

The Pike Packet

News From The Snickersville Turnpike Association - March 2011

THE E.E. LAKE GENERAL STORE

The store, located in Bluemont at the corner of the Snickersville Turnpike and Railroad Street, was built in 1901. Edward E. Lake soon thereafter began operating it as a general store for the villagers and local farmers and for the weekend visitors arriving from Washington on the W&OD trains, which began operating to Bluemont on the Fourth of July 1900. The store housed a branch of the Loudoun National Bank of Leesburg until the safe was blown in 1907. Although the Bluemont Post Office moved from a private residence to the Lake Store in 1903, it was in 1911 that the original store structure was expanded to accommodate it, adding the money order and postmaster's windows and the open and combination lock post boxes that remain intact today. The store itself has retained its original counters and shelving.

In 1997, the Bluemont Citizens Association, through its Lake Store Committee, undertook the task of acquiring grant funds to restore the Store for use beyond just the two days of the September Bluemont Fair. The previous owner had sold the Store and its property to the County for \$1 in 1996, and a Memorandum of Agreement was soon reached with the County giving the Bluemont Citizens Association full operational responsibilities. Over the intervening years the Lake Store Committee and the County were successful in acquiring three sequential Federal funds grants. The initial 1998 funding was used to stabilize the Store's exterior and to install a new roof. The 2005 and 2008 grants were for the installation of a well, bathrooms, septic system, HVAC systems, and an ADA-compatible entrance ramp, plus electrical, structural, and interior finish repairs. The \$100,000 required matching funds were acquired by Supervisor Burton providing \$45,000 of county funds and the Lake Store Committee struggling to acquire the remaining \$55,000. Administrative delays and personnel changes within the County's structure have hampered efforts to complete the restoration and open the Lake Store as a year round Western Loudoun Welcome Center. Now, however, progress is being made. The well has been dug and the structural analysis has been completed. An Architectural and Engineering company is in the process of being selected, and based on their efforts, a construction contract can be awarded.

BACON FORT

In the pre-Revolutionary War era, the Snickersville Turnpike was known to the Native Americans and early settlers as the Shenandoah Hunting Path and the Mountain Road.

General Washington had ordered Lt. Bacon to construct a number of forts along the Colchester Road as part of the Virginia colonial militia defense prior to the French and Indian War. One of these, known as Bacon Fort, was built sometime between 1752 and 1754, just east of present day Airmont and was also used as a supply base “on the wagon road between Winchester and Alexandria.” At the first Loudoun County Court session July 12, 1756, the fort was mentioned twice.

At the end of the French and Indian War, the fort was converted into a house by its owner, William West, and on March 11, 1760, William Owsley, a former neighbor of West’s in what is now Aldie, obtained a license to operate this house as an ordinary (tavern). In June 1769, William West bequeathed Bacon Fort to his son Charles. On August 1, 1769, George Washington, his wife Martha, and her daughter Martha Parke Custis, 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 about 5 o’clock.” Werner Washington, Sr. was George’s first cousin and had a house near what is now Berryville. They then went on to Bath, now Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, for a holiday to remedy the 13-year-old daughter’s failing health.

On June 3, 1788, George Washington “Halted at a small Tavern Bacon Fort,” and an 1811 advertisement noted “Ewer’s Tavern at Bacon Fort”. The structure no longer exists.

The Snickersville Turnpike Association is planning to install a hard surface roadside pulloff with a sign describing the history of Bacon Fort. The owners of the land abutting the Turnpike where the pulloff will be located have recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The site selection will have to be coordinated with them and with VDOT, which hopefully can be accomplished in the near future.

SNICKERSVILLE ACADEMY

The Snickersville Academy, a one-room log cabin built in 1825 on land donated by Amos Clayton, is one of the oldest structures still standing in Western Loudoun. It is located on Snickersville Turnpike in Bluemont’s Historic District. Virginia’s public school system didn’t begin until 1871, so our early villages used “academies” for the education of their children. The schoolmaster received \$3 per semester for each student from their parents.

The cabin also served as a “free church,” open to all denominations, until the village’s first permanent church was built in the 1850s. Bluemont’s second school was built in 1871, and the log cabin then became a private residence. It was recently gifted by the Hatcher family to Friends of Bluemont, a citizens group committed to the restoration and preservation of historic properties in the village. Their first task is to stabilize the cabin so that it can be made more available to the public.

CELL TOWER

There are currently three cell towers along the Snickersville Turnpike in the process of becoming operational. First, the existing 70-foot-tall former grain elevator at the end of Railroad Street in Bluemont was granted a 40 foot increase in height by the Board of Supervisors with the understanding that the tower company had five carriers either under contract or a letter of intent to have their antennas located in the extension. These are Roadstar, T-Mobile, Verizon Wireless, Sprint, and AT&T Mobile (Cingular). The final configuration is now undergoing review by the County's Building and Development Department.

Second, the existing 100-foot-tall flagpole at the Philomont Fire Station houses Verizon Wireless antennas at 95 feet and 85 feet. AT&T Mobile is in the process of installing their antennas at 75 feet and expects to become operational shortly. Its coverage will then overlap with their antennas on the top of the Sprint silo on Yellow Schoolhouse Road.

On February 23, 2011 the Planning Commission granted approval for AT&T Mobile to install twelve 8-foot-tall antennas at the top of a 154-foot-tall monopine at Camp High Road on Steptoe Hill Road. The Board of Supervisors approved the application on March 7th, 2011.

There is hope for no more cell towers in the future. The wireless division of Alcatel-Lucent, the French-U.S. maker of telecommunications equipment, will in September be testing its "light Radio cube," a cellular antenna about the size and shape of a Rubik's cube, which can be placed indoors or out, and easily hidden from view. All that is needed is electrical power and an optical fiber connecting them to a phone company's network. The company hopes to make the cube commercially available next year.

ROADWAY ALERT !

VDOT has informed the Snickersville Turnpike Association that they are in the process of obtaining bids for a contract to manually cut down trees up to six inches in diameter growing within five feet of the asphalt roadway on Snickersville Turnpike, Airmont Road, and Clayton Hall Road. VDOT has a 15-foot right-of-way from the center of these roads and each lane is normally nine feet wide. In addition, any dead tree limbs within this right-of-way will also be cut off. Work is scheduled to begin in May and last through the summer. Although there will be a VDOT employee monitoring the contractor's work, please call Henry Plaster (540-554-8591) if you witness any activity that exceeds these parameters.

Boulder Crest Retreat for Wounded Warriors

Bluemont, Virginia

It is becoming ever more clear that outpatient wounded veterans being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital—especially those dealing with long-term issues like severe physical injuries, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—need a nearby retreat in the Washington, D.C. area. Local Bluemont residents, Ken and Julia Falke, are donating 37 acres of land—located behind Snickersville Turnpike on the eastern face of the Blue Ridge Mountains—to manifest a vision of creating a safe and relaxing rural sanctuary for wounded warriors and their families.

The retreat will comprise four ADA handicap accessible “greentech” cabins; an ADA handicap accessible “greentech” barn/meeting house with organic farm-to-table meals; a walled organic Victorian garden, plus a field of organic produce; as well as a bird sanctuary and fishing pond. Activities offered at the retreat will include nature walks, foraging, photography, bird and wildlife watching, as well as therapeutic dogs, archery and other onsite adaptive sporting activities.

The project is currently embarking on a local, regional and national fundraising campaign in order to turn their vision into reality. For further information, please go to www.bouldercrestretreat.org or contact Ken Falke at ken@bouldercrestretreat.org, (T) 571-344-2341; or Annabel Hughes at annabel@bouldercrestretreat.org, (T) 540-554-2120.

Congratulations HIBBS BRIDGE!

Hibbs Bridge recently received **two** prestigious designations!

The Virginia Board of Historic Resources recently approved the listing of Hibbs Bridge on the Virginia Landmarks Register. The Register, established in 1966, is the official list of properties important to Virginia’s history.

On March 1st, the National Park Service listed Hibbs Bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Nation’s list of historic places worthy of preservation.

Both designations secure the historical significance of our beloved bridge in perpetuity.

SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE TOUR BROCHURE

The Snickersville Turnpike Association has published a driving brochure tied to points of interest along our scenic Virginia Byway. The 1st Massachusetts Cavalry Civil War monument, historic Hibbs Bridge, and the E. E. Lake General Store are just three of the many historic and scenic places that are featured. The four color brochure features original art by STA board member Deborah Allan and includes a handy map of the "Pike". Look for this popular and informative publication at our country stores, brochure display locations,

local post offices, and visitor information centers in Leesburg and Middleburg. A personal copy will be included with your annual dues notification.

WHEN THE WAR CAME TO SNICKERSVILLE **September 25, 2010**

On a sunny Indian summer day this past September 25th, the sleepy village of Bluemont was transformed into a beehive of activity as the blue and gray clashed in a reenactment of an 1864 cavalry engagement. Billed “When the War Came to Snickersville”, the Snickersville Turnpike Association sponsored this popular event.

On March 6, 1864, twenty three troopers from the 1st New York Cavalry were surprised by fourteen 6th Virginia cavalrymen in the village of Snickersville (now known as Bluemont.) All but two Union horsemen were either killed or captured.

Over 146 years later, in the same village where the setting has seen relatively little change, history was vividly recreated. First, a narrated sideshow of the battle was presented at the Bluemont Community Center. Then, reenactors on horseback paraded down Bluemont's “main street” and encamped at the local Methodist church, which was actually used as a field hospital during the 1864 confrontation. A walking tour of the village was conducted by Henry Plaster, local historian and chairman of the Board of Directors of the Snickersville Turnpike Association. The history and significance of village dwellings that stood during the Civil War was discussed. Spectators were encouraged to interact with Union pickets, Confederate attackers, and civilian reenactors who were impacted by the events of that day. Finally the Rebs and Yanks on horseback conducted a demonstration of the actual battle as the sound of gunfire, pounding horse's hooves, and the occasional “rebel yell” filled the air. After the “battle”, scores of people of all ages lingered to hear the fascinating stories of the reenactors who are true living historians. After lunch, the entire program was repeated, with events wrapping up about 5 p.m.

By the end of the day, hundreds had been entertained and educated by this little bit of living history.

The Snickersville Turnpike Association
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Learn more about the Snickersville Turnpike Association's monthly meetings times and days at: www.snickersvilleturnpike.org