Endangered Sites

Darby-Rader House (Maple Grove)

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison

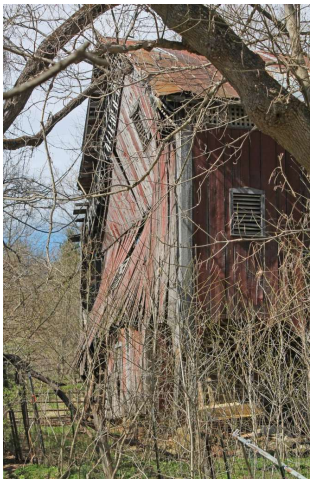
102 Darby Road (Route 721)
Troutville, VA 24175

The Rader House on Darby Road in Troutville , also known as Maple Grove, was constructed ca. 1830 by the Rader family, well-known brick masons and builders in Botetourt County. The two-story, single-pile, brick house features hand-made bricks laid in Flemish bond, accented by a beveled water table, molded cornice, and jack-arched window and door openings. The one-story entry poorch, which replaced the original full-width porch, has a gable roof supported by chamfered and bracketed posts with a scroll-sawn balustrade. Two additions have been constructed to the rear of the original block.

Samuel, George W. and David Rader were brick masons and builders responsible for building numerous nineteenth-century brick buildings in the county. Similar examples exhibiting their designs and workmanship include the Jonas Graybill House, the Christian Graybill House, the Joseph Graybill House, the George W. Rader House, the Roland Rader House, Hogshead-Corl House, and the Hays House among others. However, their legacy and contribution to the architectural character of Botetourt County has not been well documented by historians. The Rader House on Darby Road is a typical example of their work, and one of the oldest houses in the Troutville area. It is potentially eligible for listing on the state and national registers.

Unfortunately, the original, ca. 1830 portion of the Rader House is vacant and has been neglected. It is in poor condition, with broken windows and noticeable deterioration in the mortar joints of the brick foundation. This early Troutville building associated with the Rader family will continue to deteriorate without better maintenance and stewardship.

Rader-Muse Bank Barn



6325 Lee Highway
Troutville, VA 24175

Photo Credit: Mike Pulice

The ca. 1900 Rader-Muse Barn is a rare surviving example of the German-style bank barn once found throughout the Shenandoah Valley. Designed with German ingenuity to take advantage of the topography, the two-level barn is nestled against a hillside to allow exterior access to the upper hayloft as well as the lower animal pens. These barns exhibit highly skilled craftsmanship, as they typically feature stone retaining walls, a canted queen-truss system, louvered wall openings, and latticework below the roofline to provide natural light and ventilation as well as structural stability.

According to Mike Pulice with the Department of Historic Resources, bank barns are found in Augusta and Rockbridge counties with Botetourt representing the furthest extent to the south and southwest that these barns are found in Virginia. Although several bank barns have been listed on the National Register (either individually or as part of a larger farm complex), these barns are becoming increasingly threatened as they fall into disuse and are allowed to deteriorate with the decline of agriculture in the region.

Following the 2003 demolition of the bank barn on the nearby Thomas D. Kinsey Farm (which was listed on the National Register in 2002), the Rader-Muse bank barn may be the last surviving example of this iconic building type in Botetourt County. The barn has not been used for many years and is currently in a ruinous state.

Aspen Hill/Peck-Figgett House

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison

322 East Main Street
Fincastle, VA 24090

Located at the corner of East Main and North Hancock streets, the Peck-Figgatt House (also known as Aspen Hill) stands at a prominent corner in the Fincastle Historic District. Originally built ca. 1822 by John Peck, a large addition was constructed in 1839 by Captain Figgatt, a prominent local banker. The history of the Figgatt family and nineteenth-century Botetourt County is well documented through Nanny Godwin Figgatt's collection of diaries, letters from her husband, and several family recipe books. Letters between Captain Figgatt and his wife during the Civil War have been chronicled in the play Dear Nanny.

The house is designed in an adaptation of the Italian Villa style, also referred to as the Tuscan style. The DHR survey record in 2006 noted the house as being in excellent condition. The survey described the house as follows: "The main block of this brick house is a side gable, two-story structure that holds a one-story porch with turned posts, decorative brackets, sawn balustrade, and triglyphs in the frieze. A one-story porch is also found at the east side, with identical ornamentation. A gable ell lies on the east side, and a one-story addition is at the southwest corner. Polygonal bay windows are found at the south and west sides."

A separate kitchen building was later connected to the main house with a hyphen that has been infilled with brick.

The house currently stands vacant and in disrepair. Several courses of bricks appear to be separating from the foundation. The once-landscaped yard is also overgrown. This neglected condition of such a historically and architecturally significant house situated on a prominent corner in Fincastle threatens not only the house itself, but the historic character of the town.

Aspen Hill/Peck-Figgett House

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison

Historic Churches

Often one of the first structures to be built in a city or town, religious buildings represent the communal values and aspirations of its early founders. These buildings are typically located in the heart of the community and serve as part of its institutional framework. As congregations grow, larger and more architecturally refined facilities are constructed that reflect their growing prosperity and programs. In recent years, both nationally and in the Roanoke Valley, church membership is falling. While in the 1940s over seventy percent of Americans were members of churches, synagogues, or mosques, today that figure is less than fifty percent. As membership declines, many congregations suffer from a lack of financial resources that limits their ability to meet the continuing need to maintain the large and historic facilities that house them. The struggle to properly maintain them often leads to deferred maintenance that results in the need for larger, more expensive, and more difficult repairs.

While congregations typically do not want to move from their original location, sometimes it becomes necessary to sell their buildings, ideally to another congregation so the building can continue in its original function. The worst outcome is for the historic buildings to be sold, demolished, and replaced with new development.

An alternative is for these religious buildings to be adapted for another use. That new use will vary based upon the size of the sanctuary and associated buildings; the ability to preserve the historic elements of the building will depend on the new use and how skillfully the building is adapted for it. Nationally, examples of compatible new uses have included single-family residences, apartments/condominiums, museums, libraries, healthcare center, performance venue, offices, community center, art studios, co-working space, coffee shop/restaurant, computer server center, nightclub, and even a fraternity house.

Since RVPF first began listing endangered sites in 1986, twelve churches have been identified as threatened. These include: First Baptist Church, Salem (1998, demolished), Jefferson Street Baptist Church (2002, demolished), Mount Moriah Baptist Church (2003, endangered), St. John AME Church (2012, endangered), Christian Science Church (2017, music venue), and Calvary Baptist Church (2021, apartments planned), as well as six rural churches in Craig and Botetourt counties (2019). Two additional churches identified this year that face challenges include Fincastle Presbyterian Church and the First Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Roanoke.

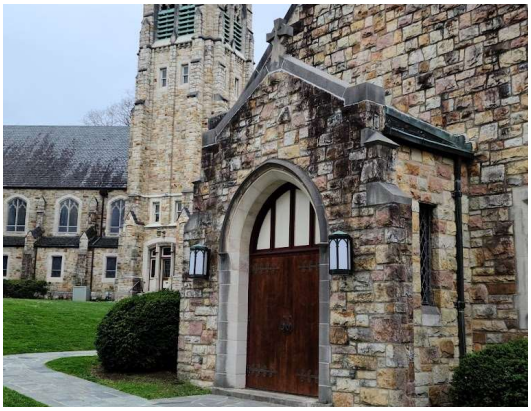
Fincastle Presbyterian

Photo Credit: Douglas J. O'Brien

Fincastle Presbyterian Church, which dates back to the 1770s (with renovations and additions in 1813, 1840, and the 1940s) is working diligently to be good stewards of this historic landmark in the face of declining membership. The congregation recognizes the historical and architectural significance of the Greek-Revival style church and is committed to preserving it. They currently undertake much of the maintenance themselves and have recently applied to the National Trust of Historic Places for funding through their Sacred Places grant program.

First Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Photo Credit: Kevin T. Akers



The First Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Roanoke is also faced with regular maintenance costs that eat into their annual operating budget. Their historic building at the corner of Jefferson and McClanahan streets, designed by architect Louis P. Smithey in 1929, is an impressive Gothic-Revival style building with a striking bell tower that has stood as a landmark at the gateway to South Roanoke since the early days of this residential neighborhood. Today, the strategic value to the community of this large church property –which occupies an entire block in one of the most highly-desirable neighborhoods of Roanoke, with Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and its many associated facilities immediately to the north, commercial development to the west, and a large condominium development to the east –is well worth preserving in the midst of it all.

Huntingdon

As the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation names its Endangered Sites for 2023, we continue to be extremely concerned about Huntingdon, a Federal-style brick house located at 320 Huntingdon Boulevard in Northwest Roanoke. It is a five-bay, two and one-half story, central passage house with a full basement and a two story rear ell. Built ca. 1819, Huntingdon is one of the oldest--if not the oldest--house in Roanoke City.

RVPF placed Huntingdon on our Endangered Sites list in 2019 and it's state of disrepair has only worsened in the intervening years. It is a classic case of demolition by neglect and we are in emminent danger of losing this historic home. We note only a modest attempt to make repairs to a gaping hole in the roof. We have addressed our concerns to the current owners (320 Huntington Boulevard Land Trust), but have received no response.

Huntingdon after restoration in 1988-1989.

Huntingdon's current state of deterioration in 2023.

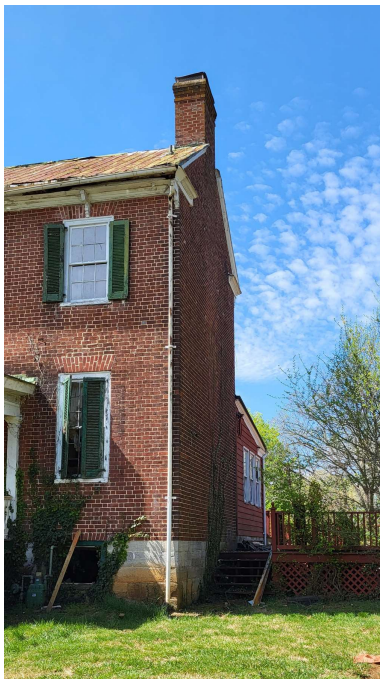


Photo Credit: Mike Pulice and Judy Harrison

Deeded to Elisha Betts in 1807, he lived in the home of the previous owner of the property until building Huntingdon ca. 1819. Huntingdon is an example of a Federal-period gentry farmhouse. The home was originally the nucleus of a 500-acre working plantation. After Elisha's death, in 1825, his widow, Sarah (also known as Sally) Walton Betts, continued to reside in the home for twenty-seven years. She added Greek Revival porches to Huntingdon. It is likely she also added a frame dwelling to the north of the house for enslaved individuals working in the main house. The 1830 census shows that the Huntingdon household consisted of Sally and thirty-eight slaves. She had originally inherited forty-three slaves from her husband at the time of his death. By 1840, Sallty Betts was ranked as one of seven leading citizens in Roanoke County based on the size of her inheritance. Additional structural changes were made to the house in the 20th-century and included dormers, front entry, and a one story rear wing.

The eight-acre tract includes the family cemetery enclosed by a brick wall with at least three graves (Elisha Betts, Sara Walton Betts, and Elizabeth Guerrant) and a probable slave quarters that consists of a one-story, double-cell building clad in board-and-batten.

Photo Credit: Judy Harrison