high dexterity and skill to

special breed of watermen soon

transportation, once established



batteaux, would carry freight.

while the river was at a high-

would be a rushing torrent, it

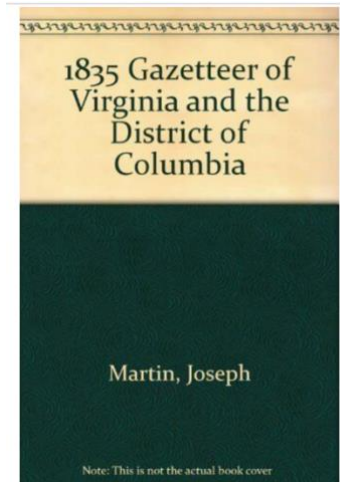
handle the batteaux. But a

grew up, and water

became a priority until the

coming of the railroad. The Rivanna Navigation Company furnished and operated the freight boats and kept the river channel clear of snags and obstructions, erected dams at shoal places, and built locks to raise and lower boats at different levels. The remains of locks can still be seen in the Rivanna River from the Glenmore golf course and the horse trail. The beautifully named Mountain Falls Creek became Camping Branch because hordes of wagons camped on its banks with their teams of horses.

Until the War of 1812, Milton was the chief commercial center of Albemarle County. Then the decline set in. Even so, in a letter dated September 2, 1812 Thomas Jefferson spoke of a large stone warehouse being built in Milton. The growth of Charlottesville and the establishment of



Scottsville were chief causes of Milton's decline. According to Martin's Gazetteer, by 1835 Milton had lost a large part of its river trade, and its population was reported as "60 white and 10 free blacks." In the WPA publication, "the boom town of the turn of the century was the ghost of a metropolis that died too young, but in the days of its youth and vigor, lived lustily and well. Today, not even the oldest inhabitant remembers its heyday. In an aerial photograph taken recently, the streets of old Milton are visible in outline."

So, when you are next strolling or riding a horse on the trail along the Rivanna River, or are on the golf course near the River, imagine what might have been. If the Rivanna Navigation Company had survived, our neighbor Milton would be a shipping center and we could be watching boat traffic up and down the Rivanna River.