

## ***A RIDE THROUGH HISTORY***

By Zoe Sollenberger

The course of the Old Dominion 100 mile ride is a trail rich in history. This trail that crosses over mountains formed eons ago, witnessed the advancing and receding of the oceans, the effects of the Michigan Glacier, the mastodon and woolly mammoth, the arrival of prehistoric hunters at least 11,000 years ago, the American Indians, European Explorers and fur traders, hunters at least 11,000 years ago, the American Indians, European explorers and fur traders, British Lords and Ladies, miners and charcoal makers, stage drivers and boatmen, soldiers and cowboys, millers and railroaders, lumbermen and barkers: all who led us to the present day. On the second Saturday in June, you can sit in your saddle and take this ride through history.

The Old Dominion 100 starts five miles outside of the quiet town of Front Royal, Virginia, which rests on the banks of the Shenandoah River and is cradled in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains at the northernmost end of the Shenandoah National Park. Who would have guessed that this town was once the westernmost pioneer settlement called "Helltown" because of the rowdy, rugged mountaineers who gravitated to its saloons and taverns. In a story by Edgar Allen Poe, he called them "a fierce and uncouth race that occupied the mountains of western Virginia." By the 1800's Front Royal settled down and became a leading manufacturer of wagons for the westward bound.

This challenging horse ride begins on a parcel of the former U.S. Cavalry Quartermaster's Remount Depot (now the Northern Virginia 4-H Center and access point to the Appalachian Trail) where 5,000 acres were purchased in 1911 by the United States Army in "rolling green hills and valleys well adapted for the training of military horses." Horses were railed in from the west and trained by horsemen from around the nation, a variety of which ranged from bronc riders to trotting horse trainers. The remount center supplied military horsepower for our nation for over 40 years and housed the most completely equipped veterinary field lab in the United States designed to serve horses and pack mules. (Near the end of World War II, all the surviving Lipizzaner stallions removed by General Patton from Europe were sheltered at this remount center). The U.S. Cavalry Mounted Service Cup competition, a race of nearly 300 miles over 5 days was one of the pioneer distance races where the horse was rewarded not only for coming in first, but in the best condition. On this relative note we will start down the trail.

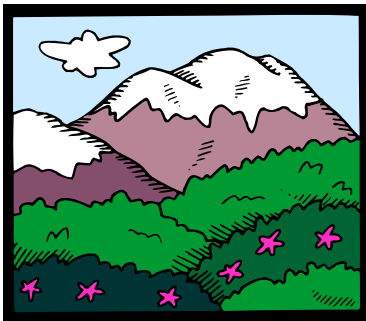
As you leave the 4-H Center, just before the break of day, you'll be riding up Harmony Hollow, the headwaters of Happy Creek, where a mountain village was settled by country English in the 1700's. They had plain and honest ways and quaint speech; a sack was called a "poke"; snakes "querled" up, and the things that hold up fences were called "post-es". These mountain folk lived in self-reliant isolation for over 100 years and their unusually quiet and orderly ways had given Harmony

Hollow its name. By the late 1800's, outsiders found people living in log cabins in these hollows, carrying rifles and "looking the part". "Romanticists considered them noble, primitive or dangerous barbarians; missionaries and educators thought they were lost sheep; and social workers were sure they needed help." A study done on "Hollow Folk" claimed "that the lifeway of relentlessly striving city folk was best and claimed these strange mountain people had few neuroses and were without the sense of insecurity so common among people in other situations; most of them have no wish to escape from reality, not representing civilization as it should be."

### **ON UP THE HOLLOW TO THE BLUE RIDGE**

"Buddy" Fox, born in 1892, remembered moonshine (yes, they had an escape from reality). The 60-gallon still was set below his great-grand-daddy's log cabin by the spring (possibly the true secret of harmony in the hollow).

Imagine as you ride along, young Buddy walking to school at dawn, three and a half miles down the mountainside past stony bluegrass pastures with a few cattle, sheep, horses and a hog grazing, a rooster crowing, and crops of wheat, rye, oats and a cabbage patch all covered with morning dew. The one-room schoolhouse still stands where the trail turns off the asphalt onto the dirt road. At 4 a.m., Lemuel, Buddy's father, might have already started a horse and wagon full of tanbark he hand stripped from oak trees over the mountain to the tannery. As this trail moves on, picture from a novel written with this hollow in mind call *The Mountain Angels*, "memories of barefoot fiddlers with unwritten songs telling tales and drinking moonshine."



Entering the Shenandoah National Park, and beginning to climb the Hickerson Trail, you may see on your left vestiges of a stone wall of Pap Hickerson's homestead. He grew Pippin apples in his orchards that he shipped to England. Pap Hickerson lost his land along with so many other mountain families to the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. A 35-acre parcel brought the Hickerson family \$208 from the United States Government.

This park idea was a dream in 1889 when George Freeman Pollock started a movement to protect the beautiful mountains from barkers, lumbermen, and miners; wanting to keep a place where "the weary men may flee and find abundant rest and freedom". In 1902, President Teddy Roosevelt issued a report on the necessity of "protecting through wise use a mountain region whose influence flows far beyond its borders, with the waters of the rivers to which it gives rise." By 1924, a national committee adopted the creation of this first National Park in the southern Appalachians. (If you're hot and tired from the climb, consider that many millions of

years ago you would be on the edge of a lava flow on mountains nearly as high as the Himalayas!)

President Hoover was leading a party of horseback riders along the ridge the trail crosses when he said, "everyone ought to have a chance to get the views from here...the people should have this sensation that I have, this exhilaration." He called the panoramic views some of the greatest in the world.

These views were not quite what the first explorers saw. As you cross the first ridge, look to the left and you will be facing Compton Peak, where presumably on August 26, 1670, a German explorer named Lederer and ten other white men on horseback and five Indian guides on foot climbed the "blue and embattled hills" and looked west toward the Shenandoah Valley in search of a northwest passage to India. Here instead they discovered western America, numerous ravenous wolves and one entire beautiful prairie abounding with buffalo, elk, deer, bear and Native American Indians minding their own business.

### **SKYLINE DRIVE TO McCOY'S FORD**

As you remember, we were crossing Skyline Drive near Compton Peak where a German explorer first saw the Shenandoah Valley and the mountains to the west. He wrote: 'the 14th of March (1670) from the top of an eminent hill, I first described the Appalachian Mountains bearing due west of the place I stood upon. Their distance from me was so great that I could hardly discern whether they were mountains or clouds until my fellow Indian travelers, prostrating themselves in adoration howled out after a barbarous manner, "Okeepeeze" i.e. "God is Nigh". The Europeans called the river they saw meandering through the valley the "Euphrates", the Indians called it the "Shenandoah", i.e. "The Daughter of the Stars".' The mountains that seemed so far away were only 9 miles away. This deceiving haze is how the "Blue Ridge" got its name.

From the Skyline Drive downward and to the west, the course of the 100 Mile ride descends into the Shenandoah Valley, a fertile and bountiful 140 mile natural thoroughfare formed by ancient oceans.

At one time this trail winding down the mountains into the valley was in a grand forest of American Chestnut trees. This time of year "the trees were covered with their fragrant long creamy flowers and the mountains looked as if their crests were covered with snow. In the virgin forest, where chestnuts were commonplace, mature trees could be 600 years old, and average 4-5 feet in diameter and 80-100 feet tall. Many specimens 8-10 feet in diameter were recorded and there were rumors of trees bigger still". Wildlife depended extensively on the nuts and once "huge flocks of Passenger Pigeons waxed fat for winter on these Chestnut forests." Timbering, barking and the deadly Chestnut Blight eliminated this regal forest by the early 1900's. Bones of old fallen trees can be seen covered with moss along the trail.

As we approach the valley, the scenery changes to the fine pastures of the ocean-borne limestone soils. During the Ice Age, Woolly Mammoths and Mastodons likely grazed along this path, followed more recently by herds of buffalo, elk and the Indians in pursuit.

For thousands of years, the American Indians thrived in this bountiful hunting ground. Well before the German Explorer Lederer "discovered" this valley, highly valued furs from the Shenandoah were being worn in Europe. The Iroquois Indians supposedly eliminated the native and peaceful Senado Indians when they figured out private enterprise. Monopolizing the trading of furs with the colonists in the east, they turned the valley into their game reserve and fur plantation. Relations with the White Man looked promising until the Europeans started moving into the valley. That doomed the Indian way of life.

The Germans, Scotch Irish and English Quakers began trickling down from Pennsylvania. They lived a simple life, becoming skilled in Indian lore and "Appalachian" crafts. Soon the valley was an open cattle range where cowboys would round up cattle once a year, driving them down our trail accompanied by the stagecoaches and covered wagons of westward-bound pioneers.

Meanwhile, back in England (still in the late 1600's) young Lord Fairfax, a court favorite of Charles I and II, became heir of 5,282,000 acres of land in Virginia, which appears to have included the 100 miles of this trail. Lord Fairfax heard that this Shenandoah Valley was "wonderfully fertile with grass so tall that the tops could be tied together in front of your chest as you sat in your saddle".

When he was 53 years old, he retired to this valley where he was reported to have loved to ride his horse, alone, all day. "It wasn't easy for a Lord to fit into Wild America, but he did. He dressed plainly and was not arrogant as the mountain people came to expect". He offered leases on his land that expired after 21 years: a shilling a year for 100 acres, provided you built a cabin and grew a garden. The Virginia Colony called this "Northern Neck Feudalism".

Where the ride trail crosses Gooney Creek once stood Boyd's Mill, built and operated in the 1700's and the first population center in Lord Fairfax's "Gooney Manor". "Gooney" is believed to be the name of a favorite hunting dog who drowned in the creek. By the 1800's this was part of a large industrial center called Browntown. The industries included a large tannery that employed at least 150 people and used the bark stripped from the mountain Chestnuts and Oaks, the Virginia Hardwood Company which used hardwoods down to 5" in diameter to make tool handles, and the Millar Company who stripped the forest of all woods suitable for manufacturing staves. "Browntown pretty much gobbled up the Mountain resources, pulling both mountain and lowland people into its orbit".

A few miles down the trail from Boyd's Mill, where we cross Route 340, was a different kind of industrial center. Once called Allen's Crossing (after a revolutionary soldier), but now called Limeton, this village was built around Elias Herr's lime company. In 1868, it changed hands and became the Carson Lime Company, producing agricultural lime. Around 1880, the Shenandoah Railroad laid tracks through Limeton (the same tracks your horse will reluctantly cross!). Following the river's course, the Iron Horse changed the way of life in the valley.

Prior to the railroad, the Shenandoah River, which the trail now approaches, was the route that linked the mountains and the valley to the world. In 1784, George Washington visited the valley and began promoting the river as a public highway. Long lines of barge-like flatboats called Gundalows, each manned by 14-18 men, were used to haul flour, iron, lumber, tanbark, livestock, etc. The men blew 8-foot long tin horns as their Gundalows approached the chutes through or around the river's rapids. Boatmen were paid \$15 for a four day trip from Port Republic to Harper's Ferry, and then they walked back home when the boats were sold for lumber. These boatmen had a reputation for being full of fun, boisterous and clever, and the dangerous trip was worth the risk if they did a quiet business in moonshine on the side. A man named Millar wrote in his early 1800 childhood memoirs: "I can remember those boats...and still hear the long drawn notes of the boatmen's horns or their hallooing and signals on the river...I had a silver watch which one of the boatmen wanted me to trade for a pet deer he had on his boat. I asked him what good the deer would do me, and he replied 'you can ride it to school, and if you don't like school, I'll trade you this bear and you can start a circus'."

So, the railroad brought to an end this river's glory; a river that was a life support for humans for at least 12,000 years. Yes, 12,000 years ago, adjacent to this trail, and along the Shenandoah River, Stone Age peoples hunted, fished, and made tools from a flint quarry. Some evidence suggests that people may have even lived here 19,000 years ago when the tip of a giant continental glacier was only 180 miles to the north, and giant animals grazed the valley: woolly mammoths, the American mastodon, ground sloths and immense bison, caribou and musk oxen. Though their weapons weren't adequate to cope with mammoths, evidence proves that they at least tried. In one Grandfather Mammoth's skeleton, archeologists found 80 "projectile points".

In 1971, the Thunderbird Archeological Dig and Museum set up camp next to our river trail. This project was funded by the National Geographic Society and the Science Foundation. The Paleo Indians that lived here 12,000 years ago (with nine-month long winters) made the "Clovis Point" out of jasper from Flint Run Creek. These points could finally pierce the hide of a giant mammal. One theory is that these weapons were largely responsible for the extinction of these animals. This early man site is perhaps the most important of their time anywhere in the western hemisphere.

The later Senando Indians were gone by the time the whites arrived. A favorite place for them to camp was McCoy's Ford Bottom, where we cross the river. They were supposedly killed off, or mingled with greater tribes who migrated up and down the valley. By 1754, all Indians had left the valley. They went west to join with other tribes to try to hold off the whites. Occasionally, they returned in "raiding forays". On warm days after frost, they would make their final raid before tucking in for the winter in lodges on the Ohio River, thus was born the term "Indian Summer".

The shallow river here at McCoy's Ford where we cross was very useful throughout history. One of the more historical crossings here was during the Civil War. The Civil War left destruction, devastation, and horror everywhere it touched. One bloodbath was spared because of three colorful Confederate war heroes who met near McCoy's Ford. Belle Boyd, a young self-appointed Confederate spy, while visiting her aunt in Front Royal, "overheard" from a closet, the diversion plan of the Federal Army.

The majority of Federal troops in Front Royal were being sent to hide in Strasburg while Stonewall Jackson's army approached Front Royal. Belle Boyd mounted a horse before the break of dawn and rode south to meet Jackson's approaching army near Limeton. Jackson, busy in the maneuvers of his "Valley Campaign" (dubbed one of the more famous strategies in military history), sent the flamboyant Colonel Ashby, commander of Jackson's cavalry, to travel over a back road (our trail) led by local horsemen, through McCoy's Ford to cut communication lines between Front Royal and Strasburg. Consequently, the Union troops were once again run off to the north.

Now that our trail has crossed the Shenandoah River, we are right at the foot of the Massanutten Mountain range, home of the beautiful hidden Fort Valley, to the rocks on Sherman's Gap, to the Ghost, and the Old Dominion's Fort Valley 50/50/50 and 25/30/25 Mile Rides.

## **THE SHENANDOAH TO FORT VALLEY**

After crossing the north fork of the Shenandoah River at McCoy's Ford, our trail travels south along its meandering banks. Since ancient times, this river cut its valley down to such an extent that the waters it gathered became sluggish and moved from side to side...so, up a lazy river we go!

Undoubtedly as you ride along, you will see numerous fishermen. Thanks to the Isaac Walton League and the Friends of the Shenandoah River, who protect and clean these waters, this river remains one of the finest Small Mouth Bass "streams" in the Eastern United States. Sport fishing came to this river with the introduction of these fish in the early 1870's. They traveled to the river in the tender of a B&O locomotive.

For many people throughout history, fishing this river was essential. Back in 1816, thousands of valley settlers moved to the river and camped on its banks where they fished for their very survival. There had been a crop-killing frost every month of the year and there was not much other food to eat.

Along with Bass, Perch, Shad and Catfish, this valley is also home to the Blind Trout. Long ago, the waters of the valley also ran underground. Now these long empty corridors and roomy chambers echo only the slow drips of mineral rich water that build up the lovely stalactites and stalagmites that hang from the ceilings and rise from the floors. Here, in the dark, live the Blind Trout, swimming in the underground streams and pools of the famous limestone caverns of the Shenandoah Valley.

Another manifestation of the erosive powers of the valley's waters are the Massanutten Mountains which our trail approaches to the west. Like a fortress, this isolated ridge, 50 miles long, majestically dominated the valley after the age-old river washed away the softer rocks and soils. The Massanutten range is so rugged that, to this day, only two roads cross it. Its impassability has had a great influence on the valley's history, particularly during the Civil War...

"The physical geography of the Shenandoah Valley lent itself to military strategy. This was notably true in Jackson's brilliant campaign of the spring and summer of 1862. The mountains and monad nocks provided signal stations; the rivers, often at flood, served as barriers against attack. The valley as a whole in shape and conformation bears a striking resemblance to the Circus Maximus in ancient Rome. The Blue Ridge enclosed it on the southeast, the Alleghenies on the northwest, and the Massanutten Range, dividing the valley longitudinally almost in the center for fifty miles is a giant spine. Around it races were carried on."

"Stonewall Jackson's men were few  
in the spring of Sixty-two,  
But he kept the Blue-coats busy---  
Fact, he almost made 'em dizzy,  
Stealin' marches, quickly cuttin'  
Round about the Massanutten."

Our trail now turns west and heads over this mountain range. These mountains were once considered to become the National Park of the Blue Ridge, a runner-up to the present day Shenandoah National Park. Fortunately, in 1912, the Massanutten were acquired by the National Forest Service and presently are part of 954,000 acres of the George Washington National Forest.

As we climb the Massanutten, our course "looks upward towards the blue sky along dizzy heights of the cliffs of the mountains where we see the dwarfed oaks and

gnarled hardy pines clinging tenaciously to the scant soils in the crevices of the rocks."

Once the American Eagle made this its home and wolves and cougars lived in its caves. The National Forest Service is striving to restore the vast areas of these mountains for its wildlife.

Up and over Milford Gap, our trail travels what is believed to be the Old Morgan Road. This road was said to have been laid out and built by a Revolutionary War hero named Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, which under a plan with General George Washington, would serve as a retreat route into a secret valley in the event of an American defeat by the British. Once, horses and oxen toiled up these rocky slopes pulling wagons. Then, going downhill with heavy loads, their wooden brakes smoked. Some teamsters dragged felled trees to control their speed, while some had devices forcing the wheels to slide instead of turning around. Vehicle parts were said to have been scattered along the road like debris on a battlefield.

Crossing this mountain, we approach the jewel of a valley cradled between the eastern and western ridges of the Massanutten. This valley is only 22 miles long and five miles at its widest. This was once a bountiful hunting ground for the Indians who named it Massanutten, meaning "Indian Basket".

The Indians who lived here had legends of gold and silver mines. These mines were mentioned in the memoirs of the French Explorer Louis Michelle who traveled to this valley in 1707. He left a crude map of the region filed for posterity in the Public Records Office in London.

The first European to live in this valley was a folk hero named Powell. This Englishman discovered the gold and silver ore in the west Fort Mountain. He used this ore to counterfeit coins. When any attempts were made to arrest him by Winchester lawmen, he would escape into the mountains. The valley came to be known as "Powell's Fort". To this day, people who live in the valley say, "Old man Powell is at it again" when they see flickering lights in the mountains. He is believed to have buried a large quantity of silver and gold near Signal Knob, which has never been found. So, if you see the lights of Powell's ghost as you ride over Sherman's Gap at night around 80 miles into the ride, head for the gold! (Most likely the flickering light you see will be only your lonely drag rider.)

There are numerous points of historical interest as we head down into "Powell's Fort Valley." Near our veterinary checkpoint at Fitchett's is the site of an old Indian town, a pioneer fort, and an 1800's mineral spring resort.

"The Indians held this valley as a common hunting ground, it being used by the different tribes temporarily. (One of these temporary Indian towns was located near our trail.) The abundance of chips, flints, arrowheads, stone tomahawks, etc. found, show that it was frequently used by Indian hunting



parties. A European named Munch and his son, who lived in the valley, saved the most interesting collection of Indian relics found in the Fort. Tradition still lingers of the great size of the Indian skeletons found in this valley; one skeleton was seven feet long."

The early settlers of the Powell's Fort Valley suffered no reported fatalities from Indian attacks, although during the French and Indian War, Europeans were in constant danger from the Indians and were often driven to their forts for protection. One of these places of refuge was "Keller's Fort", also near the Fitchett's vet check. In 1758, 50 Indians led by 4 Frenchmen raided a small village just west of the Fort Valley and took 48 prisoners. After nightfall, one young boy escaped the terror.

"He ran fifteen miles shoeless, hatless and only scantily clad into the Fort Valley to Keller's Fort for aid. A small party came back with him the next morning, but when they learned how large the force was, they gave up pursuit."

Three years later, some of the captured returned home. Many of the children taken lived the remainder of their lives with the Indians. Years after the raid, one woman returned home married to an Indian trader. She had forgotten her native German tongue and only spoke the Indian tongue.

Another historical landmark near the Fitchett's vet check was Burner Springs. Because the "abundance of fine mountain and mineral water in the Fort are not surpassed or even equaled anywhere in the world", Burner's Spring, later known as Seven Fountains, became one of the most fashionable resorts in Virginia. It had seven varieties of mineral water bubbling from the ground with a half acre of ground. A large bathhouse contained each of the seven kinds of mineral water: chalybeate, freestone, magnesia, lithia, white, blue and black sulfur (and limestone). This resort was opened in 1850 with a large hotel, ballroom and many private cottages. Three stagecoaches ran daily to the springs, one of which came from Overall over Milford Gap, along our trail. "A band of musicians met and played on the arrival and departure of each stagecoach. The summer guests numbered from 300 to 600 depending on the time of the season. Much of the work on the large farm and around the resort was done by slaves." (Slavery was rare in the Fort Valley because the early settlers were nearly all of Dutch German descent who were, as a rule, opposed to slavery.)

As our trail leaves Fitchett's vet check, we have entered this unique valley with its intriguing past. In the final chapter of "A Ride Through History," we will explore its secrets...

## **POWELL'S FORT VALLEY**

Like the fur traders and pioneers, there is no more appropriate way to enter Powell's Fort Valley than on horseback. At about 25 miles into the ride, we enter this "Little Switzerland". The valley is 22 miles long and 5 miles at its widest, with one road that enters from Edinburg and another through the Passage Creek Gorge. It cradles the cabins of those few modern day pioneers who will drive along curving mountain roads for 30 miles to get to a grocery store, and 80 miles to work.

Its original settlers found that this natural fort had its inherent dangers. Indians traveled through this bountiful hunting ground as did wolves, and each held to their birth-given rights to the bitter end. To the pioneers, seclusion was their greatest danger. Over time, a close-knit community evolved from these rugged and reclusive mountain folk. Their search for gold and silver led to the discovery of iron ore in the valley. The first of the pig-iron furnaces followed by the fires of the Civil War nearly devastated the valley, and the National Forest Service and President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps helped to bring it back. Today, the friends and members of the Old Dominion 100 Mile Endurance Ride help restore and maintain the old winding road beds and trails that were built by the blood and sweat of our forefathers.

Up until the 1700's, "the mountains remained a barrier to be crossed only by the occasional traders." As Europeans began to settle and fence their claims, the Indians felt the pressure to flee west. They returned with the support of the French during the French and Indian War, raiding secluded outposts, but failed to reclaim their hunting grounds.

Another terror to the settlers was the wolf. A number of notorious ones lived in the large caves in the cliffs of Culler's Gap, today known as "Wolf Den." "Remote dwellings with sheep, calves and young horses were easy prey to the wolves. On butcher days, or the night following, wolves, enticed by the smell of blood, would come howling all around the settler's homes." At such times, the settler and his family could not venture far away from the house. The last wolf was killed in the "Fort" in 1856 by Abraham Burner and Ephriam Golladay near Habron Gap. But, as always, Nature persists, and coyotes have recently been sighted in Virginia and are predicted to fill the niche of the wolf with a vengeance of numbers.

Despite the hardships, the pioneers stuck together and formed a relatively self-sufficient community in Powell's Fort Valley. The Clems, the Munches, the Cullers, Veatches, Boyers, Harmons, etc., got together to build barns, grist mills, sawmills, churches and roads.

Some folks had been lured to the Fort Valley in search of gold and silver, only to find an abundance of iron ore. The smelting of iron began before the Revolution and the furnaces operated until the Civil War. Some of the iron was used in Harper's Ferry where the U.S. Armory turned out a thousand rifles a month. To smelt iron, you

needed a vast forest (to make charcoal), limestone and lots of water. The Powell's Fort Valley had it all! "It took 180 bushels of charcoal, 1600 pounds of limestone and nearly 3 tons of ore to produce one ton of pig-iron." As you ride the Bear Wallow Trail, you can see the old ore pits.

The Fort Valley had three furnaces, Caroline Furnace (near our trail at the southern end of the valley), Elizabeth Furnace (near our trail at the northern end of the valley), and Mine Run Furnace. Each furnace could produce three tons of pig iron daily, consuming about 200 bushels of charcoal for each ton of pig-iron. Most of the trees on the Massanutten and in the valley disappeared.

What the iron furnaces didn't burn, the Civil War did. Sheridan and his cavalry carried out their campaign of destruction under General Grant's orders. Although there was no fighting to speak of in the Fort Valley, the Federals burned down the furnaces, barns, mills, homes and even the haystacks. As the Union reinforcements came into the valley, the Confederates watched from Signal Knob on top of the Massanutten (near the northernmost section of our trail). "The movements of the Federal armies were closely watched and they signaled to another station on the Fort Mountain opposite Seven Fountains, near the Milford Road, then to Stony Man Mountain, southeast of Luray, and from there to other stations and on to Richmond, making a direct signal communication from Winchester to Richmond." Looking down from Signal Knob, the Confederate soldiers could see a cloud of smoke from the fires set by Sheridan's cavalry. "By night, the sky glared redly and the earth was starred with bonfires." Eventually Signal Knob was taken by the Federals in a bloody fight. This cut off the important line of signal stations.

Another tragedy of the war occurred in the Fort when several of its prominent citizens were murdered by their neighbors because they sympathized with the Federal Government. And so the war of brother against brother left the Fort Valley in ruins.

The soil was fertile and the pioneer blood resilient, so not long after the Civil War, life was back to normal in Powell's Fort Valley. The self-sufficiency of the mountain families carried them through the worst times. President Roosevelt opened the first Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp in the United States in the Southern end of the Fort Valley. This camp provided jobs to victims of the Depression. The local boys who could take care of their own were often too proud to work there. Civilian Conservation Corps workers earned a dollar a day (\$5 a month to the laborer and \$25 a month to his family). They worked restoring and making roads and trails. Today, Camp Roosevelt is a public picnic ground in the George Washington National Forest. The present Camp Roosevelt trail was constructed by the Old Dominion 100 Mile Endurance Ride members and friends.

Our trail circles within Powell's Fort Valley, then leaves the valley over the infamous rocks of Sherman's Gap and heads back to the 4-H Center to finish where it began.

