



**CULTURAL INTRINSIC QUALITIES**

*“Cultural Quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features including, but not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc., are currently practiced. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions.”*  
- America’s National Scenic Byway

Coal mining once required a tremendous amount of workers attracting Italians, Hungarians, Germans and others looking for jobs. Each brought with them their own traditions, religions and unique cultures to the Virginia coalfields. This becomes apparent as one drives the route and sees the variety of architecture of some of the buildings. For example, Italians cut the stone for a building in Haysi, and the buildings in Dante and downtown Norton have architectural designs, not typical for the region.



In Clinchco, there is an oven which was once used by the Italians to bake their bread and German bread is a tradition in Dante. People living in Tom’s Creek Coal Camp remember that Hungarian immigrants from Budapest brought outside ovens from their homeland and baked wonderful breads which they sold throughout the community. Tom’s Creek was noted by many as the cultural center for the region but numerous plays that took place in many of the coal camps and throughout the mountains and a number of communities had theater houses. And in Haysi, the Riverside Country Store has been owned by three generations of Italians. It was also the site of the third Piggly Wiggly built in Virginia. The first and second were in Wise and Norton respectfully.



There are numerous churches along the route including a mosque in Pocahontas. And the St. Elizabeth’s Roman Catholic Church, also in Pocahontas, holds an annual Hungarian cabbage roll dinner to honor the European heritage of the coalfields.

Since 1943, there has been a tradition every November for the “Santa train” to make stops in the coalfields of Kentucky and Virginia providing gifts and candy to families along the route stopping in Dante, St. Paul, Dungannon and Duffield along the byway.

Also along the byway is the site of the original Country Cabin and Country Cabin II, a major venue along both the Crooked Road Music Trail and the proposed route for the byway which carries forth the mission to *“perpetuate and preserve Appalachian traditions and culture including music, musical traditions, and the preservation of mountain dance, storytelling, crafts and arts”*.