



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF)

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 062-5276

1. General Information

Property name(s): Massie's Mill Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Route 56 (Crabtree Falls Highway)

City or Town: Massies Mill, VA

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Nelson County

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: ~7.5 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural X

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Massie's Mill community is located along Route 56 (Crabtree Falls Highway) as the road runs from Roseland to Vesuvius through the George Washington National Forest. As you drive either direction on Route 56, your landscape is typically open views of the mountainous terrain that sits to the North and West. Massies Mill is a distinct break in the landscape, with a more concentrated set of development and structures evident of the development that laid here before. Massies Mill is at the base of the notable Priest Mountain which has an elevation of over 4,000 feet and is one of the more notable peaks on the ridgeline.

The intersection of Crabtree Falls Highway and Pharsalia Road is the Northeast corner of the property. In total, the district is roughly 7 acres and includes 2 noted VA DHR Architecture points (062-0202: Massies Mill Lodge and Lawthornes Thrift, DHR 062-0209: Lea Brothers Warehouse), two additional contributing structures (Joseph Peyton Lea Sr residence built circa 1890 at 37 Pharsalia Road), Garage behind Massies Mill Lodge (estimated pre 1930); and includes four Nelson County parcels: 54 A 113A, 54 A 115, 54 A 114, 54 A 111. The DePriest Bank (062-0203) is also included.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Unknown at this time

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown at this time

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: Unknown at this time

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1900 - 1930

Are there any known threats to this property? Since Hurricane Camille in 1969 there has not been any concerted effort to preserve the remaining historical structures of the area, except for Grace Episcopal Church. In fact, Massies Mill itself was dismantled and moved to Richmond in 1993 but never reconstructed. Lea Brothers General Store and the Post Office were demolished.

Narrative Description:

As noted in a 1998 study by the Nelson County Historical Society, carried out under the direction of Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Massies Mill area is home to some of the oldest structures in Nelson County (along with Lovingsston, Shipman, and Norwood) and the main recommendation of the study was that a Preliminary Information Form (PIF) should be developed for Massies Mill and the other historic districts in Nelson County. [Historic Resources Identification and Assessment of Nelson County, Virginia (1993); An Architectural Survey in Nelson County, Virginia (1998)]

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The center of the historic mill village is at the intersection of Route 56 (Crabtree Falls Highway) and Route 680 (Pharsalia Road). At the northwest corner of this intersection is the site of the former grain and flour mill. The mill stood at this site until 1993. Behind the former site of the mill is and heading several miles up Pharsalia Road is the land of William Massie, son of the Continental Army officer, Thomas Massie. This land continues up to Pharsalia, the estate of William Massie, which is currently listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

At the southwest corner of the intersection two structures with historical significance remain – Massies Mill Lodge and Lawthorne Thrift (which subsequently was the International Order of Odd Fellows Lodge) and the DePriest Bank which closed in 1932 and did not survive the Great Depression. Behind the DePriest Bank and Odd Fellows Lodge sits a residence dating back to 1890 which was formerly the home of Joseph Peyton Lea, Sr. who was the President of DePriest Bank and Postmaster of Massies Mill. Across the street from the proposed historic property is the land that formerly housed the Massies Mill post office and the site of the former Lea Brothers General Store. Behind the site of the former post office and Lea Brothers sits Grace Episcopal Church which dates back to the 1880's.

Surrounding the property are properties and structures used for several purposes including agriculture, public parks, residential, religious, and commercial.

Religious: Grace Episcopal Church is located in the middle of the Massies Mill village and has played a role in the community dating back to the beginning. The church continues to serve the local community and serve as a meaningful historical landmark.

4. History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Nestled beside the Tye River is Massies Mill, a mill village that was known as the “economic center of Nelson County” until it was largely wiped out by Hurricane Camille’s floods and mudslides in 1969. [Lovingston Historic District VLR Nomination Form (2005)] The village has not been the same since that fateful August night over a half century ago.

The history of Massies Mill is one of flour and family. It is etched in the sturdy stone of its mills and the enduring spirit of its residents. In the 1780’s, Major Thomas Massie arrived in what is now Nelson County. He settled on 9,000 acres and built a plantation home on Level Green in 1803. Level Green is just southwest of the Lea House/Lodge property. During the 1780’s Thomas Massie and his wife Sarah “Sally” Cocke had three sons together: Thomas Jr. born 1782, Henry born 1784, and William born 1795. [Wikipedia, Thomas Massie] Rather than partake in the traditional rural activity of tobacco growing, the Massie family constructed Massies Mill (DHR 062-0027) in the 1820s and later Tyro Mill (DHR 062-0028) in the 1840s. These water-powered mills became the cornerstones of Nelson County's grist industry. [Historic Resources Identification and Assessment of Nelson County, Virginia (1993)]

In 1813, Major Thomas Massie divided his Level Green estate, carving out a 1400 acre parcel and starting construction on a one-story, four-room, linear frame house. After construction was complete in 1816, the youngest son, William Massie, purchased the property from his father and named it Pharsalia (DHR 062-462). [Pharsalia VLR Nomination Form (2009)] This opulent estate is 2.5 miles north of Massies Mill.

Around the mill's rhythmic pulse, Massies Mill blossomed along with other parts of Nelson County including Lovingston. One of the most successful merchants in Lovingston during the early 20th century was W.B. Lea of North Carolina who moved to Lovingston in 1901 after learning that the merchandise firm of Adler and Myers was for sale. Soon thereafter, his brother, L.L. Lea, joined him, expanding the Lea Brothers business to Massies Mill. [Lovingston Historic District VLR Nomination Form (2005)] It was Joseph Peyton Lea Sr who seemed to sit at the center of Massies Mill both literally and figuratively. Joseph Peyton Lea Sr and his wife Mary Davis Lea arrived from North Carolina sometime around the turn of the century. In a house just a stone’s throw North of Massies Mill on Pharsalia road, they raised their six children. [MyHeritage.com (2023)]

Joseph Peyton Lea Sr. seemed to have his hands in many aspects of the development of Massies Mill at the turn of the century. He was the Postmaster in town for 30 years from 1911 from 1941. He

served as the President of DePriest Bank in Massies Mill from 1916 until its demise after the Great Depression in 1932. And was involved with his brothers in the family business of the Lea Brothers General Store (062-0205) which sat next to the Post Office and across the street from the bank. [MyHeritage.com (2023)] In the center of town, the role of Lea Brothers Store extended beyond mere commerce, becoming the village's beating heart – a space for gossip, groceries, and a shared sense of belonging. Grace Episcopal Church, built in 1895, offered solace and social connection in the community. It sat just behind the Lea Brothers Store between Route 56 and the Tye River.

Despite the Lea Brothers storefront being recently demolished, evidence remains of their commercial success in the form of the nearby Lea Brothers Warehouse (062-209).

Between the Lea house and the store sat Massies Mill and two other important structures in town, DePriest Bank (062-203) and Massies Mill Lodge and Lawthornes Thrift Shop (062-202). The Lodge was home to the International Order of Odd Fellows until 2014 and is currently the home of Central Virginia Farm Workers Initiative, a non-profit serving the areas migrant farmworkers with health and educational resources. The bank was recently home to an Irish flute maker but is now abandoned.

While the grist industry declined in the early twentieth century (1900-1920), the area's sawmilling tradition strengthened as the Bee Tree Lumber Company constructed the Virginia Blue Ridge Railroad from the Tye River Depot to Massies Mill and Woodson's Mill (DHR 062-0093) to facilitate lumbering of the nearby mountains.

The last 50 years for Massies Mill have not been quite as bright as the first 150 years. In August 1969, Hurricane Camille unleashed its fury in the form of thirty-one inches of rain which triggered flooding of the Tye River and mudslides. Only two of the 35-40 structures in Massies Mill were not damaged and 150 lives were taken across Nelson County by the disaster.

Today, Massie's Mill wears the scars of time with quiet dignity. Pharsalia, now a private residence, whispers stories of the past through tours and events, keeping the Massie legacy alive. Grace Episcopal Church, though touched by the flood, stands as a beacon of resilience. The Lea Brothers Store may be gone, but its warmth lives on in the shared memories of locals. DePriest Bank, the Odd Fellows Lodge, Lea house, and Lea Brothers Warehouse all remain and can once again serve as the center of a vibrant Virginia mountain town.

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: X Public\Local X Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

6. Applicant/Sponsor (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Kyle W Hawke

organization: Self – Considering Acquiring Lodge, Garage, and Home and Applying for Tax Credits

street & number: 1939 Sleepy Hollow Road

city or town: Roseland state: VA zip code: 22967

e-mail: kylehawke@gmail.com telephone: +1 (404) 988 6936

Applicant's Signature: _____ See attached _____

Date: _____

• • *Signature required for processing all applications.* • •

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: Zane Massie

organization: Owner (Joseph Peyton Lea Sr Residence and Lea Brothers Warehouse)

street & number: 37 Pharsalia Road

city or town: Massies Mill state: VA zip code: 22967

e-mail: _____ telephone: +1 (434) 944-0906

Applicant's Signature: _____ See attached _____

Date: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: Jeremy Hale

organization: Owner (Massies Mill Lodge and Lawthornes Thrift, Garage)

street & number: 1939 Crabtree Falls Highway

city or town: Massies Mill state: VA zip code: 22967

e-mail: jeremy@thehalecompanyinc.com telephone: +1 (434) 981 6281

Applicant's Signature: _____ See attached _____

Date: _____

7. 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: David Parr – Nelson County Board of Supervisors - Vice Chair West District

locality: Nelson County

street & number: 250 Firehouse Road

city or town: Piney River state: VA zip code: 22964

telephone: 434-277-5265 email: dparr@nelsoncounty.org



Legend

- Public View Architecture Points
- County Boundaries

This blue-shaded shape is now obsolete. Refer to new boundary map.

Unrecorded house

Lea House (unrecorded)

Massie's Mill Site 062-0027

c. 1900 house 062-0201

Massie's Mill Lodge 062-0202

Lea Bros Store & Post Office Site

DePriest Bank 062-0203

Demolished I-house site 062-0204

Grace Episcopal Ch 062-0206

Lea Bros Warehouse 062-0209



Feet

0 50 100 150 200
1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

Title: Proposed Massie's Mill Historic District resources

Date: 2/1/2024

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

Pharsalia Rd

680

680

1953

1946

56

Crabtree-Falls-Hwy

Crabtree-Falls-Hwy







Crabtree Falls, VA























Pharsalia Rd

Crabtree

56

Pharsalia Rd

Riverside Loop

Crabtree Falls Hwy

Tanyard Rd

Dickie Rd

Crabtree Falls Hwy

Tye River



062-0201

062-0027

062-0202

062-0203

062-0205

062-0204

062-0206

062-0209





GRACE
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EVERYONE WELCOME

LOVE



a
Street View

See more dates



Joseph Peyton Lea, Sr House (Circa 1890)



Front/Side Elevation. 3300 sq feet 5 BR / 2 BA



Front Elevation; Roof replaced prior to 2015 and Vinyl Windows installed by previous owner (prior to 2015)



Front Porch



Rear Elevation



Rear Elevation



Significant exterior stone work. Contributing structure



Family room and rest of home has been gutted by previous owner



Front office, Full Bath, and Former Kitchen



Former Bedroom, Intended Future Kitchen



Cabin (1BR / 1BA) renovated former garage
2016 – 2023 – not a contributing structure



Lea Brothers Warehouse – Front Elevation



Lea Brothers Warehouse – Side Elevation



Lea Brothers Warehouse Interior



Massies Mill Lodge and Lawthornes Thrift (subsequently Odd Fellows Lodge). Brick building next door is Depriest Bank



Front porch of Massies Mill Lodge on Route 56



Side garage / driveway of Massies Mill Lodge



First level of Massies Mill Lodge



Second level of Massies Mill Lodge (Odd Fellows Lodge)



Second level of Massies Mill Lodge (Odd Fellows Lodge)



Garage behind Massies Mill Lodge – Front Elevation



Garage behind Massies Mill Lodge – Side Elevation



Garage behind Massies Mill Lodge

