



# The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2013

## COMMEMORATION OF THE 1863 CAVALRY BATTLES OF ALDIE, MIDDLEBURG, AND UPPERVILLE JUNE 14-16 2013

Following the June 9, 1863 cavalry Battle of Brandy Station, Union Brig. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton was ordered to move his 8,000 men across the Loudoun Valley to determine where General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was located. Lee had ordered his Cavalry Commander Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart and his 9,000 troopers to screen his



forces that were moving up the Shenandoah Valley, ultimately to Gettysburg. On the morning of June 17, Stuart planted his headquarters flag next to what is now the Red Fox Inn in Middleburg and directed one of his Brigades to press on to Aldie, to hold the Gap against the approaching Union cavalry, and to picket the road beyond.

The Union cavalry, after skirmishing with their Confederate counterparts, moved to where Snickersville Turnpike branches off from Ashby Gap Turnpike (present-day Rt. 50) and split their forces. One component of the Confederate cavalry dismounted and their sharpshooters positioned themselves behind a stone wall at the Dallas Furr farm at a blind curve on Snickersville Turnpike. The approaching 1st Massachusetts cavalry was devastated by the withering fire. The 1st Maine recaptured the battleground later in the afternoon. Stuart's forces withdrew that evening to Middleburg.

On June 19, a number of cavalry encounters occurred, including one at Mt. Defiance, just west of Middleburg. On the morning of June 21, fighting began again at Bittersweet Farm and continued throughout the day at Goose Creek Bridge, Vineyard Hill, and finally at Trappe Road. Then, after five days of battles, the Union cavalry forces withdrew, having achieved neither Ashby or Snickers Gap nor their objective of locating Lee's army.

Planning began last spring by the Snickersville Turnpike Association to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Aldie at the 1st Massachusetts monument on the Pike on June 15, 2013. Commitments were then obtained from the 1st Maine and the Valley Light Horse Cavalry to be the cavalry reenactors. Other organizations wanted to expand the commemoration to cover the overall five-day battles, so STA Board Chairman Henry Plaster was selected to lead this Prelude to Gettysburg event. The sponsors include the Mosby Heritage Area Association, the Aldie Heritage Association, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the National Sporting Library, and the Snickersville Turnpike Association.

Here is what's planned for the three day event:

June 14 – Evening at Mt. Zion Church. Overview of the five-day battles. Dedication of plaque to the Northern correspondent buried there in June 1863.

June 15 – Morning in Aldie. Cavalry skirmish demonstration. Civilian reenactor vignettes. Afternoon at Furr Farm. Cavalry reenactment with narration of the Battle of Aldie, followed by wreath laying.

June 16 – Morning in Middleburg. History at the Sporting Library. Narration and ribbon-cutting at Mt. Defiance. Demonstration at Goose Creek Bridge. Afternoon in Upperville at Trappe Road. Cavalry reenactment with narration.

## TURNPIKE HISTORICAL MARKERS UPDATE



STA has placed two historical markers along the Turnpike. These signs are part of a series that will highlight the significance of the Turnpike, not only to Loudoun County and Virginia, but to our nation's history.

One marker is located just north of the Virginia Byway's Aldie junction with Route 50 with the other located further along the Turnpike at Hibbs Bridge.

"The Snickersville Turnpike was a key route for commerce in early America and during the Civil War was a strategic gateway to the Shenandoah Valley and to the West," said Henry Plaster, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Snickersville Turnpike Association. "We hope the markers will encourage locals and visitors alike to care for the turnpike, not only for ourselves, but to honor all those who built, traveled, and lived along this roadway over the centuries," he added.

Atop the new markers is a logo depicting a horse and buggy passing through a toll gate. The logo was designed by STA Board Member Debbie Allan and is based on a photograph taken in 1900 at the Snickers Gap toll gate.

The marker located north of the Route 50 junction includes the following inscription summarizing the roadway's rich history:

*"Originally an Iroquois hunting trail, it became by 1786 the first recorded operating turnpike in America, praised by Thomas Jefferson. In 1810 the Virginia Assembly chartered the Snickers Gap Turnpike Company, authorizing three toll gates between Aldie and Snickers Gap: horse-3 cents; 20 cattle-12 1/2 cents; 4-wheel carriage- 12 1/2 cents. A toll booth operated on the Blue Ridge Mountain until 1915. The Turnpike today is a Virginia Byway overlooking the same landscape George Washington traveled between 1748 and 1788, often stopping at West's Ordinary near Aldie and Edward Snickers' inn and ferry on the Shenandoah River."*

The second marker recognizes the significance of Hibbs Bridge, located on the Snickersville Turnpike

at Beaverdam Creek, southeast of Philomont. Hibbs Bridge, originally built in 1829, is one of just four working stone-arch bridges in the Commonwealth. In 2011, the STA was successful in securing the placement of Hibbs Bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. A grant from the Loudoun Preservation Society helped to defray the purchase price of the Hibbs Bridge marker, but **donations from friends and members of STA are needed to pay the cost of these handsome markers.** Although still in the planning stages, the STA intends to place additional historical markers near other notable locations such as the Bacon Fort site and in the village of Bluemont.

## PRESERVING HISTORIC RURAL BRIDGES

Although funding for Virginia highways and secondary roads has been, and remains, a contentious issue, federal funds for Virginia's rural bridges seem to be available. VDOT recently began preliminary engineering studies for the renovation of two historic bridges and the replacement of a third in western Loudoun County. The work is projected to cost \$2.4 million, with \$640,000 of that coming from the Federal Highway Bridge Program.

Prior to VDOT's January 9th public hearing, local landowners and residents signed a joint letter to Supervisor Janet Clarke requesting assistance in preserving these three rural bridges. The two scheduled for renovation are both on Greengarden Road in the Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadways District, as well as in the Unison Battlefield Historic District and the "core area" of the Historic Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville. The concrete bridges, both built in the early 1900's, span Pantherskin Creek and Jeffries Branch.

The third bridge, built in 1932, is on Forest Mill Road over Crooked Run, which flows into the North Fork of Goose Creek, southeast of Lincoln. The steel I-beams set into concrete are in serious deterioration and structurally need to be replaced. Under political pressure, VDOT agreed that the design of these bridges would not be disturbed.

VDOT is also studying two additional bridges in western Loudoun for replacement or restoration. One is on Paxon Road and the other on Yellow Schoolhouse Road, both over Beaverdam Creek. STA will monitor these projects closely.

## PLACES ALONG THE PIKE – THE FURR FARM



The Furr Farm, also known as the Furr-Leith Farm, is located at the corner of Snickersville Turnpike and Oatlands Road about a mile and a half from Aldie Village. The farmhouse is included on the National Register of Historic Places. The property had been owned by the Furr-Leith families for many generations since the beginning of the Civil War until it was sold in 2010 to Chet and Laura Lea Moore of Aldie. The Moores, working with Jane Covington Restoration in Middleburg, are in the process of restoring the home, barn and stable.

According to the National Register application, the farm's period of significance began in 1790 with the construction over a stone basement of a two story, side-gabled log dwelling with exterior end stone chimneys. In the early 19th Century, a frame addition was added on the north side of the home, a Greek-revival style portico added later in that century and a kitchen and bath frame addition came around 1930. There are a number of contributing buildings and structures -- a log smoke house, barn, stable, corn crib, dairy and machine shed, as well as fieldstone walls throughout the property -- all spanning the 1790's to 1930's.

The farm was owned by a number of families who lived in Aldie during the years preceding the Civil War. Land records in the early 1800's showed the property was once owned by Moses Gulick, who sold to James Garrett, who then sold to James W. Taylor. The property passed to Mrs. Taylor's son, Burr Swart, but was put up for public auction in March of 1861 and bought by William Furr. William Furr evidently moved his family to the property just prior to the beginning of the war. The deed of sale was not recorded until after the Civil War, however, as the Leesburg Courthouse and records offices had been closed during the war. After the war, a member of the Leith family married a member of the Furr family, and the property remained with the Furr-Leith families until the recent sale to the Moores.

The farm gained considerable significance during and after the Civil War. At the "Fight at Furr Farm", which was part of the Battle of Aldie on June 17,

1863, 198 men from the First Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment were killed. The Furr Farm house became a hospital at the scene. The battle was remembered by historians as, "... the most severe experienced by any Union Cavalry regiment in a single day during the war ...". After the war, a committee of First Massachusetts Cavalry veterans, family members and friends organized to erect a monument to honor those who were killed in the battle. They approached Dallas Furr, who had been a Mosby Ranger during the war and owned the farm by that time. As a gesture of reconciliation, he granted the committee permission to place the monument at the battle site in 1891.

## CAVALRY CLASH IN ALDIE!

**HISTORIC CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT COMES TO ALDIE, VA. ON SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2013**



In June of 1863 Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, screened by the Blue Ridge, moved north through the Shenandoah Valley to its ultimate destiny at Gettysburg. Union Cavalry General Alfred Pleasonton was ordered to locate Lee's army, Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart's task was to prevent that. The two forces met outside the village of Aldie on June 17, 1863. What resulted was one of the bloodiest cavalry battles of the war.

**150th Anniversary of the Battle of Aldie  
Saturday, June 15, 2013 1-5 p.m.  
The Furr Farm**

Snickersville Turnpike and Oatlands Road, Aldie, Va.  
1.7 miles northwest of Aldie on Snickersville Turnpike  
Cavalry Reenactment, Historical Narrative, Wreath-Laying Ceremony  
Admission \$5 - Kids 15 and under free

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR THIS EVENT  
PLEASE CONTACT  
GLENN RAIDEN 540-338-4157**