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Nine Endangered Sites Announced for 2003

Five aging structures, Mill Mountain, the College of Health Sciences building, dogwood trees and the site of an old hotel are placed on the 2003 Endangered Sites list of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation. They were announced Thursday night at the Foundation's annual meeting.

Since 1996, the preservation organization has selected threatened historic sites and cultural and environmental features to increase recognition of significant endangered resources. This annual listing calls public attention to these threats and encourages their preservation and stewardship.

In announcing the sites, the Foundation hopes to raise the awareness of their importance and their threatened status, said Alison Blanton, president. "We want to work closely with property owners and local governments in exploring options to promote their preservation," she said. "The Foundation wants to be a source for positive action, not merely a reactionary critic. The best success we can ask for is to take a property from the endangered list and celebrate its preservation with an award during National Preservation Week in May."

The sites:

- ***Mill Mountain**
- ***Guildhall**
- ***Carlton Terrace-College of Health Sciences**
- ***Flickwir house-Fralin Center for Health Education**
- ***Brown-Akers house**
- ***Mount Moriah Baptist Church**
- ***Dogwood trees**
- ***Bell house**
- ***Hotel site on Orange Avenue. Northeast**

Mill Mountain, subject of many plans and proposals, is threatened by a lack of definitive action by the City of Roanoke to preserve its scenic views and natural state from development. No action has been taken on Councilman Rupert Cutler's proposal to place the mountaintop under scenic easement nor on a 1990 consultants' report finding that a majority of citizens surveyed want to keep the mountain natural. Proposals have been made for an observation deck on a new water tower, a restaurant, incline railway, aerial gondola, zoo expansion and a parking garage and D-Day memorial. The ridgeline canopy has been compromised by cuts for a variety of uses. Preservation advocates fear the mountaintop will be used solely for economic gain.

Guildhall, a once stately 1882 Moomaw mansion on Cove Road, is lost. Its owner, Garden of Prayer #7, an African-American church next door, looked unsuccessfully for a buyer who would move the big brick building. When that search failed, the congregation decided in October to remove the 121-year-old house to make room for a gymnasium/sanctuary. "We're at a standstill. We want to build," said Dr. Shadrack Brown Jr., pastor of the church. The home was built by the Rev. D. C. Moomaw and his wife, the former Rebecca Crumpacker. Many neighbors and relatives visited there early in the 20th century. The church's earlier plans for a home for seniors and another plan for a youth camp at Guildhall never materialized. The house has been a landmark on a hill above Hershberger Road for almost a century and a quarter.

The 10-story College of Health Sciences/Carlton Terrace Building at 920 South Jefferson St., was planned for 150 modern apartments and 36 offices when it was constructed by a Richmond firm in 1950. The building was named for E. Tucker Carlton of Richmond, architect for the structure. Late in the last century, Carilion Health System bought the building for its College of Health Sciences and student housing. It was renamed the Reid Center, after William R. Reid, retired head of Community Hospital. In October, Carilion announced that

Community will be closed as a hospital and combined with Roanoke Memorial. Now called the Jefferson College of Health Sciences, it will be moved into the Community Hospital building and its former home probably will be demolished, according to The Roanoke Times.

Mount Moriah Baptist Church, one of the oldest African-American churches in the Roanoke Valley, is partly surrounded by a commercial strip across Orange Avenue and other nearby development. Located on a wooded hillside at 3521 Orange, Northeast, its congregation has less than a dozen elderly members. The plain wooden church, built in 1908, is the third on that site. The congregation originated in the 1850s in a Sunday School for slaves, established by Dr. Charles L. Coker, founder of Hollins University. A half-acre cemetery, containing more than 100 graves, was expanded from a former slave burial ground. The church, changed little in almost a century and located on an old road trace, is listed on the National Register of Historic places and the Virginia Register of Historic Places.

The Flickwir/Fralin Center for Health Education at 903 South Jefferson Street. constructed in 1906, is in bad need of repair. Deteriorating soffits and hidden gutter at the building front allow rainwater to leak down the brick walls. Community Hospital purchased the building about 1993 and it is owned by Carilion Health System. D. W. Flickwir, superintendent of the Norfolk and Western Railway and chairman of the N&W board's Finance Committee in the 1890s, lived at 903 South Jefferson until his death in 1935. Flickwir, also a railroad contractor, donated Roanoke City Hospital, a forerunner of Roanoke Memorial, in memory of his first wife, Charlotte Flickwir. The building has been used by Hospital Service Association, Via Tech and Research and Mental Health Services.

The Brown-Akers home, a well-preserved brick home at 6621 Peters Creek Road built about 1830, is located in a commercial zone in an area of business development in north Roanoke County. Located on the old Southwestern Virginia Turnpike, a macadam road, it has Federal mantels with fancy molded pilasters and reeding and molded brick cornices, along with an unusual early side kitchen wing. Noah Brown, a Rockingham County native, moved to Roanoke County early in the 19th century and lived here with his wife and 13 children until the family moved to the Midwest, settling near Roanoke, Illinois, in 1868. His great-granddaughter, Lois, married Hunter Akers and they moved there in 1931. After his wife's death, Akers remained there until 1998. He recently turned 100, living in a retirement home. The William Hite family lives there now.

Anthraxnose, a disease of unknown origin, is killing dogwoods across Virginia and other eastern states. The disease thrives in cool, moist environments so forest grown dogwoods have been heavily infected. Sycamores also have been found to be vulnerable to anthracnose. Dogwood, the Virginia state tree, can withstand anthracnose with good cultural care. More information may be obtained from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service at 776-7178.

The Bell family homeplace, built around 1900, is a two-story frame house on a bluff behind a store, above Back Creek, just east of Back Creek School in Roanoke County. Long vacant, it was the home of Ralph and Nina Bell. Nearby is the S. K. Ferguson cemetery, with a Confederate gravesite. The house is slated to be demolished for development of a subdivision. Its owner is Harry Clause of Troy.

The 1892 G. William Baist map of Roanoke showed an unnamed hotel near the northwest corner of Main Street (now Hollins Road) and on the old Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike (present Orange Avenue), near the location of the old Big Lick site, north of the railroad. Travelers camped at a spring here on the major east-west route. The map lists a hotel with four outbuildings. A limestone foundation in a small sliver of undisturbed land west of the spring may reflect the last remnant of the hotel site. Archeological investigation of the site may reveal information about early Roanoke and the planned community of New Antwerp.

Of the eight sites on the Foundation's 2002 endangered list, the Family Worship Center/Jefferson Street Baptist Church was razed for a Carilion Health System building site and Fairacres garden center was saved by a buyer who said he will preserve the building. The Blue Ridge Parkway and rural landscapes remain endangered by urban sprawl although a Last Chance program is designed to help save Parkway viewsheds. A new regional water authority apparently will go a long way toward solving water problems; planning is underway to move the downtown H&C Coffee sign to a new location; the Harshbarger house is still surrounded by development and brick sidewalks are vanishing when streets are repaired.

