PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 081-7153

Purpose of Evaluation
Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.
Seeking recognition of the lime kiln’s historic significance within the community.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits?  Yes x  No ____
Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program?  Yes x  No ____

1. General Property Information
Property name: Lime Kiln Theater (former Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co. Plant)
Property address: Lime Kiln Road Route 670
City or Town: Lexington
Zip code: 24450
Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Rockbridge County
Category of Property (choose only one of the following): Building Site x Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects
Acreage: 12
Setting (choose only one of the following): Urban Suburban Town x Village Hamlet Rural

Briefly describe the property’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:
The mostly wooded 12-acre site is located at the west end of Lime Kiln Road, one mile northwest of the
downtown center of the City of Lexington, at the Lexington/Rockbridge County line. See attached plat. The
plat includes a small strip of land in the City of Lexington that is not included for evaluation.
3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): None

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: n/a

If the builder is known, please list here: Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co.

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1905

Narrative Description

The remains of three lime kilns are found in a large, deep, limestone-walled depression that was converted into a performing arts theater beginning in the mid 1960s. The kilns themselves are constructed of stone, and one of them has an extant stack that is round and constructed of firebrick. The stonework is well-executed, with built-in round arches, as is the brickwork of the round-topped kiln stacks. Around 2017, the stacks were stabilized and restored to some degree, without adding any new modifications.

Lime Kiln's current main stage, in the smaller quarry depression known as the bowl, has a capacity of 675 guests. Previously the main stage was in the “old stadium” within the large depression where the lime kilns are located, where, in 2015, the theater components consisted mainly of a stand-alone gradually-elevating stand of wooden bleachers with a control booth at the top. In place of the old grandstand in the kiln area that has been removed since 2015, having caused no adverse effect to the industrial remains, stands a seasonal tent that allows for festival seating in the event of bad weather. There is a portable stage at the west end next to kiln #3.

Nearby (to the north) is a one-story half-dovetailed hewn-log cabin, brought in from Tennessee in the 1970s, as well as a smaller, secondary theater called "the bowl," originally created as a secondary quarry during the site's industrial era. Just northeast of the bowl is the much larger, fully excavated limestone quarry that now serves as the theater's main parking area. Lastly, a modern bathroom building of rustic design, with a front-gable metal-clad roof—extended in the front to form a covered porch—and dark-brown stained plywood-and-batten cladding, is a non-contributing building on the property.

4. History and Significance

Significance Statement

The three somewhat-intact lime kilns, extensive limestone walls, and excavated quarries are remnants of a large commercial operation that was active by the early 20th century. As a rare survival, the Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co. site appears to be eligible at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Industry. The Lime Kiln Theater, which now occupies the site, was founded in the mid 1960s, and may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of Recreation/Entertainment. Since its inception, the Lime Kiln Theater has hosted audiences and performers from both near and far, including many internationally known artists.

From the Lime Kiln Theater website:

Lime Kiln Theater is rooted in and inspired by the magic of a natural, outdoor theater. In 1967, two Washington and Lee University students produced “A Midsummer Night's Dream” in an abandoned, turn of the century limestone quarry and kiln in Lexington, Virginia. Fifteen years later, the landowner donated use of the site for the establishment of a nonprofit arts organization, and thus began thousands of volunteer hours to clear the brambles, thickets, and rubble to build a theater and concert venue. From a successful first summer season in 1984, Lime Kiln expanded to an annual series that
spanned over 25 years, having to temporarily cease operations due to challenging economic conditions during 2012-2013. In 2014, a newly energized Lime Kiln board undertook the challenge to bring the unique performance space back to life.

The Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co. Plant, now the Lime Kiln Theater site in Lexington, opened in 1905. The company had already operated a plant in the nearby Town of Buena Vista (also in Rockbridge County) by 1896. A 1903 advertisement in Stone magazine announced “The Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co. will manufacture fertilizer lime by a new process, by which the lime is slaked in a vacuum. The product is said to be greatly superior to the ordinary fertilizer. Mr. Lawrence Embree is the secretary and general manager of the company.” The company’s advertisement in the C&O’s Official Industrial Guide & Shippers Directory (1905) names only their Buena Vista location (no mention of Lexington) and their claim as “Manufacturers of the Celebrated Rockbridge Building Lime, Rockbridge Chemical Lime, Rockbridge Prepared Agricultural Lime, and Rockbridge Cylinder-Sawed, Kiln-Dried Staves.” Centrally featured in the ad are photographs of the sprawling plant and the quarry. At the top of the ad are listed the company officials: “E. L. Embree, President, of Columbia Paper Co., Buena Vista Va.; C.S. Adams, Vice-President, of Adams Bros.-Paynes Co., Lynchburg, Va.; and Lawrence Embree, Secretary & Treasurer.”

Another Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co. advertisement that appeared in the Lexington Gazette on June 21, 1905, read: “New Store New Goods We use this space to notify our employees, friends, and citizens of Lexington and Rockbridge, that we will, early in June, open a Large and Up-to-date Store in the lands of the Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co., near our Lime Kilns, and we respectfully solicit a share of your patronage. We will carry a line of DRY-GOODS, SHOES, NOTIONS, GROCERIES, JENTS' FURNISHINGS, HATS, TOBACCO, CIGARS and PROVISIONS. We will also buy or exchange goods for produce, such as BUTTER, EGGS, CHICKENS, and POTATOES, GRAIN and HAY. Also WOOD of all kinds in cord length, ROOF POLES, etc. Yours for business, Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co. LEXINGTON. VA. Watch for the date of our opening.”

Company script or a form of credit issued as a Rockbridge Lime & Stone Co. metal token (coin), ca. 1905, was advertised for sale on Ebay (in November 2015), is embossed with "Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co., Lexington, Va." on one side, and "Good for 25 [cents] in Merchandise" on the other side.

The book, Barrel and Box and Packages (1905) features the following statement from the company, under the headline, Now Operate Their Own Plant: "Lexington, Va., November 25.--The Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co. say: 'We have just completed our stave and saw mill, which we are running daily to its full capacity in connection with our other business. We are also building a large dry kiln which we will use in connection with our new stave mill. Lime trade continues good and orders are plentiful.'"


Sources
6) 1911 Survey Plat showing location and layout of the “Plant of the Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co.” Houston vs Barclay - Map of Partition drawn by D. C. Humphreys in November 1911.

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):
   Private: ___ x _____  Public\Local _____  Public\State _____  Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)
   name/title: Rusty and Lindlay Ford
   organization: n/a
   street & number: 686 Enfield Road
   city or town: Lexington
   state: VA
   zip code: 24550
   e-mail: rford@rockbridge.net
   telephone:

Legal Owner’s Signature: ____________________________________________  Date: ____________

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.
   Contact person: ____________________________________________________
   Daytime Telephone: ____________________

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)
   name/title: Mike Pulice
   organization: DHR
   street & number: Western Regional Office
   city or town: Salem
   state: VA
   zip code: 24153
   e-mail: michael.pulice@dhr.virginia.gov
   telephone: 540-387-5443

6. Notification
   In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager
   name/title: Spencer Suter, Administrator
   locality: Rockbridge County
   Rockbridge County Administrative Office Building
   150 South Main Street
   2nd Floor
   Lexington, VA 24450
   (540) 463-1460
   ssuter@rockbridgecountyva.gov
Legal Owner's Signature: Russell H. Lindley Ford  Date: 9-1-27

** Signature required for processing all applications. **

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person:

Daytime Telephone: ____________________________

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Mike Pulice
organization: DHR
street & number: Western Regional Office
city or town: Salem  state: VA  zip code: 24153
e-mail: michael.pulice@dhr.virginia.gov  telephone: 540-387-5443

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locality: Rockbridge County
Rockbridge County Administrative Office Building
150 South Main Street
2nd Floor
Lexington, VA 24450
(540) 463-1460
ssuter@rockbridgecountyva.gov
PLAT SHOWING
PARCEL OF PROPERTY SITUATED NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF LIME KILN ROAD AND ALUM SPRINGS ROAD OWNED BY BREWSTER S. FORD AS RECORDED IN DEED BOOKS 200-41 AND 211-202.

CITY OF LEXINGTON
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY
SCALE: 1" = 100'

JAMES E. DORSEY
CERTIFIED LAND SURVEYOR
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

This plat showing property of Brewster S. Ford being leased to Lime Kiln Area, Inc. was filed and presented in this office and adopted for recording.

Attested: D. B. Waller

Manufacturers of the Celebrated

Rockbridge Building Lime  Rockbridge Chemical Lime.

Rockbridge Prepared Agricultural Lime  Rockbridge Cylinder-Sawn, Kiln-Dried Staves

Now Operate Their Own Plant.
LEXINGTON, Va., November 25.—The Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co. say: "We have just completed our stove and saw mill, which we are running daily to its full capacity in connection with our other business. We are also building a large dry kiln which we will use in connection with our new stove mill. Lime trade still continues good and orders plentiful."

NOTICE!
New Store New Goods
We are pleased to notify our patrons, friends, and customers of Rockbridge and Rockbridge that a new store has just opened.

Open a Large and Up-to-date Store

We are located at the Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co., next to the Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co., next to the Rockbridge Lime and Stone Co.

Houston vs Barclay
Map of Partition
Nov. 1911
2017
Stabilization
in-progress
2015 photo of grandstand - later demolished
The Bowl
2015 image
Relocated cabin and restrooms - non-contributing buildings - 2015