

# Dickenson County – SITE VISIT

## SITE VISIT

On May 8<sup>th</sup> 2009, toured portions of Dickenson County with Rita Surratt and Mark Vanover. Met Larry Yates, Mayor of Haysi and toured Break Interstate Park and the Town of Haysi.

Clintwood is the county seat. Population approximately 1500 in the town and about 16,000 total. Other primary towns include Haysi (pop. around 400) and Clinchco.

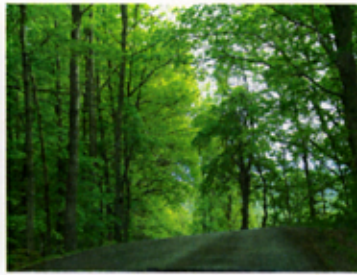
### OPPORTUNITY: PROPOSED SCENIC BYWAY

Traveled on the “South of the Mountain” proposed 19 mile scenic byway.

- Started at Hwy 611 (also known as South of the Mountain Rd). Very scenic with farmland, forested areas, breathtaking views mountain ranges, meandering creeks, and ample wildlife.



Start of Scenic Byway



Traveling along Hwy 611



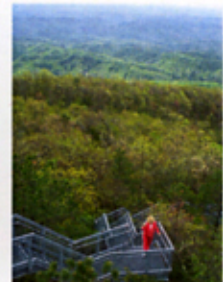
Birch Knob Observation Tower  
Is viewable in the distance.

Close up  
view

**SIDE TRIP:** At Childress Farm, a 7 mile side trip up to Birch Knob Observation Tower.



Primarily a gravel and dirt windy road up to the top. Part way up is Knob Rock (also known as Airplane Rock Overlook due to an airplane crash in 1965 20 feet below the rock). Historical marker viewable from road. Breathtaking view standing on Knob Rock overlooking the valley and the mountain ranges.



View of Kentucky

View of Virginia

183 steps to the top.

183 stairs to the top of Birch Knob Observation tower where one can see five states including the mountain range that separates Kentucky and Virginia.

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The windy gravel road takes you up to Birch Knob where one can hike up 183 stairs to Birch Knob Observation Tower and view five states from this site. Parking area, restroom facility and Information sign are available at base of tower. Next to the parking lot, there is a 20 minute hiking/horseback riding trail down to Jenny Falls.

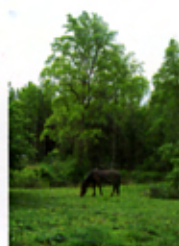


Note: Over the Hill Trail Ride begins from this point I think. ?Check on this?

- Proposed scenic byway continues on Hwy 611 South of the Mountain Road past Childers Farm then continues east through the small community of Blowing Rock.



Views of Childers Farm



Another farm.



Meandering creek along road.

- Road changes its name at this point to Blowing Rock. There is the Mountain Market at Tivis in the community of Blowing Rock.
- About two miles down the road, one passes Branham Farm Lane.

**SIDE TRIP:** Turn right onto Branham Farm Lane. Gravel and dirt road with breathtaking views of Flannagan Lake. Leads to a Wildlife Viewing area. Check with Virginia Wildlife trails for details.



**OPPORTUNITY:** A barn and 90 acres is for sale along this route. Has access to lake. Potential location for a Bed & Breakfast.



- Getting back on Blowing Rock Road, one continues east until the road splits. Take Bartlick Road east.

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*SIDE TRIP: About 1 mile after intersection, turn right onto Flannigan Dam Road which takes you town to John W. Flannigan Reservoir and Recreation area which includes plenty of parking, restroom facilities, playground and picnic area.*



- Go back to Bartlick Road, once again heading east. Russell Fork River will run along the west side of the road for a mile or two. Beautiful photo ops with small waterfalls and rapids. Road is windy, wooded and very inviting. Scenic byway ends at the intersection of Tom's Bottom Road.



***RECOMMENDATION:*** Definitely pursue obtaining state scenic byway designation then federal designation. Route has many intrinsic qualities and would definitely meet the required criteria. It would also be recommended that one continue the scenic byway to Breaks Park Road which would connect it to the "Crooked Road" with easy access to lodging and restaurants at Breaks Interstate

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*Park as well as Haysi (once Haysi reestablishes itself as a community that caters to tourists – See recommendations for the Town of Haysi)*

### MAJOR ATTRACTION: BREAKS INTERSTATE PARK

Restaurant, lodging, new cabins, campground, hiking trails, picnic area, swimming pool etc. Lodge overlooks Russell Fork River. Many walking, hiking and horseback riding trails located within the park boundaries.



*One of the trails actually connects with the Cranesnest Trail currently being developed.*

Breaks Interstate Park used to offer horseback riding through a concessionaire but insurance became too high. Has a small riding stable and covered area for those waiting to ride.



**RECOMMENDATION:** *Potential to market the stable area as a staging area for individual horseback riders and small groups. Opportunity for entrepreneur to reopen horse rental business - This should be pursued as more and more people are becoming interested in horseback riding yet there are very limited opportunities currently available if one does not own their own horse.*

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## ATTRACTION: Russell Fork River

Class V rapids. Attracts Kayakers from all over the world. Major rapids! Very dangerous and yet a very huge asset! These rapids are known across the United States and should be considered a major attraction to the area.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Contact Gene Counts to determine potential and what is currently being done to capitalize on this status as well as to determine expanding the opportunities for a whitewater run below the John Flannigan Dam. Currently draws Kayakers each October.

### Interesting Story of Past History:

The Yellow Poplar Logging Company used to build three dams across Russell Fork River and drop logs. Once completed, they would blow each dam up 15 minutes apart sending the logs all the way down to Elk Horn City.

## TOWN OF HAYSI - Huge potential for establishing itself as an "ATV-Friendly" community

Located along the Russell Fork River, the town has huge potential to establish itself as a haven for ATV riders. Mayor Larry Yates understands the opportunity and is willing to pursue legislative action to allow all roads into town to be used by ATVs.

- Currently there are a lot of empty buildings, a dollar store and no grocery store in town although the building still stands and is in decent condition. There are also two pharmacies, two banks, a Dollar General Store and a few other businesses including Ratliff Jewelers (oldest business in Haysi). Restaurants include a Subway, Pizza Plus, Pizza Factory, and a popular Mexican restaurant called Mi Finca.



- There is a wonderful large pavilion overlooking the Russell Fork River with parking. A large mural has been painted on a building at one end of the parking lot. Next door is a war memorial now under construction and a small playground.

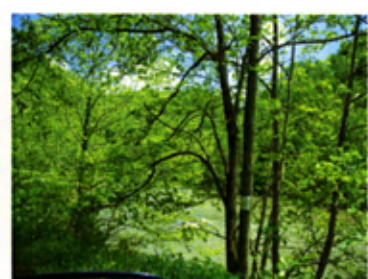
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- A gas station (now closed) located on the other side of the war memorial could serve as another meeting place but should really consider reopening if the town does pursue the off road vehicle status.



- Main Street runs into a large parcel of land recently acquired by the town. The Mayor would like to develop all 23 acres into a campground and primary trailhead for ATV and dirtbike riders to access trails leading into Buchanan County and East Kentucky. Great potential overlooking Russell Fork River. Will need to address water issues in any development.



*Proposed property to develop an ATV Campground and Staging area.*

- Turning right at the proposed campground site onto Kiwanis Park Road takes one up to a large graveled private parking area which has access to numerous trails connecting with ATV trails in Buchanan County as well as trails in Pike County Kentucky. *Potential to use this area as another staging area and trailhead for ATV's?*



- Continuing on Kiwanis Park Road takes one to Kiwanis Recreation Park and ball fields which serves as the site of the Dickenson County Fair. It also leads one up to the Regional Prison.

Notable attraction: On the right side of the road before one reaches Kiwanis Road is the Splash Dam Mine #6. Built in 1930, it is still visible in the side of the mountain. Haysi was once a mining camp and included a company store and large population of miners. 1950's flood took out many of the buildings. The Coal Camp was moved prior to that to a location more advantageous to reaching the coal. Another flood in 1970's did additional damage to the community.



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Recommendation: All brochures of Haysi should point out this site and a wayside exhibit could be erected nearby that tells the history of the area as a coal camp encouraging people following the Virginia Coal Trail to detour into Haysi and possibly spend some money.

PRIMARY PRECOMMENDATION FOR THE COUNTY: Develop the Town of Haysi into an “ATV-friendly” community by developing an ATV campground and trailhead and allowing ATV’s to ride on all roads into town.



Contact Craig Kaderavek and ask permission to GIS map some of the trails on the Forest Land Group property for potential public trails. Contact Mountainview ATV Club and seek their assistance. See contact information for Club listed below.

Also contact Jack Yates from Buchanan County who would know how best to bring their trails into Haysi. His number is (276)597-8706.

Additional Assets in the Haysi area:



- Rich history in both coal and other events.
- Lots of available buildings. Some of which could be converted into shops and businesses catering to ATVers. The upper floors of the buildings could become lodging facilities for those riders who do not care to camp.
- Wonderful market just outside of Haysi.
- Swinging bridge is a notable feature along Hwy 83/Dickenson Hwy.



Rich railroad and coal history



Wonderful market



Swinging bridge

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- Nearby Coal Museum and Caboose B&B which is part of the Virginia Coal Trail. *Recommendation: Should be included in all publications promoting Clincho and Haysi as well as Dickenson County.*

### Needs:

- A shower house, gas station, grocery store, additional restaurant(s), car wash and restroom facilities would be a few recommended amenities riders will be looking for. An ATV repair shop or garage should also be considered.

### Another Possible Potential: Trammel Coal Camp

*Trammel Coal Camp area may have potential to be turned into another area for ATV riders to lodge while tackling the trails. Need to visit site to determine the condition of the buildings and their proximity to potential trails. Also ownership needs to be determined as well as their interest level.*

### **Notable Feature along Hwy 83: Railroad Station**

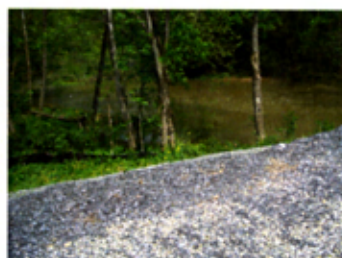
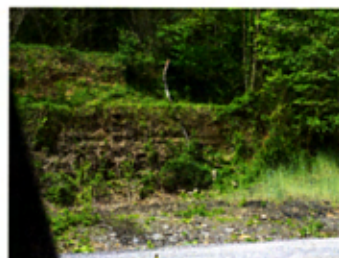
Continuing on Hwy 83 towards Clinchco and Clintwood at the intersection of Hwy 83/63, one passes a historic railroad station which has now been converted into the PSA office.

*Recommendation: Need wayside exhibit that tells about the previous use of the building and provides photos of the past when it was an active railroad stop. Might also add a designated parking area and a couple of picnic tables as a recommended stop along the Virginia Coal Trail.*



### **NEW TRAIL CURRENTLY UNDERWAY: Cranesnest Trail**

Cranesnest Trail – a bicycle and walking trail. Trail has been funded with grants.



Trailhead has large parking area and is developing a handicapped accessible fishing pier down to Russell Fork River.



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Next door is the Mountain Trail Market Restaurant which is a popular restaurant (located in building once used as a gas station). They have plans to rent bicycles once trail is opened.



## Town of Clinchco

Offers a gas station, grocery store and tobacco discount store.

Attractions include:

- Coal Miner's memorial erected beside the Clinchco post office to honor the 309 men and women killed in our coal mines.
- Dennis E. Reedy Railroad and Coalmining Museum which houses a vast collection of railroad and coal mining tools and memorabilia as well as an old still.

Website:

<http://www.dickensoncounty.net/reedymuseum.html>



**Clintwood - County Seat.** Population 1500.

Assets: Numerous gas stations, restaurants, active chamber, historic downtown, wonderful historic buildings, thriving downtown area.

- Tourist Information Center located in historic home of Doctor \_\_\_\_\_. Hospital once stood next door. Many medical artifacts displayed inside.



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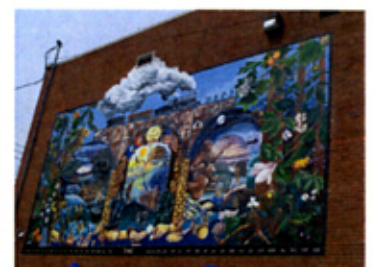
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## Attractions:

- Ralph Stanley Museum & Traditional Mountain Music Center - <http://www.ralphstanleymuseum.com/>



Annual Ralph Stanley Festival every May at the Ralph Stanley home site.



- Dickenson County Arts Center & Gallery next to Town Hall
- Clintwood is on the Crooked Road, “Around the Mountain” Artisan Trail and in the “Heart of the Appalachia”.
- War Memorial displayed on the courthouse lawn, honoring those who have served in the military. Currently, the Military Veterans Memorials recognizes soldiers from the Revolutionary War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam.
- Mural on side of building in downtown Clinton depicts Dickenson County’s rich history in music, coal, railroad and more.
- Other notable memorials in county include:
  - A memorial outside Clintwood Virginia to honor the soldiers from the Civil War that fought at the Battle of Cranesnest.
  - A Coal Miner's Memorial (See Clincho)

## ATV Club

Mountain View ATV Club is located in Clintwood TN. It is the only official ATV trail system in Virginia we have found thus far that has sanctioned trails. Their website is <http://www.mountainviewatvclub.org/>. The club leases 5500 acres from Forest Land and also pay insurance.

The majority of the trails are located in the northwest corner of Wise County with a few of the trails coming into Dickenson County near Sandy Ridge Road. They have rules, require helmets, and only members of the club may ride the trail. Membership cost is very reasonable. In 2002 or 2003, they had over 1000

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members from 40 states. They now have leveled off to somewhere between 300 to 400 members. The president of the club is Ronnie Rose, 132 Dustys Way, Clintwood VA 276-926-4861 or [vrrose@roadrunner.com](mailto:vrrose@roadrunner.com).

### Equestrian Club:

Cumberland and Pine Mountain Horse Club located in Clintwood TN  
<http://www.cpmtrailriders.com/> 276-926-4956 or 276-926-6957  
Located at 354 Ramey Flats Rd. Clintwood, Va.

Also contact Kenny Mullins for more information about horseback riding trails (276)926-6964

### *Interesting History of the area:*

- *Clintwood used to offer blood tests and marriage the same day which drew people from the surrounding areas and states.*

### Websites to link to:

<http://www.dickenson411.com>

<http://www.dickensoncounty.net/>

TO DO: WMTH will send Mark Vanover examples of Scenic Byway applications, both state and federal and the funding received by other communities to develop their byways. Send Mark Vanover and Rita Surratt photos of the Redbuds in eastern Kentucky (a Congressman Hal Roger's initiative to draw tourist to east Kentucky each Spring) and the birding brochures developed for West Kentucky to encourage visitors to visit the region. Need to get a copy of the full proposal of Cranesnest Trail from Mark Vanover.