Preservation in Louisa County

*John Farmer*

**Archaeologists Survey Mining Sites:** Dr. Benjamin Ford and an archaeologist from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) will identify and survey early mining sites in Louisa County between the Town of Mineral and Lake Anna. Funded jointly by VDHR, Louisa County, the Town of Mineral and the Louisa County Historical Society, the project will include visits to and photo documentation of 25 mining and industry sites identified by a citizens steering committee. Several of the sites will then be selected for further study. The fieldwork is scheduled for completion in early spring. A final document recording the results of the work and a scripted slide show will be presented to the County later this year.

**Comprehensive Plan:** Beginning with a Vision Forum in the spring of 1999, the Louisa County Comprehensive Plan translates a vision of rural character into an active plan for the future. In so doing, it asks Louisa County citizens to remember why they came here or, having roots here, why they stayed. Preserving rural character was addressed by most of the Task Forces organized to write sections of the Plan. Each Task Force was composed of a cross-section of Louisa citizens who volunteered to work with the County Planning Office and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. Particularly noteworthy is the participation of people from the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District. Every Task Force had at least one person from Green Springs as an active member. Historic preservation was an obvious interest but not to the exclusion of land use, growth management, economic development, education, water/sewer and other areas. The residents of Green Springs are well-known for their preservation activities, but by participating in every phase of the Comprehensive Plan they have shown their concern for the health, safety and well-being of the entire county.

**Power Plant:** The Louisa County Planning Commission recommended rezoning 92 acres of agricultural land to allow construction and operation of an electrical power plant near the Town of Gordonsville. The Louisa site is in close proximity to the Albemarle County and Orange County lines. The Planning Commission’s decision was opposed by Tri-County Citizens for Preservation who submitted over 800 signatures in opposition. Opposition to the plant is based on issues of air pollution, water usage, visual impact and impact on one of the nation’s most historic areas. The rezoning request was considered and approved by the Louisa County Board of Supervisors on March 6, 2000. On April 15 a group of 18 Louisa County landowners filed a lawsuit against Old Dominion Electric.

Challenges, 2000

*Ashlin Smith*

The year 2000 is bringing great challenges to preservationists in the Piedmont. One urgent task at hand is in Charlottesville where two buildings on the 100 block of East Main Street could be demolished by this summer. The board of Preservation Piedmont considers the future of the entire downtown mall to be endangered if demolition is approved within this local, state and national historic district.

We will continue to participate in the Charlottesville Albemarle Courts Study community dialogue and begin work with the city Planning Commission to improve recognition of archaeological resources and their management as part of the city’s responsibility to protect its cultural history. Preservation Piedmont is also gathering support for the proposed Historic Preservation Plan of Albemarle County before it comes before the Planning Commission later this Spring.

Our organization will reach out more to other neighboring counties in order to learn about their preservation efforts and offer support as needed. So far there are strong contacts with Greene, Fluvanna and Louisa counties.

Ideas and help from membership will always be welcome. These are just some of the challenges as we endeavor to make preservation of our built environment and its setting a sensible and creative alternative for the future.

See Louisa on page 2.
Protecting Historic Resources in a Changing County

Helena Devereux

Did you know that Albemarle County, with its rich history and its hundreds of architectural treasures, does not have an historic preservation plan? This might change in the near future. Sometime in late April or in May the Albemarle County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed Historic Preservation Plan, which offers a blueprint for the preservation of the County’s significant historic buildings and communities. If adopted, the Plan will become part of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. An Historic Preservation Ordinance creating historic overlay districts to protect hundreds of historic properties and archaeological sites will be considered at a later date, after the Plan has been adopted.

The proposed Plan was developed by the county’s Historic Preservation Committee which was appointed in 1995. W. James Eddins, acting spokesman for the Committee, presented the Plan to the County Board of Supervisors in the Fall of 1999. The Committee’s efforts (but not the Plan) were unanimously endorsed by the Supervisors and the Plan was passed on to the County Planning Commission. There have been two work sessions on the Plan, and some changes have been made. The next step in this long process will be the public hearing before the Planning Commission.

Anyone interested in seeing a copy of the Plan can obtain one from the Albemarle County Planning Department (296-5823) for $3.00, or can read it on the County’s website at www.albemarle.org.

The Plan has been described as moderate in tone. For example, it does not require that exterior painting of an historic building be approved by the Architectural Review Board. It also does not require that landowners maintain historic properties. It does, however, require approval from the ARB before demolition of an historic building can take place.

The Plan recommends objectives, strategies and specific heritage protection measures and includes a strong emphasis on education. Some highlights include recommendations to:

- create a permanent Historic Preservation Committee to provide assistance and advice to landowners,
- amend the zoning regulations to facilitate the productive re-use of historic structures,
- obtain enabling authority from the General Assembly to authorize the County to establish a revolving loan fund to assist landowners with repairs,
- enact an ordinance allowing a partial local real estate tax abatement for the rehabilitation of older properties,
- inform new owners of the historic significance of their property, and to
- inform the public about tax incentives for rehabilitation and preservation.

Watch for the announcement of the date of the public hearing! Albemarle County residents are urged to talk to their Supervisor in support of this important historic preservation plan.

Louisa continued

Cooperative and the Board of Supervisors. The Piedmont Environmental Council (P.O. Box 266, Orange, VA 22960) will accept tax-deductible contributions to fund the fight against the ODEC power plant.

Vermiculite: The Federal District Court in Charlottesville has before it a $20 million suit filed by Virginia Vermiculite Ltd. against W.R. Grace & Co. and Historic Green Springs, Inc. Property owned by W.R. Grace & Co. was given to Historic Green Springs, Inc. and accepted with the condition that it would not be strip-mined for vermiculite. The gift by Grace to the non-profit organization gave rise to a lawsuit where both parties stand accused of engaging in an antitrust conspiracy. A trial before Judge James H. Michael could be scheduled in May. Friend of the court briefs may be filed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Land Trust Alliance. The National Park Service opposes mining in the District and has determined that the “historic integrity of the District has been destroyed in part because the long term continuity of agricultural land use has been irreparably lost with the introduction of mining.” The Secretary of the Interior issued a determination in 1974 stating that the Green Springs district is of “national historic significance” and classified it as a National Historic Landmark. Such a determination puts the Louisa County properties on par with just under 2,200 landmarks throughout the United States. The issue has attracted national attention and was written up by The New York Times in its front-page section on February 20, 2000.

Welcome to New Members

Preservation Piedmont welcomes new members John Conover, Mr. and Mrs. James B. Murray, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Saunier, Sue Howland and Groke Mickey.
Fluvanna Groups Encourage Preservation

The Fluvanna County Historical Society is now distributing its booklet, *Preservation: The Key to Keeping Our County Rural*, written and illustrated by Ellen Miyagawa. It was discussed at the Second Fluvanna Heritage Forum last November. Deborah Murdock, past president of Preservation Piedmont and current chair of the Fluvanna County Historical Society’s Preservation Committee, was a panelist at the forum.

Several preservation organizations in the county are in the process of setting up a Fluvanna Heritage website. It will provide information about the Historical Society and its booklet, the Fluvanna Heritage Trail, the Rivanna Conservation Society and the Fluvanna Heritage Forum.

The preservation booklet can be obtained now by calling Deborah Murdock at 804-589-3083.

**Correction**

The Thomas Jefferson Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, not the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, presented its annual awards last November to James B. Murray, Jr., to the Madison County Historical Society, and to the Greene County Architectural Survey Group.

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**Preservation Piedmont Membership Form**

Name: ____________________________________________

Street: ___________________________________________

City, State, Zip: __________________________________

Phone: __________________________ Email: _______

The year shown on the mailing label indicates the calendar year for which your dues have been paid. If not ‘00, your dues were due on January 1, 2000. If your membership has expired, please renew it now to ensure that you receive future mailings.

___ Student $5  ___ Individual $10  ___ Family $20  ___ Patron $100  ___ Life $300

___ Non-Profit Organization $25  ___ Business $50  ___ Business Patron $300

___ New Member  ___ Membership Renewal

Please make dues payable to Preservation Piedmont and mail to

Preservation Piedmont
P.O. Box 2803
Charlottesville, VA 22902

We Need Your Support! Please Join Today! Thank You!
Sources of Information about Regional Heritage and Preservation

Fluvanna House Tour (April 29)
The biennial Fluvanna House Tour, sponsored by the Fluvanna County Historical Society and the Fluvanna Garden Club, will be held on Saturday, April 29, 2000, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This year’s tour will feature nineteenth-century structures in the Fork Union area including private residences, churches, and several Fork Union Military Academy buildings. Block tickets are $10 in advance and $12 at the door. Box lunches ($7 each) will be served at the Fork Union Baptist Church from 11:30 to 2:30. Lunch tickets must be reserved and paid for by April 21. For information call 804-842-3421.

Historic Court Square Enhancement Project (May 10)
Starting at 6:30 p.m., the public is invited to tour the Court Square area with assistance from committee guides who will be stationed at important sites. A presentation of the Enhancement Plan will begin in the County Courthouse at 7:00 p.m.

Charlottesville Albemarle Courts Study (May 11)
Phase II, Developing Scenarios, Circuit Court, 6:30 p.m.

Orange County African-American Historical Society Established
This past February, the Orange County African-American Historical Society was established to research, identify, preserve, and support historical sites, accomplishments, and contributions of people of African descent, and to educate the public about this part of our heritage. For more information, contact Rebecca Gilmore Coleman, President (tel: 540-672-4896, email: rcoleman@ns.gemlink.com).