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Neglect of valuable old structures and cemeteries is a key feature of the eight endangered sites announced Friday by the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation.

They are:

- Old mansions on Patterson Avenue
- Many valley cemeteries forgotten by families and sometimes by municipalities
- Gainesboro Historic District
- Caretaker's cottage in Fishburn Park
- Poage Farmhouse on Back Creek
- Bent Mountain Elementary School
- Vacant Queen Anne house at 732 13th Street, SW
- Harrison School building

The preservation organization has told the public about Roanoke area structures or natural resources in danger of neglect or removal annually since 1996. The Foundation seeks to inform the public of the values of restoring and reusing older structures, usually more durable than newer buildings.

Mike Kennedy, Foundation president, saw “a certain feeling of déjà vu here that could cause one to become pessimistic. A city-owned house in a park has been neglected. Gainesboro is still reeling after it was gutted by urban renewal. On the bright side, both the Fishburn Park cottage and the Bent Mountain school have the active support of the neighborhood, which is important. The Harrison School is occupied, which means it will be kept heated and dry. And preserving the area's old cemeteries is doable and relatively inexpensive.”

Five blocks of Patterson Avenue mansions once occupied by railway executives have been overlooked for years as many residents moved to the suburbs or newer subdivisions. Many houses on this wide street once known as The Boulevard are large Neoclassical structures developed between 1890 and 1930 by the West End Land Co. These architectural treasures are in a Neighborhood Preservation District between Mountain View and Hurt Park.

Two of these homes are a brick Second Empire building at 1495 Patterson , constructed by James S. Simmons and designed to attract others to locate in what was once an exclusive area and an imposing stone residence at 1501 Patterson, built by Col. Augustus Pope, a Norfolk and Western Railway freight agent. The Pope home has a three-story octagonal tower with stained glass windows and a wrap-around porch. In the early 20th century, Patterson Avenue became one of Roanoke's most fashionable residential streets. If restored, these mansions could have multi-family use.

Many historic cemeteries in the Roanoke area have been abandoned and they will disappear if continued to go unnoticed. Some of the earliest Roanoke citizens are buried in private cemeteries or in the City Cemetery on Tazewell Avenue or Old Lick Cemetery on Orange Avenue or are owned by the City or by local churches. Many cities recognize the heritage of these cemeteries by creating inventories and tours. The Preservation Foundation would like to promote an effort to identify, document, maintain and preserve these early cemeteries, perhaps as a partner with owners and organizations such as the State Department of Historic Resources.

The Gainesboro Historic District, the city's oldest neighborhood and center of commercial, institutional and commercial life for the African American community from the 1890s to the 1950s, has no protection against demolition, except for Gilmer and Patton avenues, Northeast, which have overlay zoning. Several historic houses have been demolished. If removal of houses or demolition by neglect continue, Roanoke can be in danger of losing its oldest neighborhood.

Sections of Gainesboro survive as the earliest housing developed by the Roanoke Land and Improvement Co. Its architecture has a full range of late 19th and early 20th century domestic, religious and commercial buildings expressing the people's desire to create their own community. The district is listed on the Virginia Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places.

The Poage family farmhouse, a prominent feature of the Back Creek/U.S. 221 area of Roanoke County since 1897, is threatened by plans for a future school since Roanoke County purchased the farm. County land use maps have designated the farm as a "village center." Robert Poage settled here in 1748 and the family has farmed the valley land for 21/2 centuries. David Poage leases the farm to raise beef cattle and vegetables. A county plan for the Rt. 221 area said the countryside once dotted with livestock and apple orchards has transformed to houses and cul-de-sacs. "Protection of historical structures and cemeteries is critical for preserving early settlement patterns," according to the plan.

Bent Mountain Elementary School, almost a century old, has an uncertain future since it was closed in June for budget reduction. Once one of six one-room schools on the mountain, the building had a major renovation in 1930. A county library continues to operate in the building and several proposals have been made for use as an arts and humanities center, a religious school or a community center

The keeper's cottage at Fishburn Park was built about 1830 but it is vacant and in disrepair with a leaking roof today. The 1 1/2-story log structure, with clapboard and stucco siding and a gable roof, was built on land granted to Thomas Smith in 1786 and later farmed by James Crawford Thompson. It was owned later by Weaver Heights Corp. and Blair Fishburn until Roanoke City took ownership in 1935. Recent occupants have been park grounds keepers. Located at the entrance to Fishburn Park, the cottage could be a living piece of history with much public exposure. It is threatened with demolition for replacement by public bathrooms for the park. The Grandin Court Civic League hopes to use it as a community center but funds and materials are needed..

The Free Classic Queen Anne home at 732 13th Street, SW, has been vacant for two years and the building was cited for exterior violations of the City Code. It was in an upscale neighborhood when Lawrence N. Buford moved in there in 1902 but the neighborhood has changed..Buford was president of Crystal Coal and Coke Co. His neighbor across the street in 1902 was J. B. Fishburn, also a top executive of the coal company, who moved in to Mountain View, next door, in 1909. Since, the home at 732 13th Street has had 16 different owners, including Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority and Juan and Elodia Jimenez, who bought it in 2008. .

The Harrison School building, home of Roanoke's first high school for African American students when it was built in 1915, has deteriorated with the current move of the Harrison Museum of African American Culture to Center in the Square. Now owned by an out-of-town developer, the building continues in use as Section 8 public housing apartments. No plans have been announced for the first floor area occupied by the museum since 1985.

Harrison School was recognized for the leadership of pioneer educator Lucy Addison, who helped extend the curriculum beyond the seventh grade to high school level. Throughout its history, the school has been a center of African American educational, social and cultural activities. Two-story wings were added to the brick, three-story building in 1922. The museum has collected memorabilia, photos and started a library of oral histories and African and contemporary art.