



The Pike Packet

News from The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2019



E. E. LAKE STORE - BACK IN BUSINESS

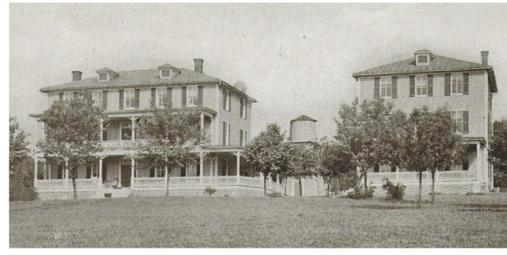
The venerable E. E. Lake Store is located at the corner of Railroad Street and Snickersville Turnpike in the historic village of Bluemont. Last year, after extensive repairs and stabilization by the County, new accessible bathrooms, a new heating/cooling system, and the new Plaster Museum of Bluemont Heritage was opened to the public in a ribbon cutting ceremony.

One area remained untouched: the original General Store. In fact, it remains the only General Store in the state of Virginia that has not been renovated. Today, as you walk the aisles, it's easy to imagine the shelves that ring the perimeter filled with tools, provisions, and necessities that an agrarian community then depended upon.

Built by Edward E. Lake about 1901, the E. E. Lake Store was originally a two-story hip-roofed structure with clapboard siding. In addition to serving the grocery needs of villagers, the building also housed a post office (now the Plaster Museum) and a branch of the Loudoun Bank of Leesburg until 1907. The store closed in the early 1930s and was reopened for about two years in the 1940s. Its history also included a popular dance hall on the second floor with a stage for the performers. Still standing by the store on Railroad Street is Mr. Lake's impressive Victorian-styled home – a very short walk to work.

The E.E. Lake Store, previously only open during the Bluemont Fair in September, is breathing new life into the village. The building now serves as a "Welcome Center" for tourists and cyclists, hosts meetings, provides office space and storage for the Bluemont Citizens Association, and is home to a Heritage Museum and archives, and hopefully opening this summer, a weekend farmers' market for local growers and artisans.

Over 115 years later, the E. E. Lake Store is back in business!



PLACES ALONG THE PIKE

"THE LOUDOUN"

In the heights above Bluemont, uphill from Railroad Street and overlooking Loudoun Valley, sits "The Loudoun", an imposing three story turn of the century building. For a brief period over one hundred years ago its proper name was "The Loudoun Select School for Young Ladies", an incorporated boarding school for girls. But it was, and is, known to all as simply "The Loudoun".

Built in 1902 by John D. Chapin, The Loudoun was originally a hotel named The Loudoun House Hotel. Constructed to take advantage of the emergence of Bluemont as a summer resort served by a rail line, rates were set at \$2.50 a day for bed, breakfast, and dinner. Competition for the tourism trade took hold and other establishments like the Blue Ridge Inn opened. But, by 1911 Bluemont had peaked as a popular destination and Chapin established a boarding school for girls at his hotel to take up the slack in the winter months.

Chartered by the Virginia Commonwealth Corporation Commission on May 29, 1911, The Loudoun Select School for Young Ladies, a private, non-sectarian boarding school for girls, was founded with Miss Alice F. Glascock identified as its president, principal, and presiding teacher. Mr. John D. Chapin was listed in the register as Secretary and Treasurer with his wife as head of the "Home Department". A faculty of nine taught such diverse subjects as Philosophy, Economics, Rhetoric, Latin, History, Bible, Mathematics, Science, English, French, Italian, German, Expression, Physical Culture, Music and Art. There were 34 teens and preteens enrolled in its first school year in September

("The Loudoun" cont.)

1911. Most were from the Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland area, but there were others from New England, the deep south, and the upper midwest. Despite the name of the school, there were at least four boys who attended as day students.

To a large extent, The Loudoun's selling point was its location. By 1912 Bluemont was an established resort town nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains within 50 rail miles of Washington, D.C. Advertisements for the school placed in national publications such as Harper's Monthly Magazine, Everybody's Magazine, and Scribner's Magazine touted the "unsurpassed" health of the mountain air as well as the advantage of "electrics to Washington, D.C. Every two hours." From the school's register of 1911-1912 comes this quote, "The fact that the entire session has passed without the visit of a physician to see a single boarding student shows the wonderful healthfulness of the location." Tuition was \$250 per school year, and parents were promised "personal attention to pupil's marked feature [sic]." Health and outdoor sports in the afternoon were emphasized. Again, from the register, "In the afternoon hours between 3:30 and 5:30, books are to be put aside and forgotten, while tired brain and body are refreshed with mountain air and vigorous exercise." Regular hikes to nearby Bear's Den or Raven Rocks were a common activity. The "thoroughly sanitary condition" of the facility was also stressed.



Basketball on the lawn

The school year 1912-1913 brought a new principal, Miss Helen M. Bradley, and a largely new faculty to the school. Despite an enrollment that doubled that of the previous year, The Loudoun Select School for Young Ladies was in decline. Bluemont's heyday had

("The Loudoun" cont.)

passed due to dwindling rail usage. At the Balch Library in Leesburg there exists a Loudoun Select School program of music, song, and dramatic readings dated May 24, 1913, most likely a celebration of the end of the school year. After that, there is scant mention of the school in the historical record. Then there is an entry from the Virginia State Corporation Commission dated February 26, 1915 stating that the school's charter was dissolved and its franchise surrendered. The hotel, with Mr. J. Lincoln Chapin listed as proprietor, remained in business. In 1916 Mr. James Calvin Beatty established a school for boys at the hotel named Willow Brook Academy, but that school, too, was defunct within a few years. The hotel lasted until 1930, coinciding with the end of railroad passenger service to Bluemont. "The Loudoun", with its intriguing history, is today a private residence.

Source: MC030 folder 1, Ann Thomas Collection, The Balch Library

ITINERANT BLACKSMITHS

A blacksmith forges wrought iron to make various things, such as agricultural implements, gates, and tools. Many blacksmiths also worked as farriers and wheelwrights, shoeing horses and making and repairing wheels. George Washington had a blacksmith's shop at Mount Vernon in 1787 that is still there today. Local farmers used the services of traveling ("itinerant") blacksmiths and provided an anvil and a forge for them in an enclosed outbuilding.

Before tractors, farmers used draft horses to provide the power for plowing, harrowing, and harvesting and usually kept several of them, mostly Percheron and Belgian breeds. These draft horses needed to be shod periodically, which was the primary reason for farmers to schedule visits for traveling blacksmiths, the second being making nails and replacing broken pieces of chains or "teeth" on spring-toothed harrows that smoothed the fields after plowing.

One hundred years ago, there were sixty farmers listed in the four-page 1919 Snickersville Telephone

(Blacksmiths cont.)

Company Directory for the Bluemont Switchboard. Many of their farms along the Turnpike were dairy farms, which transitioned to other uses fifty years ago. When these farms began using tractors, the need for blacksmiths declined. Today, there are at least two operating blacksmiths nearby, one on Austin Grove Road and one on Yellow Schoolhouse Road. You can see the evidence of these itinerant blacksmiths in the few remaining blacksmith shop outbuildings at local farms.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I recently came across an August 1935 photograph of the Bluemont Methodist Church with tall green corn growing in the field next to it. The Snickersville Turnpike was a dirt road with two chickens right in the middle of it. The farm life along the Pike's fourteen miles was a lot different then, yet today the stone fences, the viewshed, and the rural character remain the same. Your help is needed to make the County keep the developers at bay and to find viable uses for the open farm fields.



The Snickers Gap Turnpike, authorized in 1785, was America's first operating turnpike and connected to the road to Leesburg at what was previously called Williams Gap, after the 1731 "squatter." During the past year VDOT paved the western half of historic Williams Gap Road with a rustic tar and chip surface. We are continuing to work with VDOT on the clogged culvert at the Airmont Road intersection. VDOT has erected new lower 40 mph signs on Foggy Bottom Road, and resurfacing is scheduled this summer.

Emerald Ribbons is a new County concept to establish a County-wide parks and trails system that would include the western half of the Snickersville Turnpike. "Stay tuned."

Henry G. Plaster

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DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Civil War Battle of Unison actually began on the Snickersville Turnpike? On November 2, 1862 a Union advance force of 2500 cavalry, infantry, and artillery under General McClellan began to move south from Philomont toward Unison. McClellan was met by 1,000 cavalry and horse artillery under Jeb Stuart. One of Stuart's staff officers was a young scout who was assigned Loudoun Valley for the first time. He was John Singleton Mosby, before he became widely celebrated as "The Grey Ghost".

ROADSIDE CLEANUP - APRIL 2019

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 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 them as to 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