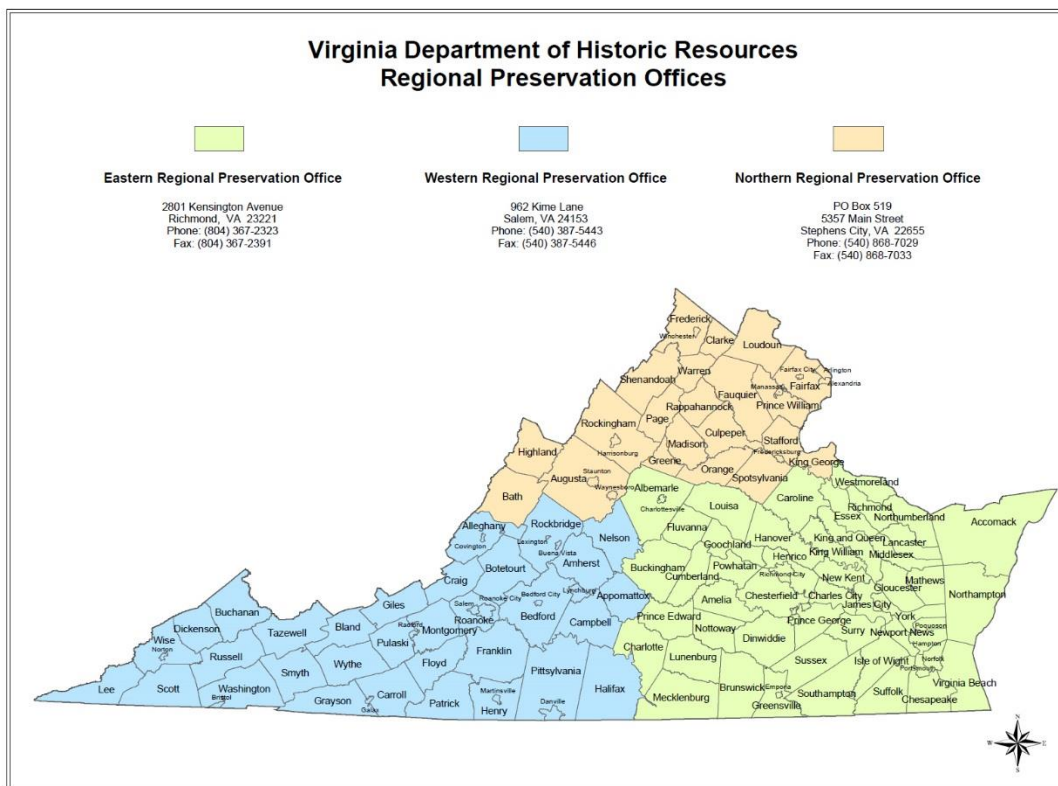


Discovering and Preserving Virginia's History

By: Mike Pulice, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), a state agency headquartered in Richmond, has three regional offices housing its Community Services Division—in the City of Salem (Western Region), Stephens City (Northern Region), and Richmond (serving Eastern Virginia). The agency's mission is to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship of Virginia's significant historic architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources. In large part, DHR is a regulatory agency that reviews environmental studies for state and federal projects to assess the potential impacts of projects on significant historic resources, e.g., buildings and sites; and also approves applications for *state and federal tax credits* designed to incentivize the rehabilitation of significant historic resources. Among other important programs, the department also has a *preservation easement* program through which donors elect to preserve their properties well into the future by precluding major alteration, demolition, and development in perpetuity.

One of the main priorities of DHR's regional offices is to support the *Virginia Historic Landmark* and *National Register of Historic Places* designation programs. Regional offices provide guidance to applicants, review and edit documents, and present nominations to state review boards. Register designations are mainly honorific, placing no restrictions or



obligations on property owners; yet they tend to foster greater awareness and appreciation of historic places, result in eligibility for rehabilitation tax credits, and put significant properties on the radar screen for local, state, and federal agencies that are undertaking or funding projects in the area, so that they can be afforded some degree of protection.

DHR regional offices also support DHR's *Survey and Planning* and *Threatened Sites* programs, which provide funds for investigation, recordation, and inventory of historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. Regional Office staff members make site visits for documentation purposes and to interpret and inform property owners about historic resources on their lands and programs in which they might participate. Site visits may be requested by anyone and there is no fee. Very often, staff are called upon to provide assessments of building construction dates and to provide guidance toward repair, rehabilitation, or restoration. Calls about cemeteries are common, and some DHR staff members can provide extensive guidance toward research and care of cemeteries on private lands.

As an architectural historian with an archaeology background, working out of the Western Regional Office in Salem, I try to make the most of opportunities to document historic sites on private lands that would not be accessible without invitation from the property owner, as well as providing free advice regarding preservation. Our regional office, staffed by archaeologist Tom Klatka and me, covers 32 counties and 12 cities in southwestern Virginia (see map). Tom and I are both veterans of the agency, well accustomed to assisting callers and making requested site visits. Tom is a University of Virginia-trained regional authority in both historic and prehistoric archaeology, and is well known, in part, for his expertise with recordation and preservation of cemeteries. I am a Radford University and Virginia Tech graduate with deep interest in historic masonry and traditional building techniques such as log construction.



***This long-forgotten log house, on a wooded tract in Bedford County, proved to be a significant find. It is now recorded in the DHR archives as the Page House.
Photo by: Mike Pulice, DHR.***

If you have structures or sites you'd like to know more about, such as the age or significance, or need advice toward stabilization, repair, protection, historic designation, or rehabilitation tax credits, please call or send an email to:

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