



The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2020



Williams Gap 1915

WILLIAMS GAP AND THE TWO TURNPIKES

In the early 1700s, settlers moving west sought farmland along the old Indian trail roads. In 1731, Robert “King” Carter took out a land patent for his 13-year-old son George. In it, the “Indian Thoroughfare” (now Snickersville Turnpike) was described as running from “Williams Cabbin in the Blew Ridge” to the Little River, at now Aldie. The fact that there was a squatter’s cabin at the Gap means that it was there before 1731. In 1743, George Carter owned 2,941 acres as part of the Manor of Leeds “at the lower thoroughfare of the Blue Ridge known by the name of Williams Gap, alias the Indian Thoroughfare of the Blue Ridge, including the same and the top of the ridge.”

In 1748, 16-year-old George Washington accompanied George William Fairfax to survey Lord Fairfax’s properties in the Shenandoah Valley. On his return trip in April, he wrote “Tuesday 12th. We set out from Capt. Hites in order to go over Wms. Gap.”

Loudoun County was created in 1757 from what was the western part of Fairfax County, with its new county seat at Leesburg. The Town of Round Hill didn’t exist until after the Civil War, but the road from Woodgrove to the Gap was called the Williams Gap Road and its connection to Leesburg was established in 1764. In 1760, Edward Snickers was operating a ferry on the Shenandoah River west of the Gap. After the Revolutionary War, Snickers ferry was reestablished by the Legislature in October 1786, “on the land of Edward Snickers at Williams Gap.” Later that year, Williams Gap became Snickers Gap. Also, in 1786, the road from Little River became America’s first recorded operating turnpike and was praised by Thomas Jefferson.

In 1791, the road from Georgetown to Leesburg was extended to Snickers Gap and was known as the Leesburg Turnpike. It is believed that it merged, at the terminus of Williams Gap Road, at the village then known as Snickers Gap, and later as Snickersville. In 1797, William Clayton built his stone house facing that road, which, after early versions of Route 7, became Clayton Hall Road. The single tollgate at the gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains thus collected tolls from two turnpikes – the Snickersville Turnpike and the Leesburg Turnpike – on a continuing basis, except during the Civil War, until at least 1915.



PLACES ALONG THE PIKE WHITESTONE FARM

About a mile up the Turnpike from the village of Aldie is one of the leading Angus cattle seedstock operations in that industry – Whitestone Farm. The primary function of a seedstock producer is to breed high-quality bulls, cows, and heifers in order to sell their genetics (in the form of a bull) to cow calf operations, ultimately yielding offspring that produce high-quality beef.

The all-black, polled (lacking horns) Aberdeen Angus breed originated in Scotland and are affectionately known as Doddies or Hummies. Though they are classified as small, the average weight of a grown bull is approximately 2,000 pounds or one ton.

Whitestone Farm was established on Snickersville Turnpike in 1981 on 122 acres with a herd of 49 cattle. The operation has since grown to over 2,000 owned or leased acres and an average herd of 1,200 registered Angus cattle. Whitestone hosts two annual sales events in March and October. Both bulls and females are featured. Buyers come from great distances looking for quality genetics. Birth weight, weight gain, milk production, marbling, and ribeye ratio are all important factors in the purchase of cattle. Of course, the tech explosion is as pervasive in the world of agriculture as it is anywhere else. Genetic profiling tools are used extensively by both buyers and sellers.

Whitestone – A leader in their industry, responsible stewards of the rural character of the Turnpike, and, most of all, good neighbors.

(William D. Washington cont.)

In July 1869, William was offered a teaching post at the Virginia Military Institute. He was commissioned by the Superintendent to paint seven posthumous portraits of alumni and faculty who had died in battle during the Civil War, including Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, and George S. Patton, Sr. He also contributed a portrait of the still-living Robert E. Lee.

William Washington died shortly thereafter at VMI on December 1, 1870 at 37.

P.S. Can Bluemonters now say that “Washington slept here?”

BROADBAND COMING TO WESTERN LOUDOUN?

In December 2019 the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved funding for a \$15.5 million contract that could provide the backbone for an inground high speed internet network at competitive pricing for many western residents. In addition, the contract would pay for the completion and upgrade of broadband in county school and government facilities in western Loudoun.

Most of the county’s school system and government buildings are presently connected by a fiber optic system that needs modernization. The contract proposes to add more branches to the existing system, opening the door for private internet service for many underserved and unserved county residents in the west.

However, not all Loudoun government facilities are presently “wired”. Bluemont Community Center, Philomont Fire & Rescue, and Philomont Community Center, among others, are not included in the contract. An additional cost of \$ 4.8 million would have to be approved for those and other buildings to be brought online.

Initial service to county facilities will not start until January of 2021.

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WILLIAM D. WASHINGTON SNICKERSVILLE’S FAMOUS ARTIST

John Perrin Washington was the son of Samuel Washington, George Washington’s brother, and moved to Snickersville in 1830 with his wife Farinda Fairfax. They moved into a house on the Snickersville Turnpike just west of Clayton Hall and when Timothy Carrington died that same year, Perrin became the village’s fifth Postmaster. Their son, William Dickinson Washington, was born on October 7, 1833. Perrin secured a job with the United States Post Office in Washington, D.C. and he and his family moved there in 1834.

Young William began his own career as a draughtsman at the U.S. Patent Office. In 1851, he began studying painting with Emanuel Leutze in Washington, D.C. and wished to continue his studies with Leutze in Dusseldorf. Virginia’s two senators convinced the Secretary of State to appoint William a dispatch bearer to help him get to Germany. While there, William began his career as a history painter. He sent one of his pieces, Commencement of the Huguenot War, home for exhibition, where the Daily National Intelligencer gave it favorable comments.

William returned to the Patent Office and in 1855, he drew a copy of Leutze’s Washington Crossing the Delaware on its basement wall with a crayon. The Commissioner of the Patent Office brought President Franklin Pierce and the Secretary of the Interior to view the drawing. William entered work in the first exhibition of the Washington Art Association and later served as its Director and Vice President.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, William traveled to Richmond to “sign up” and was assigned to the Virginia State Engineers Office, where he drew a number of redoubts and fortifications. One of his notable paintings was Jackson Entering the City of Winchester Virginia. His most famous painting was The Burial of Latané, showing women, slaves, and children performing the burial service of Captain William Latané of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, who was killed in 1862 during J.E.B. Stuart’s ride around McClellan’s army during the Peninsula Campaign. It became iconic that women were not just grieving for their loved ones, but for the entire Confederacy.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT



Glenn Raiden, the Turnpike Association’s Treasurer since its early days, will be leaving the area this summer, causing concern about a knowledgeable replacement. The good news is that Harriet Clubb, Glenn’s next-door Turnpike neighbor, with significant financial experience, has joined our Board of Directors and, after a brief overlap, will be Treasurer.

Over the past year, we have been working closely with VDOT and the County to address the seasonal traffic issue at the intersection of Foggy Bottom Road and the Turnpike. Later this year, the completion of a new access road to Great Country Farms just to the east of the intersection will improve traffic flow even more.

Over the past fifteen years, Loudoun County has lost over 67 square miles of farmland. Now that the Comprehension Plan has been completed, the Board of Supervisors and the County Staff have begun work on reviewing the Zoning Ordinance. What MUST be removed is the current wording that allows developers to erect four times as many houses if they are “clustered.” If we and other preservation organizations don’t provide maximum opposition to clustering, farmland and open spaces will disappear.

Henry G. Plaster

DID YOU KNOW?

The original alignment of Snickersville Turnpike through Mountville was a straight bee line. That changed in 1814 when Ezekial Mount decided that the pike ran too close to his barn and blacksmith shop, the traffic spooking his animals. After failing to convince officials of his plight, he hired a lawyer. The skilled lawyer uncovered a state regulation that stated that no road could encroach on an orchard without the orchard owner’s permission. Overnight, Mount had an apple tree transplanted right between his barn and blacksmith shop. The pike became a succession of two right angles through Mountville.

ROADSIDE CLEANUP - APRIL 12-18, 2020

The Snickersville Turnpike Association will be assisting Keep Loudoun Beautiful by picking up trash along 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. This year we’re dedicating the week of April 12th to keeping the Pike clean. We urge everyone to spend some time picking up litter on your road.

Let’s all pitch in and keep the Pike clean!