

The Blue Ridge Heritage Project

Fall Update – September, 2013

Next meeting: Tuesday October 8, 2013 – See below for details

What is the Blue Ridge Heritage Project?

The BRHP is a grassroots effort to create a monument and related displays that will tell the story of and to honor the sacrifices made by the people of the Blue Ridge Mountains so that Shenandoah National Park could be established. The project hopes to accurately educate visitors about the people who lived in the mountains before the park; and, through living history presentations, exhibits of photographs, and displays and demonstrations of the tools and utensils of daily living we want to bring to life the day to day world of those who gave up so much to make Shenandoah National Park possible. It is hoped that a monument will be developed in each of the eight counties where land was acquired to create the park.

October 8 Meeting

Mark your calendar for October 8! The Blue Ridge Heritage Project will hold a public meeting at the **Greene County American Legion Hall, 636 Madison Rd. (Rt. 230), Stanardsville**. Coming from Stanardsville, Ruckersville, Elkton and points west, south or east, you will take Rt. 33 Business (Main Street). At Madison Rd. (Rt. 230) turn north toward Madison. The Hall will be on the right in 6/10s of a mile, just as you are leaving town. If you are coming from Madison or points north you will head south on Rt. 29 and turn right (west) onto the Wolftown-Hood Rd. (Rt. 230) at the traffic light by the Sheetz station south of Madison. Continue for 10.2 miles. The Hall will be on the left just before reaching Stanardsville.

At this meeting we will be organizing committees to begin doing work that will make the Project a reality. Three committees are needed initially, and more will be formed as needed:

Development Committee: This committee will be responsible for suggesting, implementing, and overseeing fundraising strategies. We are hoping to obtain funding from individuals, but to also seek contributions and sponsorships from businesses and to apply for grants as well as to organize fundraising activities.

Publicity Committee: We need people who are experienced with social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and who are able to build and maintain a website for the project. This committee will also work to create brochures and other print media, and will be coordinate publicity through broadcast and print channels.

Design Committee: What will the memorial look like? Where will it be located? Finding a site and creating a plan for the design are jobs of the design committee, then working with contractors to give a physical presence to the project.

In addition to the three committees above we will be forming an Advisory Council. This group will help coordinate the work in each of the eight counties around the park. We

would like to have two representatives each from Albemarle, Augusta, Greene, Madison, Page, Rappahannock, Rockingham, and Warren Counties on the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will take a leadership role, serving as a liaison between the committees of each county, and will help bring continuity to the project's design at the individual county committees move forward.

Join Us!

If you support the Blue Ridge Heritage Project please get involved. We are at a crucial point where we need to have many hands in order to make the work light. Any amount of time you have to offer is important. There is no "big organization" overtop of the project making it happen. This is a project for, of, and by the people, and without help it will not come to be. Because this is a grassroots effort, if the people don't push, then the wagon won't move! Please consider participating in one or more of the committees. If you are not able to attend the meeting on October 8 contact me to let us know which committees you would like to join.

Happenings Over the Summer

Since the June 10 public meeting things have been moving along, but mostly behind the scenes. Between our various vacations the project's board of directors has met twice. We have filed our application with the state of Virginia and have received our articles of incorporation. We are now awaiting approval of our application to become a non-profit organization. On July 11 Bill Henry introduced the project to Celebrate Shenandoah, a tourism marketing organization that focuses on the region surrounding Shenandoah National Park. On September 15 Bill gave a presentation on the project to the Rappahannock County Historical Society.

Getting the Word Out to the Community

On September 19 Bill represented the BRHP in a panel discussion held at Graves Mountain Lodge as a part of the first session of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation's annual training program, the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute. The Institute's participants examined the displacement of the families of the Blue Ridge as a case study. Bill was joined on the panel by Jimmy Graves, owner of Graves Mountain Lodge, and by Claire Comer, Interpretive Specialist with Shenandoah National Park, both descendants of families who lost land for the creation of the park. Learn more about the Institute for Environmental Negotiation and the Leadership Institute [here](#).

On October 17 Bill will be one of three guests on Virginia Insight, a call-in radio talk show on WMRA. This program that will focus on the people who lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains before the park, and listeners have the opportunity to call up and ask questions of the guests. The other participants will be Mark Purington, Digital Content Coordinator for the Carrier Library at James Madison University, and Claire Comer, Interpretive Specialist with Shenandoah National Park. In the process of cataloging the recordings for the library's collection Mark has listened to or read transcripts of over 130 tape-recorded interviews in the Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection. These tapes are recorded interviews with people who lived in the mountains prior to the coming of the park, made from the 1960s into the 1990s. Claire's ancestors have lived in the Luray area since the 1700s, and some of her family's land was acquired for the park. As a part of her responsibilities with the park she has become very familiar with the recordings that Mark is in the process of cataloging.

The program is set to air live from 3-4 pm. on Thursday, October 17. Listeners can call in to ask questions or make comments. Learn more about the Virginia Insight program at: [Virginia Insight](#). WMRA can be received through much of the Shenandoah Valley on 90.7 FM. In Charlottesville it can be heard at 103.5, in the Lexington area at 89.9, and in Winchester at 94.5. Those not able to receive a broadcast signal can go to the WMRA's website ([WMRA.org](#)) and stream the program through their computers.

National Public Lands Day = No Admission Fee for SNP

Saturday, September 28 is Public Lands Day. Along with many parks and other areas across the nation, Shenandoah National Park is foregoing the admission fee for entrance to the park. A number of activities will take place that allow park visitors to get involved in a hands-on way. The public is invited to join park staff in a variety of volunteer activities in a variety of locations within the park. Contact the park's Volunteer Coordinator to sign up or for additional details at 540-999-3500 ext. 3181.

As a part of the celebration of National Public Lands Day authors Ann and Rob Simpson will lead a special guided walk in the Big Meadows area at 11:00 am. beginning from the Byrd Visitor Center. The Simpsons will be available to sign copies of their newest book, *Nature Guide to Shenandoah National Park* at 10 am. and after the walk.

Information on the park's celebration of National Public Lands Day and the Simpsons' book signing and walk may be found at [Public Lands Day, 2013](#).

Also on Saturday, September 28 Shenandoah National Park is co-hosting the 80th Annual Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni reunion. The reunion will be held in the Massanutten Room at Big Meadows Lodge, and will begin at 9:00 am. with a welcome from Jennifer Flynn, SNP's Deputy Superintendent. The public is invited to attend.

Local Author Investigates the Communities That Existed in the Blue Ridge Before the Park

Sue Eisenfeld is putting the finishing touches on the manuscript for her book on hiking the lost communities of Shenandoah National Park, in preparation for sending it off to her publisher. It is slated for release in the fall of 2014. Keep up with Sue and her book's progress by going to Facebook and clicking [Like](#).

Recently there has been some concern for why the Greene County part of the project is getting all the attention when we intend to try to establish a monument in each of the eight counties where land was acquired for the park. The intention of this project is that it is to be a local endeavor, with direction and decisions coming from the people. It is not a competition between counties, but a cooperative effort to bring recognition to those whose land became the park, to educate those who visit the park and surrounding region, and to build an appreciation for how the park came to be.

Like anything, you have to start someplace, and that someplace happened to be in Greene County. The directors are hoping that what we are doing in Greene will be a template for other counties, making it easier to establish other units of this project. The end result will be a connected group of eight sites that will tell the story of the park's formation with an emphasis on the people and the events that occurred in each county. We will all benefit if we work together for the common goal.

We are looking for more opportunities to spread the word about the project and would like to give a presentation at meetings of community and civic organizations. If you know of a group that would be interested please pass this information on. The very best way to get the word out is to tell family, friends, everyone you know! Word of mouth has much more power than any other form of advertising!

Please come to the October 8 meeting and help guide the project from its earliest stages.