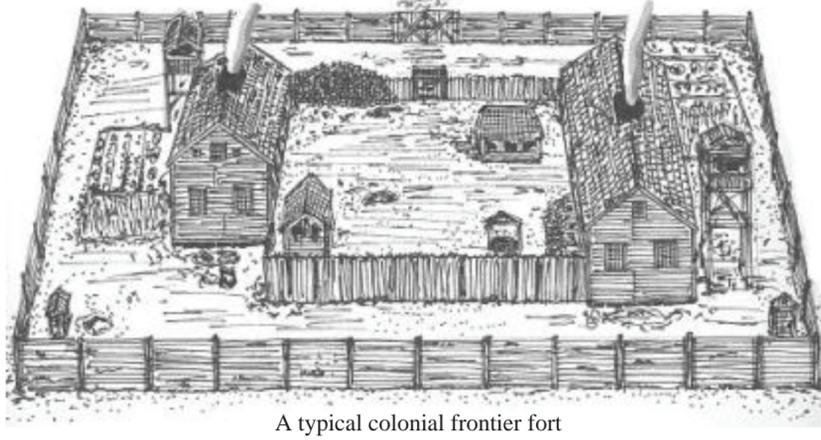




# The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2015



A typical colonial frontier fort

## BACON FORT

*Virginia Frontier Peril and Forts*

Bacon Fort, circa 1755, stood on a promontory above Beaverdam Creek Fork on the north side of the Mountain Road, about four miles east of modern Bluemont.

It can best be appreciated in the context of the French and Indian War (1754-1764), which George Washington started and which brought about daily peril to the Colonial Virginia frontier, which stretched up past Maryland and just west of southern Pennsylvania and then westward to "Ohio Country."

The French had established trade and commerce at the Forks of the Ohio (Allegheny and Monongahela rivers) near Pittsburgh. The Ohio Company in 1752 challenged the French, starting a small fort and settlements in the same area.

The French in 1753 began to build forts to deny British traders access to the Ohio river. London then ordered Virginia Colonial Governor Robert Dinwiddie to send a messenger and instruct the French: stop building forts. Dinwiddie sent Major Washington, 21, who met with the French in late 1753. The French declined cooperation.

Dinwiddie promoted Washington to Lt. Colonel and ordered him to return and help the Ohio Company build its fort. On this expedition, with fewer than 60 men and the French near, Washington built primitive Fort Necessity 37 miles from the River Forks. On 28 May 1754, with 40 militiamen and 12 Mingo warriors, Washington ambushed before breakfast 35 French commanded by Jumonville, killing ten, including Jumonville, wounding one, and capturing all but one. Washington was promoted to colonel. He returned to Fort Necessity, and superior French forces compelled his humiliating surrender on 3 July 1754.

In Williamsburg, Washington was criticized, Dinwiddie spoke of a "want of proper command," and Washington resigned rather than accept demotion.

*(Bacon Fort cont.)*

Still, Washington fought with British General Braddock who battled the French 9 July 1755. The British were routed, fled, and Braddock died of wounds suffered. Washington's uniform was shot through four times (without injury), and he was recognized for his "gallant behavior."

The House of Burgesses restored Washington's rank and put him in command of a 1,200 man regiment. Washington headquartered at Winchester, constructing Fort Loudoun after September 1755.

Braddock's defeat opened the Virginia frontier to peril and terror. French indigenous allies, especially Shawnee and Delaware warriors defending their land, killed settlers and soldiers. Washington ordered Lt. John Bacon to build two forts, including Fort Ashby near Cumberland, completed before December 1755. Nonetheless, Washington lost 400 men in 18 months.

In late 1755 and early 1756, the House of Burgesses ordered Washington to build 23 small forts and approved funding. 1756 was deadly, however, and in early 1757 even Fort Ashby was abandoned. Only after British forces prevailed in 1758 did the frontier become stable.

It was during this perilous period that Bacon Fort was likely most useful to Washington. It was a strategic outpost for rest and provisions en route to Fort Loudoun. Its importance is emphasized by its inclusion on a July 1757 Loudoun County map and its twice being mentioned in court as a surveyor's landmark.

With frontier peace, Bacon Fort was converted to a house by landowner William West, and by March 1760 William Owsley was licensed to operate the house as an ordinary (tavern, hostelry).

In June 1769 West bequeathed Bacon Fort to his son Charles. It was a convenient stop for Washington. In his diary he writes 1 August 1769, "Set out from Charles West's . . ." when he was traveling with his wife, Martha, and her daughter, Martha Parke Custis. As late as June 1788, he writes: "Halted at a small Tavern Bacon fort."

Bacon Fort survived as a tavern well into the 19th century. Nothing remains today.

*(Philomont General Store cont.)*

constructed of concrete blocks that were made on the site. West A. Pearson bought the store from the Milhollen estate in 1935 and Pearson's General Store became the new name. After several more ownership changes, the store was rechristened Philomont General Store in 1966. The present owners are Mark and Madeline Skinner, just the eighth in over 100 years. Since 1941 the store has housed the local U.S. Post Office, the last operational post office located in a general store in Loudoun County. Laura Pearson (daughter-in-law of West Pearson, Sr.) retired in January after having served more than fifty years as postmaster. You can see that the store's roots run deep in the community. And, this being Hunt Country, there are occasional celebrity sightings. Academy award winning actor Robert Duvall, who lived nearby in the 1980's, was a regular at the store. Occasionally Duvall might bring a friend with him – Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, or Waylon Jennings.

The next time you travel Snickersville Turnpike, take some time for a stop at the Philomont General Store. You never know who you might bump into on the front porch.

## TWO RECENT TURNPIKE EVENTS

This past Fall, the Snickersville Turnpike Association held two separate but interrelated events that recalled the early history of this area. The first was the installation of the White Pump Drivers Tavern marker at the intersection of Colchester Road and the Turnpike. Colchester, founded in 1753, was the second town established in Fairfax County and prospered as a trading and tobacco port until about 1815, when Alexandria became the primary shipping center. The White Pump Farm stone house operated as a tavern in the late 1790s and, by 1800, was known as the White Pump Drivers Tavern. As noted on the historical marker, drivers moved animals such as sheep, cattle, and hogs along roadways to market. Wagons stopped at the Tavern as late as 1915.

During the Civil War Valley Campaign of 1864, while General Philip Sheridan drove up the Shenandoah Valley, he faced a significant threat to his rear and to his supply lines from Mosby's Rangers, based east of the Blue Ridge in Loudoun

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Until the early 1830's the area around Philomont was referred to by locals as the "British Property" because it had always been owned by absentee English landlords. In 1831 a now unknown Italian painter passed through the village and coined the name Philomont, a combination of the Greek word "Philos", meaning beloved or loving, and the French word "Mont", meaning mountain.

## ROADSIDE CLEANUP – APRIL 2015

The Snickersville Turnpike Association will be assisting Keep Loudoun Beautiful by picking up trash alongside historic Snickersville Turnpike. Your help is greatly needed. You are probably aware of our Adopt-a-Highway signs. Together, with the help of Bluemont Citizens Association (west of Yellow Schoolhouse Road) and Mountville Farms (and Mountville), the entire 14 miles of the Turnpike is covered. Once again, we are in need of volunteers to help make this year's effort a success. Let your section leader know your selected area.

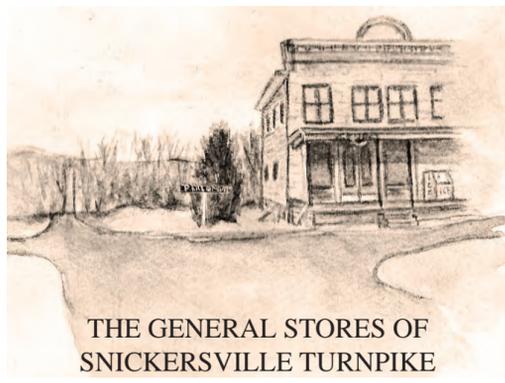
Orange trash bags can be picked up at the Philomont Community Center. Once filled, please call your section leader to notify the location of the bags. They will notify VDOT for pickup. You can also obtain the orange bags directly from VDOT.

Let's keep the Pike clean!

## SECTION LEADERS

Route 50 to Route 690.....Glenn Raiden 540-338-4157

Route 690 to Yellow Schoolhouse Road.....Henry Plaster 540-554-8591 or Chris Furlow 540-554-4510



THE GENERAL STORES OF  
SNICKERSVILLE TURNPIKE  
PHILOMONT GENERAL STORE

*This is the first in a series of articles featuring the three general stores on the Pike – Philomont, Airmont, and Bluemont. In this newsletter we will highlight the Philomont General Store.*

The General Store. A quintessential icon of Americana. The mere name conjures up images of the past: creaky wooden floors, a potbelly stove, and a small post office in the back. Largely displaced by box stores, shopping malls, and mini-marts, the general store is becoming a rarity on the landscape. Especially in a sprawling major metropolitan area. Viewed by many as a relic, a quaint vestige of the past, some come through the front door of the Philomont General Store expecting a museum. And it is partly that, but it's much, much more. In addition to the nostalgia items and the "basics", one will find local artisanal crafts, a large selection of wines – local, domestic and foreign, and gourmet foods in a full-service deli. Most importantly, the store serves as a vital and essential hub for the community of Philomont.

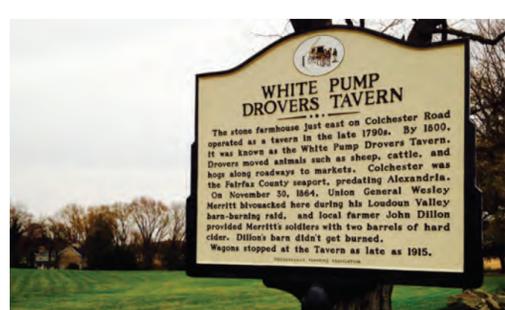
In continuous operation as a general store in the same building since 1913, Philomont General Store is located approximately midway between Aldie and Bluemont on the historic Snickersville Turnpike at the tiny crossroads village of Philomont, a 19th century Quaker community. An already established mercantile, the store was purchased by Henry Milhollen in 1843 and stayed in that family for close to 100 years. In 1908 Milhollen's store was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. After five years in a temporary space, the present store was

*(Two Recent Turnpike Events cont.)*

County. After Sheridan had defeated Jubal Early's army in late October in the Battle of Cedar Creek, he received these orders from General Grant: "There is no doubt about the necessity of clearing out (Western Loudoun County) so it will not support Mosby's gang. So long as the war lasts, they must be prevented from raising another crop."

At first light on the morning of November 28, 1864, the 3,000 Union troopers of General Wesley Merritt's 1st Cavalry Division came through Ashby's Gap, carrying torches, with orders from Sheridan to "consume and destroy all forage and substance, burn all barns and mills and their contents, and drive off all stock in the region." On November 30, having burned Ewers Mill, near Bacon Fort, Merritt's raiders serendipitously selected White Pump Farm for their overnight bivouac. It was then that nearby farmer John James Dillon hatched his plan to deliver in his wagon two barrels of his hard cider to Merritt for his troopers with the hope of protecting his barn. It was a good plan, since the next day, Merritt passed his barn by. At the end of the five day Burning of the Valley, Merritt's men had either slaughtered or driven off 5,000 to 6,000 cows, 3,000 to 4,000 sheep, 500 to 700 horses and 1,000 hogs. They torched 230 barns, 8 mills, and 1 distillery. Also destroyed were 10,000 tons of hay and 25,000 bushels of grain. Twelve prisoners were taken.

The second event was a commemoration of farmer Dillon's successful undertaking at the nearby circa 1780 Cider Barrel Barn. On November 30, 2014, the 150th anniversary of the raid, the Onorato family, present owners of the Barn, hosted a barbeque for the Snickersville Turnpike Association.



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