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Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation and Virginia Preservation announce 2024 Endangered Sites List on Tuesday May 14, 2024 at Washington Park Caretaker's House

In recognition of National Preservation Month, the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (RVPF) will announce the 2024 Endangered Sites List at 4:00pm on Tuesday, May 14th at the Washington Park Caretaker's House (233 Orange Avenue NW). The Preservation Virginia statewide list of Since 1996, the RVPF has announced a list each year of significant historic, natural, and cultural sites in the Roanoke Valley that are in danger of being lost due to neglect, 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. The RVPF 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 two Tudor-Revival style houses in NW Roanoke, three rustic log cabins in SW Roanoke County, and a former Masonic Building in Downtown Roanoke as endangered sites as well as a general trend in the decline of preservation trades. The RVPF also revisited five sites previously listed that are eminently endangered as they continue to be threatened by neglect, deterioration and/or uncertain futures. On a positive note, we are excited to call attention to one site that was listed in 2019 and has been recently purchased and is currently undergoing renovations (see below). The 2024 sites include the following:

Tudor-Revival Style Houses

1039 and 1054 Old Country Club Road NW, Roanoke, VA



Photo Credit: Whitney Leeson



Two impressive Tudor-Revival style homes, reminiscent of the “Great Gatsby” era, have stood vacant for several years. Completed in 1928 and built to impress and entertain, the houses face each other across **Old Country Club Drive**. Overlooking the golf course of Roanoke Country Club, they recall an era when this neighborhood was still an outlying suburb of the City. Exuberant

examples of the Tudor Revival style popular in the Roaring Twenties, they exhibit a high degree of craftsmanship and detail. The house at **1039** boasts a profusion of gables, a magnificent sandstone entry surround, and half-timbering with patterned brickwork. Across the street, the house at **1054** is most notable for a gigantic leaded-glass window two stories high, pouring sunlight into a huge Great Hall with an oak mezzanine and a massive stone fireplace. Other rooms have high-relief plaster Renaissance strapwork spanning their ceilings, and beautiful crown molding's. Both houses are currently unoccupied and deteriorating, with no indication that the current owners have any plans for restoration or reuse.

Historic Cabins on Crystal Creek Drive *Along Crystal Drive SW, Roanoke County, VA*



Crystal Creek Drive in SW Roanoke County contains various cabins with Rustic-style architecture that has been identified by the Department of Historic Resources as a potential National Register Historic District. The cabins demonstrate a range of decorative log-building techniques. Historically the Crystal Creek Drive cabins illustrate the complex interplay of early-twentieth-century attitudes towards nature, American backwoods culture, and leisure, and the housing exigencies of the Great Depression.

Of the five cabins, two have been restored and “beautifully present excellent examples of the restoration potential,” these are listed for rent on Airbnb. One has collapsed in sections and may not be possible to renovate. The other two are possible restoration projects. One of the two, known as Reno’s Roadhouse represents an example of a group of 1930s Rustic-style roadhouses scattered throughout Roanoke County, the Coffee Pot on Brambleton Avenue representing the best-known example. The roadhouse was accessible only by a swinging bridge that still exists.

Masonic Lodge/Corinthian Ballroom

211 First St./109 Kirk Ave. SW, Roanoke, VA

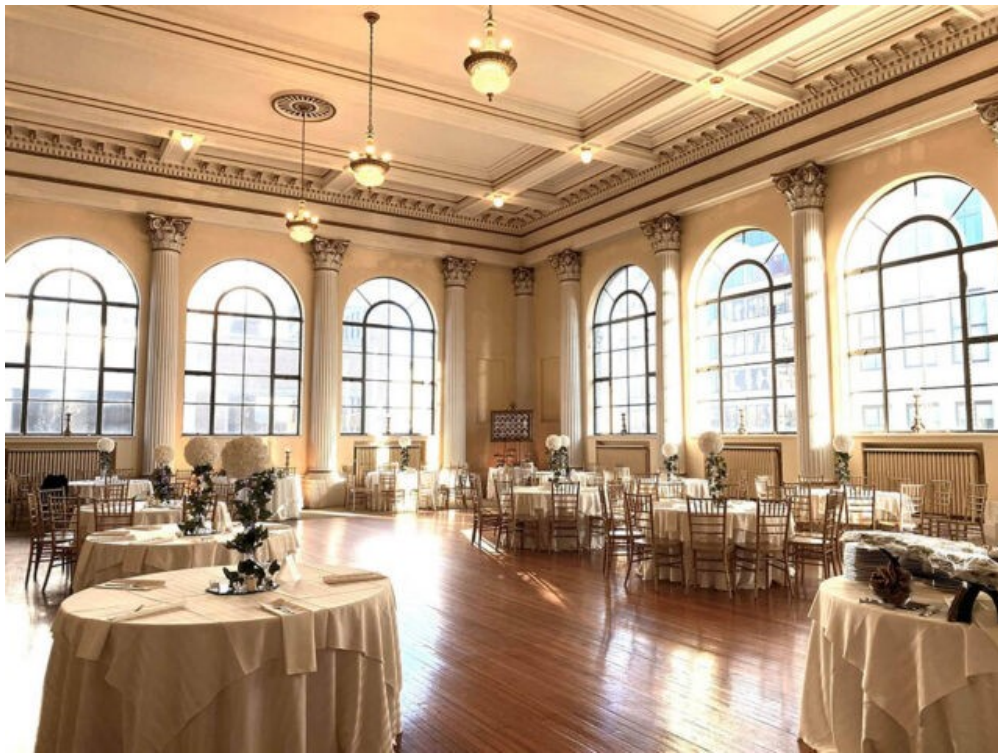


Image courtesy of weddingrule.com

In February 1888, Masons in Roanoke secured a charter entitled “Masonic Temple Association.” Their first building was at the corner of Campbell Avenue at Jefferson Street. The building stood until purchased by the National Exchange Bank. Their next location was at the corner of First Street and Kirk Avenue. Built in 1911, this building features decorative metal panels in the cornice. The large metal medallion at the center of the cornice and the large arched windows on the fourth floor indicate its use as a Masonic Hall. The first-floor housed the Reams, Jones & Blankenship Furniture Company. For many years “subscription” dances were held on the top floor of this building. In the 1940s the storefront was redesigned and is an excellent example of the Art Deco style.

Most notably, the storefront space was home to Roanoke Book and Stationery, although many different companies have occupied the space over the years. In 2003, the Corinthian Ballroom opened on the 3rd and 4th floors as an event venue for weddings, dinners, and parties. In 2006, Florabella opened and was

the last tenant in the first-floor storefront before it closed. Vacant now with some windows boarded up, the exterior of the building is showing signs of neglect and deterioration. The building is currently for sale.

Traditional Building Trades

Photo Credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation



Many property owners want to preserve and restore the features that comprise the historic character of their homes and buildings: original windows, doors, roofs, trim, masonry, and other notable features. However, it is often difficult to find tradespeople who are able and willing to maintain and repair these building components.

Historic building elements are important not only because of their appearance, which is often hard to replicate with new materials, but because their maintenance and function allows for environmentally sound stewardship of our built environment. Well-maintained historic windows and doors, constructed from old-growth woods and enhanced with appropriate storm windows and storm doors, can be just as energy efficient as modern replacements. Studies show that the payback time in energy savings is often longer than the lifespan of the modern windows or doors, which may need replacement again in 10-15 years, while well-maintained wood windows and doors can last a century or more. Repeated replacement adds to landfill waste and depletion of non-renewable resources. See <http://www.presnc.org/historic-windows-energy-efficiency/> and <https://www.greenamerica.org/green-living/three-steps-super-efficient-windows>

Yet, when property owners want to maintain and repair these features, they often have difficulty finding local contractors and craftspeople who are able and willing to affordably undertake these projects. While maintenance and repair are often not complicated, this approach can be non-standard: it is often difficult to predict in advance the full range of repairs needed before beginning a job. Many construction professionals want predictable projects—which makes removal and replacement easier to estimate in terms of time and materials. Furthermore, window, door, siding, and roofing manufacturers have much larger budgets for advertising and promoting their products, while advocates for repair and preservation often operate on shoestring budgets.

For these reasons, persons entering construction trades may not be exposed to the “niche skills” of wood window and door repair, wood siding and trim repair, or how to maintain historic gutter systems. Craftspersons with these specialized skills are few and far between and thus can charge high prices for their services—particularly if they must travel long distances to provide them. While there are a few construction firms in our region that specialize in historic restoration, their focus is often on large projects, their services come at a premium price, and their availability is limited.

To counteract this problem, programs have been established to encourage education in the field of historic preservation trades. Some offer support to individual homeowners to learn skills, some provide training to those who want to make working to restore historic materials their profession, and others attempt to better connect building owners with tradespeople. The Preservation Priorities Task Force, a joint effort between National Preservation Partners Network and the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides an overview of the issue at <https://www.preservationpriorities.org/preservation-trades> . The Virginia Department of Historic Resources also maintains a Historic Trades Directory at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-trades-directory/>.

We should support local, state, and national efforts to expand this needed workforce. Additionally, homeowners and local contractors can broaden their knowledge of best practices for maintaining and repairing historic building materials through any number of online and published resources. The US Advisory Council on Historic Preservation provides a good list of traditional trades training programs and resources on their website, at <https://www.achp.gov/initiatives/traditional-trades-training/programs-resources>

Saved

Wheatland Manor, listed as endangered in 2019, was recently purchased and is being restored. Built in 1820, Wheatland Manor is among the most substantial well-finished antebellum residences in Botetourt County and was listed on the National Register in 1992. Owner Kelly Dye will be sharing her experiences restoring the historic house on May 23 at the Botetourt County History Museum.



Eminently Endangered

In addition to the endangered sites announced this year, the RVPF calls particular attention to five sites listed previously that are now considered to be eminently endangered. This includes two of the oldest surviving houses in Roanoke City - the ca. 1819 Huntingdon, and the ca. 1837 Caretaker's House (Evans House) in Washington Park - as well as the ca. 1830 Poage's Farmhouse in Roanoke County, the 1948 Claytor Clinic in Roanoke's Gainsboro neighborhood and the iconic H&C Coffee Neon Sign located in downtown Roanoke. These historic properties have been listed as endangered again, more specifically as 'eminently endangered', to call particular attention to their continued ongoing neglect and deterioration as their loss becomes more imminent.

Huntingdon



Built ca. 1819, Huntingdon was the historic plantation home of Elisha Betts. The 2 ½ story, five-bay, Federal style brick dwelling is possibly the earliest surviving house in Roanoke City and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Due to neglect, the RVPF first identified Huntingdon as endangered in 2019 and its condition continues to deteriorate rapidly. The vacant property is also threatened by the potential for subdivision and redevelopment.

Poage Farmhouse



The Poage Farmhouse sits on a 55-acre tract along Route 221 in the Back Creek section of Roanoke County, VA. Vacant since the property was purchased by Roanoke County Schools, it has recently been sold to a developer. The two-story log section of the house dates to the 1830s. The house has suffered from a

complete lack of maintenance since it was purchased by the Roanoke County School Board in 2008. With an undetermined future amidst land that is valuable for subdivision and residential development, there is concern that it has become even more endangered.

Claytor Clinic



Claytor Clinic was built by the Claytor family and opened in 1948 in Roanoke's Gainsboro neighborhood. Five Claytor family physicians worked there, and it served as a primary outpatient facility for the Black community. It closed for many years while threatened by eminent domain. First listed by RVPF as endangered in 1996, the building continues to deteriorate, and its condition is increasingly threatened following a breakdown between the City and the Claytor family to redevelop the site.

H&C Coffee Neon Sign



The iconic neon H&C Coffee Sign sitting atop the former Shenandoah Hotel (which is owned by Center in the Square) is dark. After initially listing the sign as endangered in 2002 due to the proposed construction of the Taubman Museum, the sign was relocated to the former Shenandoah Hotel and relit in 2005. Purportedly, Center in the Square owns the sign by virtue of its current placement on top of the building owned by Center.

A non-profit organization was formed to help raise funds to rehabilitate and maintain the sign, but despite its success in gaining commitments for much of the necessary funding, the project seems to have stalled. The longer the sign remains dark and in disrepair, the more difficult and costly it will be to bring it back to life. Equally important, the sign's prominent and highly visible location is crucial in solidifying its status as a valued Roanoke icon, especially considering it

is one of only a few remaining examples of mid-century neon advertising art in the city.

Washington Park Caretakers Cottage



Image courtesy of Roanoke Rambler.com

The Washington Park Caretakers Cottage dates to ca. 1840 and was part of the original mid-18th century Mark Evans property. The park land once had a grist mill and later a dairy farm before becoming a segregated public park for the Black community in 1922. When a city dump was built in the park in the early 1960s, it became a catalyst for local activism during the Civil Rights Movement with Rev. Wilkinson leading the fight to close it. While a new swimming pool planned for the park will no longer require its demolition, the future of the vacant and neglected house remains uncertain without a viable use and given its severely deteriorated condition. After listing it as endangered in 1999 and 2017, the RVPF has partnered with the City and Friends of Washington Park to apply for a grant to stabilize the house and pursue the process of listing it on the National Register.

Preservation Virginia, a statewide advocacy group for historic preservation, will also announce their 2024 list of Most Endangered Historic Places, which includes the Washington Park Caretaker's House, on May 14. Each May, Preservation Virginia releases a list of historic places across the Commonwealth facing imminent or sustained threats. The list, which has brought attention to 170 sites in Virginia over the years, encourages individuals, organizations, and local and state governments to advocate for their preservation and find solutions that will save these unique resources for future generations. The program has a track record of success with only 10% of the sites listed to date lost to demolition or neglect. For more information about the Preservation Virginia Most Endangered Historic Places list, visit <https://preservationvirginia.org/our-work/most-endangered-historic-places/>.

In summary: The announcement by RVPF of their 2024 Endangered Sites list as well as the continued threats to previously listed sites are intended to emphasize the importance of educating the public and property owners about the significance of historic resources in the Roanoke Valley.

For more information about the mission and activities of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, visit www.roanokepreservation.org.