

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.

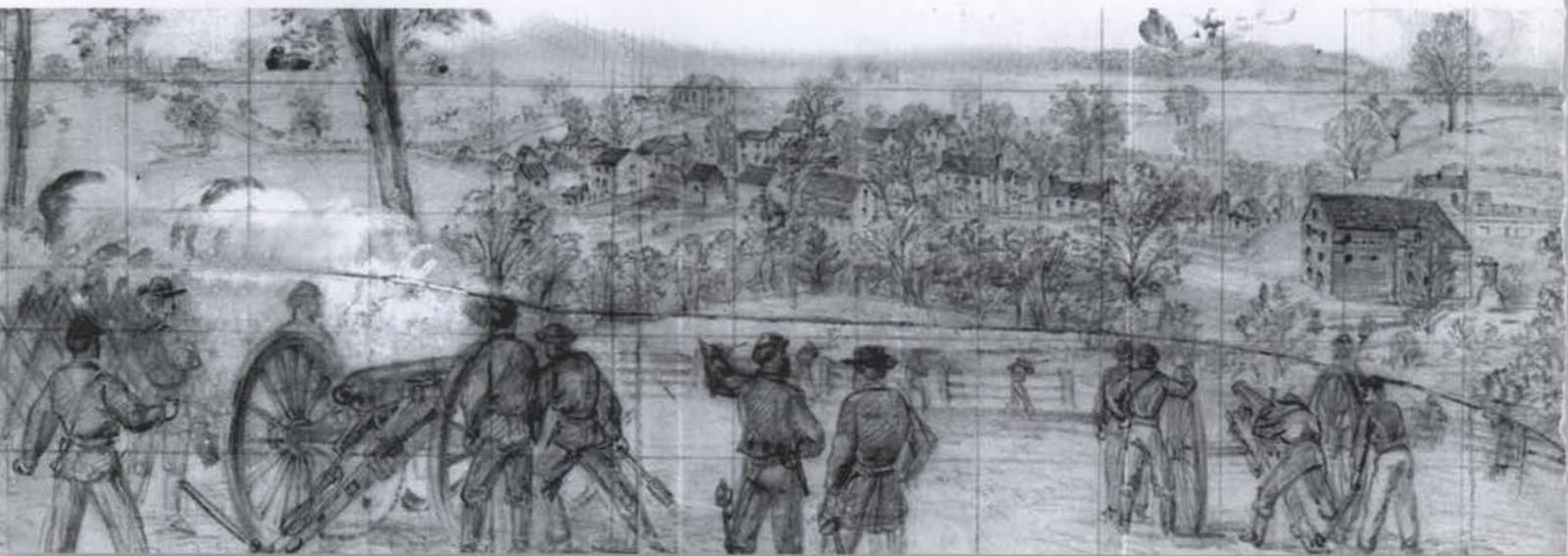
The curious who venture down the short, narrow section of Route 684 leading back to the mill quickly realize that they have entered a place that is very special, if not unique; the number of historic site markers along the street remove any doubt.

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.

Above: Label once used for products manufactured at the Buckland Woolen Mill. Below: Contemporary drawing by Civil War artist Alfred Waud, depicting Gen. George Armstrong Custer's position at Cerro Gordo, on the heights above Buckland during the Battle of Buckland Mills, Oct. 19, 1863.



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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.



Buckland Mill is the only one of the three mills in Buckland to survive. In this late 19th century photo, the large dam on Broad Run can be seen.

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 cavalymen 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 cavalymen under Gen. Fitzhugh Lee were concealed in the woods.

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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 cavalry 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 cavalymen. 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



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.

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 four 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 ABBP 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 Common, and St. Luke's Church.

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 Resources, the Virginia 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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Buckland Hall. Section of C. Allan Brown's Buckland Cultural Landscape map showing the street layout, Broad Run and other details.

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 Mageniss 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.



Buckland Preservation Society Chairman David W. Blake, reviewing documents pertaining Buckland at his home.

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 Warrenton, Virginia: A History of 200 Years.



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