

CHAPTER 6.

WHAT ARE OUR HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES?

Floyd County is culturally rich, as evidenced in increased tourism and population. These cultural resources are both historic and contemporary.

Brief History of Floyd County (adapted from *Our Beautiful Mountain*, 2006)

According to tradition, present day Floyd County was among the first areas explored when Virginia Colonists began to push into the mountains of Virginia. In the mid-to-late 1600's, expeditions began to map the area that was then principally a hunting-grounds by Indians, including the Canawhay tribe. The first white settlements in the area occurred in the mid-18th century. By the 1790's, English, German, French, Scottish and Irish immigrants settled in what is now Floyd County. One of



the first industries, Spangler's Mill, was also established in this time period. Watermills such as this one continue to symbolize the resourcefulness of residents and the importance of natural resources and living in touch with the land.

Coming onto the crest in what is now Floyd County, settlers were often astounded by the natural beauty, particularly in the Spring when the Chestnut blooms made a sea of white. Writing of their new plateau homeland, they often referred to it as "our beautiful mountain."

Land in the southwest portion of the County that was ceded by the Cherokee Nation to the British in 1768 was, in turn, part of the large land grant made to Lighthorse Harry Lee, father of Robert E. Lee and Charles Carter Lee. The latter moved to the County and penned what is believed to be the first book written here, *The Maid of the Doe*. It was a book of poetry about the Revolutionary War. Part of that Lee property, Buffalo Mountain, is now a natural recreation area.

In 1831, Floyd County was established and was named for Governor John Floyd. Governor Floyd was a native of Montgomery County, the parent County of Floyd. Reflecting early and strong commitment to education in the community, the Jacksonville Academy was established in 1846. It served students from Floyd and surrounding counties. The

Jacksonville Academy was located in one of the two buildings that is now Schoolhouse Fabrics.



Schoolhouse Fabrics

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the local economy was dominated by agriculture. Textile manufacturing rose and fell during this time. The construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway during the

Great Depression brought some needed work to the County, and more importantly created a linear park and access way to introduce travelers to the arts, crafts and music of Floyd County. Mabry Mill, located in Floyd County, is one of the most visited and photographed sites along the 469-mile length of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Rocky Knob recreation area along the Parkway also features hiking, camping and panoramic views.

By the 1970's, Floyd County was "discovered" by the back-to-the-landers seeking rural refuge. Many of the new residents were artists or artisans. In Floyd County, they found a land of natural beauty, a unique geography with all waters flowing out, rich hand-craft and music traditions, and open opportunities for creative living. These same assets and the culture of creativity now attract many travelers to Floyd.

Thanks in part to the natural, cultural and technological amenities (see Citizens, local telecommunications cooperative), the population of Floyd County has increased considerably in the past two decades.

Historic Resources

Three organizations have done a great amount to preserve and share history: the Floyd County Historical Society, the Floyd County Preservation Trust and the Old Church Gallery. Current projects include the preservation of historic properties such as the Oxford Academy. Just last year, the Ridgemont Hospital-Marie Williams House at 217 North Locust Street opened as the Floyd County Historical Society Museum.



Ridgemont Hospital-Marie Williams House now serves as the new Floyd County Historical Society Museum. Photo courtesy of the Floyd County Historical Society.

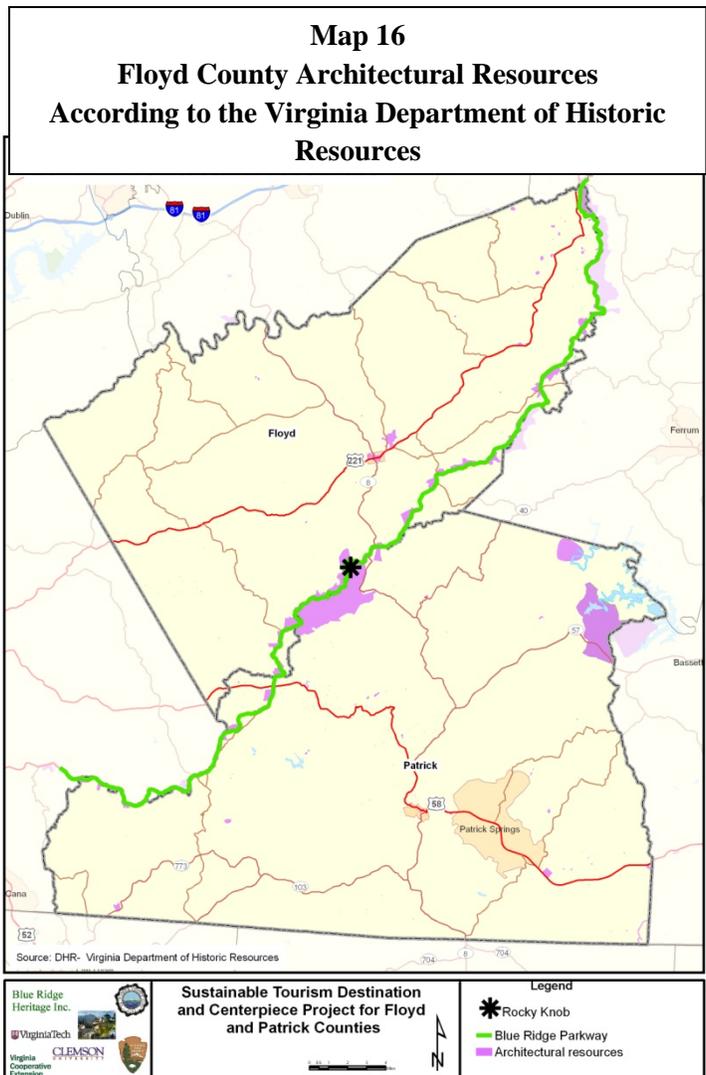
Several places in the County are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register or both (see Table 38). Additionally, the Town of Floyd has adopted an historic district.

Table 38
Floyd County Places on Historic Registers

Place	USGS Quad	Date Listed on Virginia Landmarks Register	Date Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
Floyd Presbyterian Church	Floyd	12-16-75	05/17/76
Zion Lutheran Church and Cemetery	Floyd	06-16-81	-----
Glenanna	Floyd	06-13-01	05/16/02
Phlegar House	Floyd	03-19-03	06/22/03
Floyd Historic District	Floyd	09-14-05	11/16/05
Rev. Robert Childress Rock Churches, MPD	3 counties	12/06/06	03/30/07
Slate Mountain Pres. Church and Cemetery (see also Rock Churches)	Willis	12-06-06	03/30/07
Willis Presbyterian Church and Cemetery (see also Rock Churches)	Willis	12-06-06	03/30/07
West Fork Furnace (44FD0048)	Willis	03/19/09	06-05-09
Oakdale	Endicott	12/17/09	03-17-10

Source: <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/RegisterMasterList.pdf>

Preliminary research suggests there are many other historic properties in the County (see Maps 16 and 17). For example, there are reported to have been well over a hundred watermills in Floyd County, several of which are still standing. An inventory of historic resources would help identify important properties before they are lost.



Map 17
Floyd County Archaeological Resources
According to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources



	<p align="center">Sustainable Tourism Destination and Centerpiece Project for Floyd and Patrick Counties</p> <p align="center">0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles</p> <p align="center">N</p>	<p align="center">Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rocky Knob Blue Ridge Parkway Archaeological resources
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Culture

Though increasingly diverse in population, Floyd County is still imbued with a strong sense of common values, very much like these identified by Loyal Jones in his article *Appalachian Values* in 1975:

- *Religion*
- *Individualism, Self-Reliance, and Pride (including freedom and “space and solitude”)*
- *Neighborliness and Hospitality*
- *Familism (“family-centered”)*
- *Personalism (“one of the main aims in life . . . is to relate well with others. We will go to great lengths to keep from offending others, even sometimes appearing to agree when we do not. . . . Appalachians respect others and are quite tolerant of differences.”)*
- *Love of Place*
- *Modesty*
- *Sense of Beauty*
- *Sense of Humor*
- *Patriotism*

At times, these values can be at odds, such as the desire for “space and solitude” and unlimited choices, or Love of Place and Personalism. That is, when neighbors can sell land for virtually any use or any density of development, the sense of place, freedom, space and solitude can be lost forever. Historically, the individualism, personalism and reticence to set “speed limits” on development have dominated County culture. With the pace of change in the past decade, though, most people who have weighed all sides thoughtfully, as evidenced in the community input rankings, are now ready for more reasonable limits to protect the farms, forests and waters of Floyd County.

Cultural Resources

Now, Floyd County is known for music, the arts, farms, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Childress Rock Churches, among other things. Yet, cultural resources are sometimes difficult to quantify.

It has been said that there may be more musicians per capita in Floyd County than in Nashville. There certainly are many music venues in the County, providing live music 5 days per week generally, not to mention special events and festivals. Much of the music is traditional mountain music, but there is also a variety of American roots and world music.

The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail has brought greater recognition to Floyd County's musical assets.



At left, Arthur Conner describes how he made the fiddle he is holding.

There are also many talented artists in the County, from woodworkers, metalsmiths, ceramists, painters, photographers, jewelry-makers to writers. The Jacksonville Center for the Arts, a local non-profit, promotes the arts as well as other rural, creative enterprises. Likewise, the Old Church Gallery is an important repository for local and regional arts, as are many individual studios and shops around the County. Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network also links visitors to artisans, farms, galleries and craft venues in Floyd County.



The Parkway itself records the history and culture of the Blue Ridge. One of the most frequently photographed cultural/historic assets in the United States is Mabry Mill, which is located on the Blue Ridge Parkway in the southwestern tip of Floyd County. During the early 20th century, the mill ground corn and buckwheat for surrounding farms as well as powered a lumber mill and woodworking shop. Over the past 200 years, there have been over 140 watermills in Floyd County (Cox 2010).

Several of the Childress

Churches, as written about in *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*, are in Floyd County. They are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Photo by Lee Chichester

Chapter 6.
What are our Historic and Cultural Resources?

Summary and Conclusion

- Traditional “Appalachian Values” such as Individualism and Love of Place are still present in the County, and sometimes conflicting.
- Historically, the Floyd Countians have favored individualism and personalism, but with the quickening pace of land development, most citizens who participated in this planning process now favor actions to protect this place they love, especially farms, forests and water resources.
- Floyd County has a wealth of cultural and historic resources.
- Several non-profits are working to preserve and share historic resources including through a new museum.
- The Town of Floyd has adopted a historic district.
- A historical places inventory of the County is needed to help identify and prioritize key historical places.
- Several non-profits are working to promote cultural resources, which are also important to the people and economy of Floyd County.

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