

Entrance Corridor // Route 53 (Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.)

From Rt. 20 to the Fluvanna County line

DRAFT



Last updated: 02.23.2023



LENGTH: 9.5 MILES

HISTORY

Routes approximating most of today's Rt. 53 can be found on maps from the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, together with place names of Simeon, Mt. Eagle, Buck Island, Kenwood, and Nick's (Nix) which remain connected to the corridor today. The 1907 Massie map identifies the segment of the road between Simeon and Nix as the "Thoroughfare Rd." In 1948, Rt. 53 first appeared as a renumbering of Route 20 from Charlottesville to Simeon and Rt. 642 to Palmyra. The western end of the route was reconfigured in 1971 for the I64/Rt. 20 interchange. Improvements to the parkway and construction of the Saunders Bridge, the primary vehicular entrance to Monticello, were completed in 2002.

Agriculture was a primary activity on the land along the corridor in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Farms included the 1200-acre Buck Island Farm that was patented in 1731 and includes today's National Register-listed Harris Farm, a property of over 200 acres located east of the corridor and north of Buck Island Creek. Thomas Jefferson owned a significant amount of agricultural land, located north of the corridor and east of Monticello. In the 1770s, Jefferson gave Count Filippo Mazzei 193 acres of his land in the Simeon area for the purpose of establishing a vineyard. Mazzei built a house on the property just south of the Simeon Store. It was named "Colle" – meaning "hill" in Italian. Vines were planted and a wine company created, effectively beginning America's wine industry. The vineyard had some success but did not survive the Revolutionary War years. The original Colle house was replaced in the 1930s. The property was put under conservation easement in the 1960s and by 1984 a replanted vineyard began producing wine again.

Houses and farm buildings associated with the area's agricultural pursuits resulted in both high-style and vernacular forms along the corridor. Proximity to waterways led to industrial pursuits in the area. This included the Buck Island mill (ca. 1817) which was located near the bridge carrying Rt. 53 over Buck Island Creek, and the Buck Island brick factory (pre-1900), located near the mill on the other side of the street. Neither of these resources remain. Some extant historic resources that are visible from the corridor include St. Luke's Episcopal Church (1892-93), Simeon Market (originally Colle service station, ca. 1930), Buck Island Store, Bibb and Rothwell Houses, Mt. Eagle Church, and Spring Hill Baptist Church. These resources continue to tell the story of the religious and commercial development that accompanied the agricultural and industrial pursuits in the area.

The corridor witnessed the early growth of the tourism industry in the 1920s as the Thomas Jefferson Foundation assumed control of Monticello and opened it to the public. Michie Tavern, originally constructed in 1784 on Buck Mountain Road, was moved to its current location in 1927 to serve as a museum of antiques and to take advantage of the tourist traffic to Monticello. The mill building was moved to the site from Augusta County in 1976 and a number of other buildings have been moved to or built at the property to accommodate the expanding museum and restaurant. Michie Tavern was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1993. Monticello was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 and was listed in the state and national registers in 1969 and 1966, respectively. In 1987, Monticello, together with the University of Virginia's Academical Village, were designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Resources at the

west end of the Rt. 53 corridor are included in the Southern Albemarle National Register Historic District which was listed in 2007.

**Portions of this history were based on the following sources: Strong, Dave. Virginia Highways Project, 25 Sept. 2005, <http://www.vahighways.com/> ; "Thomas Jefferson's Monticello - Official Website." Monticello, <http://www.monticello.org/> ; DHR, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.*

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRESSION

The Rt. 53 corridor is a narrow road, curving in some places, with a strong rural character that is interspersed with pockets of rural residential development. Wooded borders are typical along the street and can be so dense as to eliminate views of the properties beyond. These dense segments give way to filtered views of residential and agricultural properties, and in the northern and western segments, they open to some expansive views. Residential development is more concentrated at the Nix and Simeon intersections. Heading north and west from Simeon, the road begins to curve and ascend Carters Mountain (part of the Southwest Mountains chain), reaching a highpoint at Saunders Bridge and the entrance to Monticello.

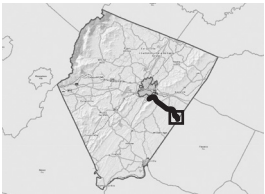
ZONING & LAND USE

Except for a short segment of Monticello Historic District zoning located near the entrance to Monticello, property along this corridor is zoned Rural Areas. This zoning results in a mix of forested and agricultural land, wooded street frontages, and single-family detached residences with lawns along the street.

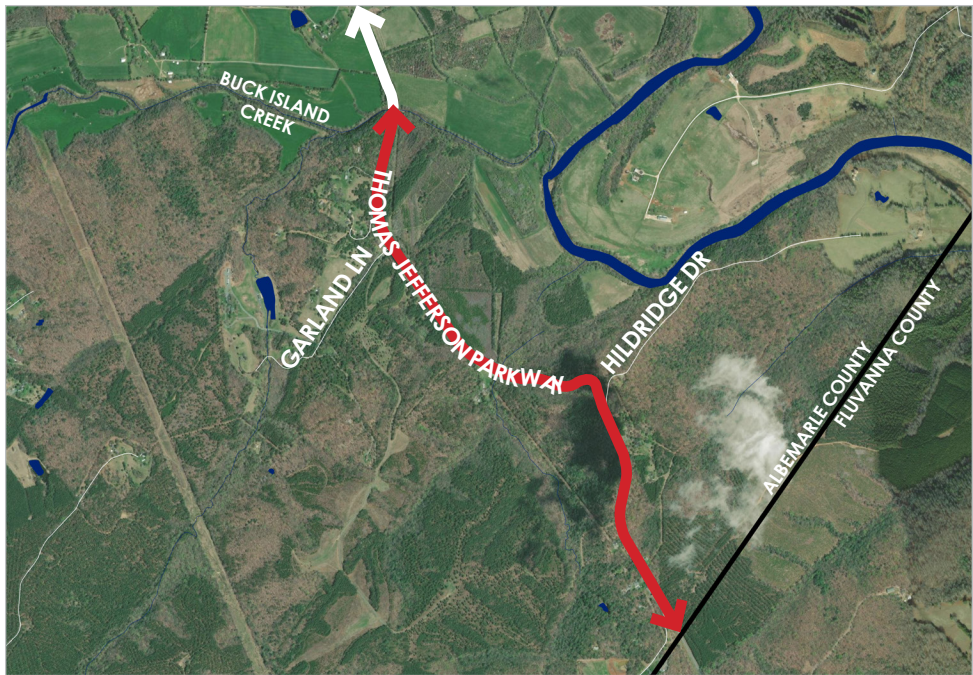
Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Valley Pass

Between the Fluvanna County line to the east and Buck Island Creek to the west

DRAFT



Last updated: 02.24.2023



LENGTH: 1.8 MILE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The easternmost segment of Rt. 53 is densely forested on both sides of the roadway with instances of cleared land. When residences are visible, they are typically separated from the road with wooded areas of varying widths or landscaped lawns with mature shade trees. Some residential and agricultural properties are lined with fencing, most often 3- and 4-board fences with dark or natural coloring. Utility lines are also notable along the segment as the lines roughly follow the path of the road, changing sides and depths from the roadway at different points. The church near the Fluvanna County line, once occupied by the Spring Hill congregation, is a small but prominent structure that reflects local community history.

STRUCTURES – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Form: Simple rectangular forms with pitched roofs
- Scale: Small, 1-2 stories
- Materials: Wood, masonry, metal
- Colors: Brown and gray neutrals, white

LANDSCAPE – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Dense wooded borders along the road, some on berms
- Some lawns with mature shade trees

ELEMENTS OF ORDERLY AND ATTRACTIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Board fences

CHARACTERISTICS TO AVOID

- Lack of landscaping at the street

Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Valley Pass

Between the Fluvanna County line to the east and Buck Island Creek to the west

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PRECEDENT IMAGES

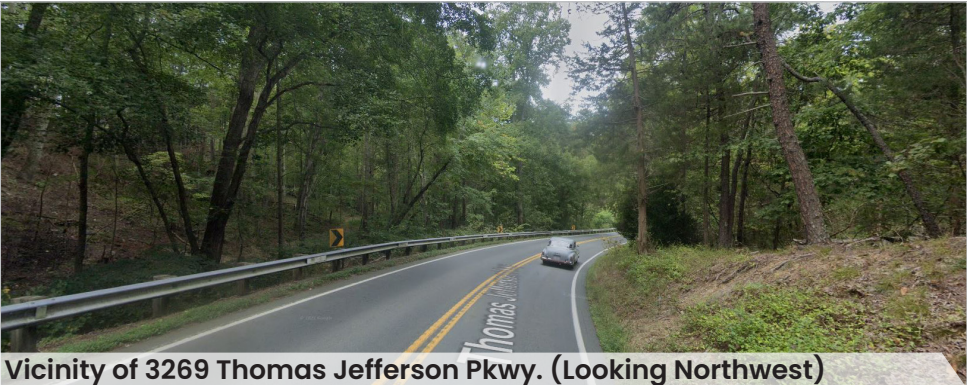
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Rt. 53 bridge over Buck Island Creek
The general area of the Buck Island mill.



Vicinity of 3307 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.
The general area of the Buck Island brick factory.



Vicinity of 3269 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Looking Northwest)
Guard rails are more prominent than board fences at the western end of the segment where steeper slopes require safety features.



3529 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.
Wooded frontages are broken in a few places by residences that are visible but set back from the street. Mature trees blend the site with the surroundings.



3450 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.



Vicinity of 3542-43 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Looking Northwest)
Dense wooded frontages and property lined with board fences are typical along this segment.

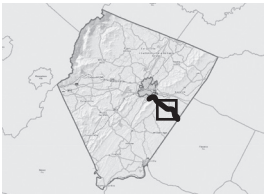


3575 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy., Spring Hill Baptist Church
This church, built ca. 1900-1920, displays the vernacular form and style typical of the period.

Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Thoroughfare

Between Buck Island Creek to the east and Rt. 795 (James Monroe Pkwy.) to the west

DRAFT



Last updated: 02.24.2023



LENGTH: 4.5 MILES

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The rural character of the Valley Pass segment continues into the eastern end of this segment, though with a greater proportion of agricultural fields, including those of the historic Harris Farm just northeast of the bridge over Buck Island Creek. Open areas along the segment are balanced with trees, as demonstrated by agricultural fields with wooded backdrops or narrow wooded strips along the road, and residential lawns with large, mature trees that provide shade and screening. Residences become the most prominent building type visible along the segment around the Rt. 729 intersection and the Nix community. Board fences also continue in this segment, with the 3-board style most typical. Historic structures on this segment are typically found at prominent intersections and include the Mt. Eagle Baptist Church and the Allen Store and Woody Dance Hall.

STRUCTURES – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Form: Simple rectangular forms with gabled and hipped roofs
- Scale: Small, 1-2 stories
- Materials: Wood, brick, metal
- Colors: White, red, brown and gray neutrals

LANDSCAPE – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Wooded frontages along the road, some on berms

ELEMENTS OF ORDERLY AND ATTRACTIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Board fences

CHARACTERISTICS TO AVOID

- Lack of landscaping at the street

Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Thoroughfare

Between Buck Island Creek to the east and Rt. 795 (James Monroe Pkwy.) to the west

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PRECEDENT IMAGES

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Vicinity of 2648 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Deep forested buffers are typical along this segment. Board fences provide a rhythm along the street.



2725 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Driveways provide breaks in the trees along the street. Board fences are typical.



Vicinity of 2768 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Trees on berms limit views from the corridor.



2935-2950 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy., Harris Farm

Breaks in the wooded frontages provide views of agricultural fields.



Vicinity of 2638 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Views of farm buildings are available along this segment. They typically have traditional forms and wooded backdrops.



2501 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Views of most residences are filtered by mature trees.



2419 Buck Island Rd., Mt. Eagle Baptist Church

The original Mt. Eagle Baptist Church (ca. 1912, the smaller white building) exhibits the vernacular form and style typical of the period.



2243 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

The Buck Island (Allen) Store (ca. 1920) exhibits a vernacular commercial style typical of the early 20th century.



Vicinity of 1562-1540 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.

Approaching Rt. 795 from the east, small scale residences have simple forms and traditional materials. Mature trees provide a buffer between the buildings and the street.

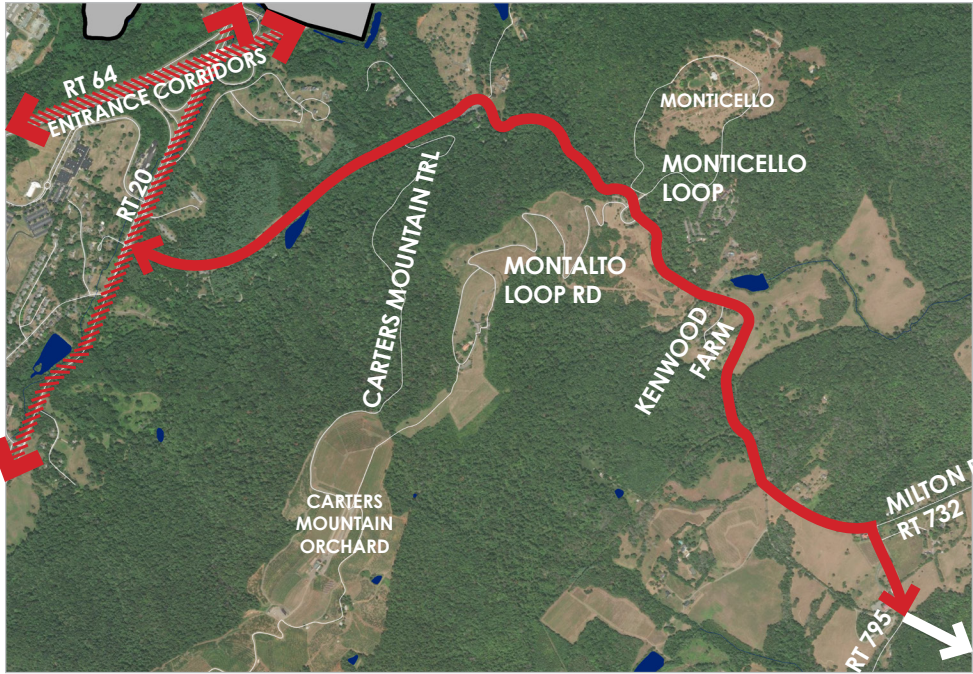
Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Landmarks

Between Rt. 795 (James Monroe Pkwy.) to the east and Rt. 20 to the west

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LENGTH: 3.2 MILES

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

While some areas of this segment include wooded borders consistent with the eastern segments of the corridor, expansive fields and breaks in wooded borders which reveal distant views to other natural landscapes are prominent here. A short distance west of the Rt. 795 intersection, a break in the wooded frontage reveals a broad view of vineyards, mountains, and historic buildings. As the segment progresses westward, St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the Simeon Store (originally the Colle Service Station) anchor the Milton Rd. (Rt. 732) intersection. Near Kenwood Farm, the entrance to Jefferson Library, a view opens to the northeast and, as the corridor continues, the notable Saunders Bridge marks the entrance to Monticello. The bridge itself is located between Monticello and Montalto mountains and allows Saunders-Monticello Trail users safe access across Rt. 53. Northwest of Monticello Loop the dense wooded borders emphasize the curving, narrow width of the street, before the view opens again in the vicinity of Michie Tavern, a historic tavern built c. 1784.

STRUCTURES – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Form: Simple rectangular forms with gabled and hipped roofs
- Scale: Small, 1-2 stories
- Materials: Wood, masonry, metal
- Colors: Red, white, brown and gray neutrals

LANDSCAPE – PREDOMINANT FEATURES

- Dense wooded borders along the road, some on berms
- Some lawns with mature shade trees

ELEMENTS OF ORDERLY AND ATTRACTIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Board fences

CHARACTERISTICS TO AVOID

- Lack of landscaping at the street

Entrance Corridor // Route 53 // Landmarks

Between Rt. 795 (James Monroe Pkwy.) to the east and Rt. 20 to the west

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PRECEDENT IMAGES

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1353-1379 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.
Just west of Rt. 795, a broad view of vineyards and mountains becomes available to the northwest.



1330 and 1333 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.
St. Luke's Episcopal Church and Simeon Market anchor the Milton Rd. intersection.



Vicinity of 1056 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy.
A view opens to the northeast near Kenwood Farm.



830 Monticello Loop
The Saunders Bridge is a dramatic gateway to Monticello.



683-641 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy., Michie Tavern
The Michie Tavern buildings and parking lot fit snugly between the road and the mountain. Trees and shrubs at the street edge help soften the view of the paving for travelers as the corridor curves and gains elevation.



Western end of Thomas Jefferson Pkwy. (Looking Northeast)
The western end of the corridor establishes the “parkway” setting for travelers leaving the city with a wooded roadside, forested slopes, and grassy shoulder.