Buckland, the ‘time capsule’ village on Broad Run

Part I: Quiet setting today belies Buckland’s rich heritage and historical significance

By John T. Toler

Driving south on U.S. 29 where it crosses Broad Run, one can catch a glimpse of the old stone tavern on the corner, and farther back, some old houses and a large frame building next to the stream that was once a mill.

This community in a shallow valley along Broad Run is what remains of the town of Buckland, once called “the Lowell of Prince William County,” a reference to the industrial town of Lowell, Mass.

The curious who venture down the short, narrow section of Route 684 leading back to the mill quickly realize that they have entered a place that is very special, if not unique; the number of historic site markers along the street remove any doubt.

Due to its location in a high-growth area directly on a heavily traveled highway, in recent years Buckland has faced certain obliteration. Fortunately, people connected to the village, including current property owners and other kindred spirits, became aware of the village’s endangered condition, and have acted.

Along with his neighbors, David W. Blake, owner of nearby Buckland Farm, founded the Buckland Preservation Society Inc. in 2003.

They realized that Buckland offered at least three separate “historical landscapes” that have survived virtually intact:

• The Town of Buckland and the immediate surrounding areas, which are now protected in a 497-acre National Register Historic District;

• The entire core ground of the 1863 Buckland Mills Battlefield, as established by the American Battlefield Protection Program; and

• A Native American town/trading center and sacred site on the Susquehanna Plain Path (Old Carolina Road) at Buckland.
We love this town, now it's your turn - tell us why **YOU** love it!

Submit your love letter to us by January 9, 2012 to be entered in our "I Love Haymarket" contest. Winning submissions will be selected by our fine staff and will be printed in the February 2012 issue along with a $100 visa gift card.

Categories include:
- **Newbies** - resident in the last 5 years
- **Townies** - resident longer than 5 Years
- **Kiddies** - 12 and under

Entries should be submitted through email at krysta@piedmontpress.com, please indicate the category above in the subject.
Because so much of these separate historic landscapes survive as well as the original buildings in their original contexts, Mr. Blake believes that Buckland could be restored "...in a way you can't restore other historic places."

To this end, the BPS has used several different methods to acquire and protect the property in and around Buckland, and much of the land has been placed in permanent easement – never to be developed, and protected from encroachment.

**Buckland’s Rich Heritage**

There was already business activity going on in the town on Broad Run originally called “Buck Land” by the Native Americans, when Samuel Love, Buckland’s “Founding Father,” purchased land from Robert “King” Carter’s sons and son-in-law in the area, including a mill and dam. He also built Buckland Hall, a stone house east of the village.

Changes began in 1775, after Love petitioned Fauquier County (at the time it was thought that the little settlement was in Fauquier) to build an improved public road that could carry wagon traffic from Warrenton to his mill on Broad Run, replacing the rutted, inadequate private road then in use.

It was determined that there was sufficient public need, and the road was one of the first public roads in the region. Samuel Love’s sons Samuel, John, Charles and Augustine served as Virginia Regiment officers during the Revolutionary War, and returned to transform Buckland into a vibrant mercantile center.

Beside (Love’s) mill, they built an assortment of secondary structures for production of manufactured goods at the base of the lane leading to the main house. The Town of Buckland was chartered by an Act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1797, and included 48 lots on both sides of Broad Run and the Town Common, with the road passing through the settlement.

The influence of the Love family on Buckland cannot be overstated. In 1808, John Love, then a U.S. congressman representing Fauquier and Prince William counties, formed the Fauquier-Alexandria Turnpike, which would link Fauquier Court House – by way of Buckland – with the Little River Turnpike (present-day Route 7), and on to Alexandria.

It took several years for the first paved road in Virginia to be built. French engineer Claudius Crozet was engaged to design and construct the portion that passed through Buckland. It was Crozet who determined that the new road should pass through the center of Buckland, rather than the north end, upstream of Broad Run, where an old wooden bridge once stood. In addition to taking four lots out of the original plan, the placement of the road would have a lasting impact on the town.

From an historic viewpoint, the actual construction of the turnpike was also significant. In addition to being Crozet’s first project in Virginia, it was built using the new process developed by John Loudoun McAdam, whereby a roadbed of smaller stones built up between two ditches was paved over with larger stones, creating what at the time was considered to be “the finest road in Virginia.”

With the road improvements, Buckland became a regular stop on “Extra Billy” Smith’s stagecoach route. The “Stagecoach Inn” was built in 1824 to accommodate travelers, and a post office established in the town by 1800.

By the 1830s, the town had two water-powered gristmills, a woolen factory, two successive distilleries, blacksmith’s shop, tannery, several stores and a stone quarry. Other enterprises were attracted to the area and leased parcels in the town, and soon there were two taverns, an apothecary, a wheelwright and a cooper, a boot and shoemaker, and a saddle maker offering their products and services.

Residents continued to move into Buckland, building homes in and near the town, including skilled laborers, craftsmen and professionals. By 1855 about 130 whites and 50 freed African Americans and several hundred enslaved were living in Buckland.

The Battle of Buckland Mills

After Confederate forces abandoned their defensive positions at Centreville in March 1862, Union troops moved south into the Piedmont, occupying towns and villages including Warrenton, Haymarket and Buckland.

In August 1862, the first shots of the Battle of Second Manassas were fired when Union Gen. Pope’s men were involved in a local skirmish on the Buckland Bridge.

Fortunately for Buckland, the presence of Union troops in the area did not result in the burning the town, as it did in Haymarket in November 1862. But Buckland was the scene of a significant battle involving 12,000 cavalrymen supported by artillery that took place on Oct. 19, 1863.

At the beginning of the day, Confederate forces under Gen. J.E.B. Stuart held the Town of Buckland. Using the buildings in the town for cover, they fired on Union cavalry and artillery under Gen. George A. Custer positioned on the high ground across Broad Run at the Cerro Gordo plantation, the home of Charles Hunton.

When Stuart’s troops retreated by design west on the turnpike from Buckland, heading west on the turnpike, Union cavalry under Gen. Henry E. Davies and Gen. Judson Kilpatrick pursued them, leaving Custer to guard the town and ridge above it.

Riding hard toward Warrenton, Stuart lured the Union forces into a Confederate trap west of present-day Greenwich Road (present-day Rt. 215), where 5,200 cavalrmen under Gen. Fitzhugh Lee were concealed in the woods.
As Davies’ brigade passed the wooded area, Lee ordered his cannons to fire, springing
the trap. The advancing Union column
was cut in half, and a running battle
on the turnpike from New Baltimore to
Buckland raged, as the forward element
of the Union force fled toward Gainesville
and Haymarket. The pursuit of the Union
infantry by Lee and Stuart’s men later
became known as the “Buckland Races.”

Lee and Stuart combined their forces and
attacked the confused Union troops from
the front, flank and rear, and driving them
back to Broad Run in full retreat. Likewise,
Custer’s men, who were bringing up the
rear as the battle unfolded, were pushed
back to the Buckland Bridge.

About 250 Union soldiers were reported
killed or wounded in the battle, as well
as 200 captured, and marched to the jail
in Warrenton. Half the Union army’s
ambulances and wagons carrying medical
supplies were captured, along with Custer’s
personal papers, which were later published
in a Richmond newspaper, in a clear effort
to humiliate him.

Commenting on the Confederate victory,
Custer—who had two horses shot out
from under him— noted that the Battle of
Buckland Mills “...was the most disastrous
this division ever passed through ... I
cannot but regret the loss of so many brave
men.” Historians studying the battle note
that Custer’s decision to defy orders and
hold his men back after the initial attack,
rather than rushing into the trap likely
spared the lives of many of his cavalrymen.
This has become known as “Custer’s First
Stand.”

The Battle of Buckland Mills was the
Confederate Army of Northern Virginia’s
last cavalry offensive, and Gen. Stuart’s last
victory over enemy cavalry.

**Preservation Efforts Organized**

Buckland enjoyed periods of moderate
prosperity after the Civil War, but
like many 19th century agricultural
communities, was not immune to economic
depression and events beyond its control. A
changing world left the town behind, and
the catastrophic flooding of Broad Run that
happened also took its toll.

By the 1930s, Buckland was a mere village
scattered over a sloping hill, where filling
stations and small, tumbled-down old
structures and the crumbling remains of
Buckland Tavern marked the site of the old
town.

Although the village took another serious
hit in 1951, when U.S. 29 was widened to
eight lanes, only a small slice of the historic
features of the town were lost. The original
foundations of the few buildings taken
remain extant.

Addressing the fragile existence of
Buckland, BPS directors initiated a
project to preserve and eventually restore
the town on those original foundations.
Philosophically, they believe that ownership
is the best foundation for stewardship, and
that historic preservation is the highest and
best use of their properties.

In that spirit, BPS members have placed
nearly 400 acres of the Buckland Historic
Landscape into permanent protective
easements. BPS has a formal long-term
plan approved by the American Battlefield
Protection Program to continue placing
easements on 2,333 acres of the battlefield
core area.

Richard Bland Lee V, the fourth generation
of the Lee family to live at Buckland, serves
as Chairman Emeritus. Involved in historic
preservation efforts, Mr. Lee also served as
chairman of the Sully Foundation.

David W. Blake serves as BPS chairman.
In addition to his home, Buckland Hall,
Mr. Blake has placed 100 acres of Buckland
Farm into permanent easement, and
has a plan with the ABPP to continue
easements and acquiring other parcels on
the battlefield, which will also be protected
by easements.

BPS President Linda Wright and her
husband Edward B. “Barry” Wright have
owned Cerro Gordo Farm since 1983.
The main house overlooks Broad Run and
the village, and figured prominently in
the Civil War actions at Buckland. The
Wrights also own the old post office in the
village.

Vice president of the BPS is Thomas Ashe,
who acquired the Buckland Tavern at
the corner with U.S. 29 in 1975. He later
purchased the Richard Gill house, the
Hampton-Trone house, the Eppa Hunton
Schoolhouse, part of the original Town

Director Brian Mannix and his wife Susan
Dudley acquired the Buckland Mill tract
in 1986, and live in the Miller’s House
next to the mill. Their property includes
approximately 4,000 feet of the Broad Run
streambed and is now under easement.

Mrs. Betty Evans, who with her late
husband Thomas Mellon Evans owned
Buckland Farm for four decades, also serves
as a director.

Past Director John McBride, an attorney
who specializes in the areas of land use
and development, continues to be actively
involved with the society.

The Buckland Preservation Society works
closely with the National Park Service’s
American Battlefield Protection Program,
the Virginia Department of Historic
Department of Historic Resources, the
counties of Prince William and Fauquier,
APVA Preservation of Virginia, the
National Trust for Historic Preservation,
the Journey Through Hallowed Ground,
the Land Trust of Virginia and others to

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*Above: Kinsley Mill, on Broad Run east of
Buckland, was demolished during the 20th
century. Left: The Stagecoach Inn, demolished
in the 1930s, once served travelers on William
"Extra Billy" Smith's stagecoach line. The woman
in the photo is believed to be Mrs. Grace Bear,
who lived in the landmark Buckland Tavern for
many years.*
implement a long-term preservation plan.

Major accomplishments include listing the Buckland Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, and gaining federal recognition of the Buckland Mills Battlefield.

Their success in preserving land through easements has been recognized, and the BPS has been awarded matching grants from federal, state and private funds to purchase additional properties that will be put into protective easements. The terms of these grants call for public access to the historic areas, something the BPS fully endorses as part of their research and educational commitment.

By providing a window into Virginia's industrial, architectural and cultural past, they are confident that Buckland can become a destination for those involved in heritage tourism, bringing visitors to the area and stimulating the economy as part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Program.

"Tourism is the #1 industry in 15 counties in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground," according to Cate Magenias Wyatt, founder and president of the JHTG. "Tourism generates $3 billion in revenue, and 54,364 jobs in the region."

Buckland is close to the middle of the 180-mile Gettysburg-to-Monticello Journey Through Hallowed Ground, and Buckland — with nearby access to I-66 — is "an excellent gateway to the JTHG," she added.

Part II, to be published in February, deals with the new initiatives taken on by the Buckland Preservation Society Inc., and what the future may hold.

Author John Toler is a writer and historian and has served Fauquier County for over 50 years, including 4 decades with the Fauquier Times Democrat. He has written and lectured about many legendary characters in Fauquier County's history. Toler is the co-author of 250 Years in Fauquier County: A Virginia Story, and author of Warrenston, Virginia: A History of 200 Years.
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