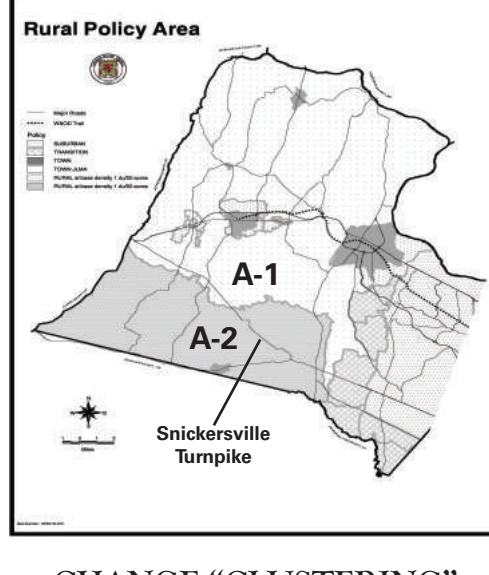




The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2016



CHANGE "CLUSTERING"

Many organizations, including the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Visit Loudoun, the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce, and the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, have stated that Western Loudoun County must remain "rural." The largest threat to achieving that objective is housing development. The current Loudoun County Revised General Plan states that "the rural land outside of the Towns and their Joint Land Management Areas could accommodate over 58,000 dwelling units (houses) that would add billions of dollars in public costs."

Clustered development refers to the packing of a large number of dwellings into a relatively small land area while theoretically leaving a larger area undeveloped. Chapter 7 of the Plan, entitled Rural Policy Area, provides two rural residential areas, each with cluster options, called the "Southern Tier" (Agricultural Rural, AR-2), basically south of Goose Creek, and the "Remainder" (AR-1). (See graphic.) The Plan calls for AR-2 to be developed at a base density of 50 acres per lot with a clustered development option of one house per 15 acres, and for AR-1 a base density of 20 acres per lot and a cluster option of one house per 5 acres. The rationale for having two Western Loudoun districts and the significant difference in the cluster acreage is not clear.

Under the County's AR-1 cluster option ordinances are the following:

1. A minimum of 70% of the gross land area of the development shall be comprised of a Rural Economy Lot(s) or a combination of Rural Economy Lot(s) and Common Open Space.
2. Rural Cluster Lots shall be grouped in clusters consisting of a minimum of 5 lots and a maximum of 25 lots.

So, the developer of the 175 acre Black Oak Creek, an AR-1 property just a short distance north of the Snickersville Turnpike, plans to build, under the existing ordinances, 35 houses in a flood plain, with "steep slopes," over four times as many houses as the eight allowable without clustering. The only exit is onto Black Oak Road, a rural dirt road off of Snickersville Turnpike.

Loudoun County is in the process of revising the General Plan. Now is the time to correct upward the number of acres per house required in a cluster. At a minimum, the cluster requirement must be changed in AR-1 to one dwelling unit per 15 acres, the same as in AR-2.



THE GENERAL STORES OF SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE AIRMONT STORE

This is the second in a series of articles featuring the three general stores on the Pike – Philomont, Airmont, and Bluemont. In this newsletter we will highlight the Airmont Store.

When the Postmaster General of the United States appointed local landscape artist Lucien Powell (see sidebar below) as the new postmaster of a tiny crossroads settlement in western Loudoun County in 1897, the village of Airmont was officially born. The name was chosen by Powell as a variation of Philomont, the small Quaker town to the south and east.

The already established Airmont Store (its date of origin uncertain), owned by a Charles O. Arnold, became the home of the new post office in 1897. Although Powell was officially the postmaster until 1904, it seems Arnold did the actual heavy lifting. Charlie Arnold succeeded Powell in the job with which he was already well acquainted and held it until the post office was closed in 1912. Arnold's store passed on to a Lawrence "Jack" Kemp who operated the establishment until a fire put him out of business in 1922. Kemp had either incredibly bad luck or a most determined nemesis because his nearby barn had burned to the ground a few years earlier. In both cases, arson was suspected. Loudoun County being inhospitable to Mr. Kemp, he soon departed the area.

In 1924 Charlie Cassell built a new store, the

(Airmont General Store cont.)

present one, using the existing foundation of the old building at the corner of Snickersville Turnpike and Airmont Road. Being the height of Prohibition, he dutifully served his clientele the occasional clandestine pint or two. Four years later the store was sold to Cornelius Wynkoop and it stayed in Wynkoop's family until 1984. The present owner (since 2002) is Antonio Cruz.

Today, the Airmont Store serves it's tiny community, commuters, and those just travelling through. It also acts as a game check station for local hunters. Occasionally an old-timer may drop in and reminisce about the days of penny candy and five cent soda pop. From the front porch of the tidy white framed structure there are sweeping views of the Blue Ridge to the west. An official census in 1908 put Airmont's population at 25 people. It looks to be about the same number of folks today.

Lucien Whiting Powell was born a short distance from the small settlement in 1846, and, as a young man, ran away from home to join his older brothers in the Confederate army. He served as the driver of a water wagon during the war. After the war Powell pursued a career in the art world. He studied under the renowned landscape painter Thomas Moran at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He went on to become a preeminent artist, several of his works part of President Theodore Roosevelt's personal collection and others displayed at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. Powell purchased the property directly across the Pike from the store as a summer house in 1876 and named it Airwell. It still stands today and operates as a B&B. Lucien Powell died in 1930.

Reference: Scheel, Eugene. *Loudoun Discovered – Communities, Corners and Crossroads, vol. 4*

STONE WALL FENCES OF THE PIEDMONT

(Stone Wall Fences cont.)

area and the 'hunt country' aspect of the fieldstone walls. Dry stone walls have become a status symbol.

In fact, one could say that stone walls played an important role in the establishment of the Snickersville Turnpike Association in 1994. At that time VDOT had proposed a major "upgrade" of Snickersville Turnpike. The Pike was envisioned by highway planners as an important connector route that would link Route 7 to U.S. 50 and the burgeoning Dulles area. VDOT plans called for the widening and straightening of the Pike, making it more accessible to heavier truck and commercial traffic. And, in doing so, some of the existing stone walls would have to go. These proposals galvanized the local community in opposition to the project and so, Snickersville Turnpike Association was born, an organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the rural and historic character of this special place.



One of the many aesthetic qualities of Snickersville Turnpike that makes it so special are the stone wall fences that line the route. These stone walls add a historic accent to the rolling pastoral quality of the Piedmont. Aesthetics aside, these walls mark boundaries as well as contain livestock. During the Civil War walls were used as shields by the warring armies. In modern times they have become status symbols and even served as an important token in development and road engineering issues.

The stone used to construct the oldest of these walls are native to the area and were, in fact, gleaned from nearby fields as they were cleared for farming. Perhaps that is why the walls seem to fit the landscape so well.

Dry stone (also called drystack) construction of walls is an ancient art in which stones are fit together without any mortar to bind them. These walls retain stability because of the unique construction method in which carefully selected stones are placed in a load-bearing, interlocking manner. The width of the wall diminishes as the wall gets higher, which strengthens the wall considerably.

Dry stone wall construction dates to 1350 A.D. and is attributed to the Bantu tribe of southeastern Africa. The excellent craftsmanship of the stone walls built by the Inca in Peru date to 1400 A.D. and is on display at sites such as Machu Picchu. The 'golden age' of stone wall construction in the United States was the period between 1775 and 1825. By the end of the 19th century, with the advent of wire (and later barbed wire), stone wall construction became no longer tenable nor economically viable. Stone walls are especially numerous in Loudoun County because of the rocky soil. The best built of these stone walls can have a life span that exceeds 200 to 300 years which suggests that many in our area are beginning to show their age.

Skilled "wallers", as dry stone masons are referred to, are becoming a small resurgence these days, largely because of the demand for the repair of deteriorating walls, along with some new construction. This new construction consists largely of the proliferation of small country estates, built by those who admire the history and charm of the

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DID YOU KNOW?

In 1909 a one room schoolhouse was constructed in Airmont on the south side of Snickersville Turnpike. By 1913 there were 33 pupils in grades one through six. Two teachers split their time between nearby Yellow Schoolhouse in the morning and Airmont School in the afternoons. The school lasted until 1931 and the frame building was torn down in 1940.

ROADSIDE CLEANUP – APRIL 2016

The Snickersville Turnpike Association will be assisting Keep Loudoun Beautiful by picking up trash alongside historic Snickersville Turnpike. Your help is greatly needed. You are probably aware of our Adopt-a-Highway signs. Together, with the help of Bluemont Citizens Association (west of Yellow Schoolhouse Road) and Mountville Farms (and Mountville), the entire 14 miles of the Turnpike is covered. Once again, we are in need of volunteers to help make this year's effort a success. Let your section leader know your selected area.

Orange trash bags can be picked up at the Philomont Community Center. Once filled, please call your section leader to notify them as to the location of the bags. They will notify VDOT for pickup. You can also obtain the orange bags directly from VDOT.

Let's keep the Pike clean!

SECTION LEADERS

Route 50 to Route 690.....Glenn Raiden 540-338-4157

Route 690 to Yellow Schoolhouse Road.....Henry Plaster 540-554-8591