

SNICKERSVILLE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

In 1860 Snickersville was the trading center for the area farmers. It was where they voted and got their mail. There were two stores of general merchandise and two taverns. There were several doctors and their apprentices and a lawyer to draw their deeds and wills and sue their debtors. A new church had been built, and the 1825 school was still educating the children. Three blacksmiths, two saddlers and a wheelwright took care of the horses and carriages. There were four carpenters, five shoemakers, three tailors and two families of seamstresses.

Only a few of the farmers around Snickersville owned any large number of slaves, and acts of manumission were frequent. About half of the village's population had its heritage from the north, and the local economy was not one which depended primarily on slave labor. When the Civil War began in April 1861 and at the 23 May 1861 Virginia secession referendum, 114 in the Snickersville precinct voted for it and 3 voted against. In the village itself, only Edward Davis, the Welsh tailor, voted against.

1861

On 24 July 1861, Dr. George E. Plaster, a Snickersville resident and physician, joined Company A of the 6th Virginia Cavalry, known as the Loudoun Dragoons, which he and Colonel Richard Dulany cofounded, and departed Welbourne in command of the Company the next day. It was at the Battle of Balls Bluff outside Leesburg on 21 October 1861 that 21-year-old Flavious ("Stormer") Osburn of the 8th Virginia Infantry

was mortally wounded and became Snickersville's first Civil War casualty. The second was John Murphy of the 17th Virginia Infantry, who was also killed at Balls Bluff.

1862

Invasion and occupation by Union forces had threatened Loudoun County since the opening days of the War. In December 1861, Brigadier General D.H. Hill, Stonewall Jackson's brother-in-law, became commander of the Confederate forces in the County. In February 1862, Colonel John W. Geary and his 28th Pennsylvania Infantry crossed the Potomac into Virginia at Harpers Ferry and established his headquarters at Lovettsville. General McClellan then started moving his Union Army from Washington south toward Richmond, and General Joseph E. Johnson, in charge of Confederate forces in Northern Virginia, withdrew from Manassas to meet this threat. Accordingly, on 6 March 1862, General Hill was ordered to withdraw his forces, leaving only cavalry to impede pursuit by Geary. On 7 March, Geary's forces moved to Leesburg, taking possession of Fort Johnston and changing its name to Fort Geary. Leaving a provost-marshal in Leesburg, Geary turned west to Snickerville and reconnoitered that section of the Blue Ridge Mountains. 1st Lieutenant George E. Plaster was captured on 14 March in an action near Upperville and was sent to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington, DC. He was later exchanged on 1 August 1862. The Federals occupied Upperville on 15 March. They then moved into Fauquier County only to return to Loudoun, at Aldie, a few days later. From there they moved to Snickersville again, where they were joined by the detachment that had been left at Leesburg. Thus, for the first time, Loudoun was entirely in the hands of Federal troops.

On 9 October 1862 began what was to be known as Stuart's Chambersburg Raid, a plan conceived by Cavalry General J.E.B. Stuart to damage Union General George McClellan's communications in Pennsylvania. Having plundered Chambersburg, Stuart continued clockwise around the entire Union Army and crossed back into Loudoun County at White's Ford. He brought with him about 1200 horses, many civil and military prisoners, and an "immense" amount of clothing and shoes. On 12 October 1862 Stuart's cavalry together with this booty passed through Snickers Gap on its way back to the Valley. There were skirmishes near Snickersville on 21, 22 and 27 October.

On 29 October 1862, the Army of Northern Virginia began its return to "middle Virginia" to counter General McClellan's crossing the Potomac into Loudoun County during the period 26 to 30 October. Stuart began his engagement plan by leading Major General Fitz Lee's horsemen and six of Captain John Pelham's guns through the Blue Ridge via Snickers Gap. The initial clash occurred on the last day of October, and the antagonists maintained violent contact for the next week. Most of the fighting took place in the wedge of land between the Snickersville and Ashby's Gap Turnpikes in and around Union (now Unison). The Confederates got off to a "rousing start" on the morning of the thirty-first as Stuart with the 3rd and 9th Virginia ranged east from Snickerville along the Turnpike to Mountville, surprising a 100-man detachment of the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry and capturing many.

On the 2nd and 3rd of November 1862, the 91st Pennsylvania Brigade of the Union 5th Corps was bivouacked near Snickers Gap. One of the Union soldiers shot a hog, which they had for supper. On the 3rd of November, the 91st was ordered "to the top of the mountain," where they observed Confederate infantry going through the Gap,

apparently for reconnaissance. When joined by the 2nd Corps on 4 November, they succeeded in driving the Confederates from the Gap. However, on 7 November, a Yankee cavalryman was captured at the Gap. On 12 November, after the Union forces had moved south to near Warrenton, two troopers left camp to recover some company papers that had been left behind at Snickers Gap. On 13 November they arrived at Snickersville, where they were captured by Major Elijah V. White's 35th Battalion.

1863

In June 1863, Union Cavalry General Alfred Pleasonton, fresh from his marginal victory at Brandy Station, was ordered by General Hooker to determine where Lee's Army was in the Shenandoah Valley. Lee had just recaptured Winchester and was preparing to move north, eventually to Gettysburg. On 1 June, General Pickett's Division had moved through Snickers Gap to join Lee. The first battle of the Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville took place on the Snickersville Turnpike on 17 June northwest of Aldie. A 1st Maine cavalryman, captured toward the end of the battle spent the night near Snickersville along with the Massachusetts and New York Federals captured at Aldie. The next day they headed for Winchester to join those captured during the rout of General Milroy there. One Snickersville villager observed, "Their horses and equipments will do much to make our cavalry more efficient."

On the 18th General Pleasonton, having learned nothing of value concerning the location of Lee's infantry, sent Colonel Gregg's brigade toward Ashby's Gap by way of Middleburg and Colonel William Gamble's brigade toward Snickers Gap. Confederate General Thomas Munford's pickets were content to harass and delay Gamble and did not

attempt to make a stand until afternoon. Then, with his brigade up from near the town of Union (Unison), Munford drew them up in a line of battle near Snickersville. Gamble's forces came within two miles of Snickers Gap before realizing that they were at least ten miles ahead of any support and turned back, arriving in Aldie about 9 pm that evening.

On 19 June, the brigades of Gamble and Major Samuel Starr made a long, generally fruitless march in an attempt to clear a path through Snickers Gap, and both encountered moderate fighting. This was because General Stuart had ordered General Munford to extend his line north to Snickersville, from which he could cover Snickers Gap. General Longstreet's infantry had also moved into the Gap from the Shenandoah Valley to augment the Confederate cavalry.

General Pleasonton decided to withdraw his Cavalry Corps on 21 June. General Buford's First Division moved back to near Aldie. However, Colonel Devin's Brigade was sent out to reconnoiter toward Snickersville. But they had only gotten as far as Carter's Bridge at Goose Creek on the Turnpike when they were attacked by Colonel Thomas Rosser's 5th Virginia, coming down from Snickersville. The skirmish ended near midnight. On the 23rd, General Stuart ordered General William E. ("Gumble") Jones to move his brigade, along with Captain Roger Preston Chew's battery, to Snickersville where they remained on picket until the 29th. Stuart had succeeded in keeping the Union cavalry from achieving both Ashby's Gap and Snickers Gap to determine the location and movement of Lee's Army north up the Shenandoah Valley toward, ultimately, Gettysburg.

After Gettysburg, General Meade, now in command of the Army of the Potomac, returned his army to Loudoun. The 1st and 11th Corps, after crossing on 17 through 19

July 1863 at Berlin (now Brunswick) on pontoons, came south through Waterford to Hamilton; the 5th and 6th Corps moved from Berlin through Purcellville to Unison. The 2nd, 3rd and 12th Corps crossed at Harpers Ferry and followed east of the Blue Ridge through Hillsboro, Woodgrove (now Round Hill) and Snickersville, continuing on south into Fauquier County. Once again, as in 1862, a large army had crossed the County twice in less than two months, sorely pressing the people and their property.

On 14 September the Loudoun Rangers, a Union company organized by Waterford Quakers, were known to be in the Snickersville area. Their mission may have been unrelated to the Union scouting expedition sent out on 15 September to determine what Confederate forces were in the area. Union General George A. Chapman started with 400 men from brigade headquarters in the Valley, and early on the 16th crossed the Shenandoah at a ford near Snickers Gap. There a detachment of 55 men under Captain Compson was sent up the river to Ashby's Gap and then to return to Snickers Gap. Chapman, himself, with the remaining men, crossed over Snickers Gap, and moved along the base of the Ridge to Paris, and returned to Snickersville about 2 pm.

Chapman's report on 17 September stated "The men being much fatigued, I ordered an hour's halt, sending forward one squadron of the Eighth New York, Captain Bliss commanding, into the Gap. Captain Compson was also in the Gap, having crossed from Ashby's to Snickers Gap by a road on the mountain ridge. About an hour had elapsed and the men had mostly fallen asleep, when they were suddenly charged upon by a force of from 50 to 80 of the enemy, and being stampeded by the surprise, a number were killed, wounded, and captured before I reached the scene of the encounter with the main body."

The Confederates were led by Captain William Chapman who "collecting about 40 men, reached Upperville some hours after the Federals had left and, cutting across the mountains, attacked the party in the Gap, killing and wounding a number, recapturing all the prisoners and most of the horses, and also capturing 18 prisoners and forty horses from the enemy." He lost one man killed and three wounded and one horse killed.

In October 1863, Robert Marshall, a Snickersville carpenter who had joined Company A of the 6th Virginia Cavalry in October 1862, came home on furlough. On the north side of the Snickersville Turnpike east of Clayton Hall, there were only a few houses -- William Brown's with its saddle and harness shop, John Hesser's (no longer standing), Marshall's Victorian, Mrs. Hodgson's (where the Community Center now is) and Joab Osburn's. Thomas Osburn, Joab's 15-year-old son, witnessed the "Sunday morning fight." In 1923, he wrote "I had witnessed the movements of the Confederates through the hills above the village, and the beginnings of the fight from the kitchen stoop of my home. I then ran to the back of the garden, where I had a view of the fields, and saw that part of the fight. Before the smoke and dust had cleared away, I ran up through the Hesser Orchard, where I was joined by Bob Marshall. On the knoll near where the R.R. now stands (no longer standing), we came to a Federal soldier, lying face down, presumably dead. Bob turned him over on his back, when he threw up his hands and said 'I surrender.' He was not hurt. He had simply fallen off his horse. We conducted him over to the Brown residence, where other prisoners were being held. I will also state, incidentally, that the only Federal Soldier I actually saw killed, fell near a large tree on a line between the Townsend Osburn (now Plaster) and Hill (Whitehall) lands. He was

very young, not much more than a boy, fair complexion, freckled, with red or sandy hair."

Herbert Osburn, 19-year-old brother of Thomas and Flavious, who was killed at Ball's Bluff, was taken prisoner in October 1863 and spent eleven months at Point Lookout, and seven months at Elmira, NY. He never quite recovered from the effects of his imprisonment. James Osburn, another brother, enlisted when he was about 18 in 1864 in the same Company A, 6th Virginia Cavalry and was captured three days before Appomattox, his horse being killed under him.

1864

Attached is a detailed, eye-witness account by 15 or 16 year-old Thomas Osburn of "A Sunday Morning Fight in Snickersville" that took place on 6 March 1864. Twenty-three First New York cavalymen were surprised by fifteen 6th Virginia cavalymen under Lt. Joseph A. Gibson and including Fleet James of Snickersville resulting in twenty of the Union horsemen being either killed, wounded, or captured. Sergeant Alfred Caine had been ordered by his Union captain in Hillsboro to take 4 corporals and 18 privates to meet at Purcellville a larger band pursuing a Confederate force near Waterford. However, his group lost their way and, as they were moving through what is now Round Hill toward Snickersville, Dr. J.E. Copeland, then a boy, noted that all rode grey horses except for one, who rode a brown. The Union dead were placed in the Snickersville church, that evening to be retrieved by men from their unit. Their wounded were cared for by Snickersville women in their homes.

There is today a monument on the north side of Route 7 just west of Route 601 with the inscription, "Mt. Airy fight June 15, 1864 Mosby - US (unreadable)." No other information regarding the fight or "Mt. Airy" is available.

General Jubal Early, Commander of Confederate Forces in the Shenandoah Valley, crossed the Potomac River into Maryland on 5 July 1864. At the Battle of Monocacy on 9 July, he fought against Union General Lew Wallace (later to become famous as the author of the novel "Ben Hur"). Early then pushed on to the outskirts of Washington, then withdrew and on 14 July crossed the Potomac at White's Ferry with prisoners and a cannon captured at Monocacy, Maryland livestock and \$200,000 of Union currency taken from citizens in Hagerstown and Frederick. After resting in Leesburg for two days and writing a report about his "successful" raid upon the Union Capital, his main forces headed west toward Snickers Gap. Union troops under General George Crook, following in hot pursuit, engaged the rear of Early's wagon train at Purcellville, destroying a few wagons. On 17 July, Confederate forces under Major Adolphus "Dolly" Richards raided an advance detachment of Federals at Snickersville. Then, on 18 July, a Union cavalry force under General Alfred Duffie chased Early's men through the Gap, only to find that Early had already crossed the Shenandoah at Snickers Ferry. On 20 July, Lt. Colonel Mosby, with Companies A and D, attempted to raid a Union wagon train encamped near Snickersville. Attacks and counterattacks followed, in which Early reported between 200 and 300 men lost. Union casualties were listed at 422. Snickersville's stone church was reportedly used as a hospital, with the church grounds serving as temporary burial grounds during and after the battle.

In early August 1864, General Grant sent General Sheridan to Harpers Ferry to prepare a force of 40,000 soldiers and 4,600 cavalymen to destroy General Early's Army. Lt. Colonel John Mosby's Rangers had been continually harassing Union forces on both side of the Blue Ridge. The Rangers moved through Snickers Gap with 250 men and two howitzers and made an embarrassing attack on Sheridan's wagon train in Berryville on 13 August. Captain Alfred Glascock, son of Alfred and Margaret Chew Glascock of Snickersville, was the head of Company D of the Rangers. Two days later, 50 to 80 of Mosby's men, commanded by Captain William Chapman, attacked about the same number of Union troopers who were resting at Snickers Gap. Some of these were 8th New York cavalymen who had spent the day riding up the Shenandoah to Paris and back along the Ridge in search of wagon-raiding Rangers. General George H. Chapman with the main body of his men were resting in Snickersville after spending the day in a similar search east of the mountains, riding to Paris and then to Upperville and back. After the action, Chapman stated that "a number were killed, wounded and captured before I reached the scene of the encounter." He then chased the Rangers for about two miles before returning, due to exhaustion of the men and darkness, to his camp in the Valley.

On 3 September, George Callahan of Snickersville, while home on leave, was out for a stroll with Thomas Osburn and Squire Mount. They had gotten as far as the horseshoe curve on the other side of the mountain when they met members of General Sheridan's forces. George was taken captive, but the old man and the young boy were left unhurt. Captain Roger Chew of Snickersville had recruited this 26-year-old Irishman for service in his Battery in 1862. He had reenlisted in April 1864 for the duration.

On 15 September, from "Mosby's Memoirs, "So when the troops (400 of General Sheridan's cavalry who had captured several of Mosby's men) reached Snickers Gap, all lay down in the shade and went to sleep. Captain Chapman soon came plunging down the mountainside like an avalanche and was firing among the men before they were awake. They had not expected an enemy to come like a bolt from the sky, and the attack caused a general stampede. All the prisoners were recaptured, and many of the enemy were killed, wounded and captured."

During the early hours of 14 October, a detachment of Rangers riding under the direct command of Mosby held up a U.S. military train on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad west of Duffield Station north of Berryville. "We crossed the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge (at Snickers Gap) before noon and found Grogan's party waiting for us at the appointed place (Bloomfield's Ebenezer Church) in Loudoun County." The captured \$173,000 was evenly distributed among Mosby's men, giving each of them \$2,160.

In August, Major General Sheridan had received the following order from General Grant: "If you can possibly spare a division of Cavalry, send them through Loudoun County to destroy and carry off the crops, animals, negroes and all men under fifty years of age capable of bearing arms. In this way you will get many of Mosby's men. All male citizens under fifty can fairly be held as prisoners of war, and not as citizen prisoners. If not already soldiers, they will be made so the moment the rebel army gets hold of them."

But Sheridan at that time was far too busy with his campaign in the Shenandoah Valley immediately to comply. It was not until after his victory over General Early in October at Cedar Creek that he felt he could act. On 26 November he sent the following

telegram to General-in-Chief Henry Halleck: "I will soon commence work on Mosby. Now there is going to be an intense hatred of him in that portion of the (Loudoun) valley which is nearly a desert. I will soon commence on Loudoun County, and let them know there is a God in Israel. Mosby has annoyed me considerably."

On 27 November, Sheridan issued the following orders to Major General Wesley Merritt in command of the 1st Cavalry Division: "You are directed to proceed, tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock, with two brigades of your division now in camp, to the east side of the Blue Ridge via Ashby's Gap... you will consume and destroy all forage and subsistence, burn all barns and mills and their contents and drive off all stock in the region... The reserve brigade of your division will move to Snickersville on the 29th. Snickersville should be your point of concentration and the point from which you should operate in destroying toward the Potomac... You will return to your present camp, via Snickersville, on the fifth day."

Merritt's men separated at Paris into three groups. One went south through Rectortown and Salem (now Marshall), , another east to Aldie and then along the Snickersville Turnpike to Snickersville, and the third headed north to the Potomac. All met at Snickersville with the livestock captured, encamped overnight and returned via Snickers Gap to the Valley, arriving there on the morning of 3 December. General Merritt reported driving off or destroying 6,000 head of cattle, 4,000 head of sheep, nearly 1,000 fatted hogs, and 500 to 700 horses. The reserve brigade reported they had burned 230 barns, 8 mills, 1 distillery, 10,000 tons of hay and 25,000 bushels of grain.

1865

The guerilla warfare was not stopped by Merritt's raid, and Snickersville continued to be subject to raids and skirmishes for the last few months of the war. Robert Marshall, Company A, 6th Virginia Cavalry, died on 4 March in the Elmira, New York prison. John A. Chew was wounded at Hamilton during the 20 to 22 March movement of Union troops to Snickersville. Major George E. Plaster, M.D., 6th Virginia Cavalry was captured on 1 April at the Battle of Five Forks (west of Petersburg). He signed his oath of allegiance on 19 June and walked back to Snickersville from the Johnson Island prison in Ohio. On 5 April, James M. Osborn, Company A, 6th Virginia Cavalry, was captured. General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox on 8 April. Of the 39 men from Snickersville who fought in the Civil War, 6 were killed, one died of wounds received in battle, and one died in prison.

Henry G. Plaster

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