



The Log Book

What's New at the Snickersville Academy & Bluemont

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My, How We've Changed!

By SUSAN FREIS FALKNOR

Bluemont's Snickersville Academy looks quite different now than when Friends of Bluemont received it as a gift from the Hatcher family four years ago.

Then Bluemont's first school and church was an abandoned dwelling, with three small rooms and a loft—"three rooms and a path" (to the out-house)—as the old saying goes). Walking up from Snickersville Turnpike, it was a challenge to get across the little creek that runs by the Academy and down through the village.

Overgrown with vines, backed by woods and a hayfield that would become Boulder Crest Retreat for Military and Veteran Wellness (then still just a dream), the Academy felt quite remote.

The little log building sagged toward the creek several feet away, and a thick layer of stone and cement bulged at that side, as if to bolster it. The stone work, log walls, and daubing needed repair. Sunlight streamed in between the logs on the chimney wall. The floor was spongy underfoot.

It is quite a different picture today.

- All the chink and daub is restored using period materials and craftsmanship.
- All stonework repair is complete, including the chimney and foundations.
- Replacement logs are installed for those damaged by an old chimney fire or rotted.
- The Academy is bolt upright, and will stay that way, thanks to the hidden modern sub-foundation on the creek side.
- The interior is restored to one room.
- The vaulting interior of the roof—now visible—gives the feel of the original school and church.
- The fireplace has been restored to its original look and the flu made safe.
- The floor is now stable.

Why the new stripped look—white logs with reddish daub between? The color contrast may look strange to our eyes, but this is probably how the brand new Snickersville Academy appeared in 1825.



The daubing, made from a mix of sand, lime, and clay, takes its color from our bright orange local Virginia clay. The reddish daubing will fade over time, as the mix cures and the white lime works its way to the outside. The bug-discouraging whitewash on the logs will tend to flake off, and mute the stripped effect.

Before winter, we will temporarily close up the open spaces at the windows and eaves. Next year should bring restored eaves, windows, and the narrow original porch stretched across much of the front. Also on the list: complete repairs on the floor, build a safety rail across the shortened loft, create some early 1800s benches/desks/pews. □

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Sunday May 17, 2015

Join us to celebrate the 190th anniversary of the Snickersville Academy. The "Indenture" that established the village's first school and church was signed by neighbors Robert Chew, William Bradfield, Timothy Carrington, William Woodford, and Townsend Clayton at Clayton Hall on May 21, 1825.

