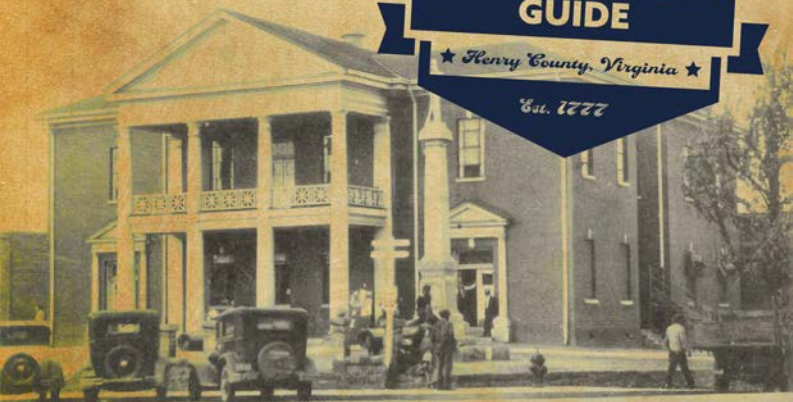


# HENRY COUNTY



# ABOUT THE DRIVING TOUR

The Martinsville & Henry County Historic Driving Tour was produced with generous support from the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA), the Harvest Foundation and the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society.

This is the second edition of a guide to showcase some of the many historic properties that are in Martinsville and Henry County. It was difficult to select the limited number of properties that could be included because there are so many historic properties in the city and county. We have a rich heritage dating back to pre-historic times when the Woodland Indians set up villages here. As white settlers moved in the area, they built beautiful homes and farmed the land. African Americans who were enslaved and forced to work the land later stayed in the area to establish businesses and to contribute to the workforce in the emerging industries.

Martinsville and Henry County grew to be a world leader in tobacco, furniture and textile manufacturing. Hopefully, this booklet will give readers a glimpse into our heritage. More information and pictures can be found at the Heritage Center & Museum, the Fayette Area Historical Initiative Museum in Martinsville and the Bassett Historic Center in Bassett.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE:

**THE PROPERTIES IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED FROM THE ROAD UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE. PLEASE RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE PROPERTY OWNERS WHO HAVE GRACIOUSLY AGREED TO HAVE THEIR PROPERTY INCLUDED IN THE MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY HISTORIC DRIVING TOUR.**

Information included in this publication was gathered from the following sources:

- National Register of Historic Places
- Martinsville & Henry County Historic Views
- Henry County, Virginia Heritage Book
- Fayette Street 1905-2005
- Magnet, A Commentary by Ralph C. Lester
- The Life and Times of Ridgeway, Virginia 1728-1990 by Ruth Pace and Mary Pace McGee



# SPECIAL THANKS TO:

## THE MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society has been established to share the fascinating story of the area's past, to help preserve its rich historical resources and to become a part of a community of history lovers.

The society is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization that was formed in 1996. The society was initially formed to help save the Historic Henry County Courthouse when the courts moved to a new building. The county allowed the Society to use the Courthouse and to be its caretaker.

With subsequent grants, the Courthouse was restored and the County gifted the building and grounds to the Historical Society. The building was named the MHC Heritage Center & Museum. It is the headquarters for the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society. The society is the common thread that binds Martinsville and Henry County's past, present and future.

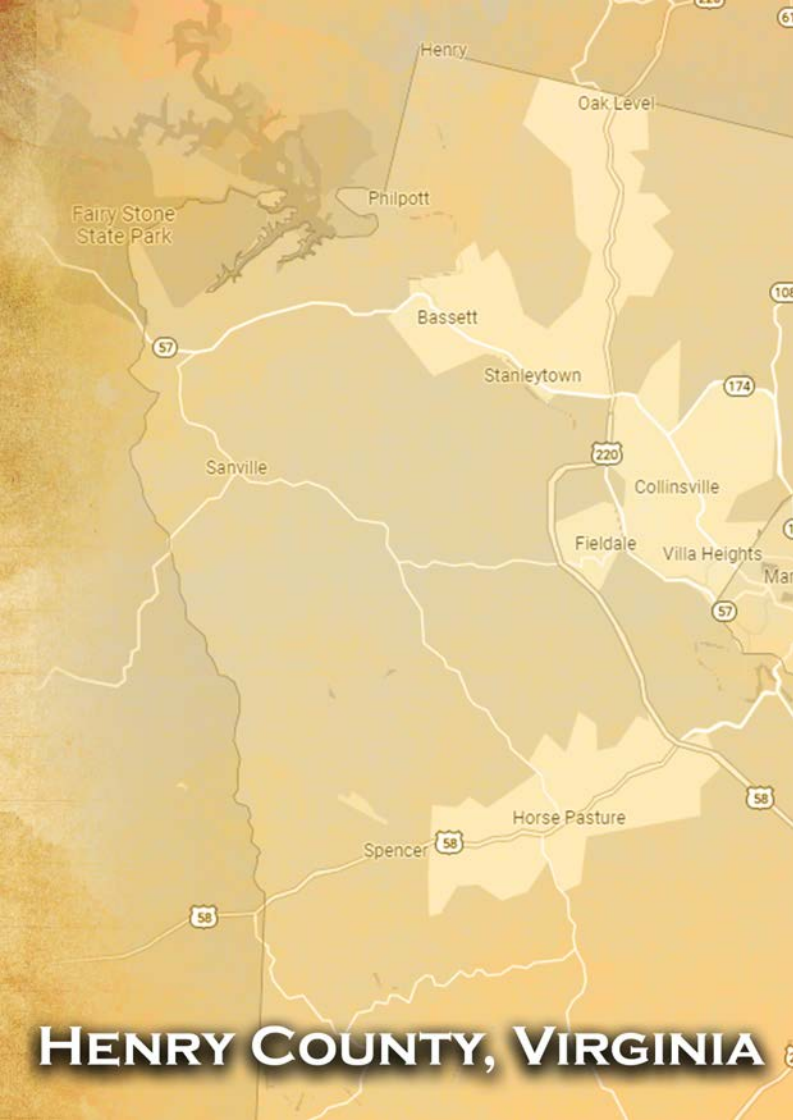
## DAN RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) was created in 2002 by residents to protect and promote the natural and cultural assets of the 3,300 square mile Dan River Basin in Virginia and North Carolina. Since its inception, the organization has become a leader in outdoor recreational master planning, trail and blueway development, bi-state and multiple jurisdiction collaboration, interpretation and dissemination of information about environmental issues, environmental education and more.

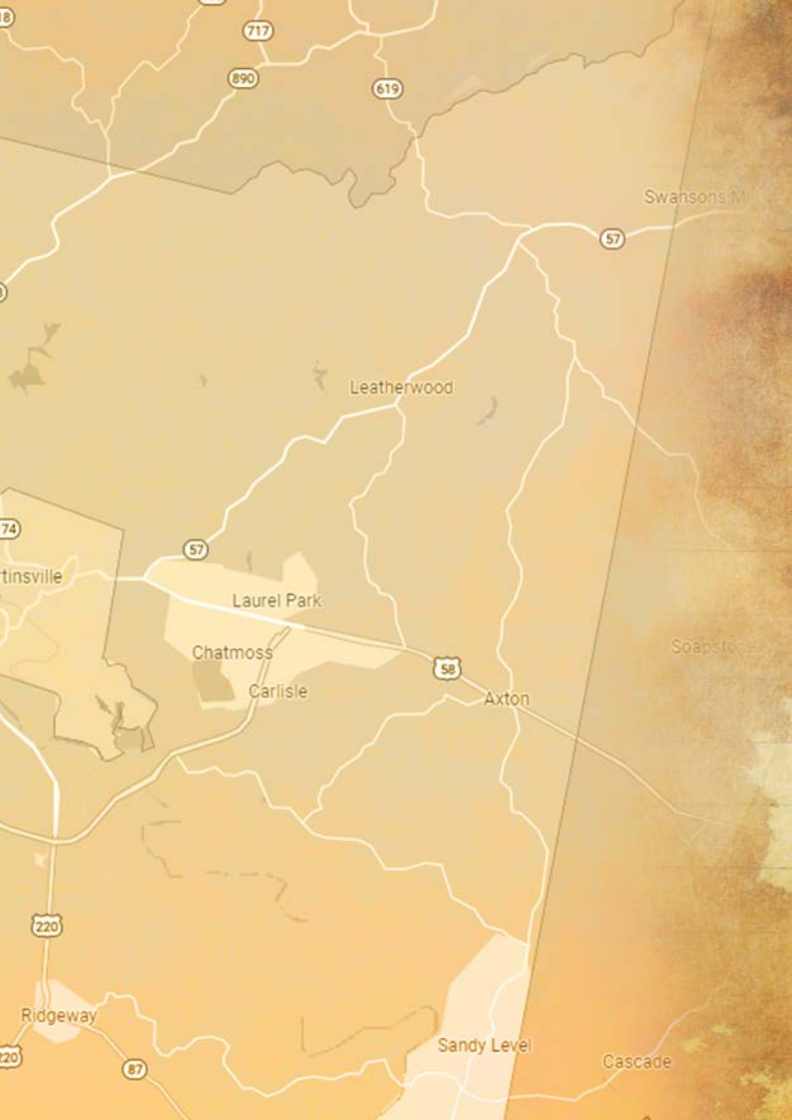
By promoting a bi-state network of rivers, greenways, and trails, DRBA hopes to improve the region's quality of life, making the area a better place in which to live, visit and do business.







# HENRY COUNTY, VIRGINIA





## MARTINSVILLE, VIRGINIA

Martinsville had its beginnings in 1791 when the village incorporated. It was centered around the Henry County Courthouse which was built on land donated by George Hairston, a plantation owner, and James Anthony.

Businesses sprung up around the square. The area brought people from all over the county to take care of business, shop and meet with friends. As the region became more prosperous with first the tobacco industries and then later the furniture and textile industries, the need for stores and offices expanded down Main Street and Church Street.

In the mid-20th century, uptown Martinsville was a destination for many shoppers looking for the latest fashions. Many of these buildings built in the early 20th century have been torn down, but numerous ones still exist and have been restored and repurposed. A description of these historic buildings has been published in a walking tour brochure.



# 1 EAST MAIN STREET

## HISTORIC HENRY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Henry County separated from Pittsylvania County in 1777. Over the next 15 years, the county boundary lines were changed as Franklin County and Patrick County were formed. In 1791, George Hairston, a local wealthy landowner, donated 50 acres of land in the center of the new county to the Court of Henry County for their use. A courthouse was constructed in the center of the property and became the focal point of the town square. Counties in Virginia were required to place their courthouses in the center of the county, so their citizens could travel to it in a day to conduct business.



### DID YOU KNOW?

THE TWO RODMAN CANNONS IN FRONT OF THE COURTHOUSE CAME FROM FORT MCHENRY.

In 1824, Martinsville and Henry County needed a new courthouse. A federal-style structure with Doric columns was constructed with two exterior stairs leading to the second floor courtroom. More renovations came over the next 100 years. The Courthouse has remained relatively unchanged since it was completed in 1929.

In 1996, the County courts relocated. The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society became the building's caretaker. With federal, state and local grants, the Courthouse was restored. The county then gifted the courthouse and surrounding grounds to the Historical Society to establish the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center and Museum.







## 311 EAST CHURCH STREET

RUCKER-PANNILL HOUSE - "SCUFFLE HILL"

The Rucker-Pannill House, known as Oak Hall, was constructed in 1905-1906 by tobacco magnate Benjamin F. Stevens for his wife, daughter and son-in-law, Pannill Rucker. The original dwelling was a three story brick and granite structure with Spanish tile roof designed in a combination of features from the Classical, Craftsman, and Mediterranean styles. In 1917, the original structure was destroyed by fire along with Stevens' collection of fine art and antiques.

A new residence was constructed by the Ruckers between 1917 and 1920. This two-story Colonial-Revival brick dwelling incorporates portions of the original house, including the pressed stretcher-bond brick walls, the two-story polygonal window bays, and the granite belt course. Later occupants included furniture manufacturer Rives S. Brown, S. and textile magnate William L. Pannill, who named the home "Scuffle Hill." The structure currently serves as the parish house for Christ Episcopal Church next door.





# 321 EAST CHURCH STREET

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR



## DID YOU KNOW?

REVEREND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN STRINGFELLOW, A NOTED CONFEDERATE SPY, WAS RECTOR OF THIS CHURCH FROM 1891 TO 1894.

Christ Episcopal Church is one of the oldest standing churches in the area. It was built circa 1890. This late 19th century brick church is designed in the Gothic Revival style—the shape of a Maltese cross with intersecting gable roof, central belfry, projecting vestibules and a square corner tower. The front vestibule and entrance is an addition to the original structure. Three cast-bronze bells, made in Holland, were placed in the bell tower in 1893. These musical bells ring out every hour on the hour.

The church moved here from its original location, which was three blocks west. It was founded in 1841 to provide worship for families who had clung to their Episcopal worship since colonial times.



# 324 EAST CHURCH STREET

JOHN WADDEY CARTER HOUSE - "GREY LADY"

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR

John W. Carter, the only son of James and Elizabeth Carter, was born in April of 1860. After graduating from Roanoke College and from law school at the University of Virginia in 1884, he returned to Martinsville to open a law practice. He was local counsel for the Norfolk & Western Railway Company and for other large interests. Carter took an active part in the Democratic party and served as mayor of Martinsville. This beautiful Queen Anne residence was built in 1896 by Carter as a wedding present for his young bride, Miss Mary Kizziah Drewery. Referred to as the "Grey Lady," the dwelling is a textbook example of the Queen Anne style possessing typical features of irregular composition, mixture of materials and surface use of Eastlake ornamentation.



## DID YOU KNOW?

THE HOUSE WAS DESIGNED BY TENNESSEE ARCHITECT GEORGE FRANKLIN BARBER AS A "ORDER-BY-MAIL" KIT THAT WAS SHIPPED WITH PLANS AND MATERIALS BY RAIL.

The house is now the headquarters of Rives S. Brown Realtors. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. Visitors are welcome to come in the house when it is open for business.





# 207 STARLING AVENUE

THE LITTLE POST OFFICE

The Little Post Office is associated with the U.S. mail's star route service, the dominant delivery method in rural America during the latter half of the nineteenth century. A typical 1890s star route originating in Martinsville covered 16 miles out and back, six times a week, on horseback or by wagon.

In 1894, John B. Anglin (1847-1932), formerly a farmer in Patrick County, Virginia, and his second wife, Pocahontas Houchins (b. 1857), built a two-story house (no longer standing) and a one-story brick office that served as the command center for Anglin's star route mail contracting business.

By 1901, Anglin's star mail contracts numbered over five hundred routes in ten states. By 1903, Anglin had divested himself of all but three routes. Although star routes continued to operate, Anglin apparently anticipated the coming end of this type of business and sold it in 1917. The Little Post Office was rehabilitated and made into a private office as it continues to be today. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.





# 308 STARLING AVENUE

G.T. LESTER HOUSE - "THE WEDDING CAKE HOUSE"

Resembling a wedding cake, the G.T. Lester home on Starling Avenue was built in 1918. At the time, people were putting in their first bathrooms--tacking pipes to outer walls which resulted in frozen pipes during the winter.

To solve this problem, "Cap'n Til" Lester designed a three-story square in the center of his home to include the bathrooms, the heating system, and stairways. All the rooms are five sided with one of the walls being part of the inside center square. The white brick was shipped from England.

Capt'n Til started out in the tobacco manufacturing business, developing his own plug tobacco brands. With the proceeds from the sale of a patented tobacco press, he started a lumber manufacturing business, Lester Lumber Company. He continued as an inventor, building his lumber and building-supply businesses and developing land.

PHOTO OPP.



# 900 RIVES ROAD

MARTINSVILLE NOVELTY CORP. FACTORY

In 1929, the Southern Chair and Novelty Corporation was incorporated but soon changed its name to Martinsville Novelty Corporation because a North Carolina company had a similar name.

According to the company's president, Robert O. Minter, Jr., "Novelty in the 1920s was a furniture term that meant occasional table...I always say that they named the company Martinsville Novelty because no one knew how to spell occasional. That's with two C's and one S, by the way."

The company constructed a three-story brick factory, a lumber storage shed, drying kiln and a spur railroad line. The factory was constructed to be totally self-sufficient with a steam powered generator that burned sawdust to produce its own electricity. The generator is still in the building.

Because their products were modestly priced, the company survived the Great Depression. Additions were built in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1974, the company's most profitable year, it employed 115 people. The company closed in 1995.





# 1101 MULBERRY ROAD

GREENWOOD

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR

Greenwood, also known as the Martin-McCabe House, was built in 1808-10 for Colonel Joseph Martin III, the son of General Joseph Martin for whom Martinsville is named. Col. Martin was born in 1785 and served in the War of 1812.

This two-story Flemish-bond brick house was originally located on Leatherwood Creek in the Axton area. It had a private oval for horseracing and a deer preserve. Behind the springhouse were hundreds of burial stones marking the graves of Martin slaves.

## DID YOU KNOW?

COLONEL MARTIN WAS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF THE VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES AND SERVED EIGHT YEARS IN THE VIRGINIA SENATE.

Around 1940, after a disastrous cave-in from basement excavations, the McCabe family purchased the house, dismantled and moved it to its current location on Mulberry Road in Martinsville. It was reconstructed as nearly as possible to its original state. It continues to be a private residence.





# SAM LIONS TRAIL

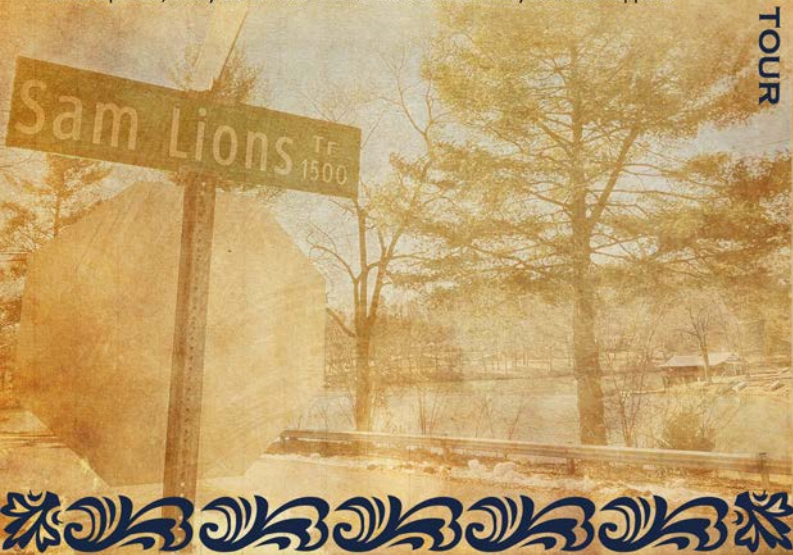
## SAM LIONS TRAIL

This street in Martinsville can trace its name back to the story of Sam Lion, a slave who worked as a field hand on the Beaver Creek Plantation which was owned by the Hairston family.

The Hairstons let their slaves at Beaver Creek make and sell their own goods for money. Over the years, Lion had earned enough extra money to buy his own woodworking tools. However, when a new overseer asked to borrow one of the tools, Lion refused. The overseer attacked him, and Lion killed the man with a shovel he was using to chop kindling.

Lion fled the plantation, and hid in a nearby forest for two months. Eventually, unwilling to go North without his family, Lion turned himself in. He was sentenced to hang and was shot while trying to escape.

Like Lion, other slaves were able to earn small amounts of money outside of their daily duties. Ned and Clem, two wagon masters, earned money by hauling extra loads for other planters. Clem was also a beekeeper, and amassed enough savings to buy his own honey press, which cost \$10 and two gallons of honey. After emancipation, many slaves returned to work for the family as sharecroppers.



# 1005 JORDAN STREET

DRY BRIDGE SCHOOL - ROSENWALD SCHOOL

Julius Rosenwald, as president of Sears and Roebuck Company, established the Rosenwald Fund to help pay for more than 5,000 schools for African Americans in 15 southern states. Dry Bridge School is one of the few Rosenwald schools built by brick. The completion of this four-room school in 1929 culminated years of work by blacks living east of Martinsville, Virginia, who sought better school facilities and better education for their children.

Plans and specifications for school construction were provided by the Rosenwald program. Inside Dry Bridge School are four classrooms and two offices. The rooms have tall ceilings treated with pressed tin squares and cornices, plaster walls above beaded vertical-board wainscoting, two-inch-wide oak flooring, and five-panel doors, all of which is original fabric. Even the blackboards remain in place.

A freestanding school addition was built beside the Dry Bridge School in 1958. The two buildings were called the East Martinsville Grammar School. The school closed in 1968 as the result of school desegregation. MARC Workshop, Inc. rented the property to begin a mission of serving handicapped persons. The property was conveyed to them in 1989. The Dry Bridge School was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.



## DID YOU KNOW?

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE FORMED IN 1927 CALLED FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY AND FOR RACE PRIDE THROUGH BETTER SCHOOLS.





# 1300 KINGS MOUNTAIN ROAD

BEAVER CREEK PLANTATION

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR



George Hairston bought the land and a house on the future Beaver Creek Plantation from Abram Penn, who had purchased the land through a grant from King George III.

The house burned sometime during the period 1827-1835. It was located on part of the vast Hairston landholdings. Collectively, the Hairston family, who lived in numerous southern states, was considered one of the nation's largest slave-holding families. It is estimated that the Hairstons had in excess of 10,000 slaves. Today, many families of African descent share the name Hairston.

The second house, which you see now, was completed in 1837 by George Hairston's son, Marshall (b. 1802 - d. 1882). The last addition was added in 1958.

The gardens behind the house have the original boxwoods imported from England in the mid 19th Century and several of the trees in the yard were brought back during the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Second and third generation owners divided their yearly time between Beaver Creek and their Mississippi cotton plantations. Gravestones in the Hairston Family Cemetery at Beaver Creek identify six generations of the family along with two house slaves.

The Hairston heirs sold Beaver Creek after owning it for more than 200 years. Today, the mansion house, surrounded by 27 acres, is the Corporate Headquarters of the present owner, Carter Bank & Trust.





A 125

## OAKWOOD CEMETERY

The Town of Northampton Chartered Oakwood Cemetery in 1895 and in 1907, after the Cemetery was incorporated as a corporation, the town was known as Northampton, Massachusetts. The Cemetery was founded by the Rev. George Waller, D.D., and the Rev. Dr. Waller was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Cemetery was founded by the Rev. Dr. Waller, D.D., and the Rev. Dr. Waller was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Cemetery was founded by the Rev. Dr. Waller, D.D., and the Rev. Dr. Waller was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**DID YOU KNOW?**



Thus began the cemetery that was to expand to over 20 acres through the years. Older graves have been moved to the cemetery, including those of Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers. Worn etchings such as "Last Blood Shed Here For The Cause, 1865" are seen here. The cemetery abounds with boxwood, dogwood trees, crepe myrtle, and sugar maples to provide year-round color. Lot owners have added to the beauty by planting roses, daffodils, peonies and other beautiful blooming plants. The Martinsville Garden Club added gates and shrubbery.



## 200 GRANDBERY ROAD

GRANBERY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



### DID YOU KNOW?

GRANBERY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS THE OLDEST CHURCH BUILDING IN HENRY COUNTY THAT HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS USE AND HAS AN ACTIVE AND THRIVING CONGREGATION.

Granbery United Methodist Church began as a small mission church, known as Bethel Methodist Church, in another location. This church was built in 1889 and was named for Bishop John Cowper Granbery, clergyman of the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church.

Granbery has had 43 pastors in the past 120 years. The main sanctuary of the church was heated by a pot-bellied wood-fired stove until 1957. Until that time, Sunday School was held only nine months of the year due to the cold weather in winter. The church was originally illuminated by the warm yellow glow of kerosene lamps that hung on the walls.

The outside design and the sanctuary have changed very little.





# 6271 CHATHAM ROAD

GRAVELY TOBACCO (LEATHERWOOD)

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR



Joseph Gravelly, first of the Gravellys in Henry County, came from Culpeper County before the Revolutionary War. He acquired extensive lands in what came to be known as the Leatherwood section. The Gravellys were tobacco growers and later in the 1800s became world famous as processors of plug chewing tobacco.

This building is one of the early Gravelly tobacco factories built by Joseph's son, Peyton, in 1850. Benjamin Franklin "Ben" Gravelly, Peyton's son, developed his own brand of chewing tobacco and marketed his products to northern cities: Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York.

According to one story, Benjamin Gravelly, suffering with a cold, sipped a large quantity of licorice, a standard remedy of the day, while simultaneously chewing the ever present plug of tobacco. He was pleasantly surprised by the flavorsome blend. Thereafter, B.F. Gravelly & Sons flavored their manufactured product with the essence of licorice.





# 2900 OLD LIBERTY DRIVE

## PATRICK HENRY MONUMENT

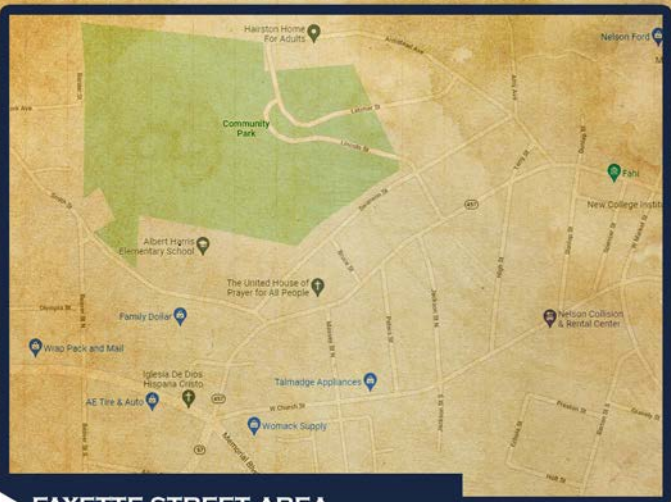
Henry County was formed in 1777 during the Revolution and named for Patrick Henry, who lived on a large estate on Leatherwood Creek. In 1922, the Daughters of the American Revolution erected this large granite monument commemorating his residence here. Patrick Henry, born 1736 in Virginia, was a lawyer, patriot, orator and a participant in virtually every aspect of the founding of America. He is remembered for his powerful and inspirational speeches. He was the first governor of Virginia, taking office in July 1776, and served in the Revolutionary War.

### PHOTO OPP.



Henry suffered from bouts of malaria throughout his life. In 1778, he bought 10,000 acres in Henry County, built a house and lived there until 1784, hoping the change of climate would be beneficial to his health. He soon became involved in local politics. He was elected to represent Henry County for five one-year terms in the House of Delegates. He was elected as governor again in 1784 and served until 1786. Patrick Henry died at Red Hill Plantation in Charlotte County, Virginia in 1799 at the age of 63.





## FAYETTE STREET AREA

The Fayette Street Area, west of the Historic Henry County Courthouse, was farmland until the railroads came to the area in 1891. That brought on a growth of the town. Fayette Street was laid out that year. As the popularity of tobacco products grew, numerous warehouses and factories were built on Fayette Street. African Americans provided much of the labor force. They began to develop in the area what became their commercial, residential, social and institutional center.

Black-owned businesses provided the services and entertainment that were not available to them elsewhere. The 100 block of Fayette Street became known as the Baldwin Block. Dr. Dana O. Baldwin was the first black medical doctor in the area. He not only provided medical care, but he was also an entrepreneur. In the Baldwin Block, he built a drug store, hotel, theatre, pool room, barbershop, beauty parlor, dental office and his office. The block was cleared in the 1990s and is now the location of a new building for the New College Institute.

The National Register of Historic Places established the area as the Fayette Street Historic District in 2007.



## 211 FAYETTE STREET

IMPERIAL SAVINGS AND LOAN

This building was originally the second home of Imperial Savings and Loan. It was started by African Americans in 1927 when a group of church members were deciding what to do with money they had saved at a local church's Sunday School meeting.

In 1929, Imperial Savings and Loan Association was chartered. In 2005, Imperial remained the only African American owned savings and loan in the state of Virginia, with assets of more than 9 million dollars.

The building is now the home of the Fayette Area Historical Initiative (FAHI) Museum and Multicultural Center. It focuses on African-American life in Martinsville and its surrounding communities by preserving its past and promoting economic development. It is open free to the public. Call 276-732-3496 for hours.





## 218 FAYETTE STREET

### GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

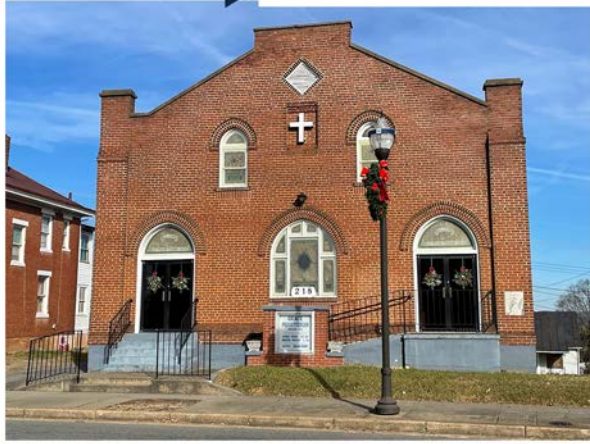
Grace United Presbyterian Church is one of several churches that were built on Fayette Street, but it is the only one left that has a historic sanctuary.

The church was constructed in 1918 with its parsonage built next door. It is of the Gothic-Revival style. As is the case with many of the churches, Grace Presbyterian's members began meeting as an organized group in a home in 1882. Crowded meeting space at the home soon moved the congregation to the basement of a tobacco factory on Fayette Street. Later a frame building was built which burned, as was the fate of many of the area's early church structures.

Not only did it give spiritual guidance to its parishioners, but it provided an elementary education for black grade-school girls and boys. The success of the schools in the South during reconstruction depended on the generosity of the local black community and the resourcefulness of ministers.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS A CONTRIBUTING BUILDING IN THE FAYETTE STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT IN UPTOWN MARTINSVILLE.



# 1002 SECOND STEET

## PEOPLE'S CEMETERY

People's Cemetery, established in 1905 for African American citizens, is thought to have first been used in the 19th century as a slave cemetery. It now has 450 tombstones or identifiable markers, including seventy-seven veteran's graves.

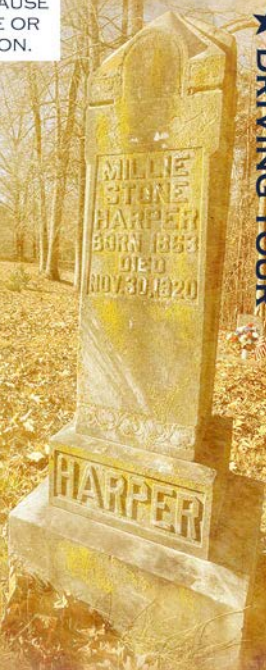


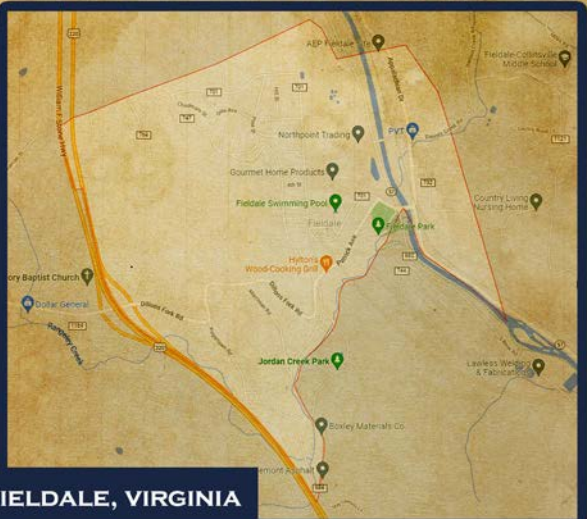
CAUTION SHOULD BE  
TAKEN WHEN VISITING  
GRAVES NOT TO DISTURB  
ANY MARKERS, OR CAUSE  
ADDITIONAL DAMAGE OR  
LOSS OF INFORMATION.

CAUTION

It is believed that the property to the west of the formal cemetery may have been used as a pauper's cemetery and may contain an unknown number of graves. Markers at People's Cemetery range from elaborate headstones to simple homemade and hand inscribed concrete slabs. Louis Spencer (b. 1822 - d. 1917), a former slave, is the earliest born person to be buried in People's Cemetery. He cohabitated with Mary Jane Finny in 1851 and had at least seven children.

There is one narrow gravel drive with no areas for parking or turning in the cemetery, so visitors should park on the street approaching the cemetery and walk in for viewing.





## FIELDALE, VIRGINIA

Fieldale is named after Marshall Field, the famous Chicago merchant who died in 1906, a decade before the founding of Fieldale. Marshall Field & Co. in 1916 selected a 1,841-acre site a few miles southwest of Martinsville as the site of a new towel mill. It had all the elements needed, water from the Smith River and the Danville & Western Railroad and Norfolk & Western Railroad. Along with a new textile plant, the company, Carolina and Cotton & Woolen Mill (later known as Fieldcrest Mills) also created its own town out of sparsely-populated farmland beginning about 1917.

When the company built the town, it erected a small business district including a post office, grocery store, furniture store, hotel, shoe shop, barber shop, drug store, produce store, theatre and a bank—everything needed to establish a community. The company donated land and funded the building of a school, YMCA and two churches. The town was the first in the area to have water and a sewer system, sidewalks, paved streets and electricity. Eventually, the company built more than 1,000 homes, which were rented to mill employees. The houses were built in widely variegated architecture, avoiding the old-time monotony of straight rows of similar houses.

The Fieldale Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.





# 986 FIELD AVENUE

## FIELDCREST MILLS

In the early 1900s, Marshall Field and Company of the famed department store in Chicago, Illinois decided to operate their own towel manufacturing plants to ensure better quality products. They chose this beautiful valley with the Smith River, the Danville & Western Railroad, and the Norfolk & Western Railroad because Marshall Field knew an abundant water supply was the critical factor in making a quality product.

Fieldcrest Mills opened in 1919 originally as "The Carolina Cotton and Woolen Mills Co." It covered four acres and employed 333 employees. Spinning facilities, a weaving department, and a bleachery were constructed. In the 1920s, silk full-fashioned hosiery became popular. Knitting machines were installed and silk hosiery was produced until the 1950s when it was replaced by nylon hosiery, forcing the closing of the hosiery mill in 1955.

In 1937, Fieldcrest Mills began producing high quality towels for other retailers including Sears and JC Penney. In 1953, Marshall Field's mill was sold to Fieldcrest Mills and in 1985 Fieldcrest merged with Cannon. In 1997, Fieldcrest Cannon was purchased by Pillwotex Corporation which closed in 2003.



# 986 FIELD AVENUE

VIRGINIA HOME



## DID YOU KNOW?

TODAY, THE BUILDING HAS BEEN REHABILITATED AND TURNED INTO A BEAUTIFUL BED AND BREAKFAST INN.

When Marshall Field & Company of Chicago established their textile manufacturing facilities in Fieldale in 1919, there was a special need for housing unmarried women. In 1920, "The Dormitory" was built. In 1929, when Bessie Merriman took over operations of the boarding house, the name was changed to "The Virginia Home" and male boarders were allowed.

Beginning in the 1940s, Fieldcrest Mills, Inc. began to sell off its residential properties and Mary Alice Merriman purchased The Virginia Home property for \$10. The Merriman family continued to operate the boarding house until 1996 when they sold the property. Over the years, the Virginia Home served as a social gathering place for the community. The dining room was opened to the public from the 1940s until 1979. It became a favorite place for Sunday dinners which were served family style.





# 1024 THE GREAT ROAD

## HILLCROFT

Hillcroft has a long history with many owners. The first owner was Henry Lyne. He built his small home on the Great Wagon Road sometime in the 18th century. When looking at the present home, it is the section to the right of the front door. It was constructed with hewed timbers put together with hand forged nails and wooden pegs. It has a corner fireplace and narrow stairs leading to a small room above. The exterior was clapboard with a split oak covered roof.

In 1815, the house was sold to Rev. John Traylor, a Methodist circuit rider. Rev. Traylor built the middle section of the house. The interior has fine woodwork which was added to the original section.

John Rangeley, originally from England and later from Maine, bought the house in 1841. He had another section built onto the house. This section is on the north end and was made with handmade bricks, probably made on the site.

Each section is only one room deep with windows on the front and back, a fireplace and staircase in each section. At some point, a standing seam tin roof was installed and a separate kitchen constructed in the rear. It was later moved to be part of the Rangeley's son's house built next door.

During subsequent years, the house deteriorated. Dr. A.W. Rucker, a local physician, and his wife bought the house and lovingly brought it back to life. They wired and plumbed the whole house and installed central heating, all concealed in newly plastered walls. They gave it a Williamsburg look by changing the front door, adding dormers and building another wing with a kitchen.



In 1966 after several subsequent owners, Dr. Mervyn and Virginia King bought the house. It was the perfect place to showcase their antiques. They built another wing onto the back of the kitchen section to provide for a family room. The house is now owned by their daughter and family.





# OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

## FIELDALE

### A 109 WALLER'S FORD

George Waller (1754-1814) and his wife, Anna Winston Waller (1755-1839), established their plantation at Waller's Ford on the South River near here about 1770. George Waller helped establish Henry County, serving as one of its first justices and as an early tax commissioner and sheriff, and he was one of Martinville's first trustees. Waller was an officer in the 1st militia, which mustered on his plantation. In 1781, Major Waller marched 21 militia companies to North Carolina, where they fought in the Battle of Guilford Court House. They were present at Yorktown for the surrender of British forces on 19 Oct. 1781.

Memorial of George Waller, 1781



WALLER'S FORD  
HISTORIC MARKER

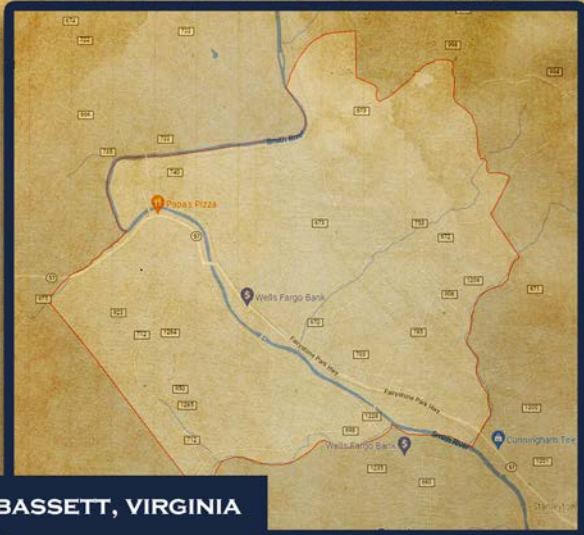
THE HISTORIC  
FIELDALE IRON BRIDGE

THE FIELDALE  
WALKING TRAIL

THE TEXTILE  
HERITAGE TRAIL

EMERGENCY CALL  
THE ALICE AS FOR THE SITE  
3521 RIVER ROAD  
FIELDALE WALKING TRAIL DISTANCE  
.96 mile / 5,043 feet / 1,551 yds





## BASSETT, VIRGINIA

The town of Bassett, Virginia was first known as a post office established in 1892 and known as "Bassetts." The post office was built on land owned by John Henry Bassett. He married Nancy Jane Spencer and they settled on a farm on the Smith River that would later become the town of Bassett. Their three enterprising sons, John David, Samuel Henry, and Charles Columbus Bassett ran a sawmill on the property in the late 1880s and sold crossties to the Norfolk and Western Railway for the construction of the new rail line to Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

After the railroad was completed in 1892, the Bassett brothers continued to mill lumber and sold it to furniture manufacturers all over the eastern half of the United States. John David "J.D." Bassett, who also operated a mercantile store, observed from his travels that "furniture certainly could be manufactured in Henry County (Va.) at a tremendous advantage." In 1902, the three Bassett brothers and their brother-in-law Reed L. Stone founded the Bassett Furniture Company with 50 employees. According to J.D. Bassett, this was the first furniture company in Virginia to succeed. The town of Bassett grew quickly with the growth of the Bassett Furniture Company. The small farming community became a town with a population of 800 by 1915.



# 150 OLD STAGE ROAD

EDGEWOOD



▶ PHOTO OPP.



Edgewood is a two-story Greek Revival style home constructed in the 1830s on 116 acres of land. Col. George Waller gave the property to his daughter and her husband, Major John Redd. The house is located on the old Carolina Post Road, also known as the Great Wagon Road or the Stagecoach Road in what is now Stanleytown. Edgewood may have been used as an inn for travelers in the 1800s since it is near the Smith River and there was a place to ford the river nearby.

The house has been owned by eleven different families through the years. Dr. Leslie Faudree and his wife, Clarke, purchased Edgewood in 1946 and began extensive renovations in 1951, adding bathrooms, closets, a kitchen/laundry area, and a garage. Samuel and Carolyn Davis bought the house with 8.28 acres in 2003. The Davises embarked on a five-year restoration project. In 2007, the house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.





# 375 EDGEWOOD DRIVE

STONELEIGH



**GOV. THOMAS  
B. STANLEY**

From his position as a delegate in the General Assembly, Stanley rose through the ranks of the state Democratic party organization to become Speaker of the House of Delegates, a U.S. Congressman, and finally Governor of Virginia from 1954-58.

Stoneleigh, the former residence of Virginia Governor and Mrs. Thomas B. Stanley, is a distinguished example of the Tudor Revival Style.

The house was built in 1929-31 on a small hill amidst the rolling countryside of Henry County. The gardens at Stoneleigh, designed by E.S. Draper of North Carolina and later reworked by Charles Gillette of Richmond, are a tribute to the gardening efforts of Stanley's wife, the former Anne Pocahontas Bassett. The house and gardens have been restored and are being used for special events.

A pioneer furniture manufacturer, Thomas B. Stanley organized the Vaughan-Bassett Furniture Company before starting his own furniture factory at what is now Stanleytown in 1924. The completion of Stoneleigh signaled the end of Stanley's active business career and his entrance into the state political arena.



# 3289 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

JOHN D. BASSETT HIGH SCHOOL

The period following WWII posed a challenge to the public school system in Virginia as it struggled to meet the demands of an exploding population in the wake of budget and building constraints that dated back to WWI and during the Depression. There was a record rise in taxes, prices and wages. The teacher pool had been drained from the war years and potential new teachers lured away by more lucrative job opportunities in the industries that prospered after the war.

Many school buildings were either in disrepair, outdated or inadequate in size as capital outlay had been delayed. In addition to those challenges, new programs were being promoted following educational reform after WWI. These programs required specialized spaces such as gyms and libraries. Existing school buildings had to be upgraded to accommodate the changes.

In 1954, the Virginia Board of Education stated “no funds should be expended for extraneous ornamentation unless every desirable educational facility has been provided in the buildings.” Thus, the 1947-48 Bassett High School with its full complement of Georgian-Revival detailing marks the end of an era of school design.



The high school was converted to a middle school in 1979 and then closed in 2004 with school consolidation. It is now owned by EMI who has graciously made space in the school available for the community to use.





# 3536 FAIRYSTONE PARK HWY

## BASSETT TRAIN STATION

When the Norfolk and Western Railway opened its line in 1892, the Bassett train station became the hub of downtown life. Around it developed businesses dependent upon train transportation. During its first year, a total of 1,705 passengers arrived at the Bassett station, and 1,687 departed. Freight merchandise arriving that year totaled 208 tons, while outgoing shipments totaled 1,535 tons.

By the late 1920s, a total of six scheduled passenger trains a day stopped at Bassett. This station is the only combination passenger-freight depot still standing on the former N&W line through Martinsville and Henry County. The present depot replaced the first depot that burned in 1922. The last passenger trains between Roanoke and Winston-Salem came to an end in 1961 after 69 years of service to Bassett.

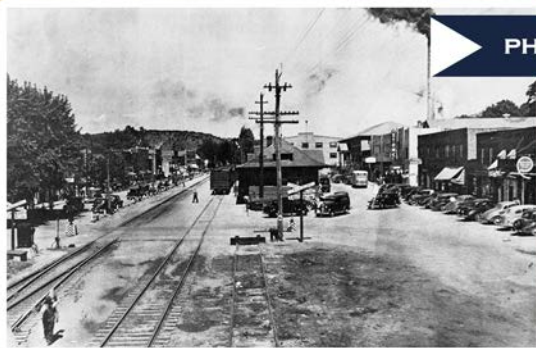


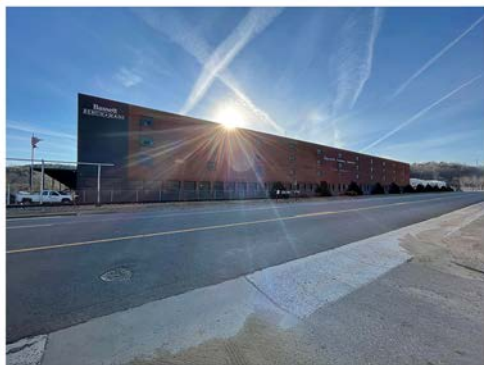
PHOTO OPP.





# 2600 FAIRYSTONE PARK HWY

## BASSETT FURNITURE INDUSTRIES



As the major employer in the town of Bassett, which developed on land once part of the family farm, the Bassett family was a generous supporter of the community, donating land for schools and parks. By 1917, sales at Bassett Furniture Company reached \$1 million, in spite of a disastrous fire that destroyed the plant.

The Bassett Furniture Company entered a period of expansion in the 1920s through acquisitions and diversification. In 1931, Bassett Furniture Industries was formed as an umbrella for the various companies. At the beginning of World War II, J.D. "Doug" Bassett, Jr. negotiated a contract to supply truck bodies for the military to ensure that the plants could continue to produce during the war.

The period after the war would prove to be the most productive for Bassett Furniture Industries as demand for furniture increased with the population growth of the baby boom and the associated increase in new home construction and suburban sprawl. This growth and prosperity, for both the furniture industry and the town of Bassett, continued through the end of the 20th century.

### DID YOU KNOW?

THE BASSETT FURNITURE INDUSTRIES BUILDING HAS SINCE BECOME HOME TO BASSETT BENCH<sup>®</sup> MADE WHICH PRODUCES HANDCRAFTED FURNITURE LIKE THOSE MADE BACK IN 1902.



# 7643 HENRY ROAD

OLD TURNER PLACE

The Old Turner Place is a fine example of a log hall-parlor plan house that was commonly built in southwestern Virginia until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It is a rare survivor that maintains the distinctive attributes of early American folk housing. Constructed sometime between 1783 and 1804, the Old Turner Place has continued to remain in possession of Turner family heirs to the present. The Turner family is descended from John Turner of Cornwall, England, who came to Tidewater Maryland in 1718 where he married Elizabeth Brashears. Their oldest son, Shadrack Turner, moved to Piedmont, Virginia with his bride and acquired extensive land holdings in the 1750s and 1760s.

By 1767, he owned over 4,000 acres including 800 acres on Town Creek. In 1776, the Town Creek lands became part of Henry County. Shadrack Turner provided supplies to the Henry County militia in 1777 and to the Virginia militia in 1783. A descendant, John Turner, moved to or built the log house around the time of his marriage to Nancy Burnett in 1804. He served as an ensign during the War of 1812. By 1820, he and Nancy had eight children and owned two slaves. In 1860, a nephew, Stephen Turner and his wife, Ruth, acquired the property. Life on the farm and elsewhere throughout Henry County and southwest Virginia was disrupted by the Civil War.

## DID YOU KNOW?

EIGHTEEN  
MEMBERS OF  
THE TURNER  
EXTENDED  
FAMILY SERVED  
IN THE CIVIL  
WAR. SEVEN  
DIED DURING  
THE WAR.





# 96 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

HORDSVILLE

Hordsville plantation was a property of more than 1,000 acres. The building of the house on the plantation was completed in 1836.

The first occupants were George Hairston, Jr. ("Old Rusty") and his wife, Louisa. "Old Rusty" graduated with a law degree from Princeton in 1805. He served in the Virginia Senate from 1817 to 1821.

He was the originator of the Smith River Navigation Company and Union Iron Works.

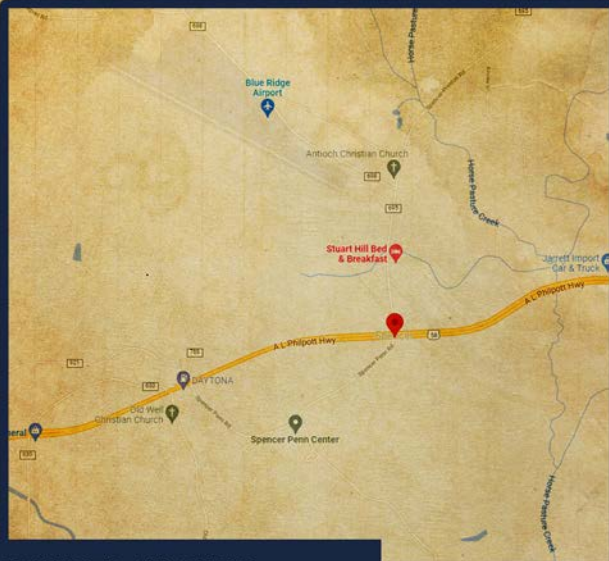


## DID YOU KNOW?

HORDSVILLE STAYED IN THE HAIRSTON FAMILY UNTIL THE DEATH OF MATTIE HAIRSTON IN THE 1960S







## SPENCER, VIRGINIA

Spencer is a community in Henry County that was named for an early settler, James Spencer, Sr. It was a bustling village when the Danville and Western railroad had a train station there. It was an important railroad station for tobacco distribution as well as the transport of needed materials for local residents. The Spencer family began both the Spencer Brothers Tobacco Company and D.H. Spencer and Sons Tobacco. They started their manufacturing operation of plug chewing tobacco in Spencer, then later in Danville, Martinsville and other locations.

At one time in Spencer, there was a post office, a physician's office, one church, one store in which townspeople did local shopping and some additional buildings. The region had a favorable climate and the Mayo River provided an ample water supply to run sawmills for lumber and gristmills to process grain into meal and flour for home use.



# 187 SPENCER PENN ROAD

GRASSDALE

Members of the Spencer family settled in present-day Henry County in the early 1780s. James Spencer, Sr. and son James, Jr. came from Loudoun County, Virginia. By 1783, James Jr., had obtained land on Horsepasture Creek and erected a house. A grandson of his, Daniel Harrison Spencer, later acquired the property in the immediate area in the mid-late nineteenth century and began to amass considerable wealth. The 1860 census stated his real estate holdings (some 2,400 acres) were worth \$50,000. He also owned forty-two slaves who worked mostly in tobacco cultivation, but also in producing other staple crops such as corn, wheat, rye and oats.

In the late 1850s, Spencer began large-scale production of plug tobacco at Spencer. By 1860, he and George Dillard operated the Spencer & Dillard Tobacco Factory, employing a crew of 28 men and 3 women, and producing 113,000 pounds of tobacco valued at \$27,300. Around this time, Spencer built his mansion on "Grassdale Farm."

The Civil War brought hard times for the farm and factory, but in 1869 Spencer's son, David William Spencer, supposedly took control of the company. D.H. Spencer maintained part of the business as a "farmer and merchant" who dealt in general merchandise. By 1874, the Spencer concerns were once again flourishing. A number of black people lived in the vicinity after the war and continued to work in tobacco production. During the early 1980s, the factory manufactured nine brands of chewing tobacco and was operated under the same name D.H. Spencer & Son.

## DID YOU KNOW?

IN 1870, A POST OFFICE OPENED WITH D.H. SPENCER'S SON PETER D. SPENCER AS ITS FIRST POSTMASTER.



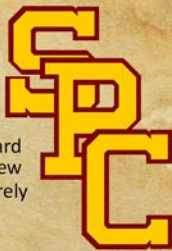
# 475 SPENCER ROAD

SPENCER-PENN SCHOOL

The Spencer-Penn School began as a 3-room frame schoolhouse in 1910. In 1926-27, a large Colonial Revival brick structure was erected as the main school building, while the frame building remained in use for a number of years. In 1935, a small cottage was built adjacent to the school for home economics classes. Later, the main (brick) building was outgrown and new wings were added to the side and rear.

Beginning in 2000, the Henry County School Board consolidated its schools into a smaller number of new facilities and abandoned the Spencer-Penn property entirely in 2002.

The school is now a community center offering educational, recreational and entertainment programming. The 1926 portion of the school has been rehabilitated to look more closely as it originally did.





# 2683 J.S. HOLLAND ROAD

KING HOUSE



## DID YOU KNOW?

LT. KING WAS A MEMBER OF THE 24TH VIRGINIA CAVALRY REGIMENT WHOSE ONLY DUTY WAS TO GUARD THE APPROACHES AND ROADS WHICH LED INTO THE CAPITAL OF THE SOUTH.

Although the current occupants are Darryl and Lillian Holland, the house is actually "The King House," built in the late 1830s by Camillus King. King is buried in the cemetery on the far side of the road, along with other members of the King family. According to the 1860 Census, the Kings were the owners of more than 100 slaves who helped run this grain and tobacco farm, and the servant cemetery is located on the distant hill you can see behind the house, overlooking Horsepasture Creek.

During the Civil War, Camillus' son, Thomas, was a lieutenant in the Confederate cavalry. King was captured and held as a prisoner of war by Union forces, a member of "the Immortal 600"--a group of 600 Southern officers sent to prison camp and held under fire in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. He was later transferred to Savannah, Georgia before being shipped back to Fort Delaware at war's end. Released from prison in 1865, Lieutenant King returned to Horsepasture and served as Commissioner of the Revenue for Henry County for a number of years. Thomas King's younger brother "Jent" King lived in the house with his family after the Civil War, and the land and house passed out of King family hands early in the 20th century.





## RIDGEWAY, VIRGINIA

Ridgeway was settled by large land owners who raised tobacco. During the 19th century, three tobacco factories were established in Ridgeway. When the Roanoke and Southern Railroad built their tracks through Ridgeway, it brought passenger and freight through the area and in the 1890s, the town of Ridgeway was incorporated. From 1899 until 1929, some of the trains brought passengers to the Phospholothia Springs which consisted of two sulphurous springs. Doctors endorsed the partaking of the waters from the springs as a cure for stomach, skin, kidneys, nervous system, rheumatism, gout, etc. A three-story resort hotel was built to provide guests a place for rest and entertainment. The hotel was razed in the 40s.

Another important business in the area was the mining of mica, a mineral containing silicon. It was indispensable in the manufacture of electronic, electrical and radar equipment from 1908 until the end of WWII in 1945. The southern part of Henry County was found to be rich in this mineral deposit and one of the largest pieces of mica ever mined anywhere in the world was dug from one of the Ridgeway mines. In 1947, Richard P. Gravely, Sr. came to Ridgeway and bought the Ridgeway Manufacturing Company to expand Gravely Novelty Furniture in Martinsville. By the 1960s, the company began producing floor, wall, and mantel clocks which were beautifully crafted clocks with imported works and chimes. Ridgeway Clocks became the world's largest producer of "grandfather" clocks.



# 1826 LEE FORD CAMP ROAD

MARROWBONE

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR

The first Hairston family home in Henry County was Marrowbone. It is thought to be one of the oldest houses in the county. Marrowbone was built in 1749 by Robert Hairston for his bride, Ruth Stovall. This was a grand house built with a curved stairway and ornamental woodwork while their neighbors lived in log cabins. Robert served in the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. The Hairstons had thirteen children.

Early Hairston land holdings were listed at 30,000 acres. Their oldest son, George, built Beaver Creek and increased his holdings by 230,000 acres. The house was extensively renovated in 1953. It continues to be a private residence.



## DID YOU KNOW?

MARROWBONE WAS LEFT TO THE OLDEST SON, GEORGE HAIRSTON. IT WAS PASSED ON FROM FATHER TO SON TO THE 5TH GENERATION OF GEORGE HAIRSTONS.





# 213 CHURCH STREET

THOMAS KING JONES, SR. HOUSE

The Thomas King Jones, Sr. house was built in 1901 by George O. Jones for his son, Thomas and his wife, Ethel.

The house is of Victorian architecture with a prominent high cone roof over an upstairs porch.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones lived their entire married life in the house and raised three children. Thomas King joined his father in the mercantile business, where he remained throughout his life.



PHOTO OPP.



It is said that Thomas King was present whenever the church doors of the Ridgeway Methodist Church were opened. What's more, he opened them.



# 3637 JOSEPH MARTIN HWY

BELLEVUE

HENRY COUNTY ★ DRIVING TOUR



Bellevue “Bellevue” was built in 1783 by John Redd. Major Redd (1755-1850) was a pioneer settler of what is now Henry County, becoming for a period of four decades, a member of that county's court. He served in the War for Independence, primarily on the frontier, participating in several actions directed against the Crown's Tory and Cherokee supporters, but also at the siege of Yorktown.

At the time of his death, Redd was related through marriage--his own and those of ten of his children and numerous grandchildren--to the region's most prominent families. He was buried in the graveyard at Bellevue, the estate he developed. Justice Kennon C. Whittle, fifth-great grandson of John Redd, and his wife acquired the property, 80 years after Redd's death, from their cousin, Patty Redd Walker.

Justice and Mrs. Whittle restored the residence during the mid-1950s. The house has superior interior woodwork: carved mantels, dentil molding, arched doorways, and wainscoting all original and well preserved. It enjoys a splendid view across a valley of gently rolling countryside, plowed fields, grass land, and fences with few, if any, visual intrusions on its historic aspect.

## DID YOU KNOW?

BELLEVUE CONTAINED A SAFE ROOM WITH A DOOR AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRCASE THAT COULD BE LOCKED TO PROTECT THE FAMILY FROM STRANGERS WHO MIGHT BE SPENDING THE NIGHT.





Martinsville-Henry County  
Heritage Center and Museum  
1 East Main Street  
Martinsville, VA

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 432 Martinsville, VA 24114

Hours of Operation  
Tuesday-Friday (1 to 4 p.m.)  
Or call for an appointment.

In the event of inclement weather, the Heritage Center & Museum  
may be closed. Please call before visiting.

Admission is free.

For more information, please call 276-403-5361  
<http://mhchistoricalsociety.com>

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