



2023 Kegley Preservation Awards

Award for Heritage Education

“Hidden in Plain Site” Documentary – Trish White-Boyd



Trish White-Boyd led the Roanoke Hidden Histories Committee in their effort to tell the stories of the African American experience in Roanoke through everyday places in the city that are often overlooked and, in some cases, entirely erased. In partnership with the Harrison Museum, the broad-based community volunteer group raised funds to sponsor two public history projects - the documentary “Hidden in Plain Site” and the Henrietta Lacks statue in the newly renamed Lacks Plaza. The documentary, which premiered in May 2023, was produced by the Richmond-based, Hidden in Plain Site, organization and provides a multi-media virtual tour of five sites associated with overlooked or lost places of Black history in Roanoke. It uses current and historical images along with remembrances by community members to bring this hidden history to life. The memorial Henrietta Lacks statue, which replaces the Robert E. Lee statue in the plaza across from the Roanoke Municipal Building, was dedicated in September. The statue commemorates the involuntary contributions to science and medicine made by Lacks by her cells without her permission. Many people were not aware that Lacks was a Roanoke native until her childhood home was demolished several years ago. The goal of the Hidden Histories Committee is to continue to engage and enlighten the public by telling the often-painful stories of the African American experience in Roanoke while also celebrating the achievements of this community.



2023 Kegley Preservation Awards

The Roberts Heritage Education Award

Gainsboro Branch Library – Roanoke City Public Libraries



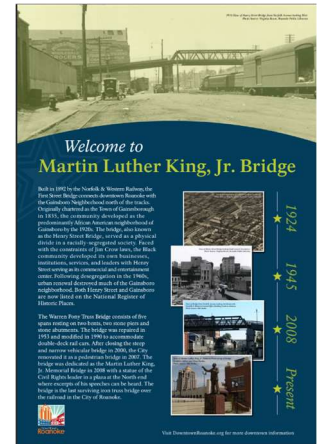
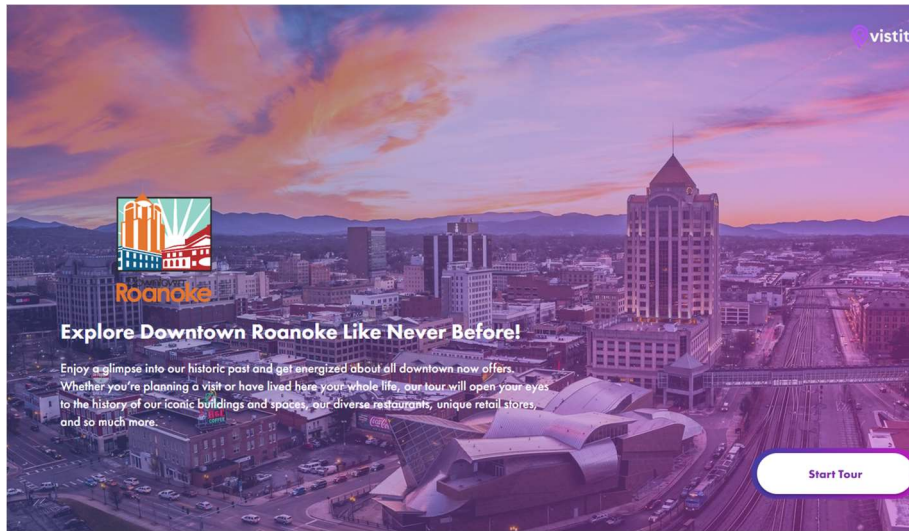
The Gainsboro Branch Library has a rich history in the African American community of Roanoke and Southwest Virginia. After 800 community members petitioned the city for a library, it was established in 1921 in a vacant storefront. At the time, it was only the second library for African Americans in Virginia and the fourth in the South. The library outgrew its space by 1929 and Virginia Y. Lee, who served as librarian from 1928 to 1971 and was recognized recently with a state marker at the library, advocated for a new and larger facility. Receiving only \$20,000 in city funds (compared to \$100,000 for the main “white-only” library), Lee petitioned St. Andrew’s Catholic Church to donate the land and oversaw the design of the current Tudor-Revival style library, which opened in 1941. Thanks to Lee’s leadership, the library houses a much-envied collection of books and other materials on Black history, modeled after Black studies collections at leading national Black colleges, such as the Hampton Institute (where Lee attended) and Howard University. When the city instructed Lee to remove this collection, she hid it in the library basement for safekeeping with access secretly provided to the Black patrons. It is the largest collection of Black studies in Southwest Virginia and includes many first editions donated by nationally known Black authors. Through the dedication of Lee and subsequent librarians, the Gainsboro Branch Library has stood as a center of education and knowledge for Roanoke’s African American community for over 100 years. As the primary repository for much of the Black history of Roanoke, the library is a tremendous asset. The dedicated members of the library staff continue to be good stewards of this valuable resource as they assist researchers, enlarge, curate the collections, and support the Black community through various heritage education programs and events.



2023 Kegley Preservation Awards

Award for Heritage Tourism

Virtual Downtown Roanoke Wayfinding Project - DRI, Inc.



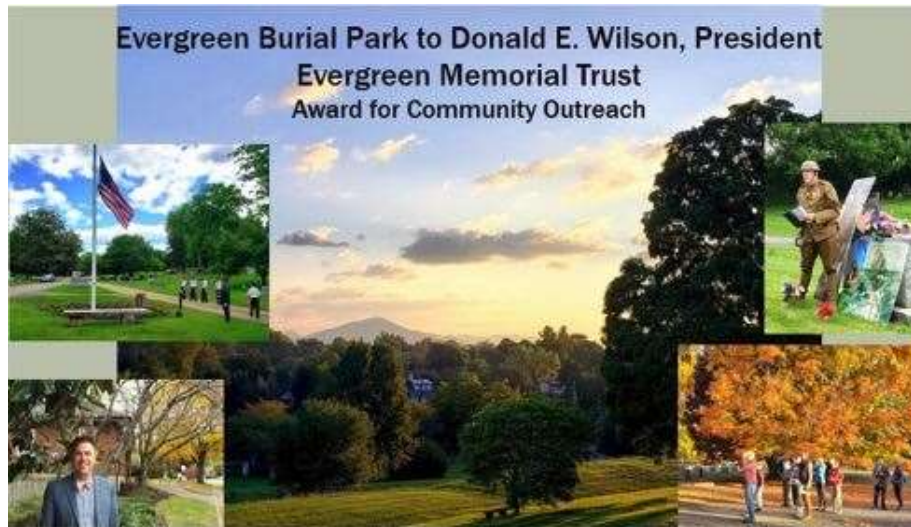
In May 2023, Downtown Roanoke, Inc. (DRI) launched an interactive virtual tour of downtown Roanoke on their website as a new way to explore the downtown district from anywhere. The new Downtown Roanoke Virtual Tour provides visitors and residents with an effortless way to explore and familiarize themselves with Downtown Roanoke – both past and present. The virtual tour features high-resolution, 360-degree panoramic views that allow users to navigate and zoom in to see the area in greater detail. The tour also allows users to learn more about the history of downtown with historic “then” and “now” photos. In addition to the virtual tour, DRI recently completed the implementation of a larger-scale, regional wayfinding system consisting of 33 signs and 5 kiosks spread throughout downtown Roanoke. Spearheaded by Visit Virginia’s Blue Ridge and made possible by regional grants from the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, these wayfinding signs will help downtown visitors navigate more easily to their desired destinations by providing clear direction, as well as historical information, to points of interest throughout downtown. DRI worked closely with the RVPF, the Virginia Room at Roanoke Public Libraries, the History Museum, and Ken Miller with Norfolk & Western Historical Society to locate historical information and photographs to include in the virtual tour and wayfinding system. These two heritage tourism initiatives are a great new tool that recognizes the importance of Roanoke’s history as part of what makes the city such a unique place to live, work, play and visit. To access the virtual tour, visit: <https://www.downtownroanoke.org/vistity-tour>



2023 Kegley Preservation Awards

Award for Community Outreach

Evergreen Memorial Burial Park – Don Wilson



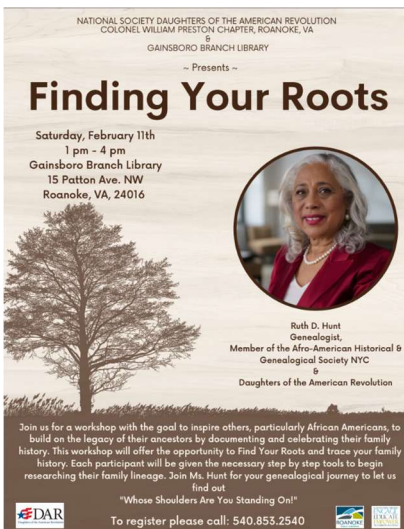
What brought a small-town Iowa boy to Roanoke in 1982 to one of the valley's most long-lasting and successful businesses? Don Wilson came to work at Evergreen Burial Park as a natural-born salesperson! After working his way up, he bought the company and serves as the President of Evergreen Memorial Trust. The company is headquartered at Evergreen Burial Park, which also oversees four other regional cemeteries. Evergreen Burial Park began in 1916 on the Old Solitude Farm in what was then Roanoke County. The cemetery was designed by the Hare and Hare architectural landscape firm of Kansas City, Missouri, and its popularity was established from the start. Many notable individuals and their families are buried in the 54-acre cemetery including Virginia Governor Lindsay Almond, fifteen Roanoke mayors, several Norfolk & Western presidents, and over 3,000 veterans of all wars dating back to the Civil War. The cemetery is a rich archive of history with its extensive burial records as well as a welcoming place for visitors. In addition to keeping meticulous records, Don and his staff provide numerous community-related events for the public. For the past 18 years, he has conducted a fall historical walking tour highlighting some of the more interesting individuals and stories of the social history of Roanoke. On Arbor Day Sunday, arborists lead a tree walking tour highlighting the specimen trees, including some planted from the original landscape design. On Memorial and Veteran's Days, flags are placed on all veteran's graves. In 2020, the Robert E. Lee Monument was relocated to Evergreen from Downtown Roanoke. From its continuous forward-thinking management since 1916 to Don's leadership, the cemetery and its parklike setting provides a unique background to tell the stories of Roanoke, Virginia.



2023 Kegley Preservation Awards

Award for Heritage Education and Research

“Finding Your Roots” Genealogy Workshop – NSDAR & Nancy Canova



The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR)-Colonel William Preston Chapter presented a free 3-hour African American “Finding Your Roots” Genealogy Workshop in February of 2023 to 55 attendees at the Gainsboro Library in Roanoke, VA. The workshop featured Ms. Ruth D. Hunt, member of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society – New York City Chapter, and New York City Chapter, NSDAR. Twenty-five volunteers/genealogists representing Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, and the Roanoke City Library were also there to learn how to research African American genealogy and to assist attendees with future computer workshops. During the workshop DAR genealogist Nancy Canova presented a power point on how to navigate the section for African and Native Americans and other people of color at DAR.org and how to complete the DAR application. She also promoted an 874-page book researched and written by NSDAR called *Forgotten Patriots* which lists over 6,600 African American Patriots who served during the American Revolutionary War. At the conclusion of the workshop, NSDAR members Wendy Warren and Nancy Canova presented the book to the Roanoke City Library’s Virginia Room so many can reference it. This chapter held two follow-up genealogy workshops at the Virginia Room in April and June. The workshops picked up where Ms. Hunt left off in building ancestral charts using the library computers to document birth, marriage, and death records for each generation. It was a very successful event and inspired those in attendance a desire to research their roots and provided an educational opportunity for all. The NSDAR plans to continue this outreach with another workshop in February 2024.