

A--BULL RUN STONE BRIDGE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Bull Run Stone Bridge Historic Overlay District was established in 1972 to protect the bridge and its surroundings from incompatible development.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- o The topography of the district's landscape slopes surely and evenly down to Bull Run, a stream or small river about thirty feet wide with wooded banks.
- o The landscape, dominated by wooded areas and open fields and with few buildings, has a rural feeling.
- o Route 29, a two-lane state highway, is the only road in the district and runs east-west through its center, crossing Bull Run and linking Fairfax County with Prince William County.
- o The dramatic view down to Bull Run from the higher elevations of the district dominates the cultural landscape as one heads west on Route 29. Heading east, one comes into Fairfax County at one of its few remaining wooded, rural entryways.
- o Bull Run is the primary waterway within the historic district. Many smaller streams run through the district, all part of the Bull Run watershed.
- o The old stone bridge (not open to vehicular traffic) crosses Bull Run just to the north of the present Route 29 bridge. Other than Route 29 and its new bridge, no man-made structures are visible from the bridge.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The stone bridge crossing Bull Run was twice the scene of major battles in the Civil War. On July 21, 1861, Confederate troops, defending Manassas Junction and its railway, defeated a larger contingent of Union troops, forcing them to retreat back across the stone bridge. This battle, known as the Battle of Manassas or Bull Run, was the first major battle of the Civil War and the Northern defeat shocked the Union. Before the battle, Union supporters were so overconfident that many sightseers came from Washington with picnic lunches to watch the expected rout of the Confederate forces. A few months later Confederate forces destroyed the center span of the bridge which Union engineers then replaced with a wood span.

On August 29 and 30, 1862, the opposing armies meet again at Bull Run in part of Lee's campaign to invade the North. The battle raged for two days, and again the Union forces were forced to retreat across the bridge, which they destroyed behind them on August 31, 1862.

In 1886 the bridge was rebuilt. In 1926, the road crossing Bull Run, Route 29-211, the old Warrenton Turnpike, was realigned south of the old bridge, which was closed to traffic. The federal government purchased the stone bridge in 1959 and restored it as part of its centennial celebration of the

Civil War. Today, the bridge is part of the Manassas National Battlefield Park, most of which is in Prince William County, and is administered by the National Park Service.

CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT

- o ARCHITECTURE: The old stone bridge is the pivotal structure in the district. Though the product of many reconstructions, it retains its historic integrity of place, association, and feeling. The bridge spans 170 feet and is twenty-four feet wide. Constructed of rough gray and red sandstone, the bridge is supported by two semi-circular arches with a rounded ice abutment on the upstream side. The National Park Service erected a split-rail fence along the road east of the bridge. While the fence does not date from the Civil War era, the use of a historic fence type and its placement aid in distinguishing the park property.

The absence of many buildings, driveways, and parking areas greatly contributes to the rural transition between the industrial development east of the district and the national park west of it. Only two buildings are visible from the road: an abandoned roadside restaurant and a small house. The few other buildings within the district are residential and agricultural buildings set 800 feet from the road.
- o HISTORIC AND CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES: In the report substantiating the zoning amendment that established the Bull Run Stone Bridge Historic Overlay District, only the bridge itself (parcel number 63-2-001-4) is specifically listed as a historic property. No contributing properties are listed.
- o LANDSCAPE AND SITE FEATURES: The landscape is the dominant feature of the historic district. The elevation gradually drops 200 feet in the mile from Bull Run Post Office Road to Bull Run. Looking west, toward Bull Run, a dramatic vista of the land is spread out before the viewer with the topography clearly revealing the military significance of the area. Woods and fields line the road and fill the view--south of Route 29, there are woods; to the north, fields. This is not the historic landscape, which during the Civil War was barren and treeless, but instead, it is the result of modern uses of the land. The intent here is not to recreate the Civil War landscape, but to protect an important site of Civil War activity, an environmentally sensitive area, and one of the remaining areas of open space in Fairfax County.

Bull Run itself is an important visual and historical feature of the district, as well as a sensitive watershed. A polluted or silted waterway would damage the historical and scenic value of the site.
- o ARCHAEOLOGY: The entire district may be considered a Civil War archaeological site as it was all within the range of the two Manassas battles and various troop movements and encampments. The floodplain

portion has a high probability of holding prehistoric sites. Five archaeological sites have been recorded in the floodplain along the eastern bank of Bull Run (FX1477 through FX1481). Three are prehistoric sites, one is a historic site, and one has components of both.

DISTRICT GOAL

By establishing the Historic Overlay District, the Board of Supervisors sought to encourage compatible land uses, improve the visual approach to the bridge, and maintain the open, rural, low-density character of the area. The bridge itself is on national park land and is protected by the federal government.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The following section lists standards which should be maintained and promoted in order to achieve the goals of the district. The specific guidelines presented below suggest ways to maintain those standards and are to be considered as a supplement to the general guidelines for all districts in Section Two, above.

STANDARD 1--Natural topographic characteristics of the district should be preserved and enhanced.

GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Retain natural land contours.
- 1.2 Protect Bull Run and the adjacent flood plain from alterations of water level and landscape.
- 1.3 Do not obscure or dominate the dramatic views to the west of the historic district.

STANDARD 2--Natural landscape features--particularly traditional plant materials and tree cover--should be preserved and enhanced.

GUIDELINES

- 2.1 Avoid removing existing healthy trees. Replace them with like material.
- 2.2 Maintain informal, natural landscaping composed of fields and wooded areas.
- 2.3 Avoid creating large expanses of manicured lawn and formal landscaping.

STANDARD 3--The physical and design integrity of the stone bridge and its site should be maintained.

GUIDELINES

- 3.1 Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for all preservation and restoration on the bridge, its abutments, and approaches.
- 3.2 Consider the potential for archaeological resources early in development and construction plans and mitigate adverse effects.

STANDARD 4--The rural character of Route 29 should be preserved and enhanced.

GUIDELINES

- 4.1 Maintain this portion of Route 29 as a two-lane road with soft shoulders and no cross streets.
- 4.2 Design any new bridge carrying Route 29 traffic over Bull Run with open rather than solid walls or railings to allow travelers to view Bull Run and the Old Stone Bridge.

STANDARD 5--New residential construction should be designed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

GUIDELINES

- 5.1 Set structures back 200 feet from the road.
- 5.2 Consolidate access to new construction into one narrow driveway, such as the existing outlet road adjacent to the federal property south of Route 29, or a road of similar scale and material.
- 5.3 Screen new construction either by landscaping or natural topography to maintain the semi-rural character and the view along Route 29.
- 5.4 Design the lot configuration of subdivisions or other development projects to be compatible with the natural topography.
- 5.5 Build structures into the land rather than on the highest point of their lot.

STANDARD 6--Signs and fences should not detract from or overwhelm the visual character of the bridge or natural landscape.

GUIDELINES

- 6.1 Design fences to be low, open, horizontal, and constructed of wood.
- 6.2 Keep signs to the minimum number and size necessary for identification of the historic site and highway safety.
- 6.3 Signs should be of natural materials, horizontal, and low and should not be brightly colored or internally lighted.
- 6.4 Free-standing signs should not exceed 10 feet in height.