DRIVING HISTORIC
SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE

A SCENIC ROUTE THROUGH VIRGINIA'S PIEDMONT

Snickersville Turnpike Association

Snickers Gap Tollgate

A Virginia Byway

Snickersville Turnpike is one of Loudoun County's Virginia Scenic Byways, which were adopted by the General Assembly in 1988. With extraordinary cultural and aesthetic value, these traditional travelways lead to and pass within areas of historical, natural and recreational significance, linking Loudoun's old towns and villages. Starting in Aldie at Route 50, Snickersville Turnpike travels northwest, rolling over foothills and crossing Goose Creek and its tributaries. At Bluemont (formerly Snickersville) the Turnpike climbs to 950 feet and meets Route 7 where it crosses the Blue Ridge through Snickers' Gap.

A Living History

When the Iroquois hunted in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, they followed a trail that eventually became the roadbed for Route 734, the Snickersville Turnpike. Over the centuries, many names were given to this meandering byway that rises and falls across the lush Loudoun Valley. Land deeds from the early 1700s refer to it as the Shenandoah Hunting Path. From the late 1700s until the early 1800s it was called the Mountain Road. Still, at various points along the route, people found other names more suited to their purposes, such as the Blue Ridge Road, Colchester Road, the Middle Road and Snickers Gap Road.

By all its names, Snickersville Turnpike has been a setting of great significance to our nation's history. While still a land surveyor for Lord Fairfax, George Washington traveled this road over Snickers Gap and often spent the night along the Shenandoah River, where Edward Snickers kept an inn and operated a ferry.

Increased commercial traffic in the early 1800s put an extra burden on the road, and during its 1809-10 General Assembly, the Commonwealth of Virginia created a system of privately owned toll-roads or "turnpikes", and appropriated $20,000 to build the 13.75 mile Snickersville Turnpike. As late as 1915, a toll booth was still in operation on top of the Blue Ridge at Snickers Gap.

Many Civil War skirmishes took place along the full length of the turnpike, where both Union and Confederate troops covered Snickers and Ashby's Gaps, while troops lead by Robert E. Lee and "Fighting Joe" Hooker traveled up and down the Shenandoah Valley. Major General J.E.B. Stuart, Brigadier General Alfred Pleasonton, and John Mosby with his Rangers were prominent figures in Loudoun Valley's Civil War action.

The War took its toll on the turnpike. The Goose Creek Bridge was burned, and after the war, only the westernmost five miles were in a condition to merit payment for passage.

A Surviving Culture

Many of the houses and other buildings along the Turnpike predate the Civil War. Some houses were set up as hospitals during the war, others served as inns. In the early 1900's, parts of Snickersville Turnpike enjoyed a thriving tourist trade. The architecture along the road spans all periods, including early stone and log construction, classic Victorian farmhouses, post-Depression cottages and contemporary structures.

Today, Snickersville Turnpike is home to people from a diversity of backgrounds and occupations. Farm vehicles move along the road from field to field. Cattle and horses graze in pastures quilted with trees, streams, board fences, and century-old stone walls. Commuters stop at country stores for their morning coffee and paper. Cyclists and motor clubs enjoy the scenery on weekends. A community of walkers, runners and horseback riders share the road daily.

Proving a strong sense of place for Loudouners and carrying travelers across one of America's most beautiful landscapes, Snickersville Turnpike supports today's lifestyles while allowing echoes of the past to resound among the hills.

The Turnpike during the Civil War

There is a sharp bend on the Snickersville Turnpike several miles northwest of Aldie. Just before this bend on the north side of the road is an old pre-Civil War house that is known as the Furr house. On June 17, 1863, along this section of the Snickersville

Turnpike occurred one of the bloodiest cavalry battles of the Civil War. In 1883 the survivors of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry, who lost more than 100 men at this site, erected a commemorative monument on this curve to mark the spot where the heaviest fighting took place. The past owners of the Furr house donated the land for the monument. This is the only monument dedicated to Union forces that exists in Loudoun County today.

When you drive down the Snickersville Turnpike stop for a moment at the monument. You are standing in the exact spot where so many men sacrificed their lives to preserve the United States of America. Engraved in the granite monument are their names. You can look out across the same fields toward the Bull Run Mountains and see the same view as those men saw in 1863. Nothing has changed. There is no super highway across those fields. It is mostly quiet in this place with only the chirp of a bird to be heard. Yet somewhere in the memory of the rocks, and trees and earth there is the jingle of bits and the creak of saddle leather and the sounds of hoof beats on that dusty road those many years ago. Maybe, if you listen carefully enough, you will hear them.

STA Mission Statement

Our mission is to ensure that road maintenance and improved safety can be achieved on Snickersville Turnpike without taking irreversible measures. Additionally, we are committed to maintaining the pastoral beauty and aesthetic value of this scenic Virginia Byway. STA is dedicated to addressing transportation issues and promoting the rural character of Snickersville Turnpike and our community.

Snickersville Turnpike Association
P.O. Box 452
Philomont, VA 20131

For more information and to join STA
www.snickersvilleturnpike.org

SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE

1. THE "MOUNT AIRY FIGHT" CIVIL WAR MONUMENT AT SNICKERS GAP
Mosby's Rangers surprised a company of Federal troops resting at the Gap and took Union prisoners and horses and released twelve Confederate prisoners. The encounter took place at the (no longer standing) tollhouse and tollgate at the western end of Snickersville Turnpike.

⑦ to Purcellville →

① Bluemont

← to Winchester

② ③

3. E. E. LAKE GENERAL STORE / WELCOME CENTER Built in 1901, just after the arrival of the first train on July 4, 1900, this historic general store served the farming community and Washington tourists for three decades during Bluemont's heyday as a summer retreat.
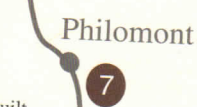
④

(734)

Airmont

⑤ ⑥

5. AIRWELL At Airmont stands the house that Lucien Powell, Loudoun County's most famous landscape painter, acquired in 1876. His studio is the structure close to the Turnpike. His admirers and collectors included Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, and J. Edgar Hoover.

2. SNICKERSVILLE ACADEMY
Built as a log cabin on land donated by Amos Clayton in 1825, it was the area's first school, with students paying $3 a session. It is located just off the Turnpike in the historic village of Bluemont.

6. BACON FORT (Roadside Sign Pending)
Bacon Fort, built in the 1740s to protect travelers, became an ordinary (tavern) in the 1760s. George Washington and his family slept here on their way to Bath (now Berkeley Springs, WV).

Philomont

⑦

4. THE YELLOW SCHOOLHOUSE Built in 1852 at the intersection of the Turnpike and the original road to Bluemont from Leesburg, the school also had Methodist church services every other Sunday. It held classes until 1931. Note the two entrance doors, one for men, one for women.
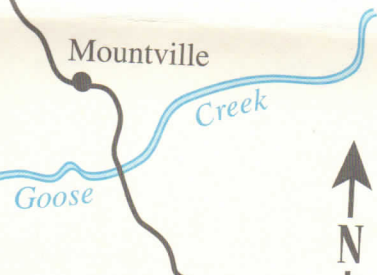
7. PHILOMONT GENERAL STORE
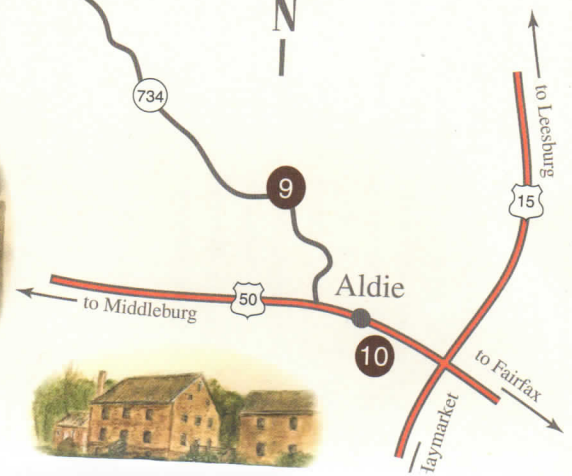The only store in Loudoun County sharing space with the Post Office.

⑧

8. HIBBS BRIDGE Spanning Beaverdam Creek, this dual-arched 1829 stone bridge has been recently restored. It is one of only a handful of masonry bridges in Virginia still carrying traffic.

Mountville

Creek

Goose

N

(734)

9. FIRST MASSACHUSETTS CIVIL WAR MONUMENT
Erected in 1883 by compatriots of those Union cavalry troopers killed and wounded in the June 17, 1863 Battle of Aldie.

to Leesburg

⑨

15

Aldie

← to Middleburg   50

⑩

to Fairfax →

Haymarket

Please respect all private property.

10. ALDIE MILL Built in 1807-09, the Aldie Mill is Virginia's only grist mill powered by twin waterwheels.

Largely displaced by specialty retailers and convenience stores, the general store is becoming a rarity on the American landscape. Fortunately, Snickersville Turnpike is home to four operating general stores. These establishments are the perfect places for refreshment on your journey.

Bluemont General Store
33715 Snickersville Turnpike
Bluemont, VA 20135
(540)554-2054

Airmont Store
35376 Snickersville Turnpike
Round Hill, VA 20141
(540)554-8800

Bluemont General Store

Philomont General Store
36550 Jeb Stuart Road
Philomont, VA 20135
(540)338-5792

Aldie Country Store
39285 John Mosby Highway
Aldie, VA 20105
(703)957-4999