



The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2009

2008 STA Pike Event Features a Historical Theme

The 2008 Snickersville Turnpike Association's third annual October Bike-Hike the Pike Event introduced a new theme and some new rolling hardware. Styled "A Turnpike Journey Through Three Wars," the October 19 Bluemont event featured a motor trolley ride down the turnpike narrated by local historian Rich Gillespie as well as the event's more traditional activities: a bluegrass band, a free barbecue and organized hiking and biking parties down Snickersville Turnpike.

The "Turnpike Journey through Three Wars" trope was incorporated into the autumn event in order to communicate the historical involvement of Snickersville Turnpike in the French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the American Civil War. Reenactors in period uniforms and clothing were on hand to enhance the historical theme. The trolley made various narrated stops during its tour, including Bacon's Fort, a French and Indian War era installation--George Washington actually slept there! It also stopped at the site of the cabin of John Champe, a Loudoun County native who became a double agent in an attempt to capture Revolutionary War spy Benedict Arnold, and at the First Massachusetts Cavalry memorial on the Turnpike marking the Battle of Aldie during the Civil War. The trolley made two runs down the Turnpike during the event.

Based on the response of those who came and took the historical ride, the trolley was determined to have been a grand success, and the STA is considering how to optimize the experience during autumn events in the future. Because the goal of the event is to be a family outing, the option of a somewhat abbreviated ride for younger students of history is contemplated for the future.

Geocaches

Geocaching is like a scavenger hunt using a GPS device. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. There are today almost 700,000 active geocaches around the world that are enjoyed by people from all age groups.

The Turnpike Association was recently contacted by one of the organization's representatives seeking permission to locate some of their containers along Snickersville Turnpike. The three sites currently being jointly considered are the historic E. E. Lake Store in Bluemont, Hibbs Bridge and the 1st Massachusetts Civil War monument area. The containers themselves can be as small as a one-inch long, width of a pencil or somewhat larger to suit the location. Those at the Lake Store and Hibbs Bridge would contain information explaining the historical significance of each.

Our Board of Directors has endorsed these specific geocache locations as a unique way to further knowledge regarding the Turnpike itself and the historical sites along our historic Virginia Byway. Other sites being considered are Aldie Mill, the Sergeant Champe Revolutionary War Monument and the Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville pull off locations. More information is available on www.geocaching.com.

Board of Directors Vacancies

The Board of Directors of the Snickersville Turnpike Association is seeking additional Board members who have a strong commitment to the preservation of the Turnpike and the surrounding areas. Membership entails a monthly meeting and an active contribution of creativity and commitment to our community.

Cell Towers

At the September 17, 2007 Planning Commission Public Hearing Sprint Nextel presented their Special Exception proposal for a 106-foot-tall, 25-foot-wide stealth silo cell tower on the Childs property on Watermill road near Hibbs Bridge. The Commission requested a consolidated propagation map for all of the proposed Sprint Nextel sites throughout the County and asked that the existing Philomont Fire Station flagpole be considered for collocation.

Earlier this year, Sprint Nextel revised their proposal to conceal their antennas within a 3-foot-wide, 95-foot-tall flagless flagpole and noted that the Fire Station site did not meet their requirements. At two subsequent meetings, the Turnpike Association and nearby residents questioned the rationale precluding the Fire Station site and sought to reduce the proposed 95-foot height. Nevertheless, Sprint Nextel planned to present their unchanged new plan at the Planning Commission's March 12, 2009 work session. On the third of March, they asked to move their application to the May work session. Also included in their future plans are (1) a 100-foot stealth silo on Wainway Lane, (2) a 100-foot stealth silo on Cockerill Farm and (3) a 108-foot stealth silo on the Hale property between Route 7 and Williams Gap Road. For now, it is not clear what, if any, new sites will be erected.

AT&T is currently in discussions with the Philomont Fire Station regarding adding, at the 72-foot height, six of their antennas within the existing flagpole. An application to the County would then follow. Verizon is working on a proposal for a cell tower on Cobb House Road, but it has not gone to the County yet.

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

Leith Farm Easement

Recently, Mary Leslie donated a conservation easement to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, permanently protecting a "core area" of the June 17, 1863 Civil War battlefield known as the Battle of Aldie, the first day of the five-day Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville. The 97 acre property, known as the Leith Farm, has been in her family for more than seven generations. Very little has changed on the Farm over the almost 150 years since that historic battle. The "Dallas Furr House", the stone walls and the viewshed over the battle area remain the same.

The impressive 1st Massachusetts monument, erected in 1883 by the comrades, relatives and friends of those many Union cavalymen who were killed or captured there, is one important tourist attraction along the Turnpike. The upcoming Civil War Sesquicentennial Celebration should be as opportunity to educate more people about the importance of preserving our heritage. As you may have noticed, we recently replaced the deteriorated pulloff surface with an attractive stamped concrete ballast stone-looking material. We will also soon be replacing some of the failing chestnut rails in the fence. Please come by and enjoy the history and the scenery.

APRIL ROADSIDE SPRING CLEAN UP

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY

SEE BACK COVER FOR DETAILS!

Hibbs Bridge & Snickersville Turnpike Initiative

The Snickersville Turnpike Association is reengaging the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) in its process for listing Hibbs Bridge in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1998 DHR completed an "Intensive Level Survey" and on 1 June, 1998 recommended the property "Eligible for Listing." DHR notes in its document of that date: "The Hibbs Bridge is historically significant for its association with the Snickers Gap Turnpike, an early Virginia Turnpike. It also possesses architectural/engineering significance as a rare survivor of its type. The bridge was completed in 1829 as part of the Snickers Gap Turnpike..... (Snickers Gap Turnpike Company Records, 1829)."

There the matter has rested for nearly 11 years. According to Joanie Evans (DHR Programs Specialist/Historic Preservation), restarting the listing procedure is relatively easy, requiring only new photos, a description of the 2007 restoration, and a letter of support from the Virginia Department of Transportation. VDOT has routinely provided such support for qualifying bridges. Ms. Evans writes "... we are excited for the possibilities of the bridge being placed on the registers."

Simultaneously, STA is exploring the designation of the Snickersville Turnpike, now a Virginia Byway, as a National Scenic Byway through the Federal Scenic Byways Program. The current Loudoun County Historic Preservation Plan makes it County policy to pursue such a designation.

Snickers Gap Tollgate

This photograph, taken in 1900, is the only one known to exist today that shows the tollgate, the toll keeper and the toll keeper's house, along with a paying horse and buggy. Note the long "turnpike" portion of the tollgate in the up position.

The late Earl Iden recalled that John Franks and his wife "kept the tollgate on top of the mountain. I just don't know what they charged--so much a passenger and for the vehicle." The tollgate ceased its operation around 1915. The gate and the tollhouse no longer exist.



ROADSIDE SPRING CLEAN UP!

April 2009

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 Bluemont Citizens Association (west of Yellow Schoolhouse Road) and Mountville Farms (around 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 outstanding. 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 where you have left the bags. They will notify VDOT for pick up. You can also get the orange bags directly from VDOT.

SECTION LEADERS

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

Rt. 690 to Yellow Schoolhouse Rd..... Henry Plaster 540-554-8591