

# Historic Thoroughfare

Route 7 began as a buffalo trail connecting the Potomac River in present-day Old Town Alexandria to the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains at Leesburg.

It was included in Lord William Fairfax's original royal grant and first appeared on a plat prepared for him in 1739.

Route 7 became home in 1837 to Hachaliah Bailey, one of the nation's first elephant owners and the father of the American circus. Bailey's son Lewis, a clown whose circus would stop in Alexandria, made Hachaliah aware of the property for sale.

Route 7 was part of the original, 1960s-era plan for Metrorail. A station was to be constructed where Skyline sits today.

The road was called the Great Eastern Ridge Road by the Necostin Indians until they abandoned it in the late 1670s to traders, colonists and early postal carriers.

Tolls were levied on the road beginning in 1785 to pay for maintenance, but the advent of the Civil War put an end to the practice.

The corridor was the site of President Abraham Lincoln's 1861 formal military review of 50,000 Union troops, a spectacle that inspired Julia Ward Howe to write "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."