

FACT SHEET

BULL RUN MOUNTAIN 1200 ACRES

OWNED BY THE VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

Foundation Statutory Purposes

In 1966 the Virginia General Assembly determined that open space and public parkland in Virginia were diminishing at a rapid rate and that therefore the General Assembly was creating the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to preserve these public interests:

The General Assembly finds that the State's population is increasing rapidly and becoming concentrated in urban and suburban areas; that the open space available for parks as well as natural, scenic, historic, scientific and recreational areas is being diminished constantly and it is in the public interest that preservation of open space be encouraged.

In order to promote the public policy above declared, and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land, or other property of whatever character for the purpose of preserving the natural, scenic, historic, scientific and recreational areas of the State, there is hereby created the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, a body politic to be organized and to have such powers as hereinafter provided. 1966 Acts of Assembly, Section 1, c. 525. [Emphasis added.]

Bull Run Land Was Donated to the State Agency For a Public Park

In its 1965 Report, the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Commission proposed a state park in the Bull Run Mountains. George Freeman, a Richmond attorney, and Shirley Briggs from Bethesda, Maryland, acted as "strawmen" purchasers for a private non-profit entity, the Natural Area Council. The Council, in turn, later donated the land Freeman and Briggs had acquired to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. A 1993 news article cites Freeman's objection to the Foundation selling any of the Bull Run mountaintop property he worked to acquire: "One day, the state will rekindle the dream of a recreation area in the Bull Run Mountains and will need to buy back the property, he predicted." July 5, 1993 Richmond Times-Dispatch article, "Sale of mountaintop to heiress is sore point".

Each Five-Year State Recreation Plan Since 1965 Has Proposed the VOF Bull Run Mountain Land for a Public Park

The most recent State Comprehensive Recreation Plan states:

.....
32. The Bull Run Mountains in Prince William and Fauquier Counties offer attractive mountain terrain. There is an intensive effort by state and local governments, in cooperation with private interests, to preserve this unique mountain area through land acquisition and open space easements. Once protection is provided for this area, a master plan should be developed which will provide for compatible day use recreation.

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In addition to its easement acquisitions, the [Virginia Outdoors] Foundation protects over 6,000 acres through fee simple ownership, including the 3,000-acre Bull Run Mountain tract. [Since 1989, part of the tract was sold to a private party.]

The 1989 Virginia Outdoors Plan, pages 189 & 10 respectively..

While A Study Was Done of the Natural and Recreational Features on the VOF Land in 1980, No Inventory of Its Historic and Cultural Sites Has Been Conducted and Recorded

The sites of historic significance found on the VOF land include:

- o The ruins of "Meadowland" and icehouse near Beverley's Mill

Described in the Historic American Buildings Survey, "Meadowland" is

.1 mile east of Broad Run, north side of State Rte. 55 at Thoroughfare Gap. Fieldstone walls. Built mid 18th C.; demolished. 1 ext. photo (1936).

Historic American Buildings Survey Virginia Catalog (VA-829).

According to National Park Service (NPS) Historian Noel Harrison, the Chapman family erected "Meadowland" as a residence, which was part of the Chapman's Mill complex (also known as "Beverley's Mill"). "Action at Chapman's (Beverley's) Mill August, 1862", The Manassas Museum News, Vol. 8, No. 2 (March-April 1990) p. 2.

- o The hand-dug quartzite quarry on Quarry Ridge immediately north of Beverley Mill

Regarding the economic function of this quarry, Noel Harrison describes it today "as a huge trench extending about 200 yards along the spine of the ridge. Operations here, unlike those at most quarries, emphasized excavation along the surface of the rock, not into it. Age, close proximity to identifiable building sites, and the type of stone extracted also make the quarry unique."

In terms of historic significance, Harrison notes it was one of the two sites of fierce fighting during the Civil War Battle of Thoroughfare Gap (the Mill structure was the other):

..... [W.H.] Andrews was soon joined by the rest of the First [Georgia] Regulars, who, during much of the next hour, engaged in a bizarre firefight with the infantrymen of the 11th Pennsylvania. The two regiments, separated only by the quarry trench, blazed away at point-blank range but were generally prevented by the excavation from making physical contact. The soldiers on both sides later claimed that their musketry forced the opposing regiment to retreat several times.

"A New Look at Chapman's (Beverley's) Mill", Unpublished Version, Noel G. Harrison, pp. 2 & 5; see also, The Manassas Museum News article by Harrison, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 3.

- o The knoll on which Union artillery were positioned and firing at Thoroughfare Gap as depicted in Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War

On page 2 of Harrison's Manassas Museum News article is the Harper's drawing of Union cannon aimed at Thoroughfare Gap. The land on which the cannon is located is part of the "Bell Tract" that the Virginia Outdoors Foundation owns.

Another NPS historian, John Hennessy, in his book Return to Bull Run (1993), details how the Confederate Evander Law led his 1,000 Alabama soldiers up a steep slope of "Old Mother Leathercoat", then through mountain terrain just north of the Union blockade in Thoroughfare Gap, and down the east slope of the smaller ridge to the cannon of the 11th Pennsylvania. All of the ground Law and his troops traversed is State-owned, with the exception of the steep slope west of the ridgetrest:

.....
Evander Law was a twenty-six-year old South Carolinian, one of the army's promising young officers. He had been badly wounded at First Manassas, but recovered in time to distinguish himself as a stand-up fighter on the Peninsula. Now he faced a task unlike any other he

had attempted: moving an entire brigade over Mother Leathercoat, terrain better suited for goats than soldiers. Longstreet sent him a guide who claimed to know a trail over the mountain. The climb was arduous, the trail a trail in name only. The column stumbled along. Worse, halfway up the hill the guide lost his bearings. Incensed, Law dismissed the man and sent out his own scouts instead. If there was a way over the top they were to find it. If not, they were to make one.

Law's soldiers scrambled up the mountain, pulling themselves along by branches or with the help of a man in front. Near the summit they ran into a sheer rock precipice that blocked their path. After a quick search, Law found a way through, but only one man at a time could pass (Law had more than a thousand men), and then only with the help of both the man behind and the one in front. From below he could hear the continuous rattle of musketry; Jones's men had not yet pushed through [the Union blockade in the Gap]. And from the east, toward Manassas, he could hear the boom of cannon. What did that mean? "I felt that the sound of each gun was a call for help," Law remembered, "and the progress of the men, one by one, across the rocky barrier was painfully slow.

As soon as enough men to form a skirmish line scaled the cliff, Law ordered the advance to continue. Down the east face they moved, finding the going faster but only slightly less dangerous. Moving into a cleared field at the base of the slope, Law's skirmishers spotted a Yankee battery to their right. Law wrote, "They were firing steadily but leisurely and seemed as if they were there to stay." Law waited for the rest of the brigade to arrive, then pushed his skirmishers toward the flank of the guns. Rickett's skirmishers rushed out to meet them. The Union cannons hitched up their pieces and galloped to safety.

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Return to Bull Run, pp. 158-159.

- o Camp and observation post of Confederate Colonel John S. Mosby on the ridgecrest of "Old Mother Leathercoat"

An old roadbed that begins just east of the Mill and heads north through the valley between the two ridges of Mother Leathercoat winds up to the higher ridge, eventually reaching a fairly flat area of the ridgecrest where an extensive rock outcropping protrudes. Most all of this land is owned by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

A Major John Scott who was in Mosby's command authored Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby published two years after the Civil War. A chapter in this book, captioned "Adventures Between the Lines of the Armies", describes Mosby's camp at the crest of the Bull Run Mountain during the summer of 1863:

.....The two Federals were [captured and] taken to the Bull Run Mountain, from the crest of which could be plainly seen the Northern army camped in the Plains below.

.....
He [Mosby] did not, however, as you have seen, retire before them [the advancing Federal troops], but established his camp on the crest of the Bull Run Mountain, from which he descended like a mountain wolf, and made daily forays on the enemy.

Partisan Life, pp. 110, 112-113.

A landowner reports seeing the numbers "1863" inscribed on a large rock that is part of the rock outcropping. This needs confirmation which provides additional reason to conduct a formal inventory of the historic and cultural sites on the State land.

- o A residential structure built by a family of freed slaves who settled the valley following the Civil War

A large part of the valley between the two ridges is owned by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. It once was populated by freed slaves who moved into the area shortly after the War.

One of the families, the Corams, built their residence there and it is still standing, although in serious need of structural repair. Culturally it signifies the ability of a family to start a new way of life basically from nothing. Their homeplace should be included as part of the inventory.

The National Park Service Chief Historian Has Recommended that the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap and the Mosby Camp Be Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

In July 12, 1993 correspondence, Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian of the National Park Service, was disappointed to learn that the 1980 Study of the State land "made little if any effort to inventory and evaluate cultural resources in the study area."

He specifically references the research of Harrison and Hennessy as a basis for listing the military operations in the National Register:

The significance of the military operations in and around Thoroughfare Gap documented by Historians Harrison and Hennessy and their integrity are such to merit their inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, and D. The Mosby sites, although of local rather than national significance, also merit inclusion in the National Register.

The study of these Civil War sites and their documentation to National Register standards should be a part of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation planning process.

July 12, 1993 Correspondence from Edwin C. Bearss.

The Prince William County and Loudoun County Park Authorities Have Asked the State Agency's Board of Directors To Support the Establishment of a Public Trail on the Bull Run Mountain Land

The State Recreation Comprehensive Plan cited above has designated the Foundation's land as the southern end of a State Recreation Trail called the Bull Run-Catoctin Trail. The trail is planned to initiate at Thoroughfare Gap and head north through this land following generally the Bull Run and Catoctin Mountain ridgelines up to Point-of-Rocks Maryland where it intersects the C & O Towpath. The 1989 Virginia Outdoors Plan, pp. 189 & 253.

Both recreation departments of Prince William and Loudoun Counties have gone on record with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in requesting the Board's consideration of this day-use trail on the Foundation land. February 9, 1989 Correspondence (Loudoun); March 23, 1989 Correspondence (Prince William).