

greetings from

STICKLEYVILLE, VA

Off the
Wilderness Road
in far southwest
Virginia



Country stores are a big part of any small community's life. Over the years, Stickleyville was blessed with country stores spread throughout the community. Most people had to walk, and having these stores nearby made life easier.

Stickleyville, Virginia

A good place to visit when you're on your way to someplace else.

Most folks traveling the Wilderness Road in far southwest Virginia on their way to destinations in Virginia, Tennessee or Kentucky will zip right through Stickleyville.

The little community lies nestled in the lush valley between Powell Mountain and Wallen's Ridge in Lee County, Virginia, an area steeped in history.

Stickleyville is largely an agrarian community producing corn, tobacco, hay and cattle. Back in the day dairy farming was another source of income, as was moonshining.

At present there are two stores, one with a deli, groceries and gasoline; the other, a variety store with fresh produce. Storeowners Tammy Hinkle and Sandra Parsons enjoy serving the needs of their neighbors and patrons. Residents are blessed with a volunteer fire department that also serves as the polling place in elections. The fire department has 20 to 22 members who serve the community and assist neighboring departments. There are two community centers — one located on the second floor of the fire department and the other at the school.

Churches of various denominations are scattered throughout the valley. A

child-care agency known as Harvest Child Care Ministries was established in 1993. Bill's Junk Yard is a place where you can sell metal items such as old cars.

Sisters Ruby Cox and Margaret Sage, ages 86 and 82 respectively, have visited the nearby nursing home on a weekly basis for 34 years since its inception in March of 1982, providing snacks, toiletry items, stuffed toys and games for its residents. Ladies in the community perform an invaluable service to the residents when someone loses a loved one. Arrangements are made to have food prepared, delivered and set up for the family after the service, followed by cleanup and returning of serving dishes. The community center at the fire department is available, at no charge, if a place larger than the home is needed. Stickleyville Community-in-Action Inc. provides the paper products and tableware for these events.

STEEPED IN HISTORY

Stickleyville was named for Vastine Stickley (Stoekli), 1812-1855, a descendant of Tobias Stoekli, a prominent German settler of the Shenandoah Valley. Vastine married Elizabeth Duff (1823-1856),



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daughter of Joseph Duff, a member of the pioneer Duff family.

Vastine was injured in a dynamite explosion at the area known as “Big Bend” on Powell Mountain while supervising work on the Fincastle Road. According to tradition, a rock struck his head following a blast, a gold coin was inserted to lift up the skull, and he was transported to Richmond, Virginia, for medical help.

He died Nov. 6, 1855, and is buried in a sarcophagus in a small cemetery on the Kane Gap Road on property formerly owned by the Duffs and more recently the Hagan Hughes family. Mr. Stickley’s young children were listed in a Lee County census as living in the home of their Duff grandparents. The youngest child, Vastine Jr., was born the following year, the same year the mother Elizabeth died. The cause of her death is unknown.

Powell Mountain was named for Ambrose Powell, who came with Dr. Thomas Walker and his party in 1750 to explore and survey the region of southeast Kentucky for the Loyal Land Company, which had received a royal grant of 800,000 acres. Powell Mountain is a ridge

that curves to form a fishhook shape near the Kane Gap, where Daniel Boone came through in 1769 on his way to Kentucky. His 16-year-old son James was killed by Cherokee and Shawnee Indians near there in 1773, along with Henry Russell, and brothers John and Richard Mendenhall, as they attempted to settle in Kentucky, the Gateway to the West.

Wallen’s Ridge was named for Elisha Wallen, one of the longhunters who traveled through this area in 1761. The pioneers initially traveled trails carved out by buffalo that visited the salt lick in nearby Blackwater as well as paths used by the Indians. On March 10, 1775, Daniel Boone, with the help of 30 axe men, was to select the most direct route from existing trails and blaze that trail from the Holston Valley to the Kentucky River through 200 miles of wilderness. The Scott, Allen and Stout way stations provided resting places for pioneers and stagecoach travelers as they traveled along the Wilderness Road on their way to Kentucky.

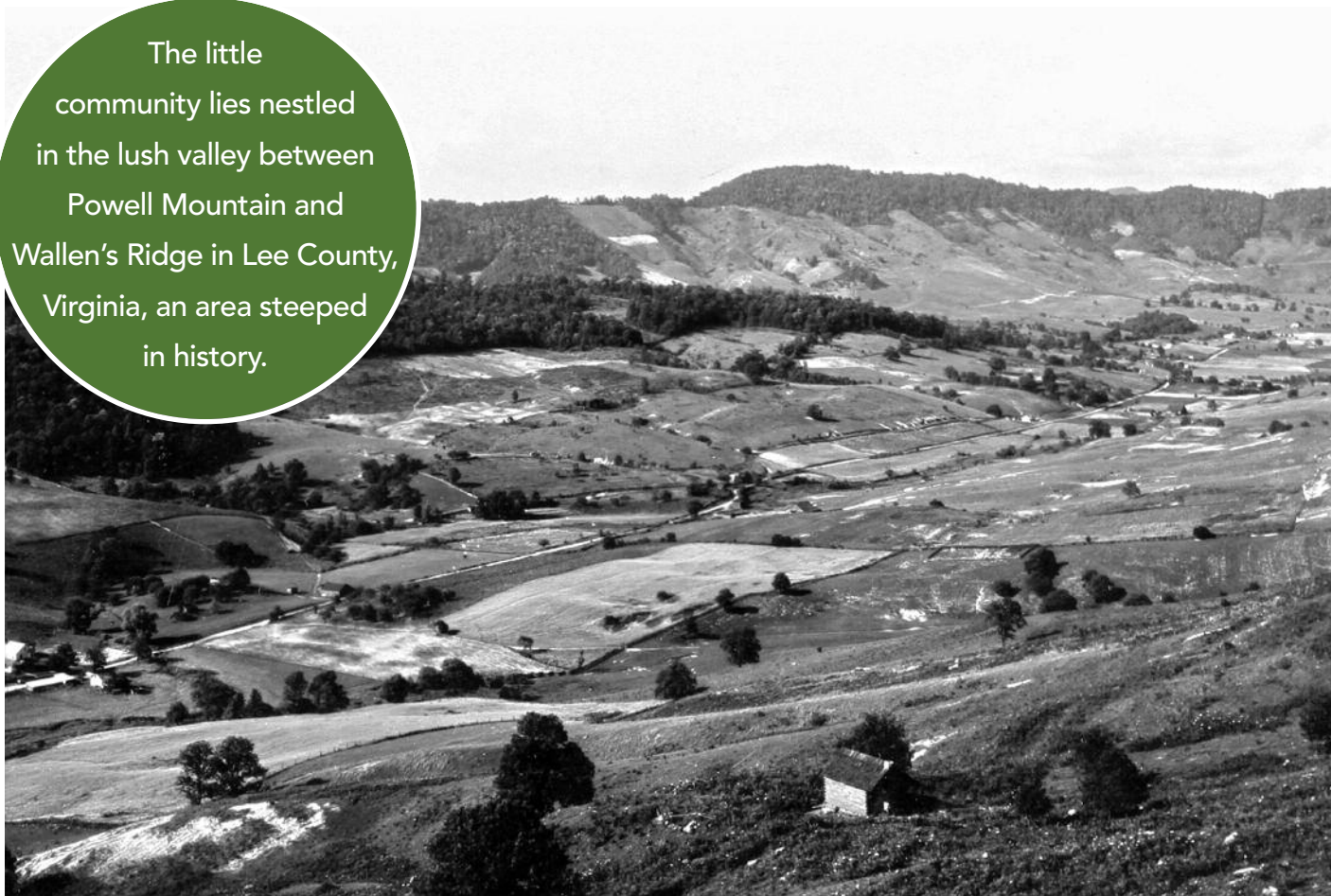
During the Civil War the old Fincastle Road was used by Union and Confederate troops alike. On July 7, 1862, a band of

Southern guerillas known as “Witcher’s Boys” captured 30 or 40 men they believed to be Union sympathizers, one of whom was John Davis Sage. They were taken to a log structure called Blue Springs Church, only a few hundred yards from Sage’s birthplace. Witcher’s Boys barricaded all windows and the door, imprisoning them for the night.

Two of the smaller prisoners managed to escape by lifting a loose puncheon in the floor and squeezing themselves through the opening, crawling from under the floor into the shadows of surrounding willow and sycamore saplings at the rear of the old church. The escape infuriated their captors and under heavy guard, the remaining prisoners were taken eastward to the south side of Powell Mountain and brutally slain, one by one.

One of the captors was hanged, not in the normal fashion but tied to a bent sapling and flung into eternity. Sage was decapitated. As soon as friends and relatives dared, his body was recovered, identified by undergarments his wife had improvised of bed ticking. Some of these men are buried in the Duff Cemetery in Stickleyville.

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THE HISTORY OF STICKLEYVILLE SCHOOL

Not until 1869 did the state of Virginia provide a general system of public schools in each county of the Commonwealth. Since this was during the years of Reconstruction after the Civil War of 1861-1865, the first head of Virginia schools, William Henry Ruffner, found it difficult to finance public schools. Often it was necessary to open them in area churches and log cabins. At first the schools were in session only four and a half months annually. Teachers were scarce and textbooks unavailable in many cases.

Superintendent of schools was James H. Graham of the Rocky Station District. The county on the whole possessed a remarkable record for pioneering in education, with the old Jonesville Institute, Lee Baptist Institute at Pennington Gap, and the Seminary near the home of the Slemple family in Turkey Cove — all predecessors of later public schools.

Some families of the Rocky Station District enrolled their sons and daughters in a subscription school at Tradesville in the present area of Woodway. During the 1880s, classes were conducted below

Stickleyville in the old log church known as Banner's Chapel. The father of Bonnie Ball (author of *Stickleyville — Its Early History, People, And Schools* from whose book this information is provided), attended school there under the instruction of W.E. (Bud) Fletcher.

It is assumed that the Stickleyville School was one of the public schools listed in an 1884-'85 *Virginia Gazette* statistical report on Lee County schools. Its building materials were similar to those used in the Blue Springs Church erected in the 1880s. This old school stood near what became the home plate of a fine baseball field that opened in 1910. The property adjoined a little stream on the east and south, known as Dry Creek, and also the land of Smyth and Evaline Stout. It is likely that the grounds were sold, or donated, to the district board by the Stouts.

A large rectangular building, it was constructed entirely of native timber. It faced west toward the old Fincastle Road. The school, which was ungraded, had pew-like seats that would accommodate at least five or six children per seat, with the boys and girls segregated. Between them were two wood-burning stoves that were

surrounded by groups of benches, used during the winter months for recitation and for warming cold hands and feet.

In 1909-1910 a new, two-story school was erected that included a high school department. Tradition has it that Granville C. Duff of the pioneer Duff family deeded the property and accepted in payment only a large plug of tobacco. The old school was carefully dismantled, and the materials were used to construct a boarding house near the school for students who lived too far away to commute on foot or horseback. In 1937 the high school department was discontinued, and its students were transferred to Pennington High School. From that time on it was known as Stickleyville Elementary School.

A new building was built in 1954 at a cost of \$141,000. The building, in use through 2012, was a single-story, brick structure with an office, library, seven classrooms and a gym that also served as a cafeteria. A mobile unit housing the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes was added near the east side of the building.

A new addition to provide a separate dining room for students, faculty and staff was constructed in 2006 on the south end



The Community of Stickleyville



Community snapshots (clockwise, from upper left): residents are blessed with a volunteer fire department; the Stickleyville School Community Center Association group; historic Blue Springs Church; the Stickleyville Community-in-Action board, which seeks to provide wholesome activities and opportunities to enhance quality of life.

of the building at a cost of \$374,021. During the 2008-2009 school term, the library and computer lab were housed in this space with the dining room relocated in the former library. The school was complemented with a large playground and playing field and an outdoor pavilion built by members of Stickleyville Community-in-Action, Inc.

The Lee County Board of Education closed the school the summer of 2012, after the school term had ended. A farewell party, initiated by Principal Mary Ruth Laster and sponsored through the generosity of family and friends, was held for students, faculty and staff so they could say goodbye. It was a sad day for everyone. The "hub" of the community was gone.

COMMUNITY COMPONENTS

Over the years, Stickleyville was blessed with country stores spread throughout the community. Most people had to walk, and having these stores nearby made life easier. Some of the store owners who provided this convenience were Bob Tomlinson, Rhea Rasnic, Lewis Robinette, James Stout, Tyler Mullins, Walter Young, Lelia Stidham and Howard Edwards.

Children were always happy to carry heavy sacks home because they were given a piece of stick candy as a reward. Feed sacks, which came in a variety of printed material, were used to make dresses for young girls and shirts for boys. Most food was raised at home and usually only staples were purchased. These included items such as sugar, coffee, kerosene (coal oil), matches, tobacco, OCB cigarette papers, and an occasional battery for the radio, to name a few. Patrons traded eggs, herbs such as lobelia (Indian tobacco), ginseng and catnip, and possum and polecat hides for goods.

One might catch a game of checkers going on around a potbellied stove or a

game of Rook in the back of the store. During World War II, war-rationing stamps were awarded to families to purchase needed goods. The community had three grist mills that were owned by Samp Sage, Lewis Robinette and Bill Lawson for grinding corn and wheat for cornmeal and flour.

Stickleyville Community-in-Action, Inc. (S.C.I.A.), was organized in 1998 to serve the people of Stickleyville by providing wholesome activities and opportunities to enhance the quality of life of its residents. The organization contributes morally and financially in supporting the community of Stickleyville while serving as a voice for its residents. The group also continues the tradition of Rook playing by sponsoring monthly tournaments with players coming from several states.

Stickleyville School Community Center Association (SSCCA) was organized in 2013 to preserve the school and its memories and holds meals each month as a fund-raiser. It also rents the school for family reunions, meetings and events. Some of SSCCA's other activities include a Haunted House on Saturdays in October and a Christmas Bazaar and yard sales. ■

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