

■ DOWN HOME SERIES

Again in the year 2011, we're making our way around the region, each issue visiting a small town and meeting some of the folks who make up the heart of electric co-op country.

On this seventh stop, we'll be ...



DOWN HOME IN

RUSTBURG

by Tucker McLaughlin, Jr.,
Contributing Writer
Photos by Randy Holmes

Nestled in the foothills of the picturesque Blue Ridge Mountains, the community of Rustburg has evolved from a one-stoplight town into a vibrant part of Campbell County.

Rustburg serves as the county seat, the nerve center for the county government. It's home to the Sheriff's Department and other important organizations, such as the circuit court system. This small community has many sources of pride, including Rustburg High School, home of the Red Devils, and the relatively new Rustburg Elementary School.

The Campbell County Citizen Services building (below) and the county courthouse (right) are located in Rustburg, which serves as the county seat.

Retail and commercial development appear to be elevated in recent years, although this Central Virginia community has had to deal with the frustrating impact of the national economic slowdown.

There's much to appreciate in the area. Rustburg is convenient to historic Appomattox Courthouse. The region has

special significance this year, with the nation remembering the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. At Appomattox in April 1865, the nation began to heal its wounds with Confederate General Robert E. Lee's surrender to Union General Ulysses Grant.

Rustburg is about 10 minutes away from Lynchburg, Virginia's Hill City, providing a host of opportunities and activities, including outstanding cultural, historical, educational and recreational opportunities.

The region features a bounty of harvest products, wineries and vineyards, classic festivals of all shapes and sizes, stunning recreational opportunities at nearby Smith Mountain Lake, and much more.

Taking a wider scope, visitors flock to the area from all over the U.S. for the glorious burst of fall foliage famous in this region, especially on the Blue Ridge Parkway.



A SPECIAL APPRECIATION

Greg Walker is a local businessman with a special appreciation for Rustburg, since he and his wife chose to raise their family here.

Walker is the vice-president and general manager of Fellers Chevrolet. He and his wife, Lynette, and their four sons — Richard (30), Philip (28), Chris (18), and Josh (16), — have balanced school and work, family life, Walker's passion for Virginia Tech athletics and much more. The family has lived in Rustburg for 12 years.

"There are a number of nice homes to choose from and plenty of land for our boys to be boys. The community is quiet



AT A GLANCE ...

POPULATION: 1,355

ORIGINS: Rustburg was established in 1780 and was named after Jeremiah Rust, who donated 50 acres of land for the new county seat.

ELEVATION: 900 feet

FACTOID: Rustburg was once an incorporated town and had a mayor; however, because the townspeople did not want to pay a town tax in addition to state and federal taxes, the town dissolved its charter.



1. Rustburg Elementary School is just one of several sources of community pride. **2.** While Rustburg is near major shopping outlets in Lynchburg, it also has its own retail amenities within the village itself. **3.** The public library is an important educational outlet available to citizens in and around the Rustburg community. **4.** A strong sports tradition is central to the Rustburg community's rhythm of life, from Dixie Youth Baseball to the Rustburg Red Devils public-school teams.

and most people go about their business at their own speed. The county offices are here so there is activity, but not so much that it can bother you.

"We can easily get to Lynchburg or Smith Mountain Lake for all kinds of activities. The youth sports programs are very popular in Rustburg.

"The Dixie Youth baseball facility at Kelly Field is very nice and has had up to 450 boys and girls in the program. There is also football, basketball, soccer and softball.

"Many parents get involved. It is great family fun. There are all walks of life in Rustburg. My experience with most residents has been in youth sports," says Walker.

Walker and his family have also been grateful for the community spirit.

"I have been very impressed with the generosity of most, with the time they give and

anytime there was a tournament or some kind of travel a team needed money for, it was easily found," he notes.

Albert Randolph, an education professional, appreciates Rustburg for its convenience to Lynchburg and the surrounding areas, its opportunities for employment, and its other advantages.

Randolph lives in the Rustburg community on Bear Creek Rd. and commutes daily to South Boston, where he serves as principal at Halifax County High School.

Randolph sees advantages to living in Rustburg.

"Neighbors are very friendly. They are really receptive whenever there's an emergency in the community," he notes.

Randolph cites another asset of the Rustburg community, noting that compre-

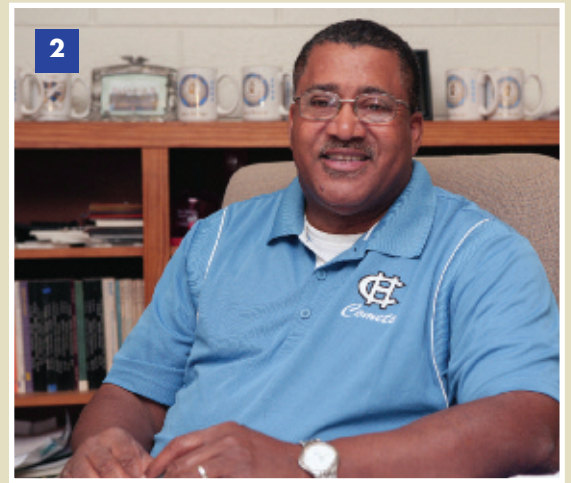
hensive hospital and medical care are only about 10 minutes away.

THE VALUE OF A GOOD LIBRARY

Another prominent Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, appreciated the value of a good library, and Rustburg is blessed in this department. On a recent Thursday morning, the library here was teeming with kids and their parents.

Shelley Oakley, public services librarian for the Campbell County system, explains the library's appeal and educational value for people of all ages.

"The Campbell County Public Library System serves the community with four locations throughout the county. The Rustburg location, the Campbell County Public Library, serves as the main library and offers services for citizens of all ages.



1. Local business owner Connie McMichael came to Rustburg in 1999, when there was a single stoplight in the community. She says the town has grown, but is still small enough that “you can get to know pretty much everybody.” **2.** Albert Randolph is principal of Halifax County High School but calls Rustburg home. **3.** Shelley Oakley is public services librarian for the Campbell County Public Library in Rustburg, a vital part of the community. **4.** After a 20-year career as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army, Jeri Rodriguez left the hustle and bustle of Northern Virginia to live in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Rustburg. **5.** Greg Walker, vice president and general manager of Fellers Chevrolet, and his wife Lynette chose Rustburg as the community in which to raise their family. **6.** Patrick Shuler is the new athletic director at Rustburg High School. **7.** These grandstands fill on autumn Friday nights as fans gather to cheer-on the Rustburg Red Devils.

"Programs such as Babygarten, Preschool Storytime, Teen Afternoons, and specific events are scheduled for area youth. Programs and services for adults include book clubs, reader's advisory, genealogy research, computer literacy, Health Information Advocacy, adult literacy and summer reading programs for all ages. Special Family Fun Nights throughout the year provide an opportunity for the public to visit the library after hours for special events and/or dinner or refreshments," Oakley says.

"The Friends of the Library sponsors Needlework Tuesdays and monthly Senior Bingo as well, in addition to other special events. Additional services are available on the library website, www.campbellcountylibraries.org, and include things such as computer tutorials, test-preparation classes, and downloadable ebooks and audiobooks. Library membership is free to all," Oakley notes, via email.

Education is a key component of the quality of life in Rustburg, with three schools — Rustburg Elementary, Rustburg Middle and Rustburg High School — all located here.

STILL SMALL, BUT GROWING

Most everybody in the community knows local businesswoman Connie McMichael. She is the owner of Connie's, Inc., a hair-and-nail salon. She has been here for approximately 11 years. She moved here in 1999.

"It's a small town, where you can get to know pretty much everybody. And I'm fairly well-known in the town — if you mention Connie, pretty much 90 percent of the people here can tell you where I'm at.

"As far as things to do here, it's still a pretty small town. There's not a lot to do in Rustburg, but Lynchburg is close, Roanoke is convenient and so is Richmond," says McMichael.

"It's grown. When I moved here, there was only one traffic light. There are now three. The town's growing," says the local businesswoman.

One of her frequent customers is Jeri Rodriguez, who retired here from Northern Virginia. She had a 20-year career as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army.

She moved to the Rustburg area in 2006 to escape Northern Virginia's

congestion. She lives about four miles from the village proper.

"The traffic up there is horrendous. It was so much more pleasant down here, and quiet. The people are a lot friendlier," she explains.

She appreciates the lifestyle advantages, especially with Lynchburg so close. She takes a variety of classes at the YMCA in Lynchburg.

She also sings in the choir for the New Castle Baptist Church in Rustburg, and appreciates the relaxing pace of life here.

RED DEVILS RULE!

Nothing is more appreciated in the Rustburg community than a Red Devils victory.

Patrick Shuler, the new athletic director at Rustburg High School — home of the Red Devils — chose to move back to Virginia after his college days at the University of Wyoming.

Shuler graduated from Brookville High School, and is originally from Campbell County. After college, he taught and coached at Martinsville High School, where he helped with the wrestling and junior varsity football teams. He was drawn to Rustburg High School.

"It's a solid school, with hard-working, hard-nosed kids. They make for good athletes, they work hard, they usually have good character. And they don't usually quit. They follow through with their commitments, all the things that basically make a good athlete," says the new athletic director.

Rustburg High School has a long-standing, proud tradition of avid community support and boasts many academic achievements.

"The school is really the center, the lifeblood of the community, and it wants the school to be successful, the athletics programs to be successful, and the community is behind the high school. They've got a lot of pride," says Shuler.

The first Rustburg High varsity football game is coming soon, after a pair of scrimmages.

Rustburg hosts William Campbell in the Red Devils' 2011 opener on Aug. 26, with Labor Day and another cycle of autumn activities on the way in the life of this down-home Central Virginia community. ■



Campbell County Historic Courthouse Museum

IF YOU GO...

The folks in Rustburg are working

to preserve local history, with noteworthy efforts underway by the Campbell County Historical Society.

Rustburg features the **Historic Courthouse Museum**, located in the center of the business district at 774 Village Highway. The museum is located in the old courthouse, built in 1848. The museum promotes a variety of themes, including recent exhibits on early education in Campbell County and Campbell County citizens in World War II.

To contact the museum for an appointment to tour the lovely old courthouse and to check out a wide selection of Campbell County Memorabilia, please write the Campbell County Historic Museum, P.O. Box 595, Rustburg, VA 24588. For more information, please contact Rob Merryman at (434) 821-1681.

The Rustburg area features a number of family-friendly restaurants, including **La Carretta's**, featuring authentic Mexican dishes with several locations near the community.

There are three popular destinations for patrons looking for different meal options in Rustburg. Those include **The Courthouse Cafe**, with homestyle country cooking; **Napoli's**, featuring Italian-style dinners and specials; and **Star East Chinese Restaurant**, featuring Chinese specialties.

Rustburg is close to Lynchburg, which provides a wide variety of cultural, athletic, artistic and educational opportunities. One of the most popular and unique venues near Rustburg is the **LaHaye Ice Center**. The ice center is located just off Rt. 460 in Lynchburg, at the entrance of Liberty University. It offers a variety of activities with a sparkling indoor facility available to the public year-round.

Rustburg is a popular bedroom community for the Lynchburg area. There are a number of interesting historical attractions nearby, including **Appomattox Courthouse**, which features very important historical displays remembering the surrender of the Confederate forces in April 1865 to Union forces; Red Hill, the last home of Virginia patriot Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, designed as a retreat from the bustling activity at Monticello for Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson passed through Rustburg on many occasions on the way to this magnificent Virginia landmark, according to local historical sources.

For more information, please visit the Campbell County website, www.co.campbell.va.us. ■