

2021 Endangered Sites

In addition to annual preservation awards, RVPF announces an Endangered Sites list every year in May to mark Preservation Month. These historic places are important to the social and cultural fabric of the Roanoke Valley. There have been some success stories and many times the awards recipients feature places that were previously endangered. The goal of the annual list is to bring greater public attention to places that matter and encourage the public to become involved in advocating for historic preservation.

Calvary Baptist Church 608 Campbell Avenue, SW

In 1890 Roanoke had a population of 16,000 and only one Baptist Church. Mr. E. H. Stewart, furniture dealer and Baptist layman, felt that Roanoke needed a second church.

Thirty-four members met in the YMCA for a time until a church could be built. The first church was a small frame tabernacle between 5th and 6th Street on Campbell Avenue.

By 1914 the membership had increased and the building's capacity was far too limited. It was decided to build and the present lot was purchased. The ground-breaking took place in 1924 and the building was completed the next year. The building is a Greek-temple-form church. It is perhaps the most noteworthy work of classical-style religious architecture in the City of Roanoke.

Trends have changed and many congregations have had to make adjustments. The current members of Calvary Baptist meet on Sunday afternoons at Colonial Baptist Church on Colonial Avenue.

Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

Judy Harrison



Roanoke Times

201 Campbell Avenue, SW

The *Roanoke Times* home office building for 107 years has been offered for sale by its owner, a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., the former publisher of the newspaper. The building at 201 Campbell Ave., SW, is a pillar of the Roanoke's downtown business center, across the street from Roanoke's Municipal Building.

Valued at \$6.07 million by a real estate firm, the three-story building has 121,319 square feet of space on 2.5 acres of two full city blocks. Much of its space is unused or under-used since the printing operation was moved to Lynchburg several years ago. The current owner, Lee Enterprises, said a decision has not been made whether to remain in the building as a tenant or to seek other space. Berkshire Hathaway also is selling its other newspaper buildings in the state.

Founded in 1886, the newspaper was bought by J.B. Fishburn in 1913 and his family operated the morning *Times* and afternoon *World-News* until



Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

the company was sold to Landmark Communications in Norfolk in 1969. Landmark sold it to a publicly traded company in 2013 and Lea Enterprises bought it in 2020.

The future of the building is uncertain because growing interest in digital communication and competition from other media have reduced newspapers' circulation and threatened their future. As its circulation dropped, the *Times* abolished many jobs and cut expenses. Reporters are working from home during the pandemic.

George Kegley





McClanahan Cemetery

608 Campbell Avenue, SW

McClanahan Cemetery is neglected

The grave sites of Col. Elijah McClanahan, his wife, Agnes Strothe Lewis and nine other family members have been neglected in a hilltop cemetery off 24th Street, NW.

About 25 years ago, the small cemetery was restored through the efforts of a Historical Society of Western Virginia committee. The site is endangered at present.

The cemetery's owner, Habitat for Humanity, is offering to donate the lot to the Foundation or any organization that will take care of it.

Years ago, a Boy Scout did some work and a crew of inmates from Roanoke City jail mowed the grass and cleaned the cemetery. The inmates (trusties) are not working outside now because of the dangers of the pandemic. But when dangers have passed and normal operations resume, Sheriff David Bell said the cemetery mowing can begin again.

McClanahan, 1770-1857, owned a large portion of present northwest Roanoke. A lieutenant colonel in the War of 1812, he married Agnes Strother Lewis, daughter of Col. Andrew Lewis Jr. of Bent Mountain and granddaughter of General Andrew Lewis of Salem.

A study by Radford University archeology students found 11 grave sites there but only three were marked.

George Kegley



Photo Credit: Bob Clement

Botetourt County Historical Society and Museum

3 West Main Street, Fincastle

Since opening its doors officially for the first time at 1:00pm on Sunday, November 27, 1966, the Botetourt County Historical Society & Museum has served as a repository for hundreds of artifacts that have helped to interpret the history of Botetourt County for thousands of visitors. Located directly behind the Botetourt County Courthouse, the museum is housed in a building that dates back to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Starting out as a one-room law office as early as 1791, the building has seen many additions and changes over the years, having become part of the Western hotel in the 1850s and having been used as apartments by Dodd and Dodd beginning in the 1930s. One of the charter Board members of the society, Katherine Harris, resided in the building at one time.

Botetourt County acquired the building in 1961 and has allowed the Botetourt County Historical Society, Inc. to utilize the structure continuously since 1966 to house its historical museum. The future of the former Western Hotel building is uncertain. Currently, there are plans to renovate and expand the courthouse which are in direct competition with the space occupied by the museum. Museum staff and Board members, along with local residents are working closely with Botetourt County to ensure every effort is taken to preserve the building during the renovation period.

Lynsey Allie

A Touch of History by Weldon Martin



Photo Credit: Lynsey Allie

Catawba Hospital, Catawba

The Catawba Mental Hospital in Roanoke County is planning to demolish the last remaining building of the 1858 Red Sulfur Springs Resort as well as several buildings associated with the historic hospital. The buildings are located within the Catawba Hospital Historic District, which was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1989; however, the property has never been formally listed on either the state or national register.

The Catawba Hospital property, located in the Catawba Valley in northern Roanoke County, contains a ca. 1858 cottage and gazebo associated with the Roanoke Red Sulphur Springs resort as well as buildings dating from the early to mid-20th century associated with the development of the hospital. The property was first recognized for the healing attributes of the Sulphur and limestone springs in 1857 by several businessmen from nearby Salem and the Roanoke Red Sulphur Springs Resort opened in June 1858. Later owned by Joe Chapman, the resort grew in popularity during the second half of the 19th century with the main hotel accommodating as many as 300 guests. The 700-acre resort attracted visitors, including many tuberculosis patients, who sought the clean air of Catawba Mountain in addition to the healing waters of the springs. In 1908, the state purchased the resort from the Chapman family to establish the Catawba Sanitorium as the first public tuberculosis sanitorium in Virginia. The property operated in this capacity until the 1970s when it became Catawba Mental Hospital.

The buildings proposed for demolition include: the ca. 1858 two-story frame hotel associated with the antebellum resort; a 1924 brick house known as the Medical Director's Residence; the 1932 nurses' dormitory known as the Garst Building; and two 1950s houses clad in asbestos shingles. A ca. 1910 frame house, which is not included within the eligible Catawba Hospital Historic District, will also be demolished. These buildings, which appear to have stood vacant for a number of years, are in a deteriorated state due to water damage from leaking roofs as well as fire damage. In several cases, sections of the exterior walls are missing, the porch or roof has collapsed, and the buildings are no longer structurally stable. Additionally, the presence of hazardous materials, including asbestos and lead paint, have made the buildings difficult to utilize and maintain according to the owner.

The RVPF recognizes the challenges state agencies face in preserving historic buildings when their primary mission is not historic preservation and they have limited budgets. However, the Commonwealth of Virginia owns many of our most historic resources and should set an example by being better stewards of our shared heritage. We call attention to the proposed demolitions at Catawba Mental Hospital to advocate for a long-range preservation plan and funding by the state which would integrate preservation with ongoing utilization and maintenance of our historic resources by state agencies.

Alison Blanton



Photo Credit: Mike Pulice

Buena Vista

Penmar Avenue and 9th Street

This Greek Revival style house and the land that it stands on represents the early history of Roanoke prior to the coming of the N&W Railway and the establishment of the city. Built ca. 1850 by George Plater Tayloe, the property originally comprised 598 acres that extended to the Roanoke River.

George P. Tayloe moved here from Mount Airy, the Tayloe plantation in Richmond County in 1830 to manage his family's large land holdings and two iron mines in Cloverdale and Catawba. After marrying Mary Elizabeth Langhorne, Tayloe acquired the property, formerly known as "Roanoke" from Mary's father William in 1833. Tayloe replaced an earlier house on the property with the Greek Revival plantation house known as Buena Vista; a good example of the Greek-Revival style in Western Virginia. The house, thought to have been built by the well-known local builder Benjamin Deyerle, is characterized by its simple block form, low-pitch hipped roof, high-quality brickwork with stretcher-bond façade, Doric pilasters and entablature, and 2-story Doric entrance portico.

Tayloe was an early philanthropist and financially helped establish both Hollins College and St. John's Episcopal Church. In 1890, he sold most of the property to the Buena Vista Land Company to develop a residential neighborhood for the growing city. After Tayloe's death in 1897, Buena Vista stayed in the family until 1937, when the house and the remaining 20-acre tract was sold to the City of Roanoke for use as a recreation center and a city park. In 1974, Buena Vista was recognized for its historic and architectural significance as one of the earliest properties in Roanoke to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Referred to as the "Big House" by the neighborhood, Buena Vista was used as a recreation center until 2011, when the city decided to close the center and sell the house and a 3-acre tract for private ownership. A 2003 facility assessment estimated that the building needed \$285,000 (adjusted to \$335,000 in 2011) in repairs and improvements. After an initial contract of sale for \$75,000 to Scott and Ascension Horchler expired, City Council approved a new sales agreement with the Horchlers in November 2011 for \$30,000. The remaining 17-acres continue to be used as Jackson Park (renamed Belmont Park in 2020).





Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

Although the RVPF supported the sale of the property for use as a private residence, since this was its original use, we strongly encouraged the City to place a preservation easement on the property in order to be a good steward of this historically and architecturally significant public property. A preservation easement is the only legal mechanism that allows for the monitoring of private property by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to assure its proper maintenance and long-term preservation. Unfortunately, no preservation easement was placed on the Buena Vista property when City Council approved the sale in November 2011. The deed of sale included the following terms and conditions: 1) the property must be used as a private residence unless zoning permits otherwise; 2) renovations to the property shall conform with Standards appropriate for landmark property listed on the national and state registers; 3) the building can not be demolished or removed without prior approval by the City; 4) the property cannot be subdivided; and, 5) the owners must make improvements of at least \$100,000 to the house within the first year.

Today, the exterior of Buena Vista is in worse condition than when it was sold. It is likely that the \$100,000 in required improvements were made to the interior to convert it back to a private residence; however, significant repairs and maintenance need to be made to the exterior of the house soon. Among other issues, poor water drainage is causing the entablature to separate from the masonry wall, mortar to deteriorate, and the stucco ceiling of the portico to fail. While we believe that the terms and conditions of the deed of sale either have been or are being met, there is no provision to require that the owners properly maintain the building and, if this lack of maintenance continues, Buena Vista will be threatened with "demolition by neglect."

Alison Blanton



The Rudd House

5315 Plantation Road

This home was built in 1885 by William Peter Huff, Sr. The home is described as Carpenter Gothic in one article and a highly decorated Queen Anne with a steeple gable of Gothic Revival roof in another. Over the years it has had numerous names including Rudd House, Windy Hill and Windmere. No history was found on the last two names but it was owned in the 1970's by Walter Rudd. The Department of Historic Resources 2011 report describes it as among the most impressive late Victorian houses in the Roanoke Valley.



The house has not been lived in for 40 years. A modern home was built on the property right behind the historic home where the owners of Rudd House lived. From the DHR report in 2011, it is described as being threatened by neglect, especially water damage and the front porch is collapsing. For years it was used as a storage area for car parts.

Currently the property is on the market.

Judy Harrison



Photo credit: <https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/>

