
The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2014

SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE HISTORICAL MARKERS

The story of the historical marker effort began in 2011 at a meeting of the STA Board of Directors. An imaginative Board member proposed the design and erection of Historical Markers for Hibbs Bridge and the termini of Snickersville Turnpike. Board member Chris Furlow proposed the design of a cast aluminum sign; Debbie Allan, an artist as well as a Board member, created a logo for the STA, and Marvin Watts created the text for the markers. All of the markers already erected—and those yet to be cast and installed—are of the same size and design so as to achieve a harmonious and recognizable medium for the communication of the historical information to drivers along the Turnpike. Indeed, this communication of the historical significance of the Turnpike is the purpose for which the Marker program was intended. The Turnpike is renowned both locally and nationally for its beauty and for the historical features which enrich a drive along it. The intent of the STA was to both celebrate the historical significance of the Turnpike and to inform motorists regarding its most salient historical features.

The markers already installed along the Turnpike include:

A marker installed near the southeastern—or Aldie—terminus of the Turnpike giving a brief history of the Turnpike and its significance for Loudoun County.

An identical marker set near the northwestern—or Bluemont—terminus of the Turnpike (at the intersection of the Turnpike and Clayton Hall Road).

(Historical Markers cont.)

A marker installed on the Turnpike on the NW side of Hibbs Bridge. The Bridge (built c. 1830) is now included on the National Record of Historic Places. This marker was the result of a generous grant from the Loudoun Preservation Society. Hibbs Bridge is of particular significance to the area. The proposed destruction or abandonment of Hibbs Bridge was a galvanizing event in the effort to preserve and rehabilitate the bridge and to protect Snickersville Turnpike itself.

The Bluemont Historical Village marker funded by the Bluemont Citizens Association.

In addition to these four existing markers arrayed along the 13.75 length of the Turnpike, the Turnpike Association has developed plans for two more historic markers having the same configuration:

A marker set at the intersection of Colchester Road and the Turnpike, next to the still standing white pump, describing the White Pump Drivers Tavern. (A drover is one who moves groups of animals, such as sheep or cattle, along a roadway). The stone farmhouse located just east on Colchester Road began operating as a tavern in the late 1790s, and wagons stopped there until 1915. On November 30, 1864, Union General Wesley Merritt bivouacked on this farm during his Loudoun barn-burning raid. Local farmer John Dillon provided his soldiers with two barrels of hard cider and—guess what—his barn didn't get burned!

A marker set on the Turnpike near the site of Bacon Fort. Prior to the French and Indian War, General Washington ordered Lt. Bacon to construct a number of forts "on the wagon road between Winchester and Alexandria." In 1760, Bacon Fort was converted into an ordinary (a hostelry for people and horses). In June 1769, it was being operated by Charles West. On August 1, 1769, George Washington, his wife Martha, and her daughter refected at the ordinary and, having "slept here, set out from Charles West's, dined at Snickers [tavern at his ferry across the Shenandoah] and got to Mr. Wr. Washington's [his first cousin in Berryville] about 5 o'clock." Nothing remains today of the Bacon Fort structure.

Each marker will recount the existence, location and historical significance of the feature being

THE ALDIE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

The Aldie Heritage Association (AHA) is a local non-profit organization that was established in 2011 with the mission statement that reads "to preserve, protect, enhance, and interpret the historic, natural and cultural resources along the Route 50 corridor between Lenah and Dover in Loudoun County, Virginia." This association and Snickersville Turnpike Association share many of the same goals. STA and AHA were partners in the June 2013 Battle of Aldie 150th year anniversary events. Originally formed from remnants of the Mt. Zion Church Preservation Association and the Aldie Bicentennial Committee, AHA plays a key role in the preservation of the rich resources of this area at the southeastern end of Snickersville Turnpike. The Aldie Heritage Association also promotes tourism and a strong rural economy. AHA plays a very active role within the community of Aldie, sponsoring the yearly Aldie Harvest Festival (featuring the famous "Aldie Duck Race"), and the recent reunion of Aldie High School alumni.

WOUNDED WARRIOR RETREAT

Modern battlefield medicine ensures that many wounded will survive with injuries lethal in earlier wars—injuries that will be lifelong and separate warriors from their former selves and from those who love them. Not just shattered bones and lost limbs. The deepest wounds may be invisible and resist healing. Traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder require extreme perseverance and understanding by those who suffer and struggle to prevail. Understanding comes hard, save by one's comrades who shared the ferocity of fire.

Ken Falke, founder of the Boulder Crest Retreat and a former Navy bomb disposal technician, envisioned a rural sanctuary where the most grievously wounded warriors could come for a period of quiet and healing. The Retreat welcomed its first wounded warriors and their families in August 2013.

Set on 37 acres just off the Snickersville Turnpike in Bluemont, a large log lodge, two two-bedroom and two three-bedroom cabins are snugged against the

memorialized. The purposes intended for these two historical markers—as with the existing markers—are to stimulate or amplify the appreciation of Turnpike motorists for the unique historical status of the road and Loudoun more generally and to publically document the roles which the Turnpike has played in the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, the American Civil War and the commercial life of early Loudoun County.

RURAL ROADS MAINTENANCE

Last Fall, the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition appointed a Rural Roads Committee to work with VDOT and our County and State officials to improve the maintenance and condition of our deteriorating rural roads rather than succumb to increasing pressure to simply pave them over. After determining that there was strong support to keep our historic roads unpaved, the Committee set out to find the solution to long-term maintenance of the County's 330 miles of unpaved roads, more than any other county in Virginia.

The three key recommendations of the seven listed in the Committee's report are:

Maintain all unpaved roads in safe and usable condition.

Maintain their traditional alignment, surface treatment, and width and protect banks, stone walls, and roadside trees in all rural, agricultural, and historic areas.

Make improvements to selected sections of unpaved roads to reduce severe maintenance problems.

Three important County organizations were briefed—the Heritage Commission, the Historic District Review Committee, and the Rural Economic Development Council—and all endorsed the plans. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors' 2014 Legislative Agenda highlights the need for better rural roads maintenance, as does the County's support for VDOT's Six-Year-Plan. Delegate Randy Minchew and Senator Jill Vogel proposed HB 416/SB 397 to address our rural roads maintenance issues.

woods of the Blue Ridge. The spacious lodge offers day-long programs and seminars tailored to assist these veterans. On the lodge terrace are two circular fire pits, around which warriors often bring African djembe drums from the music room, considered an important part of healing. For therapeutic diversion, there are six archery lanes and a large meditative labyrinth of pavers. Other possibilities are hiking the Appalachian Trail, equine therapy, yoga, and river kayaking. However, as Executive Director Jennifer Morino, a former Marine helicopter pilot, says, "the main focus is on rest and reconnection in a serene environment."

Falke is planning a stone-walled accessible organic garden with fruit trees. A stocked pond is available for fishing and an apiary is flourishing. Any combat veteran is welcome to stay at the Retreat at no expense, first come, first served. One may stay with his family for a few days to two weeks. So far, 300 veterans have enjoyed the facility. The expectation is to host about 1,000 a year.

The Boulder Crest Retreat is a noble and worthy endeavor. Bluemont, long a sanctuary for the Washington weary, now welcomes American warriors seeking healing.