



2022 Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation Endangered Sites

Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Stone Entrance Marker (Roanoke, VA)



The Melrose-Rugby neighborhood evolved between 1889 and 1920 as various land companies subdivided and developed the land within the neighborhood. The primary impetus for the development of the neighborhood was the expansion of the streetcar into Melrose by 1889. The area features American Foursquare and cottage style homes toward the south and more modern split-level ranch homes towards the northwest. Price Francisco, a well-known stonemason, designed the pillars that mark the 11th Street and Rugby Boulevard entrances to the neighborhood in 1916. He favored a more subtle trademark: a diamond-shaped stone that can be found in many South Roanoke homes today. But he also did work at Sherwood Memorial Park, and perhaps got his inspiration there for the fanciful figures that grace the Melrose-Rugby columns. The neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012. The gargoyle-mounted pillar and wall at the 11th Street entrance, which are on City property, are in poor condition, with one of the prominent gargoyles broken and sections of the wall crumbling. Repairs obviously are still needed, despite attempts by the neighborhood to repair it in 2013 with a city grant. The grant program used in 2013 no longer exists and the neighborhood association lacks the funding for the work. As there are many stone walls on City-owned property throughout Roanoke, the RVPF recommends that the City use the Melrose-Rugby entrance as an opportunity to train staff in the Public Works Department to properly repair stone walls so this skill can be used on other historic stone walls in the City. Fortunately, the city administration advised of their intentions of repairing the damaged pillar.

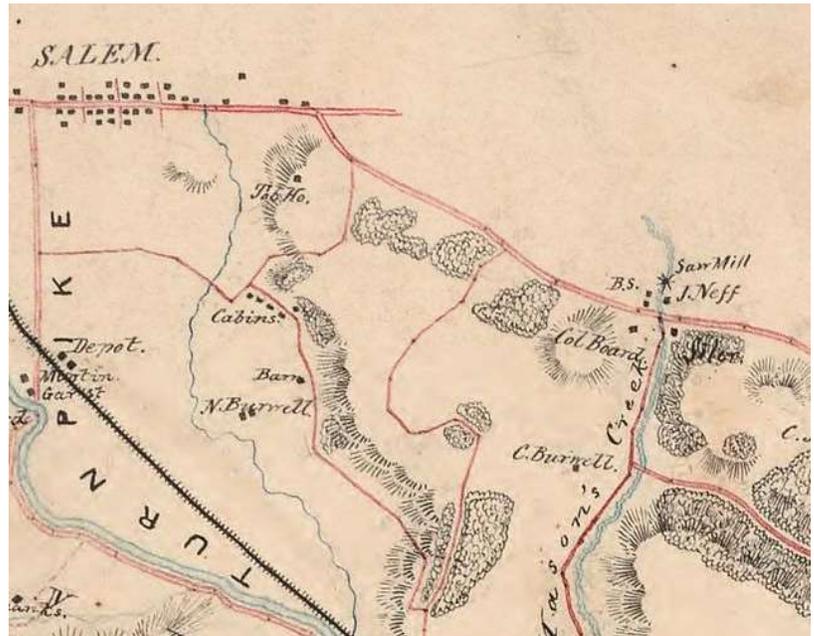


Home of Dr. Harry T. Penn (Roanoke, VA)



The ca. 1938 Tudor Revival house at 923 Madison Avenue, NW was the home of Roanoke's first black dentist from 1937 until his death in 1963. Dr. Harry T. Penn was a graduate of Virginia Seminary and Howard University before moving to Roanoke where he was a prominent civic leader. In 1948, he was appointed to the Roanoke City School Board, considered to be the first appointment of its kind in the South since the Reconstruction era. His many civic attributes include serving as President of the Addison High School Parent-Teacher Association with three years at the State PTA level, President, and Chairman of Burrell Memorial Hospital, and as President of the National Dental Association. Dr. Penn even created a business to give black women more opportunities to work, but the Lemarco Dress Factory was short-lived, and the factory was closed. The February 26, 2006, Roanoke Times news article, about Black History Month, showed a picture of Dr. Penn with singer-actress Lena Horne, with the headline "Dr. Harry T. Penn, Man about Town, He tried to make a difference." During the Jim Crow Era, blacks were not welcome in the local, white-established hotels, motels, and restaurants, and the Penn family often shared their home with out-of-town guests. Dr. Penn died in 1963. His former home is vacant with signs of neglect and City records indicate a building permit for a new house was applied for in 2003. The purpose of this listing is to make the owner and community aware of Dr. Penn's significance and his association with this property.

Schrader Road Log House / Dingledale Community (Salem, VA)



Although the exact function of this ca. 1830 structure is not known, it is believed to be the last remnant of the early 19th century community of Dingledale. The log house is enclosed inside another house that we believe was part of the larger Dingledale Community that was associated with the German immigrant Johannes Dingledine, a farmer and banker who married Susan Firestone, of the Firestone Company. The log house which has been evaluated by the Department of Historic Resources dates to ca. 1830, and measures 18 feet x 28 feet but has been added onto on both the front and back and covered with siding. An 1865 Gilmer Civil War map shows this area around Mason's Creek and the Salem Turnpike with multiple buildings, including the "J. Neff" house and a "Saw Mill." A tavern and a school had also been associated with the community. Records associated with the school, the tavern, and the sawmill have been found in the attic of the house. After years of neglect, vacancy and vagrancy, the former log house is beyond repair. As a public safety hazard, the building is threatened with demolition from the City of Salem due to its vacant condition that causes vagrancy. RVPF recommends that the building be fully documented to Virginia Department of Historic Resources standards prior to demolition and that all historic research material (and house artifacts) be archived with the Salem Museum.



History Awareness: Is the Slate Hill Community lost to history?



This community was located on and around Elm View Road in Roanoke County and is being developed with many of the houses vacant, and others torn down. The former Black community contains the Slate Hill Baptist Church, and the Department of Historic Resources has confirmed three cemeteries with approximately 166 graves. Roanoke County confirmed that no graves have been disturbed. Slate Hill would have backed-up to Pinkard Court, a more well-known Black community that was originally on both sides of the current US Route 220, where Lowe's and Home Depot stand today. The RVPF listed Dr. Pinkard's House (demolished) as endangered in 1999 and this area of the Route 220 corridor in 2006. No other information has been available about the Slate Hill community. While most of the historic resources associated with the Slate Hill and Pinkard Court communities no longer exist, the RVPF calls attention to the current and past development in these areas as an example of social injustice. It should be recognized that the important, yet often intangible, story represented by these and other Black communities, is more significant than conveyed by the architecture. While the historic buildings of these communities may be lost, it is important that the stories of the people who lived there and the community they built are not forgotten.