



BLUEMONT BUGLE

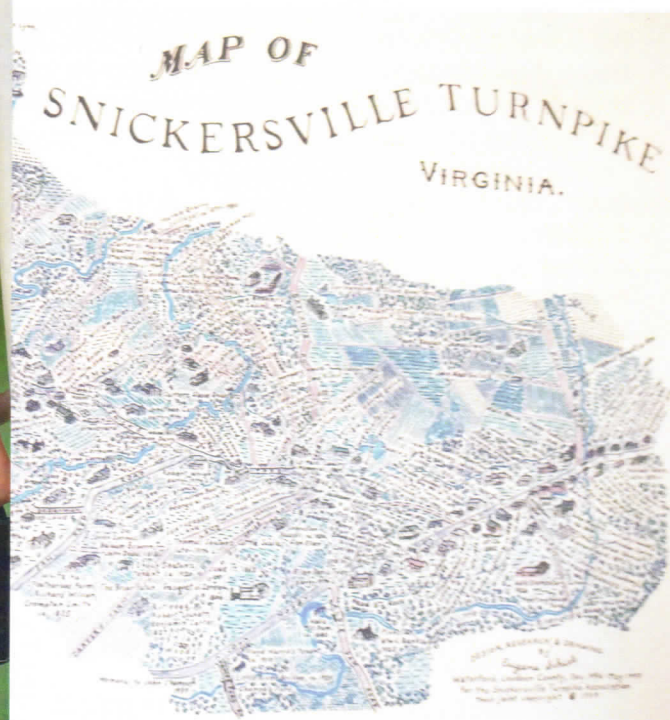
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~ ~ HENRY GARNETT PLASTER ~ ~

JULY 26, 1928 - MARCH 21, 2022



Left to right: Henry Plaster III, Austin Plaster, Will Plaster, Elie Plaster, Jeff Schroeder, Amy Plaster, Anne Mason Schroeder, Henry, George Plaster, and Christi Plaster.



REMINISCES

I still can't believe Henry is gone. For me, he has been a constant in Bluemont for the 27 years we have lived here—as much a part of the village as the church or the Community Center. Though Henry didn't live here for much of his life, his grandparents did, and Bluemont was so clearly the place that he loved and thought of as home. We all turned to him when we wanted to know some historical background of the area or details about the Civil War or the Turnpike. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that he single-handedly saved the EE Lake Store, with all the hours he spent convincing the county to share ownership of the building and getting VDOT to put in a bathroom...if it weren't for Henry, that central feature of our village would be a decaying eyesore by now, rather than a place of history and potential. And he was doing work for the Bluemont Fair right up until the week he died.

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We bonded over so many things, beyond our shared commitment to Bluemont. He told me his Navy stories (he recently shared a great one that ended with him being busted for using the Captain's private bathroom), and I told him Navy stories from my father and grandfathers. He talked about the CIA and space, and I talked about my grandfather and NASA. My kids were choosing their colleges and having their ups and downs, and so were his grandchildren. And...we both loved bourbon.

When he dialed in to a meeting from a rehab center after one of his recent hospitalizations, I wondered how many of the other 93-year-olds in that center were attending zoom meetings & helping run a couple of organizations—and we all know the answer is, not many, because Henry was special.

He grew old the way I want to grow old. He faced his tragedies and got through them. He never gave up, never gave in... always kept learning, and participating, and having people over, and telling those stories.

- **Cynthia Morris**

Of course I worked closely with Henry on the Rural Roads Committee where he was among the initial members. He was always warmly greeted by our VDOT counterparts who knew him from their long association on the Snickersville Turnpike Project. Henry helped a lot in getting us to understand the mysterious budget process for capital and maintenance projects that involved both VDOT and the county.



But, I also live in a farm house build around 1800 owned and built by Michael Plaster – a son of our Henry Plaster's great-great uncle Henry who was among the earliest inhabitants of the village of Unison. In fact I have an old petition on my wall to the Legislature of Virginia signed in the early 19th century by many of the residents of Unison including both Michael and Henry Plaster.

But, most interestingly, when I was a young engineer I worked on a very very top secret space project called "Hexagon" which I could never tell anyone about (not even my wife and children) until decades later. Well, in a conversation with Henry, it turned out that he had been the CIA's program manager for Hexagon at the time I was also on that project. Who knows, I might have even met Henry on one of the project's meetings – but no one ever really introduced themselves (at least not honestly) at those meetings anyway.

We all actually live in a small world and run into each other throughout our lives, though we often do not realize it.

- **Mitch Diamond**



Many decades ago Henry asked me for help in preparing a talk to VDOT as he and Ann were going to try for a million-dollar "iced tea" grant. What we knew about the Bluemont store at that time was this from my 1975 Guide to Loudoun.

Built for Dora Simpson, 1900-1903, it once housed the post office and grocery store. F&M Bank of Leesburg once had a branch; didn't last long after safe was blown in 1907.

Among the dozen others competing for the million dollars was the George Marshall Center, a heavy favorite to win as B.Powell Harrison had assembled an array of formidable military

and European dignitaries.

After their 35-minute presentation Henry got up, spoke for less than five minutes, ad-libbing from the above. And lo and behold when the grant came about a few months later, Dora Simpson's store received the million. "I think it was your comment about the safe being blown that got 'em," Henry later told me.

Also many decades ago, Henry would lead my classes of Loudoun County teachers to the "up the hollow" Negro community that his grandfather had helped to found after the Civil War—the school foundation, the 6-foot-wide stone wall, the spring, and the gem, the church's baptismal font that emulated a Baltimore synagogue Mikvah.

Many hundreds of teachers remember those walks and his fine commentaries. - **Gene Scheel**



The following resolution I offered 19 August 2014 in appreciation of Henry Plaster's service as chairman of the Snickersville Turnpike Association.

I moved as follows:

Whereas Henry Plaster has at great length served as chairman of the Snickersville Turnpike Association; and

Whereas Henry had proved stubborn and persistent and even cranky in service of the public interest; and

Whereas Henry has doggedly led the board to many accomplishments such as the historical markers now sited on Snickersville Turnpike; and

Whereas Henry's leadership has been instrumental in the level of esteem in which the Snickersville Turnpike Association is held; and

Whereas life is short and time of the essence,

Now therefore, be it resolved that this board recognizes Henry Plaster with affection as its admired chairman and affirms its will that Henry should remain in this position in perpetuity.

This resolution was passed by acclamation. - **Marvin Watts**

A text message from John Sullivan in Europe, read by John Constant at the Church:

Henry and I became close friends about 10 years ago, by chance, at first through a common interest in Bluemont, but we soon discovered that we shared many other interests, to me, he was so many things, both a father figure, and a life mentor who was more than 30 years my senior, he was an advisor on many topics, but most of all he was my friend, a true friend, who I was lucky enough to meet, and share time with, he always made me feel respected and appreciated, his sharp Engineering mind that still in his 90s liked to solve complex problems, and he was still using it to dominate our poker group, when I pressed him one time to increase the stakes from the standard \$3 buy in, he paused from counting his winnings and said, "Sully, it's not the money that counts, it's the camaraderie," to which all agreed, he was a civically minded volunteer for so many things that made the world a better place, he loved our country, he loved Bluemont and he loved Steak and Cheese sandwiches from Anthony's in Purcellville (where they knew him well and he never needed a menu), he loved his family and heritage deeply and was very proud of them all (both past and present family), each and every one of you (he would want you all to know that, and to have said that today, near the end, he made it clear to me, he knew it was not far off, he wanted his final days to be at home in Bluemont, surrounded by the memories of his amazing life, memories of his family, friends and loved ones, and memories of his one true love Anne. I am so happy for him to have his finale here in Bluemont, on his terms.

I was changed for the better from knowing Henry, not sure if I will ever stop tooting my horn as I pass your house, but for the rest of my days, I will always think of you fondly when I taste bourbon, rest easy my friend, your journey has been a very special one, full of adventure, love and success. - **John Sullivan**

Bluemont is a special place to live and work and Henry and Anne Plaster were a cornerstone of our community for so many years. From my first days in the late 1980s working in the then Snickersville Store, the Plasters were a welcoming and guiding presence.

The Plaster Christmas card was much anticipated each season, and featured an idyllic Christmas scene on the cover such as cutting a Christmas Tree or settling in on a bob sled. The inside cover was a comical outcome of the tree falling on Anne or the bobsled wrapped around a tree with the Plasters in disarray. The cards always made the whole community laugh and we knew we had made it on the map, when Anne & Henry asked if we would help them stage their annual Christmas Card with our Pumpkin Eating Dinosaur at Great Country Farms and were invited to their infamous Christmas party. The holiday cheer and community spirit that range through the rooms at Glen Meade heralded the season like no other event.

Over the years, Henry became a father figure to me here in Virginia and was always ready to chat about lacrosse, wine, or zoning. His wise counsel always helped inspire a positive path forward for Bluemont and Loudoun County from Hibbs Bridge to Foggy Bottom Road.

It is Henry's sage observation he made during one of our last chats, "You're working too much" that keeps ringing in my head each time I pass the lovely Glen Meade homestead these days. He is still providing me that sense of guidance and direction as I am sure many Bluemonters feel. - **Kate Zurschmeide**



A retrospective of Henry Garnett Plaster

I met Henry Plaster shortly after moving to Bluemont when I purchased a very well used old John Deere tractor that he allowed a neighbor to park on his farm. Over the years we have become very close friends and have enjoyed many conversations about the adventurous history of the Plaster family. Henry Plaster was always working to find solutions, he did so in his long career in service to our great nation, and he continued this tradition after retiring to Bluemont.

Many others will write about the long list of Henry's achievements, so I'll just say this: Henry valued work, his work as well as the efforts of those around him. He always led by great example, and I will be inspired by the high bar that he set for the rest of my days. It truly was a privilege to sit with Henry on his back porch and simply listen to stories of a life very well lived. Thank you Henry! Rest in Peace my friend. - **John Constant**

I worked with Henry on many projects, but really just as colleagues. I only had one "won't you come in" conversation with Henry on a leisurely afternoon (because I left my I-phone at his house after a meeting and had to go back to retrieve it). It was the pleasant conversation of two old men who had lived long and loved Loudoun reminiscing of battles won and lost while generously sprinkling in compliments to one another about our contributions to the work. Henry was a frequent participant in the Coalition monthly meetings and so, recently on our zoom meetings, as I looked at his little box on the screen I was aware that his time was running out but how to the very end he was a player.

- **Al Van Huyck, Chair of the Loudoun County Preservation & Conservation Coalition**



Henry, the village

Henry, the village

Henry, the man

One and the same

Whisky and words

So many words :)

Telling us what needs to be done

To protect our village

To protect our heart

To protect what needs to be won

Twinkling smiles

Polished grin

His land and his view/point were one and the same.

Henry never shied away from telling the truth. That you could count on. That IS what we counted on. Meeting after meeting, smiles after smiles. He knew how to have fun AND get the job done.

This village will miss him. We were so lucky to be able to stand on his shoulders for what felt like so many extra years. He was lucky and so were we.

Thanks for being our first mayor, Henry, the grandad of Bluemont. You were a true friend to so many of us wandering into this village, helping us to make it our home.

- **Love, Jen**



As I look out on all of you, it is heartwarming. And I can't help but think what he would be thinking if he could be seeing us here today. Looking upon us, sort of like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn did, at their own funeral, he would have suggested that we did not need to go to all this trouble, but he would have been smiling broadly to himself if for no other reason than we were celebrating the history of who he was. He loved history- especially as he got older. So, thank you all for being here. His was a life well-lived. So, a brief recital of his history. Born on July 26, 1928. He first attended the Oyster School in Washington DC where he would proudly tell you – he skipped two half-grades in one year. In the 6th grade, he moved on to St. Albans School. He sang as a choirboy in the Washington National Cathedral's Boys Choir and then Senior Choir in order to help pay his tuition at St. Albans.

The friends he made at St. Albans stayed together as friends for sixty years by getting together once a month or so to play poker. My dad kept that poker group together by adding new folks as his friends passed away, and when there was no one left from the initial group of sixty years ago, he had already created a second poker group out here in Bluemont and he continued to delight in playing, with an evolving group of local gentlemen. And by the way, even though the stakes at his poker games were always low, he was very competitive when he played. When everyone else was relaxed and having fun, he was also very focused on the game. And when he lost money at the end of a night, which was rare, even if he ended up down only a dollar or two, he was not happy about it. He would shake his head and say dejectedly, "I just wasn't getting the cards".

My dad's life was a life of service. Service to his country,... his family,... and to his community. It was deeply imbedded in his nature. He attended Duke University on an NROTC scholarship, majored in Physics, and headed to the Korean War as an Officer in the United States Navy. He saw a lot of the world with the Navy and when the Korean War was over, he went to serve his country with the Central Intelligence Agency, where he fought the Cold War for more than 43 years. When the Cold War ended, he retired and moved here to Glenmeade, his family farm behind and beside us.

In Bluemont, he and my mom were welcomed into the community and he dove right in to service to his community here. He was the long time Chair of the Snickersville Turnpike Association, protecting the historic byway that runs from in front of this church down to Route 50 in Aldie. The Turnpike Association works to preserve the rural character of this community. He also worked tirelessly for the Bluemont Citizens Association and was so proud of all that Bluemont has accomplished. And he was involved in a variety of historic preservation efforts.

Okay,... lest you all think that I inherited this same "conversationalist" gene, I will wrap this up! To me, my father was an inspiring example of a good life. His legacy of patriotism... and public service... and commitment to his family and community are worth honoring. He was a good father. He was tough, fair, smart, polite, usually patient, and always wise. - **Henry Plaster III**



Shortly after moving to Bluemont I began attending meetings of the BCA where I first met Henry. As the months passed, it was announced there would be no meeting in July. Out of curiosity, I later asked someone, why not? "Well, of course," he casually responded, "that's the month Henry is in Maine."

Of course! How could Henry not be around and possibly miss some important happening in the village he loved so dearly! I felt honored that he trusted me to lead under his mentorship. We shared a love of history and preservation. Walking into his home was like walking through a museum. When the opportunity arose

for Bluemont to have its own museum, I naturally approached Henry and asked how he would feel about naming it after his family. With the biggest grin on his face he said, "I would be honored." Thus, the old post office became the "Plaster Museum of Bluemont Heritage."

Henry had already recruited me to join the Board of the Snickersville Turnpike Association which he founded and chaired. The possibility of having the Turnpike be listed on the National Register of Historic Places thrilled him. Over a year elapsed before hearing the successful news, just days before he passed. By the end, it seemed all his wishes had been granted: covid-masks removed, the Turnpike honored, all his friends and family gathered together to celebrate his life, and his desire to be at Glenmeade to the very end fulfilled. Henry was committed to preservation and conservation with the Turnpike, rural roads, and his beloved homestead. The idea of his property being sold to developers was anathema to him. Henry has now left Glenmeade.... to reside in the hearts of those who cared for him. - **Peter Weeks**