

***Scripted Public Presentation:***  
**Survey of Architectural Resources**  
**in Russell County, Virginia**

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2009



Slide 1: In 2008, Russell County, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, commissioned the survey of at least 250 properties within the county. The survey project was funded through the Cost-Share Survey and Planning Program.

Slide 2: The 2008 study built upon a previous county-wide survey that was conducted between 1999 and 2002. The previous survey resulted in the documentation of roughly 135 resources. The current survey resulted in the documentation of 241 resources at the reconnaissance level, 3 resources at the intensive level, and the documentation of cultural landscapes and potential historic districts. 34 significant resources from the 1999-2002 project were resurveyed. The 2008 survey culminated in the completion of the Comprehensive Survey Report, which encompasses the results of both surveys.

Slide 3: Research and field work for the 2008 study began in January and was completed in August. A draft of the comprehensive survey was submitted in September, and the final report and survey forms were submitted in December 2008.

Slide 4: Reconnaissance-level field work consisted of a windshield survey of the county. The architectural historian documented the exterior features of the selected historic resources and any secondary resources associated with those properties. Only those exterior elevations and secondary resources that were visible from the public roadway were surveyed and photographed unless permission was granted to access the property by the owner. Documentation consisted of notes on construction methods, materials and material treatments, significant architectural features, and stylistic details; photographs of façades, visible elevations, and significant architectural features and details; and sketches of each site, which included the size and shape of the lot, the location of the resources on the lot, hardtop features, fences, and notable landscape features.

Slide 5: Intensive-level field work consisted of a walkover of the property, more extensive exterior documentation, and interior documentation. Interior documentation consisted of notes on construction methods, materials, original architectural features, and room layout; photographs of each room and any significant interior architectural features and detail; and a scale floor plan. When possible, intensive-level surveys were supplemented with additional background information on the original ownership of the property and any history surrounding the property that would enhance its significance.

Slide 6: Several potential historic districts were assessed. Historic districts are groups of resources with shared architectural or historical characteristics. Historic district assessment involves defining the district boundaries, establishing a period of significance, and developing an historic context. The potential historic districts documented during the two survey phases include: Lebanon, Honaker, Dante, Elk Garden, Castlewood, Route 71, Route 80, Moccasin Valley, and segments of the railroad corridors.

Slide 7: The surveyed resources fall within the following thematic contexts.

Slide 8: Contrary to common perceptions of rural Appalachian life, residents were engaged in some level of commercial exchange as early as the eighteenth century, with participation in small-scale local and regional trade. A true market economy, however, did not emerge until the period of industrialization following the Civil War. The evolution of commerce and trade within Russell County can be traced through the vernacular country stores located in the rural, agricultural communities and the stylish commercial blocks that emerged in town centers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Slide 9: The one-story, wood-frame, gable-roof massing is common to the majority of country stores. The most basic designs feature no additional elements.

Slide 10: A large number of country stores are topped with a parapet roof, either rectangular or flat, which creates a recognizable commercial façade that is easily identifiable in the rural landscape.

Slide 11: Country stores were often adapted to fit barns and other agricultural outbuildings.

Slides 12-16: Whereas small country stores were constructed in practical, vernacular fashion, the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century commercial districts, backed by capitalist wealth, were constructed in the latest architectural fashions of the time period. Commercial blocks in Honaker, Lebanon, Cleveland, Castlewood, and Dante reflect such popular styles as Italianate, Renaissance Revival, Colonial Revival, and Art Deco.

Slide 17: Early settlement patterns in Russell County are closely linked to the rugged terrain of the mountain landscape and the availability of natural resources. Settlers established farmsteads within the

broad valleys, mountain hollows, and mountain ridges. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century towns emerged in a response to industrialization and often followed newly-constructed railroad lines.

Slides 18-20: Early settlers arrived in familial groups and sought out the locations with the most fertile soil; the most abundant resources, primarily water and timber; and with the easiest access to transportation networks, such as navigable waterways or Native American trails. The fertile bottomlands of the hollows to the north and west of the Clinch River and the broad fertile valleys to the south and east of the Clinch River were the most desirable locations and provided optimal conditions for permanent settlement. A number of early communities, such as Elk Garden, Belfast Mills, Loop Valley/Corn Valley, Smithfield, and Moccasin Valley were established within the rolling valleys of Russell County. These settlements typically follow the creeks and roadways in a linear fashion, with each homestead benefiting from access to water, trails (for trade and communication), timber, and fertile farmland. Mills, country stores, schools, and churches follow the linear fashion of the settlements and are easily accessible to community members.

Slide 21: Early mountain hollow communities in Russell County, such as Swords Creek, Artrip, and New Garden, originated at the mouths of the hollows, which were enriched with the most arable alluvial soils and served as transportation crossroads. The mouths provided ideal sites for the establishment of small commercial settlements that contained a country store, a mill, a church, and a school.

Slide 22: While nineteenth-century Russell County remained predominantly rural and agricultural and populated with self-sufficient communities that relied on subsistence farming and local trade, the county seat town of Lebanon emerged as a planned town with a concentrated population and a surplus of goods and services that transcended the basic needs of subsistence living. Prior to industrialization in southwestern Virginia, the county seats provided the only source of town life. Acting as a destination for all matters of county government and law, Lebanon attracted professionals, such as doctors and lawyers; merchants; and laborers. Public and commercial buildings focused around the intersection and prominent dwellings radiated out along Main and Church streets.

Slide 23: In contrast to the planned development of Lebanon, industrial towns experienced a surge of growth that required more of an adaptation to the constraints of the physical landscape and the urgent

needs of the governing economic engine. Towns that emerged along the railroad tracks were required to contend with the topography and the demands of the industry.

Slide 24: Domestic buildings are the most predominant building type within Russell County, and they represent a range of vernacular construction techniques, architectural styles, and time periods.

Slide 25: The earliest building technique for dwellings in Russell County was hand-hewn log construction. The form was introduced with the first permanent settlers and remained a popular form of construction through much of the nineteenth century, particularly in the more remote mountain hollows and ridges.

Slide 26: As farmers acquired more wealth by the mid-nineteenth century and enhanced roadways made the acquisition of materials easier, many older log dwellings were expanded with frame additions and covered with wood sheathing to create an I-house. The I-house has by far been the dominant building form in Russell County and has transcended nearly every time periods and architectural trend throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Slides 27-29: Although wood is the predominant construction material for domestic buildings in Russell County, several high-style Federal and Greek Revival dwellings were constructed in brick during the Early National and Antebellum periods. These dwellings are found in prosperous agricultural communities, particularly where tobacco plantations flourished, and in town centers, such as Lebanon, where well-to-do professionals often established their residences.

Slide 30: The introduction of balloon framing after the Civil War and the diffusion of pattern books into rural areas, along with the increased wealth of many farmers, spurred new architectural trends within Russell County. Farmers began updating their dwellings with fashionable Victorian-era details, such as bay windows, turned porches, bargeboards, stickwork, and gable ells. In rural areas, newer buildings that were constructed during this time period boasted similar details. Despite more elaborate details, broken rooflines, and asymmetrical façades, the majority of the farmhouses constructed during this period continued to cling to at least some aspect of the traditional vernacular I-house form.

Slides 31: Particularly prosperous farmers constructed dwellings in high-style Italianate, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Stick, Colonial Revival, and Neo-Classical.

Slide 32: The industrial boom also brought prosperity to growing towns, such as Honaker, where a number of high-style Victorian dwellings were constructed to house the growing body of professionals and wealthy mining and lumber magnates.

Slide 33: Bungalows and Craftsman-style dwellings emerged as the dominant style for domestic architecture in Russell County following World War I.

Slide 34: Education initiatives began in Russell County on May 7, 1818, when the court appointed nine school commissioners; and on October 7, 1846, the court divided the county into 14 school districts.

Slides 35-36: A number of one- and two-room schoolhouses were constructed throughout the nineteenth century. All share some combination of the common characteristics of modest, rectangular massing; a wood frame; a stone foundation; rows of shuttered sash windows; and a cupola.

Slide 37: In 1913, Superintendent of Education H. W. Fugate consolidated the county into seven school districts, thus marking the beginning of school consolidation and graded institutions within the county. The larger graded schools were typically constructed in the Craftsman or Colonial Revival styles, which were fashionable during the era of consolidation.

Slide 38: Higher education has long had a strong presence in Russell County. In 1850 and 1851, respectively, a Male Academy and a Female Academy were established in Lebanon. The Female Academy continued operation until 1890. In 1893, Russell College, a female institution, opened in Lebanon and ran until 1909. Also in 1893, Professor H. W. Fugate established Collingwood Academy near Fugate's Hill in Collingwood. The school remained in operation until 1899.

Slide 39: Early Euro-American settlers, African-Americans, and European immigrant laborers converged in Russell County to create a diverse ethnic and cultural landscape.

Slide 40: Southwest Virginia was populated by settlers moving south through the Great Valley of Virginia during the Great Migration and east from Tidewater communities during a widespread westward movement into the frontier. The westward movement brought a number of British colonists, while settlers passing south through the valley into Russell County predominantly represented German and Scots-Irish heritage. Also represented, to a lesser extent, were the Swiss, Norwegian, French, Spanish, and Welsh. These early Euro-American settlers introduced log construction techniques and developed the I-house, which represents a coalescing of continental European antecedents with Anglo-American trends.

Slide 41: While small-scale subsistence farming dominated agricultural practices with Russell County, a number of large plantations and farmsteads employed slave labor. After the Civil War, many free blacks remained in the area and established their own communities. Central to the African-American community was the church, which provided much of the social, recreational, educational, and, of course, spiritual needs of the black community.

Slide 42: An influx of Italian stone masons into Russell County in the 1890s to begin work on the Clinch Valley Extension of the Norfolk & Western Railroad. The skill of the masons was necessary for the construction of the stone tunnels, bridges, and culverts that supported the rail line, most notable the massive stone tunnels constructed along Thompson Creek. A number of Italians remained in Russell County to establish permanent residence after the completion of the railroad. Several prominent stone dwellings and commercial buildings that were constructed in the early twentieth century are attributed to the skilled stone masons that emigrated from Italy.

Slide 43: African-Americans and European immigrants were heavily recruited to work in the coal mines during the early twentieth century. Company towns were often segregated based on ethnicity.

Slides 44-45: Closely linked to the evolution of the church in Russell County is the evolution of the cemetery. During the early colonial settlement, individual family cemeteries were common in rural areas. As communities grew and became focused around the church as the nexus of spiritual, social, and cultural life, church cemeteries emerged in importance. Nearly every church surveyed within the county is associated with a cemetery plot, which range in size from a small clustering of family members to entire



congregations. Within Russell County, the cemeteries appear to have been situated in the most convenient locations to the rear or alongside the church. In a few instances the grave markers were placed upon a hill adjacent to the church. Where landscaping decisions are evident, one finds little more than a decorative wrought-iron fence that either delineates the entire churchyard or encloses a specific family plot.

Slide 46: Courthouses and post offices are the two building types found within Russell County that represent this thematic context.

Slide 47: The first courthouse, a small log building, was constructed around 1786. The original log courthouse burned in 1798 and was quickly replaced with a two-story stone and brick structure, which still stands today. As the population steadily grew in the years following the American Revolution, new counties were formed out of Russell and the population center shifted further away from Dickensonville. In 1816 a motion was made to relocate the county seat to a more central location. Lebanon was officially incorporated on February 21, 1873, and the first post office opened on April 24, 1878. A new court house was constructed in 1874 in the Classical Revival style.

Slide 48: Two known post offices were recorded during the survey. Although the architecture of the resources does not reflect any specific trends in the design of government buildings, their locations reveal important clues to the patterns of settlement and growth within the county.

Slides 49-50: With the exception of a few dwellings built for medical doctors, there were no resources surveyed in Russell County that contribute to this thematic context. The location of doctors' dwellings does indeed tell a bit about the nature of the communities within which they resided. The establishment of two doctors in Honaker attests to the enormous growth and prosperity of the town during the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century zenith of the lumber industry.

Slide 51: From the early water-powered mills of the small, subsistence communities to the large-scale mines and factories of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century landscape, the economy of Russell County has always benefitted from industrial pursuits.

Slide 52: The establishment of small water-powered grist mills along rivers and creeks satisfied the subsistence and small-scale commercial economies that perpetuated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Raw materials, primarily wheat and corn, could be processed on a small scale for either home use or local trade.

Slides 53-55: The emergence of the lumber and coal mining industries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about a dramatic transformation in the economic and cultural landscape of Russell County. A number of new towns, taking advantage of both industrial and transportation opportunities, sprouted along the railroad tracks. Honaker, and neighboring Putnam, boomed with the lumber industry, and the company town of Dante emerged as the nexus of the coal mining industry. Modest worker cottages were constructed in Honaker, Putnam, Dante and a number of other industrial railroad towns across the county.

Slides 56-57: Several fortified dwellings were constructed by the early settlers in the eighteenth century to protect themselves from Native American attacks. Four of the known forts to have been constructed in Russell County are Moore's Fort, Russell's Fort, Glade Hollow Fort, and Elk Garden Fort. Only fort was surveyed, yet there is speculation that other fortified dwellings still exist. The William Dorton Jr. Fortified House located on Route 71 in Dickensonville is a simple log structure that has been encompassed within an agricultural building. It is likely that most of the fortified dwellings constructed within the county in the eighteenth century were simple one-story log buildings.

Slide 58: Prior to the early twentieth century, recreation was not a dominant theme in the history of Russell County. No doubt the residents participated in recreational activities, particularly in the form of church socials, but dedicated building types did not exist. The coming of industrialism in the county, along with an emerging modernity, signaled a new era of wealth and a greater amount of free time for the participation in leisure activities.

Slide 59: Three theatres have been identified and recorded within Russell County, all dating from the early twentieth century. Note the Art Deco style of The Russell in Lebanon. The Art Deco style, with its exaggerated geometric forms, became synonymous with the quest for modernity and was frequently employed for newly emerging building types during this time period, including the movie theatre.

Slide 60: Upon arriving in Russell County, settlers saw the need to establish religious organizations. The Freewill Baptists, Primitive Baptists, and Methodists dominated the religious sphere, and their congregations continued to grow and flourish through the twentieth century. Churches were not only the religious focus of rural life but also formed the social and cultural identity of the community.

Slide 61: Early churches, those constructed prior to the Civil War and, to a large extent, prior to 1900, reflect the conservative religious values and traditional subsistence lifestyle in which local families were entrenched. The modest buildings typically had a single room, a gable roof, and simple windows.

Slide 62: Any stylistic detail, such as gable bargeboards or peaked windows, was very minor.

Slide 63: By the end of the nineteenth century, the county was being propelled from a subsistence lifestyle into a commercialized, industrialized national economy. The opening of the region to the vagaries of national trends and the increasing importance of cash wealth combined to transform the local religious and cultural values within Russell County. While the modest, vernacular church model persisted, an ecclesiastical movement reached the area and stimulated the construction of churches that embraced spiritualism in their design, with the appropriation of such romanticized styles as Gothic or Romanesque Revival.

Slide 64-65: Several changes took place in rural churches between 1900 and the 1950s. Church membership increased, church budgets increased, there was a higher emphasis on higher education, and there was a greater emphasis on social responsibility. A dramatic increase in population led to the construction of new churches, and the increase in church membership and church budgets stimulated the expansion and upgrade of substandard facilities.

Slide 66: The most notable contribution to this time period, however, is the Sunday School Movement, which began in the 1920s and peaked around the 1950s. During this time churches were expanded to include classroom facilities.

Slide 67: Social life within towns frequently evolved around churches, theatres, and local stores. More formal social organizations were often established by the prominent men in the community.

Slide 68: Three such lodges were identified on the survey. These organizations provided social meeting spaces and organized and funded community events and projects.

Slide 69: Central to the strong community social networks was the church. The continued presence of the church as the social nexus of community life is manifest in the addition of fellowship halls and picnic shelters in the twentieth century.

Slide 70: Prior to the period of industrialization that emerged around 1900, Russell County was heavily entrenched in an agrarian culture. Early settlers relied primarily on diversified, small-scale, subsistence farming based on household economies and centered around family and community life.

Slide 71: Like domestic buildings, early agricultural buildings were typically constructed of hewn logs. While the interior and exterior appearance of dwellings was given consideration when shaping the logs and executing the notching, agricultural buildings were more crude in their design. Logs were typically squared but often in a less uniform manner, and the simpler saddle- and V-notches were more frequently used than on dwellings.

Slide 72: Many early outbuildings, particularly spring houses and smoke houses, were constructed of local limestone.

Slide 73: With the availability of sawn lumber, and thus timber-framing techniques, by the mid-nineteenth century, barns grew in size and complexity. Earlier log barns were often encased within expanded frame barns and new gable-front frame barns were constructed.

Slide 74: A common agricultural landscape in present-day Russell County features cleared, fenced pasture that encompasses the rolling hills; crop fields that spread over the flattest lands; reforested hillsides and ridges; and a farmhouse and agricultural buildings that are spread over the cleared landscape along the creek and roadway.

Slide 75: The bridges, tunnels, and culverts constructed for the roads and the railroad lines are exemplary of the developments in engineering technology, and the process of constructing these corridors through the mountain terrain is an engineering feat of its own.

Slide 76: Iron road and railroad bridges were constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to traverse the Clinch River and its many tributaries.

Slide 77: Local limestone was used in the construction of the resources along the Norfolk & Western line. Because of the inherent complexities of masonry bridge construction and the skill required for quarrying, cutting, dressing, and laying the stone, railroad companies recruited Italian stone masons. Seven exceptional stone tunnels were surveyed along the Norfolk & Western line, six along Thompson Creek west of Honaker and one along Route 19 east of Honaker. These tunnels carry the railroad tracks over streams and roadway.

Slide 78: The economic growth of Russell County is closely linked to the development of its transportation network. Early roads stimulated local and regional trade, while railroad development linked the county to national markets.

Slide 79: Early road systems generally followed the rivers, creeks, and streams. While a few major routes connected the county with outside markets, the majority of the early roads were little more than crude paths that connected farmers with community centers. One important transportation corridor was Route 71, which was originally a Native American trail known as the Trail of the Lonesome Pine. The route passes roughly east to west through the county and experienced some of the earliest settlement in the county. Another important transportation corridor was Route 80 through Hayter's Gap into Washington County. Around 1800, a tavern for overnight travelers was erected just before the gap; the tavern still stands as a dwelling.

Slide 80: After the Civil War, both local entrepreneurs and northern capitalists leapt to cash in on the rich timber and mineral resources that were largely untapped within the southern Appalachian region. In 1887, the Norfolk & Western Railroad began constructing the one hundred-mile Clinch Valley Extension into

Bluefield, Virginia, in an attempt to tap into these resources; and in 1909, the Clinchfield Railroad, which served the coal-rich landscape of present-day Dante, was placed in operation.

Slide 81: A number of rail-related buildings were constructed along the railroad right-of-way. Such resources include depots, station agent houses, water towers, repair shops, and sheds. Few of these resources remain within the county, which makes those extant rail-related resources all the more valuable. Only one depot still stands, the Dante Depot, which was constructed around 1930 in the Craftsman style.

Slide 82: Three station agent houses were also identified during the survey: one in Finney, one in Cleveland, and one in Honaker. Like depots, that station agent houses reflected popular architectural styles and were all constructed with similar building templates. These circa 1890 examples are vernacular interpretations of the Gothic Revival cottage designs popularized in pattern books by such notable architects as Andrew Jackson Downing for rural residences. The dwelling in Cleveland was demolished shortly after its survey in 2008.

Slide 83: Historic preservation is a valuable tool for comprehensive planning, economic revitalization, and heritage tourism, and tax incentives may be available to owners of historic properties. More importantly, the preservation of historic resources stimulates a pride in local history and community.

Slide 84: When communities know the value of their historic resources, they can develop a comprehensive plan to protect their heritage through responsible development and land use.

Slide 85: Historic preservation can stimulate economic revitalization through tax incentives, Main Street Program initiatives, historic preservation grants, the creation of jobs and local businesses, and heritage tourism.

Slide 86: Tax incentives for the rehabilitation of National Register listed properties may be available to property owners from both the federal and state governments. Successful completion of the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit application, working within the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings, permits an income tax credit of 20% of the eligible rehabilitation

expenses on income-producing properties through the federal government and 25% on both residential and income-producing properties through the state government.

Slide 87: Historic buildings and sites are one of the strongest assets for attracting tourists. Communities should preserve and promote their rural or small-town character. Each community is unique. Those unique qualities are what attract tourists.

Slide 88: Pride in local history is a strong contributor to community involvement and investment. When residents take pride in their history, quality of life is greatly enhanced and natural and cultural resources are more lovingly protected.

Slide 89: The following people are acknowledged for their contribution to the 2008 survey.

Slide 90: With the results of the survey, let's hope this is not the end but the beginning of historic preservation in Russell County.