



The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

Spring 2022



EULOGY HENRY GARNETT PLASTER, JR. (1928-2022)

Bluemont Methodist Church
April 2, 2022
J. Marvin Watts

Good Morning.

It is my honour to speak for a few minutes about my friend Henry Plaster. I address myself especially to Henry's family who feel most deeply sorrow and pride. Then, also, Henry's intimate friends and the community Henry embraced and who loved and respected him in return. Henry was most remarkable for his devotion to helping others and to public service.

I believe the first thing I knew about Henry was that he worked at the CIA. To me, that meant above all he could be entrusted with domestic secrets . . . a valued asset in a friend. And of course he was a special asset to the welfare of the nation, as well as, later, to Bluemont and Loudoun County.

After getting to know Henry, I had another irresistible thought: that Henry must, like Athena, have burst from the brow of Zeus, speaking complete sentences with careful and deliberate detail. Upon orienting himself, he likely recognized the desirability of setting up and directing committees, not necessarily for his own care but rather for the general welfare of the family . . . preparation for his later-in-life public service.

Henry was unflagging in kindness and good will. Boundless in generosity and hospitality. If I had to drop a document off, he would unfailingly say, "Won't you come in? I won't keep you but a moment."

Henry valued knowledge, however, as any good CIA man would. At the 20 or 30 minute mark, a guest edging towards the door, Henry would look ingratiatingly into the face of his friend and say, as he drew a breath . . .

(Henry Garnett Plaster, Jr. cont.)

"There's just this one more detail."

This particular Henry characteristic soon led me to begin some visits by advising, "I'm just on my way to the Emergency Room . . ." and this tactic would usually hold erudite monologues under an hour.

Sometimes, though, the enticement was irresistible. As you know, when the French meet, they ask, "How's your liver?" Following Henry's "Won't you come in?" he would inquire "Are you ready for a Manhattan?" That was the lead to sitting with Henry in late afternoon on the best back porch with the best view in the best village in Loudoun and maybe Virginia.

Despite sometimes serious infirmities, Henry seldom spoke of them. Shortly before her death, Madeleine Albright wrote, "To me, resilience of spirit (far more than brilliance of intellect) is the essential ingredient of a full life." That prescription fit Henry exactly.

Henry was perhaps the most stubborn man I've ever known (although I know wives will have their own candidates). Yoked to the public welfare, this characteristic was invaluable. Add to this another skill: he was a dedicated, weekly poker player with several pals. The significance of this discipline is that one can win with a bad hand. I never expected Henry to lose at anything.

About 1991, the Loudoun county administrator called to inquire whether I minded if VDOT dynamited Hibbs Bridge and replaced it. I had established the Virginia Byways in Loudoun, Hibbs on Snickersville Turnpike was a jewel, and I did mind. So I wrote a resolution for the board of supervisors forcing VDOT to keep Hibbs in service. VDOT installed a sign forbidding bus and truck traffic, annoying everyone, and hoped Hibbs would collapse.

Enter Henry. When he got his teeth into an issue (or a conversation, for that matter), he never let go. Henry organized and saw to the restoration of Hibbs in an historically correct manner, commemorated in 2007, a steady effort of about 17 years.

For this and other reasons, I wrote a Snickersville Turnpike Association resolution in 2014 seeking to honor Henry as Chairman in Perpetuity. Among the

whereases, I wrote that "Henry had proved stubborn and persistent and even cranky in service of the public interest"; and that "he doggedly led the board to many accomplishments such as the historical markers now sited on the Turnpike." I urged the board to recognize Henry with our affection and affirm its will so installing Henry. It passed by acclamation.

Hibbs Bridge made the National Register of Historic Places in 2011, as has, just recently, the Snickersville Turnpike, thanks to Henry. I rather think Henry, too, merits mention, or at least recognition for contributing to the National Register.

Thoreau says somewhere that "We stand on the shoulders of our forebears." Indeed, we all of us obviously stand on the shoulders of our parents, our grandparents. But also, we are borne up by men like Henry Plaster, the entire community uplifted, made better by the efforts and good will of this friend and neighbor. His energy somehow gets into our own bloodstream, our community DNA, and in that way he lives on.

So in one important sense, we do not part. As grief and pain ebb, our sense of loss diminishes for good reason, knowing that Henry remains at our elbow, enabling us by his example, or reminding us that we have more to do, there is better stuff in us. We feel the smile, the affection, become easy with his presence.

Life often breaks the heart, but only because we love so deeply.

Seasoned, grief becomes grace—and memory, a warm smile.

Departed loved ones thus companion us, always.

As Henry would say, "Won't you come in?"



SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE ACHIEVES ANOTHER MILESTONE

On March 17th, the Snickersville Turnpike will go before the joint meeting of the Board Historic Resources and State Review Board. In this meeting, the board members will vote to include the Snickersville Turnpike on the Virginia Landmark Register and will forward the nomination to the National Park Service for inclusion on the National Register of Historic places.

What does this all mean? The Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of historic places are similar in that these registers recognize the state and nation's sites and structures that embody our historical and cultural foundations. Recognition is entirely honorific, meaning don't expect changes to the Turnpike anytime soon. However, recognition does provide some level of protection if state or federal funds are used to widen or change the roadway. In that case, the public and local advocacy groups will have some say in how the road can be changed, or not changed at all. We recognize that Snickersville Turnpike must remain safe for increasing levels of traffic and we also recognize that we would like to preserve and protect the Turnpike's enormous beauty and unique cultural heritage.

You might also ask, why does Snickersville Turnpike qualify for the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places? The Turnpike is both old, really old, older than our nation and also the Turnpike retains some of its original 300-year-old features such as its straight alignment and early bridges. The Turnpike was originally established as a foot path by American Indians passing between the gap in the Blue Ridge (at Williams Gap, now known as Snicker's Gap) and the gap in the Blue Run Mountains (where the village of Aldie is today) We don't know exactly how early it was used as a foot path, but certainly by the mid to late 1600s. In the early 1700s, explorers followed this path, including a young George Washington when he was working as a surveyor for Lord Fairfax. Young George writes in his diary of returning home, and by the landmarks he describes, we know he is traveling along the American Indian path that was to become Snickersville

Turnpike. In the early 1800s, settlers started arriving and the foot path was improved to become a turnpike to accommodate horses, carriages, wagons and livestock. Hibbs Bridge, the iconic arched masonry bridge over Beaverdam Creek, was built during this time. The original Goose Creek bridge was also built during this time but was burned during the Civil War. The original stone abutments remain and can be seen west of the current Goose Creek Bridge. In the early 1900s, the turnpike was improved again with hard surface paving to accommodate automobiles. Smaller bridges such as the single-lane Luten Bridge west of Airmont was built during this time.

As Snickersville Turnpike enters its fourth century of continuous use, state and national recognition is a worthy milestone. Many thanks to the hard work and stewardship of the Snickersville Turnpike Association who had the vision to place the Turnpike on the National Register of Historic Places. Here's to four hundred more good years of travel through beautiful Loudoun County.

BLUEMONT OUR AGRICULTURAL ROOTS

This summer's exhibition at the Plaster Museum of Bluemont Heritage located at the E.E. Lake Store will present a vivid picture of farm life in Loudoun County in the 19th & 20th Centuries, including a showcase on contemporary farms.

Appropriately, the exhibition is inside the very storefront operated by Mr. Lake where he sold farm supplies to support local farms back in 1901. One striking feature of the store is it's the only one of its kind not to have been remodeled in Virginia – what visitors see upon entering is not much different since the store first opened.

Thanks to the support of the Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum in Sterling, the Loudoun Museum, Balch Library, and private collectors, the exhibition includes artifacts from this by-gone era of our history: old tractors, horse-drawn plows, farm implements, ice cream and butter churns – even a children's play area with Daisy the cow!

The museum is open Sundays 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM from May 1st to October 2nd.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Before the road leading west out of Philomont was renamed for Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart in 1962, it was long known as Milton Lee's Road. In the early 1900's, Milton Lee, a black man, lived in a cabin a few miles out of town at the ford on North Fork Creek. Lee maintained the ford so that it remained passable for local agriculture. He also founded, managed, and played for one of Loudoun's earliest and most talented baseball teams. Taking on all comers, his barnstorming team, the "Milton Lee's", were made up largely of Lee's relatives. Years before organized Negro League baseball came to the Piedmont, the "Milton Lee's" were a dominant and famous force in local baseball.

ROADSIDE CLEANUP - APRIL 17-23, 2022

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 the Bluemont Citizens Association who cover the roadway west of Yellow Schoolhouse Road, and Mountville Farms which covers Mountville, we count on landowners to complete the remaining 10 miles of the Turnpike. This Spring we're dedicating the week of April 17th to keeping the Pike clean. We urge every landowner to be responsible for your section of the Pike. Let's all pitch in and keep the Pike clean!