



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTRINSIC QUALITIES**

*“Archaeological Quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor’s archeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.”*

- America’s National Scenic Byway

The Virginia Coal Heritage Trail tells a unique story of the role coal has played and continues to play in the industrialization of this nation and in the lives of those within the region. Unique to many other byways, there are numerous archaeological sites that are quite visible along the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. Many of which, given time, will no longer exist. That is one of the reasons why the development and implementation of a corridor management plan that addresses each of these sites and efforts made to preserve them is so crucial. Time is of the essence.

Already, through the process of developing the corridor management plan, people are becoming more aware of preserving the past. A recent e-mail from the abandoned mine land projects coordinator for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy stated he had come across a 1950’s era shovel on one of their properties.

Normally they would cut the shovel into scrap but he much preferred to *“haul it somewhere to be displayed for its historical significance”* in telling the story of coal. In his correspondence he said *“If you know of any communities or organizations that might want it, let me know and perhaps we can deliver”*. Needless to say, we are now following up on this generous offer and hope to have a home for it soon.



But not all timing is good. Only four months prior to starting the development of the corridor management plan, the owner of the Dennis Reedy Coal Museum in Clinchco decided to close his museum and has since sold all his coal memorabilia on Ebay including the building in which it was housed which was once the old post office for the Clinchco Coal Camp. These artifacts are now scattered throughout the United States. Through this CMP process, we are hoping to encourage people to keep their collections intact and educate the communities of the value of supporting those who are trying preserve and interpret the past.

But also keep in mind, that over the years many of the artifacts of the coal mining process have been lost due to natural deterioration. Others have been physically removed from the site. Take for example the case of coke ovens. There were once thousands upon thousands scattered throughout the seven county area. In fact, Wise County alone was home to over 2,100 of them. They lined the roads and caused great smoke in the air. So much so that in one of the coal camps, they had a rule that there would be no running the coke ovens on Sundays so the women would have an opportunity to do their wash and



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hang it out on the line without it getting covered in ash and smoke. But they are an important part of the story about coal.

The coke ovens were large brick ovens used in the process of burning coal to create coke for the steel industry. At one of the CMP town meetings it was shared that Keokee, one of the larger coal mining towns along the route, once boasted over 200 coke ovens, some of which were used to bake bread for the coal camps. And during the holidays, it was not uncommon at all to see some of the miner's wives using the ovens to cook their Thanksgiving and Christmas turkeys or goose.

The town of Keokee still exists. As one enters the community, one of the first buildings one comes to is the old Power House which once fueled the electricity for both the coke ovens and the town. The building was later converted into a theater. It still stands today and is a reminder of times past. But the hundreds of coke ovens, once located below the Power House (*and shown below in the photo*) no longer exist. In fact, of the 2,100 which once existed in Wise County, we have only been able to locate two along the route but are located on private property and not viewable by the public. Two beehive coke ovens are known to be buried in Clinchco on the St. Paul loop. It is our hopes, through the development of the corridor management plan, that maybe one day, a plan can be developed that will allow these few remaining reminders of the past to be viewable once again and interpretive information provided to tell the story.



*Keokee Power plant (on the left) and coke ovens (across the bottom). The power plant was later converted into a theater.*



*Island Creek Coal Company in Buchanan County*



*Tippel and more at Seaboard*



*Tippel site now converted into a recycling center*



*Blanton Tippel near St. Charles*



*Bullitt Mine Processing Plant*

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Another unique archaeological site is the Flanary Historical Site located on the left bank of the Clinch River on State Route 65, just east of the town of Dungannon on the St. Paul Loop of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. This historical site was located at Osborne Ford until the area was renamed Dungannon in 1890. Below is information provided by the Flanary Historical Site, Inc. established in June 2004 to restore and preserve “one of the most historical sites in Scott County and Southwest Virginia.”

### FLANARY HISTORIC SITE

*Patrick Henry, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia signed a land grant to James Alley for the land dated 20 June 1790. The two-story log house, circa 1830, housed the Osborne Ford Post Office 1832-1980. Judge Estill also held Superior Court in the Post Office. Osborne Ford was a Clinch River crossing used by Daniel Boone as he traveled the trace from Castlewood on hunting trips from Moore’s Fort. The trace later became Fincastle Road, known as the Kentucky Path, and joined the Wilderness Road group at Stock Creek, near Natural Tunnel.*

*An archaeological excavation on the site by members of the Archaeological Society of Virginia was prompted by highway construction in 1977. The Virginia Department of Highway had chosen the same site to build a bridge across the Clinch River, as used by the early sixteenth and seventeenth crossing. Archaic and Woodland materials showed intermittent occupations for about 8000 years B.C. with possibly occupation as late as 1600 A.D. The site was recorded on the State Register of Historic Places on 16 Sept 1982 and the National Register of Historic Places 7 July 1983.*



Concept rendering of Flanary  
Archaeological Native American Site

*For more on this subject, see the article “The Flanary Site, Scott County, Virginia” by Howard, A. MacCord, Sr.*