



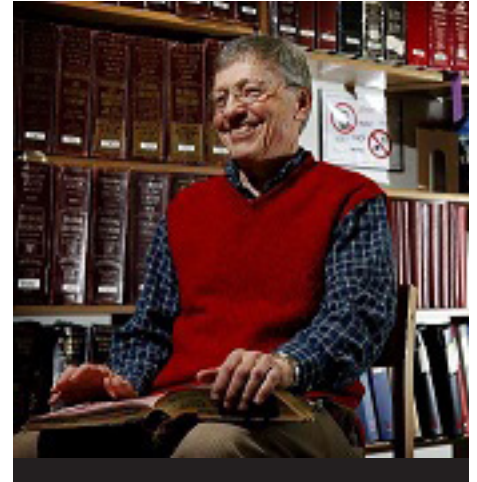
# f PRESERVATION focus

Newsletter of the  
Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation

## In Memoriam

John Kern, a native of Iowa and a graduate of Swarthmore College and the University of Wisconsin, passed away in March 2018 after making a presentation at the Virginia History Forum, held at Emory and Henry College. The presentation focused on his continued research into African-American history and the American Civil Rights Movement, subjects that were of deep personal interest to him throughout his career. John was a veteran of the Peace Corps, working in Tunisia in the 1960s and would travel to Africa again during his lifetime. For most of his career he worked as a historian in the field of Cultural Resource Management, becoming director of Delaware's State Historic Preservation Office in the 1980s.

He moved to Roanoke in 1988 to open the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' first regional office, originally serving Roanoke and ten surrounding counties. During John's tenure as director, the outreach area of the Western Regional Preservation Office grew to 27 counties and now includes 32 counties of southwestern Virginia. As a researcher and author of numerous studies and National Register nominations, John's contributions to the fields of history and preservation comprise a substantial body of work and an important legacy. He will be sadly missed. A memorial service will take place on **July 22 at 3pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church**, 2015 Grandin Road, Roanoke.



**John R. Kern, Ph.D, Historian, 1940 – 2018**

## Preservation Pub Talk

As RVPF considers nominations for its annual list of Endangered Sites and continues to advocate for saving Fire Station No. 7, we ask questions regarding what we consider to be a threat and when is it best to raise the alarm? Our ultimate goal is to raise public awareness about significant sites that are threatened and effect positive change when possible. In most cases, inclusion on the annual list is intended to accomplish this rather than to chastise an owner. With this in mind, does the fact that a building is vacant and has an uncertain future warrant inclusion on the Endangered Sites List or should we wait for a more definitive and eminent threat? When is it too late to effect change? Join us at our next Preservation Pub Talk on **Wednesday, May 16 at 6:30 at the Green Goat** to have a meaningful discussion on this topic.



**Riverdale c. 1874 in SE Roanoke was demolished April 25,  
photo courtesy of Sherry Lucas**

## Historic Tax Credit Update

The 20% federal historic tax credit survived the Tax Reform and Jobs Act signed by President Trump last December. Many thanks to organizations like the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Preservation Virginia and numerous individuals who advocated for the retention of the credits and made the case for their economic value. After initial bills targeted the historic tax credits for elimination or reduction, the final act retained the credits at their current level of 20% with the provision that the credits be claimed over a 5-year period. While this was a success, the 5-year provision negatively impacts the cash-value of the credits to a project when they are syndicated, i.e. not used by the individual owner. It is estimated that the syndication value of the credits has been decreased by 15-20%. Also, the 10% credit for buildings constructed prior to 1936 that are not listed on the National Register, either individually or contributing to a listed district, was eliminated. Although the General Assembly is considering modifications to the 25% state historic tax credit, for now this program remains unchanged.



Alison Blanton and Anne Beckett leading a group from Virginia United Land Trusts Conference

## Rosenwald: The Man and His Legacy

In January RVPF hosted a film screening of a documentary on the life and work of the extraordinary philanthropist Julius Rosenwald. Born in Springfield, Illinois to a family of German-Jewish immigrants, Rosenwald became one of the wealthiest men in America in the early 20th century as a partner in Sears, Roebuck and Company.

As Rosenwald gained his fortune, he became more and more involved in his community contributing to social programs to support impoverished Jewish immigrants in the Chicago area. Later in Rosenwald's philanthropic career, after a meeting Booker T. Washington in 1912, the two created and implemented a program in which African-Americans would achieve advancement through vocational education: the Rosenwald Schools. Perhaps one of the greatest philanthropic accomplishments of

Rosenwald, was his establishment of challenge grants which would help create more than 5,500 schools for poor African-American children in the American South. From 1915 to 1932, Rosenwald and Washington's program created educational opportunities for as many as 660,000 African-American students. These schools were revolutionary for in African-American communities, because there either were no pre-existing educational facilities or they were derelict and without proper teachers.

Preserving these schools today has become crucial to communities around the country. In Virginia, Preservation Virginia is leading the charge to document these buildings, which will aid local communities in the restoration of the schools.



<https://preservationvirginia.org/programs/statewide-rosenwald-school-initiative>

## Lick Run Walking Tour

Alison Blanton and Anne Beckett co-led a tour of 10 participants from the Virginia's United Land Trusts Conference at the Hotel Roanoke on April 22. Rupert Cutler, a founding Board member of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, the conference's sponsor, led the 1.5-mile walking tour along the Lick Run Greenway, from the hotel to Brown-Robertson Park. Rupert identified some of the 94 species of birds that live along the greenway while Anne and Alison described associated historical events. Beginning at the eight interpretive history panels in the plaza behind the hotel on Wells Avenue that depict the history of Gainsboro, the group walked along the greenway and crossed Lick Run creek to view the 1837 Washington Park House, also known as the Evans Tract House. At Washington Park the tour discussed the life of Lucy Addison and the Lucy Addison High School (1928). Conference members were enthusiastic and gained an appreciation for the nature in our own urban backyard.

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Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/roanokepreservation](http://www.facebook.com/roanokepreservation)  
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## 2017 Preservation Awards

Each year, RVPF calls attention to people, places, and projects that are worthy of note for their efforts to preserve structures, culture, and the natural environments. In November we celebrated local preservation by giving out nine awards from Salem to Fincastle.

- **Preston Place** in Salem (Stewardship Award), the circa 1821 Preston Place, probably the oldest building in Salem, was transformed into the White Oak Tea Room by a Salem Historical Society committee.
- **Boxley Building** in Roanoke (Adaptive Re-Use), a 1921 structure, has been reconfigured in part as a dormitory for international students at North Cross and Roanoke Catholic schools.
- **The Jefferson Center** in Roanoke (Restoration), the original front entrance of the old high school was re-opened on Campbell Avenue. Handrails, landing, and stairs were restored.
- **Roland E. Cook School** in Vinton (Adaptive Re-Use), a 1915 Classical Revival building, was renovated for apartments.
- **Old Persinger Cemetery** in Roanoke (Stewardship), the century-old Persinger Cemetery, off Memorial Avenue, has been cared for by the Doris and James Neal family for decades.
- **Springwood Cemetery** in Roanoke (Stewardship), small African-American cemetery on Liberty Road in NW, has been cared for by C. W. Turpin, a local contractor.

- **Ann Rogers** in Roanoke County (Activism), has worked to protect the Bent Mountain area from the impact of the Mountain Valley Pipeline.
- **Ed (posthumously) and Judith Barnett** in Botetourt (Education), extensive research by the late Ed Barnett, and his sister Judith, of African-American schools, churches and families in Botetourt County, exhibited at the Botetourt County Historical Society Museum.
- **RideSolutions** in Roanoke (Education), developed a History by Bike tour of historic sites as part of an alternative transportation awareness program.

For more information on each of these awards, visit us on the web at [www.roanokepreservation.org](http://www.roanokepreservation.org).



**James Neal Caring for a Headstone in Persinger Cemetery.**

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## Historical Marker Dedication

First Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Big Lick Presbyterian Church) was approved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for a historical marker. The marker will be dedicated on **Saturday, May 12 at 11 AM.**

Early Presbyterian history in western Virginia will be the focus of the marker "Big Lick Presbyterian Church" slated for installation. After Scots-Irish Presbyterians arrived in the region in the mid-1700s, those in the Big Lick community built Ebenezer Church in 1802 and established Big Lick Presbyterian Church in 1851. Between 1881 and 1923, the church founded seven new congregations, and later established two more. The church changed its name to First Presbyterian in 1891, and moved from its location in downtown Roanoke in 1929. It became First Evangelical Presbyterian in 2016. Please call the church office at 540-344-3204 to RSVP

## Safety+History ~ We Want Both!

RVPF continues to advocate for alternatives to demolition of Fire Station No. 7 on Memorial Avenue in the Grandin Village as the City moves forwards with plans to upgrade this facility. After listing the fire station on our Endangered Sites list in 2009 and meeting with the City and Fire Chief in 2016, the RVPF redoubled its efforts to raise awareness about the station's historic significance and the City's plans to demolish it for a new station beginning in January 2018. As repeated appeals to City council and staff to consider alternatives proved unsuccessful, the

In March, we hosted a special community meeting to share information on the significance of the station, public support through social media petitions and posts, examples of other cities renovating their historic stations, and details of two alternatives to demolition. We continue to share this information at neighborhood meetings and community events. Residents throughout the city are displaying signs in their yards and windows to show their support.

On April 6, City Manager Bob Cowell informed Council that the information provided on alternatives was worth considering and he has directed the project architect to further explore their feasibility. He expects their findings to be available in early July. While we are encouraged by this new direction by the City, we still feel that the future of Fire Station No. 7 is uncertain. It is important for the community to continue expressing their support for saving this historic fire station that serves as a gateway to the Grandin Village area. Please visit the RVPF website to learn more about how you can help with this effort.

You're invited to Preservation Virginia's

## Annual Endangered Sites Announcement

Tuesday, May 8 at 10am at Fire Station No. 7  
in Grandin Village!

RVPF nominated the station to this list in March when the station's future was in certain danger of demolition. While there is now hope that the City of Roanoke will reconsider its plans, Fire Station No. 7's future is still uncertain. Inclusion on the statewide list will help to demonstrate how raising awareness about the significance of historic sites and threats to them can get the attention of decision makers and, hopefully, effect positive change through a collaborative and creative approach.



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