

RELIC

From: PWPLS Ask A Librarian - RELIC
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2005 8:54 PM
To: 'Emmceach@aol.com'
Subject: RE: The Battle of Buckland Mills

I have some additional information about Chestnut Hill to clarify my previous message. Am not convinced that that Chestnut Hill you are interested in is the same as "West View" as described in the book *Fauquier County, Virginia, 1759-1959* (p. 222). For one thing, it appears that West View was not called Chestnut Hill during the Civil War. (It was called Chestnut Hill ca. 1799-1833.) Have determined that Bethel, the location of West View, is about 2 miles north of Warrenton near the intersection of Route 17 and 628. Bethel was also the site of Bethel Church and Bethel Academy.

In agreement with your comments below, am inclined to identify your Chestnut Hill with another location, on the Warrenton Turnpike (Route 29 and 211) about 2 miles or so northeast of Warrenton, at a place called Chestnut Fork on Eugene Scheel's map of historic Fauquier County (1974). The book *The Road to Bristoe Station*, by William D. Henderson (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, 1987), p. 200, has a map of the Buckland area showing troop movements ca. Oct. 18-19, 1863. Stuart's forces are shown across the turnpike at "Chestnut Hill," at about that location (the map was prepared by the author).

Fauquier County Virginia 1759-1959 has a reference to Chestnut Forks on p. 41. "The upper branch of Dumfries Road continued by Chestnut Forks, where it crossed the future Alexandria turnpike, to Bethel and thence through the thoroughfare of the Rappahannock mountain, north by the foot of the Cobblers, to a ford in Goose Creek (Delaplane)." Dumfries (or Croome) Road is shown on Scheel's map as Route 605, going northwest from Route 29 through Croome's Crossroads to Bethel. It was probably called Chestnut Fork(s) because it was where the road branched off that led to Chestnut Hill. That could explain how the latter name got transferred to that location by military mapmakers.

"The Buckland Races" was Stuart's rout of the Federal forces on the Warrenton Turnpike, beginning at "Chesnut Hill." The Union troops raced back toward Buckland (hence the name). A detailed account is given in Henderson's book, p. 201-203.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Emmceach@aol.com [mailto:Emmceach@aol.com]
Posted At: Monday, June 13, 2005 11:04 PM
Posted To: Ask A Librarian-RELIC
Conversation: The Battle of Buckland Mills
Subject: The Battle of Buckland Mills

Dear Brad and Don:

OK, guys . . . I need help. Does my supposition at the end of this treatise pass the test of reasonableness?

I've got three versions of the battle that almost meet in the middle, but don't quite.

Brad, quoting Scheel in "Crossroads and Corners," says that the battle:

" . . . began with calvary skirmishes along the Warrenton Pike west of Gainesville. Union forces commanded by Geo. A. Custer, a brigadier-general at age 23, advanced upon the village, halting at the turnpike bridge and mill ford. J.E.B. Stuart's calvary guarded these Broad Run crossings but Custer's superior numbers forced Stuart to withdraw some three miles west to New Baltimore. The Federals, armed with Spencer Repeating Carbines, then took that village and Stuart again retreated, three miles west to the heights at Chestnut Forks."

By the way, I have an actual Spencer -- Philip Katcher in *The Civil War Source Book*, Devon, PA, 1982, say the U. S. Army purchased 12,471 of them, but the Confederates didn't buy any because they couldn't manufacture the brass cartridge cases. My great-great uncle, Cecil Reynolds, on the other side of my family, was a Union Lieutenant from Hollidaysburg, PA and he apparently picked it up on a battlefield . . . don't know which field. I also have a Confederate cavalry saber that I think was the one that Sgt Merritt, my ancestor who was killed at Buckland, carried in the battle. Can't prove it, but according to Katcher, it is exactly like the one he would have carried, and I am assuming one of his buddies brought it home to his parents in Clinton, NC, during the winter of 1863-64.

But back to the battle . . . Don's web site says, in the *Prince William Reliquary*, Vol 3, No. 1 (January, 2004), in an article by David Blake of Warrenton, that:

"The first shots of the Second Battle of Manassas were fired on Crozet's stone bridge in August, 1862. Then on 19 October 1863 the Confederate Cavalry enjoyed its final southern victory at Buckland where it defeated Generals Kilpatrick and George Armstrong Custer. Sometimes referred to as "Custer's First Stand," it was Custer's most serious defeat prior to the Battle at Little Big Horn. After the Confederates recaptured Crozet's Bridge, they sent the Yankees scrambling on a five-mile steeplechase along the Warrenton Turnpike. General J.E.B. Stuart humorously called the victory "The Buckland Races" as if it had been a glorious foxhunt and later, in his official record stated 'I am justified in declaring the rout of the enemy at Buckland the most single and complete that any cavalry has suffered during the war.' General Robert E. Lee wrote to General Stuart on the day of the battle at Buckland, 'I congratulate you and your officers and your men on this handsome success. The plan was well conceived and well executed.' On 21 October 1863 General Lee must have been pleased to write to his wife with news of victory so late in the war. 'We met separately and collectively the three Yankee Divisions of Cavalry, Bedford's Regulars, Gregg's and Kilpatrick's and whipt [sic] them every time . . . Gen. Stuart retreated designedly before them toward Warrenton and Our Divisions, under Gen. Fitz Lee came up perpendicular to the Pike and cut their column in two. The surprise was complete and we ran them as far as we could see them. Captured half their ambulances, one wagon loaded with ammunitions, one loaded with medical stores and 800 prisoners.' The Union Army suffered 230 casualties and the Buckland Tavern and Church were used as hospitals."

Don also says a Cornell University (<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>) said "Chestnut Hill was within 2 1/2 miles of Warrenton" according to Jeb Stuart. Same source said it was "in front of Warrenton." It is now known as West View. (I am unable to locate West View, Bethel, or Route 628, all of which were referenced with regard to Chestnut Hill. - EMM)

The third piece of the puzzle comes from the National Park Service which describes the Battle of Buckland Mills thusly:

"After defeat at Bristoe Station (*five days earlier on the 14th - EMM*) and an aborted advance on Centreville, Stuart's cavalry shielded the withdrawal of Lee's army from the vicinity of Manassas Junction, Union cavalry under Kilpatrick pursued Stuart's cavalry along the Warrenton Turnpike but were lured into an ambush near Chestnut Hill and routed. The Federal troopers were scattered and chased five miles in an affair that came to be known as the "Buckland Races."

Interesting, it is three miles from Buckland to New Baltimore and an additional three miles to the intersection of US 29, the Lee Highway, and SR 605, Dumfries Road. Exactly five hundred yards due west of that intersection, in a residential area next to a couple of lakes, is a one-block-long street named Chestnut Court. This location would be exactly equal to the (2) three-mile fall backs (either intentional according to Lee, or forced by the Spencer rifles according to Scheel), and in either case, the distances would pretty much locate "Chestnut Hill or Chestnut Forks" and therefore, the site of the battle. Of course, if Jeb Stuart then "scattered the Yankees for five miles," it would have covered a lot more territory after the battle started.

So, it looks like the actual site might well have been in the northeastern suburbs of Warrenton. This would match the National Park Service reference to Fauquier County, rather than it being on the Buckland side of the line in Prince William near Broad Run.

Y'all live on the ground . . . does this make sense?

With Jeb Stuart and George Custer going at each other, it must have been a really interesting fight . . . with Fitz Lee coming in from the side to cut the column. And since Robert E. Lee had been at Bristoe Station on the night of the 14th, and then at the push toward the Union supply depot at Centreville during the next five days, he must not have been far behind Stuart coming down the Warrenton Pike headed to Winter Quarters. He would have loved a dramatic cavalry victory that late in the war . . . and he was there.

Sorry this got a little long . . . but I wanted to give each of you all three sides of the story. At this moment in time, I am inclined to believe General Robert E. Lee and the guy who named that one block stub street in the residential development in Warrenton. I think Chestnut Hill was near Lee Highway and Dumfries Road . . . that local tradition was that the battle was fought there . . . and that the developer picked up the local tradition when he named the street.

Don and Cornell, quoting Jeb Stuart, say Chestnut Hill was within 2 1/2 miles of Warrenton, and my map program calculates Chestnut Court as being 2.25 miles from the center of downtown Warrenton. Jeb Stuart was there, and if that's what he said, he was pretty close to being dead on . . . and that location would have been "in front of Warrenton" from the direction he was coming. The combination is close enough for a working hypothesis.

Thanks for the assistance from you both. I commend you on the detail you provided and your promptness. (By the way, Brad, I understand your old habits . . . as your father would have said . . . "Once a Marine, always a Marine: there is no such thing as an ex-Marine."

Thanks again.

Ted McEachern
Virginia Beach