

SPRING 2022

FOCUS ON

PRESERVATION



*MAY IS
PRESERVATION
MONTH*

ROANOKE VALLEY PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	May is Preservation Month
4	Preservation "Pub" Talk at Gainsboro Library
6	2022 Endangered Sites
11	Old Lick Cemetery Project
12	Historic Gainsboro
14	Historic Preservation Reads
15	Historic Plaque Program

Our next RVPF newsletter will be dedicated to George Kegley. Anyone wishing to send a few sentences on his/her/their best George Kegley memory are invited to do so. Please send submissions **by July 10** to Whitney Leeson, wleeson@roanoke.edu.



Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

"Preservation is simply having the good sense to hold on to things that are well designed, that link us with our past in a meaningful way, and that have plenty of good use left in them."

Richard Moe

Led the National Trust for Historic Preservation from 1993-2009

May is Preservation Month

Promoting Historic Places and Heritage Tourism

Every year in May, the RVPF along with other preservation-minded organizations across the country celebrate Preservation Month. The tradition began in 1973 as National Preservation Week and in 2005, the National Trust extended the celebration to the entire month of May.

Preservation events sponsored by the RVPF provide an opportunity to demonstrate the social and economic benefits of historic preservation and to celebrate the diverse and unique heritage of Roanoke and southwestern Virginia.

History

The first National Preservation Week was celebrated on May 6-12, 1973. A Joint Congressional Resolution was introduced on February 15, 1973, by Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee to designate the week of May 6-12, 1973, as National Preservation Week. President Richard Nixon signed the resolution into law on May 5, 1973. First Lady Patricia Nixon, who presented the National Trust awards during the third annual Awards Luncheon on May 8th, also read the Presidential proclamation:

"As the pace of change accelerates in the world around us, Americans more than ever need a lively awareness of our roots and origins in the past on which to base our sense of identity in the present and our directions for the future."

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/history-of-preservation-month#>.

Anne Beckett and Megan Mizak



Preservation "Pub" Talk at Gainsboro Library

Endangered Sites Announced Old Lick Cemetery Project Discussed

In recognition of National Preservation Month, the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (RVPF) held a Preservation Pub Talk at the Gainsboro Library on Wednesday, May 4, 2022. Foundation President Whitney Leeson welcomed approximately 50 attendees to the event that was kicked off by the Foundation's Secretary, Anne Beckett, announcing the 2022 RVPF Endangered Sites list. This year, the Foundation identified three (3) endangered sites in our area as well as a commentary on a trend of social injustice related to destruction of historic Black communities in the name of development.

The 2022 Endangered Sites included the last remnant of an early-19th century community in Salem, VA, a house built by a prominent leader in the Black community of Roanoke, VA, and the stone-pillared entrance to one of Roanoke's historic neighborhoods. In addition, a commentary was made regarding the possibility of Roanoke County's Slate Hill Community's history being lost to development, noting that while the historic buildings of this African-American community may be lost, it is important that the stories of the people who lived there and the community they built are not forgotten.



Joe Cobbs

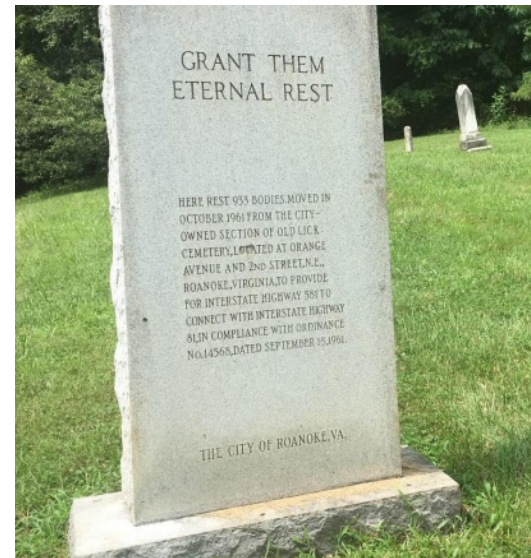


Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

Joe Cobb then explored the history and impact of local urban renewal projects in the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in the removal of bodies from both Old Lick Cemetery and City Farm Cemetery to the Coyner Springs Cemetery. Over 932 bodies were relocated to property the City of Roanoke purchased in Coyner Springs from the Old Lick Cemetery by city employees to allow construction of the I-581 Orange Avenue interchange in addition to those indigents who were also removed from the City Farm Cemetery, once located on the Virginia Western Community College campus, due to their expansion.

As part of his dissertation, Joe hopes to learn the names of those relocated to the Coyner Springs Cemetery and honor them accordingly.

Following Joe's presentation, Richard Fife with the 'Friends of Old Lick Cemetery' spoke about the Old Lick Cemetery Project and the group's efforts to clean the cemetery of trash and brush to increase access to the tombstones for visitors to safely visit and pay homage to the deceased and reflection. They also plan on collecting information on the remaining tombstones and mapping their locations for the archives at the Harrison Museum of African American Culture and First Baptist Church of Gainsboro.

Light refreshments and non-alcoholic beverages were provided to those in attendance who enjoyed this incredible evening of history. Our thanks to Megan Mizak, RVPF board member and manager of the Gainsboro Branch Library, for her help with arrangements.

Bob Clement

Richard Fife



Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

To learn more about Joe Cobb's work documenting the dead of Old Lick Cemetery read "A quest to remember Roanoke's nameless dead" by Randy Walker for Cardinal News (<https://cardinalnews.org/2022/05/06/a-quest-to-remember-roanokes-nameless-dead/>).

2022 Endangered Sites

In recognition of National Preservation Month, the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (RVPF) announced the 2022 Endangered Sites List at the Preservation Pub Talk held at the Gainsboro Library on May 4 at 5:30pm. Since 1996, the RVPF has announced a list each year of significant historic, natural, and cultural sites in the Roanoke Valley that are in eminent danger of being lost due to deferred maintenance, demolition, or incompatible development.

The Foundation's goal is to raise awareness of the significance of these sites and to help identify options to promote their stewardship. A large component of this annual effort consists of public education on the

importance, value, and benefits of historic preservation. The RVPF also hopes to serve as a resource to property owners by making them aware of tools available to support the preservation of these sites.

This year, the RVPF identified three endangered sites and commented on a trend of social injustice related to development of historic Black communities. The 2022 sites include the last remnant of an early-19th century community in Salem, a house built for a prominent leader in the Black community of Roanoke, and the entrance to a historic neighborhood. Below is a summary of this year's endangered sites

Judy Harrison, Chair of Endangered Sites Committee, and committee members Alison Blanton, Anne Beckett, Whitney Feldmann, Rob Logan, and Joey Moldenhauer

Anne Beckett presenting the 2022 Endangered Sites



Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson

Entrance Markers to the Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood

Roanoke

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 2013. 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. This grant program 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.

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison





Home of Dr. Harry T. Penn

Roanoke

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison

The ca. 1937 Tudor Revival house at 923 Madison Avenue, NW was built for one of Roanoke's first Black dentists who lived there 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; unfortunately, the Lemarco Dress Factory was short-lived, and the factory soon 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, Black people 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 Street Log House

Dingledale Community, Salem

Although the exact function of this ca. 1830-1860 structure is not known, it is believed to be the last surviving structure of the early 19th-century community of Dingledale. The log house, which is obscured by later additions, may have been part of the larger Dingledale community, which was associated with the German immigrant Johannes Dingledine, a farmer and banker and his wife, Susan Firestone. Dingledine operated a sawmill and tavern on a 948-tract in the area of the Lakeside Amusement Park and Edgewood neighborhood. The ca. 1830-1860 log house, which has been evaluated by the Department of Historic Resources, and measures 18 feet x 28 feet, has been added onto on both the front and back and covered with siding. An 1865 Gilmer Civil War map shows this area, where the Salem Turnpike crosses Mason's Creek with multiple buildings, including the "J. Neff" house and a "Saw Mill." A tavern and a school were also associated with the community, and records from these buildings 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 under a "raze or repair" citation. RVPF recommends that the building be fully documented to Virginia Department of Historic Resources standards prior to demolition and that all historic records and house artifacts be archived with the Salem Museum or similar repository.



Photo Credit: Anne Beckett

History Awareness:

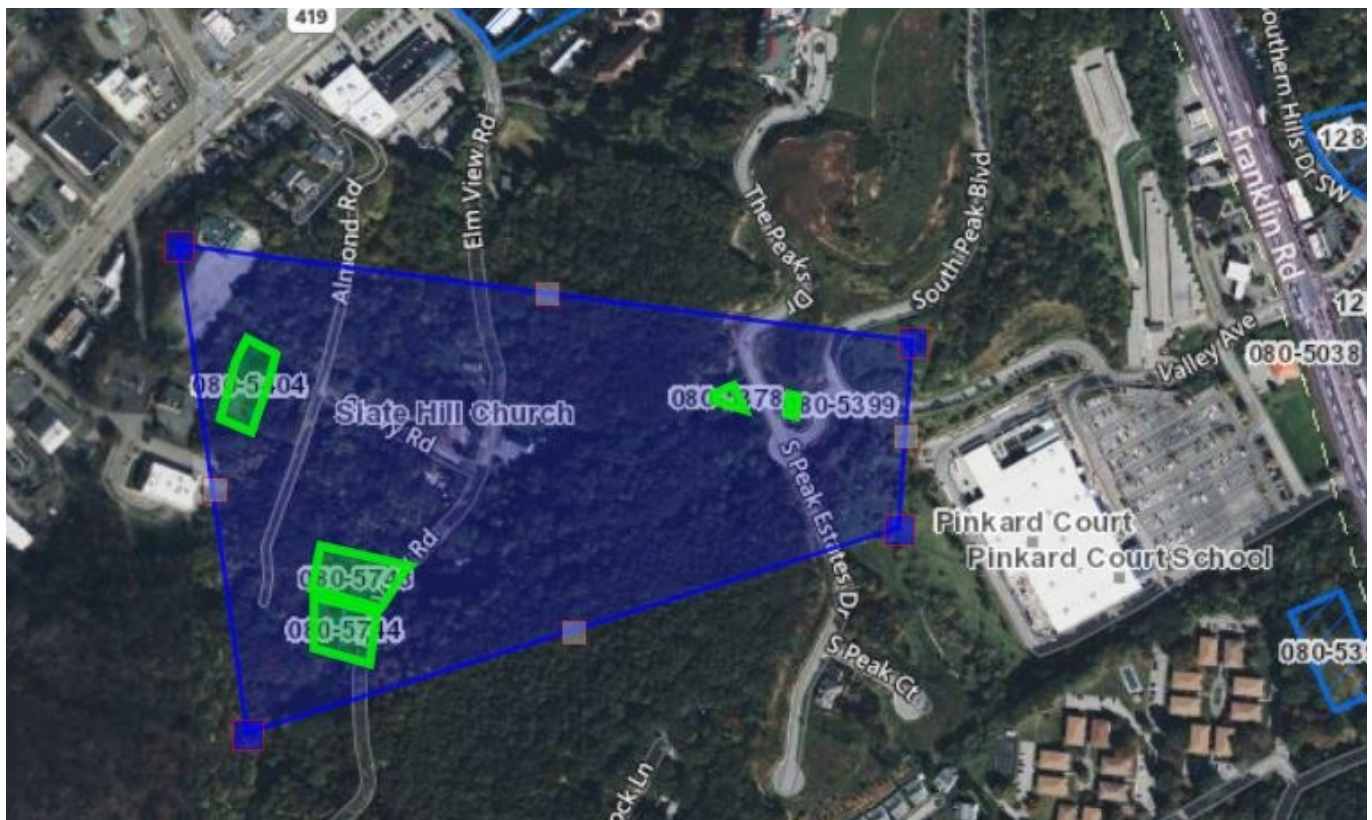
Is the Slate Hill Community Lost to History?

Located on and around Elm View Road between Routes 220 and 419 in Roanoke County, Slate Hill developed as a Black community in the early-20th century and included the Slate Hill Baptist Church, several cemeteries, and numerous single family houses. The current church was built ca. 1950 after a fire destroyed the original building in the late 1940s and many of the original houses have also been replaced.

Today, the surrounding commercial development is expanding into the former Black community with many of the houses demolished or vacant as new roads are being built. The Department of Historic Resources has recorded 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 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.

Although 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.

Photo Credit: Anne Beckett



Old Lick Cemetery Project

*Help preserve our community with a day of service at Old Lick Cemetery
July 9, 2022 and August 13 from 9:00-12:00.*

In partnership with the Old Lick Cemetery Project, the Harrison Museum of African American Culture, and the First Baptist Church of Gainsboro, RVPF encourages everyone to volunteer a few hours at the **upcoming work days on Saturday, July 9 and August 13 from 9:00-12:00.**

Volunteers will clean the cemetery of trash and brush to increase access to tombstones for visitors to safely visit to pay homage to the deceased and enjoy a time of reflection. Volunteers will also collect information on tombstones and map locations for archives at the Harrison Museum of African American Culture and First Baptist Church, Gainsboro.

If you are unable to physically assist with cleanup there are other volunteer opportunities such as completing grant applications and fundraising for new signs, flower bulbs, tombstone cleaning or restoration, replacement of gates, replacement fencing, and plaques describing the cemetery's brief history as well as plaques in honor of relocated graves.

Volunteers cleaning up trash and clearing overgrown brush need to wear long pants and shirt sleeves as well as bring rakes, loppers, pruners, and other personal handheld tools for clearing brush. Only certified volunteer chainsaw operators will cut any predetermined branches, limbs, shrubs, and small trees to increase visibility of tombstones and to make the area more aesthetically pleasing.

For more information: email or call Ellen Forbes Stick at ellenstick8888@gmail.com or 276-768-8472.



Photo Credit: Joe Cobbs



Footprint of Old Lick Cemetery before construction of the 581-Orange Avenue interchange.

Virginia Y. Lee



Megan Mizak presents on Virginia Y. Lee to Salem Museum

Learn about Gainsboro Library's most beloved librarian on July 14 at 7 p.m.

Megan Mizak, RVPF board member and manager of the Gainsboro Branch Library, will be at Salem Museum on July 15 at 7 p.m. to talk about the rich history of Gainsboro Branch Library. Founded in 1821 as Roanoke's first library for African Americans, the library has an outstanding collection of rare books and reference materials developed by Virginia Y. Lee.

Jordan Bell leads walking tour of Gainsboro for Salem Museum

July 16 walking tour departs from the Gainsboro Branch Library at 10 a.m.

Meet Jordan Bell at the Gainsboro Library on Saturday July 16 at 10:00 to learn about Gainsboro's vibrant past as the economic and cultural center for Roanoke's African American community during the Jim Crow era. From 1915-1970, many Black businesses, medical facilities, churches, civic organizations, and a library were located in the neighborhood. Jordan will tell you about the places Gainsboro residents shopped, dined, and socialized along Henry Street; businesses such as Lynhaven Smoke Shop formerly located at 125 N. Henry Street .



Photo Credit: Roanoke Public Libraries

Evie Slone instrumental in completion of Gainsboro History Project

Experience Gainsboro's storied history both physically and digitally.

Congratulations to Evie Slone, RVPF board member, for her participation in the creation and dedication of the Roanoke Higher Education Center's Central Walkway Plaza connecting its main building with the Claude Moore Education Complex located on Henry Street a short distance away. The Walkway Plaza project provides a timeline history walk from 1834 to 1970 that shares the extensive history of the Gainsboro community and Roanoke. Etched into black granite markers along the brick walkway, pedestrians can read details about the historic Gainsboro neighborhood that was once the center for Black businesses and culture during the era of racial segregation. She was also a key participant in the creation of a mobile web-based APP that accompanies the physical plaza walk. The Gainsboro History Project website includes many more details and adds multimedia elements to the walkway experience. Many, many volunteer hours were provided by Evie and others such as Megan Mizak in the development of the Gainsboro History Project.

Bob Clement

Evie Slone (second from the right) and Megan Mizak (second from the left) at the ribbon cutting.

Visit the Gainsboro History Project Website
<https://gainborohistoryproject.org/>



Photo Credit: Hill Studio and Scott P. Yates of the *Roanoke Times*

Historic Preservation Reads

Three Preservation Books for Children Recommended by the National Trust for Historic Preservation

It is never too young to start introducing children to historic places and the importance of making sure they are saved for generations to come. Check out the National Trust for Historic Preservation's recommended reads for children. From picture books to young adult novels, there's an entry point to saving places for every kid in your life. Here are three favorites. For the entire top ten list, see "10 Preservation Books for Children and Teens" by Sarah Heffern (<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-books-for-children-and-teens#.Yp0rnHbMluU>).

When Jackie Saved Grand Central: The True Story of Jacqueline Kennedy's Fight for an American Icon (2017) by **Natasha Wing** (Author), **Alexandra Boiger** (Illustrator)

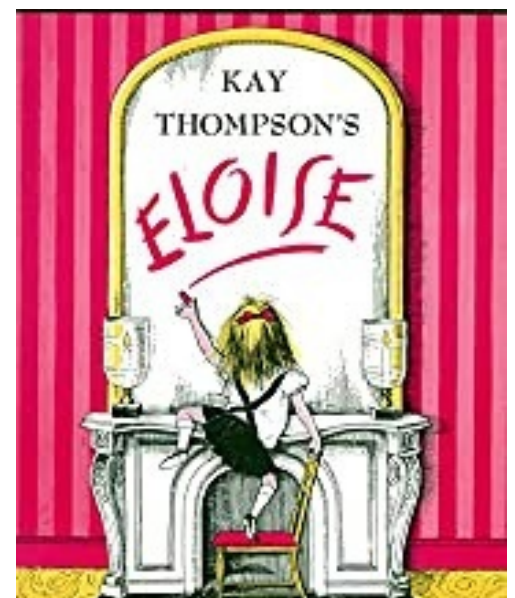
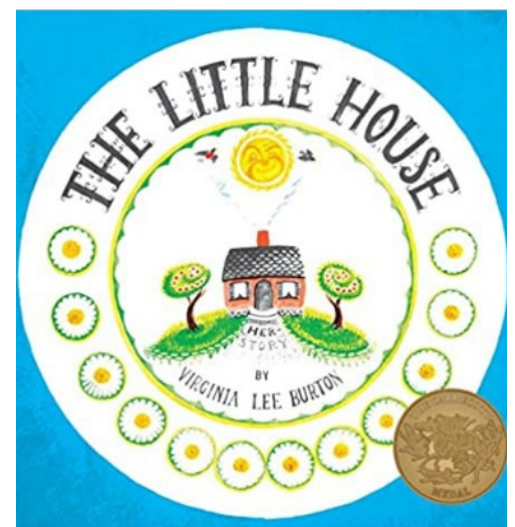
Jacqueline Kennedy's best-known contribution to historic places is her restoration of the White House during her time as First Lady, but she was also critical to saving New York City's iconic Grand Central Station in the mid-1970s when it was threatened with replacement by a skyscraper.

The Little House (1943) by **Virginia Lee Burton**

If preservation has a classic children's book, this is it. Written in 1943 and winner of the Caldecott Medal, *The Little House* tells the story of a house far out in the country that grows older as the city moves closer and closer, and how the house is saved. But as Amazon's review notes, "Young readers are more likely to be drawn in by the whimsical, detailed drawings and the happy ending than by anything Burton might have been implying about the troubling effects of urbanization."

Eloise (1969) by **Kay Thompson** (Author), **Hilary Knight** (Illustrator)

For more than 40 years, *Eloise's* adventures living in New York City's Plaza Hotel—a member of Historic Hotels of America—has delighted children young and old. She runs through her unusual home as only a six-year-old can, by creating imaginative adventures and leaving chaos in her wake.



Have You Heard About Our Plaque Program?

Bringing "History to the Streets"

Historic homes and buildings in the Roanoke Valley can now be recognized under a Historic Plaque Program administered by RVPF. The program not only brings 'history to the street' for those passing by your home or building, but also brands them as desirable locations for potential home buyers, tenants, and business owners to live, work, and/or invest in. Installing a plaque on your home or building helps others understand its historical significance in our community. Several sites already have plaques including Fire Station No. 1, the Virginia Museum of Transportation (Norfolk & Western Freight Station), the Municipal Building, owners of historic homes, and most recently, Restoration LLC in commemoration of their recent restoration of historic Villa Heights located in NW Roanoke.

Plaques are 10" x 7" cast bronze ovals with brown pebbled backgrounds forged by Paul W. Zimmerman Foundries (responsible for casting most National Register of Historic Places plaques across the country). The cost per plaque is \$350 and includes research for the text to be used on the plaque (the building's historic name, brief description, and construction date), the plaque's production, shipping, regulatory approvals from the city, and installation.

For additional information, visit <http://www.roanokepreservation.org/historic-plaque-program/> or email wleeson@roanoke.edu

"It has been said that, at it's best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future."

William Murtagh

First "keeper" of the National Register of Historic Places



The Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (RVPF) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization established in 1988 to preserve the historic, natural, and cultural resources of the Roanoke Valley (City of Roanoke, City of Salem, Town of Vinton, Roanoke County, Botetourt County, and Franklin County, Virginia). It was founded as - and continues to be - a grassroots, volunteer-driven organization. Since its inception, the RVPF has been active in a variety of preservation efforts. Consistent involvement and advocacy has resulted in increased public awareness and successful preservation projects. Although the Foundation's focus is on the past, its major accomplishments are the result of planning for the future.

"THE FUTURE" OF PRESERVATION

We partner with community groups to bring promote local history - Gainsboro History Walk

We advocate for preservation of important buildings - The Claytor Clinic (currently on the Endangered Sites List)

We give tours of Roanoke to share local history and preservation

We partner with RideSolutions for History By Bike Tours - Vinton Tweed Ride

We install plaques on historic buildings - formerly endangered. Villa Heights has been saved and renovated

We create and install community signs to commemorate and celebrate local history - Evans Mill & Crystal Spring



P.O. Box 1366, Roanoke, VA 24007
www.roanokepreservation.org

Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation Board of Directors

Officers

Whitney Leeson, President
Bob Clement, Vice President
Frederick Gusler, Treasurer
Anne Stuart Beckett, Secretary

Members

Jordan Bell, Alison Blanton, Ariel Clark, Lynsey Crantz-Allie,
Whitney Feldmann, Canlin J. Frost, Katherine Gutshall, Judith Harrison,
Kate Kronau, Molly Meredith, Megan Mizak, David Parr, Evelyn Slone