



The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2012



BATTLE OF ALDIE – 150th ANNIVERSARY SAVE THE DATE – JUNE 15, 2013

The Snickersville Turnpike Association will be hosting a magnificent reenactment of the historic Civil War Cavalry Battle of Aldie that was the beginning of the Loudoun Valley Campaign that took place in June 1863. Following the June 9th Battle of Brandy Station, which was the largest cavalry battle ever fought in the Western Hemisphere, BGen. Alfred Pleasonton, the Union Cavalry Commander, was ordered by MGen. Joseph “Fighting Joe” Hooker, Commanding General of the Army of the Potomac, to determine the location of Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia.

The Little River Turnpike (now Route 50, the John Mosby Highway) ran through a gap in the Bull Run Mountains at the village of Aldie. To the west, the Snickersville Turnpike branches off toward Snickers Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains, while Little River Turnpike continues on to Ashby Gap. General Lee had ordered his Cavalry Commander MGen. J.E.B. Stuart to defend the turnpikes and keep the Union forces from reaching either Blue Ridge Gap while his army was marching north through the Shenandoah Valley towards Gettysburg.

On June 17, 1863, after pickets on both sides

(Battle of Aldie cont.)

engaged in the village of Aldie, 1st Massachusetts and 4th New York cavalry units moved up Snickersville Turnpike and were repelled, after ferocious fighting at the Furr House, by the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Virginia Cavalry sharpshooters. The 1st Massachusetts Regiment was decimated by the withering fire, losing 198 out of 294 men. Six companies of 1st Maine Cavalry and a regrouped squadron of 4th New York counterattacked and eventually dislodged the Virginians from behind their stone fence position.

During the afternoon of June 15, 2013, a large group of both Union and Confederate cavalry reenactors will demonstrate for the public exactly where the Battle of Aldie took place at the Furr Farm. In addition to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and other County officials, the Governors of Maine, Massachusetts, and Virginia will be invited to attend the cavalry reenactment. Noted historians will describe the significance of the event, and the public is invited to talk with the individual civilian reenactors and the troopers with their horses. That evening at the Furr House there will be campfire stories describing the ordeal of fighting a four-year war on horseback.

That’s June 15, 2013. Save the date!

A COMMUNITY-BASED PRESERVATION PLAN FOR ALDIE, MIDDLEBURG, AND UPPERVILLE BATTLEFIELDS

In January, the Mosby Heritage Area Association applied for a \$50,000 Battlefield Grant from the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program. The Snickersville Turnpike Association letter of support below was included in the request, as were letters from the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Land Trust of Virginia, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Aldie Heritage Association, the Unison Preservation Society, the Atoka Preservation Society, and other local organizations.

The Snickersville Turnpike Association (STA)--its board, membership, and community of interest--

TURNPIKE HISTORICAL MARKERS

Do you know that today there are no signs along the Snickersville Turnpike that tell about its wonderful history? That will soon be changing. The Association is in the process of raising money to acquire two cast aluminum markers from Sewah Studios. The markers are 33 inches high and 43 inches wide, and will cost \$2,060 each. They will be installed at both ends of the Turnpike, visible from the roadway and near existing pulloffs.

The markers will have a wheat color background with black lettering and a special STA logo at the top. The text will cover the fact that the Snickers Gap Turnpike was the first recorded toll road in operation in the United States, opening at the end of 1786. In 1818 the Snickers Gap Turnpike Company completed the “improved road” that was authorized by the Virginia General Assembly in 1810. The last of its three tollgates ceased operation in 1915.

Also in the planning stage are two additional Turnpike historical markers. One will be located at Hibbs Bridge and will include its recent inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Near the site of the French and Indian War-era Bacon Fort will be the fourth Turnpike marker and will note that George Washington, his wife, and her daughter slept overnight there in 1769, after the fort became an ordinary.

There are still other Turnpike sites that are under consideration for future markers.

LAKE STORE RESTORATION

The somnolent historic E.E. Lake Store is about to be rejuvenated to become the Welcome Center for Western Loudoun County. The selected Architectural & Engineering contractor’s proposal is being negotiated to reflect the approved Site Plan. Construction to allow for year-round operations will begin this Fall in Bluemont.

lends its strongest possible support to the Mosby Heritage Area Association (MHAA) application for a grant to fund preservation plans for the Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville Civil War battlefields

STA has worked closely with MHAA since its founding in 1995, for our missions commonly overlap and are mutually reinforcing. Although we focus on maintaining the historic integrity of the Snickersville turnpike, we also actively support all efforts to protect and enhance the pastoral beauty, aesthetic value, and irreplaceable cultural integrity of our historic resources including the hallowed ground on which our ancestors fought and fell.

The preservation community has had considerable success defending vital assets, especially in the last two decades, through the joined forces and concerted efforts of dedicated community-wide organizations, land owners, local and state political entities, the Interior Department and National Park Service as well as members of Congress.

None doubt, however, the threat development continues to pose to specific heritage sites such as the Civil War battlefields of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville.

In the context of wide community preservation support, it should be added that these battlefields remain in a substantially natural state much as the would have been seen in the 19th century, including contiguous land. In addition, MHAA has already spent a decade mapping and documenting these battlefields. MHAA also has the organizational preservation plans should funding be made available.

We at STA believe the MHAA application timely, and we lend our wholehearted support.

We look forward to the application's being approved by the National Park Service, for these critical battlefield landscapes are not just of local and state interest: they are of national importance.

*Sincerely,
Marvin Watts
STA Board of Directors*

SNICKERSVILLE ACADEMY UPDATE

The Friends of Bluemont are incrementally working on restoring the 1825 log cabin that served as Bluemont’s first school. Located just off Snickersville Turnpike on the old Mountain Road, Snickersville Academy can now be reached by crossing a newly built footbridge across Butcher’s Branch, known in those early days as Saw Mill Run. The deteriorating entry porch has been replaced with a temporary one; the electricity has been upgraded; and the interior has been converted back to its original configuration as a one-room schoolhouse. Until 1871, the schoolmaster was paid \$2 per semester for each student by their parents.

This year’s work will focus on stabilizing one sunken corner. Next will be roof repair and rehabilitation of the stone chimney. Subject to the availability of funds, a histogram marker will be installed out on the Turnpike. The Academy is the second oldest remaining schoolhouse in Loudoun County, older than Waterford’s and only a few years younger than the brick schoolhouse in Lincoln. Come to the Bluemont Fair this September and enjoy a tour.

WOUNDED WARRIORS RETREAT

Ken and Julia Falke of Bluemont recently received approval from the County to proceed with building permit efforts toward establishing the Boulder Crest Retreat for Wounded Warriors. Access to the 37-acre refuge for wounded veterans and their families will be off of Snickersville Turnpike on a new private road to be named Bluemont Village Lane. A pond to be stocked with bass and blue gills has already been started.

Two two-bedroom and two three-bedroom cabins will be located on the west side of the open area next to the wooded slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A separate meeting facility with a commercial kitchen will be available for special events, but limited to ten per year. A vehicle storage structure will also be built.

A local, regional, and national fundraising campaign is underway to raise \$10 million, \$5 million of which will be used for construction of the four houses and the other two buildings. A groundbreaking ceremony that hopefully will include the Governor is being planned.

TRAFFIC CALMING COMING TO ALDIE

Ground was broken this past fall for the Aldie Traffic Calming project and work is progressing nicely thanks to the mild winter weather. The historic village at the southeastern end of Snickersville Turnpike is getting a facelift that includes new landscaping, raised intersections, new medians, crosswalks, curbs, and sidewalks. Most of the work to this point has been the reconfiguration and improvement of drainage along Route 50 through the village. Also in the plans are a pull-off area just west of town that will feature interpretive signs of the Civil War cavalry battles that took place in the area.

When completed (tentatively scheduled for December 2012), Aldie will sport a look similar to that of Upperville, which underwent the same process in 2008. Aldie is the third phase of Route 50 Traffic Calming measures, the second being the Gilbert’s Corner roundabouts project, completed in 2009. These calming measures not only improve traffic flow and promote safety for pedestrians and motorists, but also enhance the historic and rural nature of the area.

See more at: http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/route_50_traffic_calming_measures.asp