

The Blue Ridge Heritage Project

Update – September, 2016

Greetings!

A lot has been happening since my last update on the Blue Ridge Heritage Project. With the coming of spring the Blue Ridge Heritage Project began a period of rapid growth that carries on yet. Plans that were made over the long winter have taken shape, and now five of the eight counties are in various stages of moving forward toward the goal of constructing a chimney monument. Madison County dedicated their monument in November, 2015, and have been working to enhance their site.



The Blue Ridge Heritage Project, County By County:

Albemarle County: In early 2016 a group of interested and motivated people came together to form a steering committee to plan the Albemarle monument. Under the leadership of Paul Cantrell, and with the help of Albemarle Board of Supervisors member Ann Mallek, the committee got off to a strong start and met regularly through the winter and spring. The group has been seeking and finding numerous opportunities for publicity, including a radio interview, several articles in the Crozet Gazette, and Ann's appearance to promote the BRHP in Crozet's July 4th parade. The committee has chosen Patricia A. Byrom Forest Preserve Park in the northwestern part of the county as the location for its monument. The Albemarle County Parks and Rec. Department and the Board of Supervisors have given the monument their enthusiastic approval.



Darryl and Jackie Whidby stand by the Albemarle monument they are building.

A standing chimney from a home site that was on a tract originally slated for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park was donated for its stones. Volunteers dismantled the chimney, moved the stones to Byrom Park, then sorted through the stones and spread them out to aid in selection once the construction began. Stone mason Darryl Whidby, along with Jackie, his wife and assistant,

are working tirelessly to erect the chimney monument. Dedication for the monument is set for November 5.

A media event was held at the site on August 31, and since then the Albemarle project has been featured in newspapers and on television. Charlottesville's *Daily Progress* published an article that was picked up by the Associated Press and has run in papers in Richmond, Fredericksburg and Winchester, VA and in Washington DC:

http://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/monument-to-families-displaced-by-shenandoah-national-park-unveiled/article_f74b231e-8619-5efd-856a-3c014f96f8e1.html

Phase II of the project is to construct a covered pavilion adjacent to the monument that will be suitable for small gatherings. Post and beam construction will be used for the structural part of the pavilion, and it will be the size of a modest home typically found in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Please mark September 15 on your calendar. The Albemarle committee will hold a Silent Auction to raise money for Phase II. The event will begin at 5:30 at Old Trail near Crozet. You will find more information at: <http://www.blueridgeheritageproject.com/albemarle/>

Greene County: Led by Norm Addington and Jim Lawson, the Greene County committee has been meeting regularly through the spring and into the summer. A site has been selected in the town of Stanardsville at the corner of Main Street and Celt Road. The monument will be highly visible from Main St. and will be adjacent to new development on this site that will include a performance pavilion and a town market space. A community development block grant to pay for the pavilion and market space has recently been awarded. The grant will pay for creating a site plan that will incorporate the monument into the rest of the development. Read about the Greene monument in this *Greene County Record* article:

http://www.dailyprogress.com/greenenews/news/the-discarded---project-aims-to-honor-those-who/article_8e6311ee-3f05-11e6-8842-bb6863ec992f.html

Madison County: The Madison monument is located on the Criglersville School property, right next to the old Blue Ridge Turnpike, which was an important transportation corridor dating back to colonial days. The Turnpike gave Shenandoah Valley residents a way to reach markets and supplies east of the mountains. Stonewall Jackson used the Turnpike to move his troops across the Blue Ridge Mountains as a part of his Valley Campaign. Generations of mountain residents followed the route east and west until it was closed by the formation of Shenandoah National Park. The Madison BRHP committee has worked with the Madison County Historical Society to gain approval for placing a historical marker alongside the road near the BRHP monument explaining the importance of the Blue Ridge Turnpike. The Madison committee has been landscaping their monument site, including planting several blight-resistant hybrid American chestnut trees as a reminder of the significance of the chestnut trees to the families of the Blue Ridge before the species was nearly wiped out by the chestnut blight.

Page County: Page County is moving forward in planning for their monument under the leadership of Luray resident Rose Ann Smythe. The BRHP of Page recently completed informational presentations to the Stanley, Shenandoah, and Luray Town Councils and to the Page County Board of Supervisors. After visiting the six proposed locations, the Site Selection Committee anticipates making a decision about the monument's location by the end of September. Media coverage in the Valley Banner, the Page News and Courier, and WHSV TV has helped to get the word out to the community. The Blue Ridge Heritage Project of Page Committee will have a booth at the Page County Heritage Festival on October 8 & 9, with a mock-up of the bronze plaque and a large painting of a stone chimney done by the local artist and architect, Paul Quigg. The committee is gathering more family photographs and anecdotes to compile into a living history that will be part of the project. Fundraising efforts will begin as soon as the site is selected and a local stonemason is procured. The goal is to have the chimney completed in the spring of 2017. *Shenandoah Valley Now* featured an article on the Page monument:

http://www.shenvalleynow.com/news/article/group_aims_for_new_memorial_in_page_county

Rappahannock County: Descendant Missy Hall Sutton has taken the lead in Rappahannock. The steering committee has been holding regular meetings, and several potential monument sites have been identified and evaluated. The committee is going to make a proposal to the Board of Supervisors to place a temporary monument next to the county visitor center. An article appeared in the *Rapp News*: <http://rappnews.com/2016/06/03/sperryville-column-for-june-2/148886/>

Rockingham County: A steering committee was formed in the Elkton area, headed up by county Board of Supervisors member, Mike Breeden and local historian, Jim Lawson. The

steering committee has been meeting regularly and has found two potential locations for their monument. The sites are being evaluated, and a decision will be announced at a later time. The committee has been given the stones from two chimneys, which will be moved to the site selected. A stonemason is waiting to begin work on the monument. An article on the chimney donations appeared in *Shenandoah Valley Now*:

http://www.shenvalleynow.com/news/article/beldor_hollow_home_to_live_on

Augusta County: In mid-August Bill Henry spoke to a group at the Waynesboro Library. The presentation was covered by WHSV Ch. 3: <http://www.whsv.com/content/news/Group-working-to-honor-families-displaced-by-Shenandoah-National-Park--390523411.html>

This was the beginning of an effort to promote the BRHP in the eastern Augusta County/Waynesboro area. People interested in helping with the project are being sought to serve on the steering committee. We need photos of people and places from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Augusta County before the coming of Shenandoah National Park to post on the Augusta County page of the BRHP website.

Warren County: Several potential locations have been proposed for the Warren County/Front Royal monument. This fall efforts to form a steering committee will be moving forward. Anyone interested in working with the project is invited to join the committee. Photos of scenes and people from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Warren County before the National Park are wanted for posting on the Warren County page of the BRHP website.

How Do We Find The Names To Be Placed On The Plaques?

Compiling an accurate list of family names is perhaps the most challenging task for the county committees. While the names of landowners is a public record and can be obtained at the county clerks' offices, there was an unknown number of other families who lived on the land that was to become Shenandoah National Park. These people did not own their homes. Many were tenants or served as caretakers, and there were people who had never obtained proper title to the land that may have been in their families for generations. These names are difficult or impossible to obtain from the park or from courthouse records.

The BRHP committees in each county are asking family members to help by checking the lists to be sure their ancestors' names are included for the correct counties. Lists have been posted on Facebook, and advertisements and articles have been, or will be, run in local newspapers. Help us to make our lists, and plaques, as accurate as possible.

The BRHP Website Is Up And Running!

The Blue Ridge Heritage Project now has its own website, thanks to the dedication and the skills of descendant Teresa Kay Lam. Each of the eight counties has its own page where there is, or soon will be, a photo gallery, progress reports, news on upcoming events, and information of local interest. Visitors to the website can learn about the mission of the Project and find newspaper articles and other media coverage. More features will be added that relate to the history and genealogy of the people of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Teresa is seeking photos and stories of families who lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains before Shenandoah National Park, both before and after the displacement. We want their legacy to live on for future generations, so they too will know about the mountain way of life. If you or any family members have photos and are willing to share them on the Blue Ridge Heritage Project's website, they can be scanned, you will receive credit, and your family will be remembered for an eternity.

Visit our website at BlueRidgeHeritageProject.com. The website is still under development, with new features, news articles, and photos being added frequently. Check back to keep tabs on the progress of the county monuments and to learn about events that will be coming up.

Support The Blue Ridge Heritage Project

From the beginning, just three years ago, the Blue Ridge Heritage Project was designed to be a 'grassroots' effort. One definition of 'grassroots' that fits the BRHP comes from Webster's dictionary: ". . . one which uses the people in a given district as the basis for a movement. Grassroots movements and organizations utilize collective action from the local level to effect change at the local, regional, national, or international level. Grassroots movements are associated with bottom-up, rather than top-down decision-making, and are sometimes considered more natural or spontaneous than more traditional power structures." While the term is generally used to describe political movements, the above definition fits our organization well. The people – the grassroots - organize, direct, and carry out the work of creating the monuments as well as raising the funds to make it happen.

The BRHP is now able to accept credit card donations through the website. Go to BlueRidgeHeritageProject.com and click on the DONATE NOW button. You may direct your donation to the BRHP general fund, which supports and promotes the entire project throughout the region, or you can designate which county or counties your donation will help support. You may also make your donation a monthly recurring contribution, and you may use your donation to honor someone or make a memorial donation.

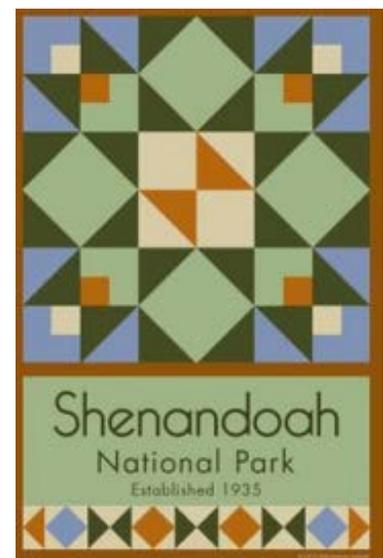
You may also donate to the Project by mailing in a donation. Make your check payable to BRHP and send to BRHP, P.O. Box 1172, Stanardsville, VA 22973. On the memo line of your check you can designate which county or counties you wish to support or you can direct it to the general fund. (The BRHP is a 501c3 non-profit and donations are tax deductible)

Quilt Event This Fall

In addition to helping keep people warm during long winter nights, quilts were (and still are!) a treasured and important part of many families' histories. With love in each stitch, quilters created works of art that are passed down from generation to generation. The designs and patterns sewn into quilts sometimes told stories of the people who created them and those they loved.

As a part of its celebration of the National Park Service's Centennial Anniversary, Shenandoah National Park is hosting the National Quilt Tour at the Dickey Ridge Visitor Center during the month of October. The National Quilt Tour features quilts with designs related to many of the national parks, including Shenandoah. In conjunction with the National Quilt Tour the artisans and quilters of Greene County will be featuring *Quilts of Greene*, an exploration of the history of the last 100 years through the art form of quilting. Family quilts on loan from individuals and quilts from the collection of the Greene County Historical Society will be displayed from September 16-October 30 at The Palette Art Gallery, the Greene County Historical Society, the Greene County Library, Noon Whistle Pottery, United Bank, and Pioneer Bank in Stanardsville, and at the Greene County Visitor Center and the UVA Community Credit Union in Ruckersville. The Shenandoah National Park quilt will be on display at The Palette from September 16-30.

To kick off the *Quilts of Greene* tour The Palette will host an opening reception on Saturday, September 17 from 3-6 pm. Shenandoah National Park Superintendent, Jim Northup, will be the featured speaker. The Palette is located at 8269 Spotswood Trail (Main St.) on the west end of Stanardsville, next door to the Great Valu grocery store. Come join the quilt tour!



Follow Us On Facebook

The Blue Ridge Heritage Project has a Facebook page, where we make announcements and post information and links that will be of interest to those following the Project. The Albemarle, Greene, Page, Rappahannock, and Rockingham County committees have set up their own Facebook pages. Take a look, Like and Follow us!

Get Involved With The Project

There is still a lot of work to be done. We will need landscaping suggestions for the monument sites and photos for the website and the interpretive signs. People interested in historical research are needed to compile accurate lists of the families displaced in each county. We need people with expertise in finding and applying for grants that will provide support for the work that lies ahead, and we need good ideas for fund raising to bring support from the communities around Shenandoah National Park.

Most of all, the Blue Ridge Heritage Project needs to get the word out. The most effective way to do this is through word of mouth. Tell your family, your friends, your co-workers, people at your church – tell *EVERYBODY* about the Project. Bill Henry and others are available to speak to community, church, and government groups to introduce the Project. To become a part of the Blue Ridge Heritage Project contact Bill.

What is the Blue Ridge Heritage Project?

The BRHP is a grassroots effort to create a series of eight monuments and related displays that will tell the story of and honor the sacrifices made by the people of the Blue Ridge Mountains whose land was acquired so that Shenandoah National Park could be established. Our goal is to develop a monument site in each of the eight counties where land was acquired to create the Park.

The Project hopes to accurately educate visitors about the people who lived in the mountains before the park. Through living history presentations, programs of traditional music, 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.

Thank you for your interest in the Blue Ridge Heritage Project. To become involved, to support the Blue Ridge Heritage Project, or to get more information you may contact Bill Henry (onarock01@yahoo.com or 434-985-7905)



The completed Madison County monument in Criglersville.

Blue Ridge Heritage Project
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BlueRidgeHeritageProject.com

We are a 501c3 non-profit,
and your contribution is tax deductible