History of Generals Highway

Generals Highway acquired the inspiration for its name due to its association with the Revolutionary War, George Washington, and Count de Rochambeau. Rochambeau and his troops marched along the road on the way from Annapolis to Yorktown in 1781. Washington was known to use the road repeatedly, particularly after the Revolutionary War, when he would journey to the Continental Congress in Annapolis.

The cultural landscape of Generals Highway played a significant role in the development of Anne Arundel County and in the development of networks from Annapolis to the rest of the State. This historic 8-mile road is the surviving remnant of a colonial post road that originally led to Baltimore and points beyond, such as Philadelphia. Before the construction of Ritchie Highway (Rt. 2) and Crain Highway (Rt. 3) in 1927, followed by Veterans Highway (Rt. 97) in 1933, it was the main thoroughfare from Annapolis.

A methodical and carefully planned investigation was initiated to learn more about this historic road. Archival research, advanced mapping, and targeted archaeological excavations (below) produced many important findings.

Archaeologists excavating shovel test pit at the Rising Sun Inn site.

Stone foundation and mill stone found at the Bacon Ridge site.

Another important discovery was a 34’ x 34’ stone quarter house built in the 1780s at the Belvoir plantation owned by Dr. Upton Scott (below). Historical research tells us that between 15 and 30 enslaved workers labored at this plantation at any given time in its history.

Digital reconstruction of slave quarters discovered in 2014 at Belvoir Plantation (Created by a team led by Dr. Julie Schablitsky; view at www.youtube.com).

Exposed stone foundation at the Savoy site.

For more information on this research project visit www.aacounty.org/cc. This page includes a digital Story Map with maps, photos, and a detailed discussion of Generals Highway history.
1. Bacon Ridge Site—Native Americans traversed the Generals Highway 9,000 years ago. Archaeologists found prehistoric stone tools such as this mortar and pestle. A ruin of an 18th-century grist mill was also found here.

2. Rising Sun Inn—This 1753 tavern provided food, drink, and lodging for travelers on their way to Annapolis. It has been the headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution since 1916.

3. Belvoir—This 18th-century house and surrounding tobacco plantation were owned by the Ross and Scott families. In 2014, archaeologists discovered a 34’x34’ slave quarter built on the property in the 1780s.

4. Brooksby Point—In 1777, the English missionary and circuit rider Francis Asbury began conducting sermons here in the home of John Sewell. Asbury later became one of the first two Methodist bishops in America.

5. Bunker Hill—An early 19th-century slave cabin still stands on the 200-acre plantation owned by wealthy merchant William Henry Baldwin. There are only a few documented slave cabins remaining in the State.

6. Indian Landing—This 1683 tobacco inspection port served several surrounding plantations. The tobacco barn at left once stood on nearby Hockley in the Hole and was moved to Historic London Town and Gardens.

7. Millersville Post Office—Designated in 1841 and named for Postmaster George Miller, the post office was located along the Annapolis and Elkridge Railroad. Now called the Childs Residence, it is the County’s South Shore Trail Ranger Station.

8. Savoy Site—Archaeologists excavated the dwelling of Anne and Charles Savoy, African Americans who operated a 10-acre farm in the 1870s-1880s. These buttons and beads were among thousands of artifacts recovered.

9. Crownsville Hospital—This mental hospital complex for African American patients was built on a 556-acre parcel in 1911 and has a controversial history. Patients grew willow and manufactured baskets and furniture here in the early 20th century.

10. Herald Harbor, Sherwood Forest, Epping Forest, and Arden on the Severn—These residential summer resorts date to the 1920s. This Sherwood Forest cabin is a typical dwelling that survives from this time period.