BUFFALO VALLEY SCHOOL: PRESERVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE IN A RURAL TENNESSEE COMMUNITY

By Jesse L. Alley
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Murfreesboro, TN
http://www.ajlambert.com

ABSTRACT: Relating the local history to state and national movements, the residents of Buffalo Valley were able to enlist the Center for Historic Preservation to help protect the Buffalo Valley School House by placement on National Register of Historic Places. This study explores why the building qualified for nomination had how it adaptive reuse as a Community Center continues to be the touchstone of rural community. Built in 1929 Buffalo Valley School House reflects all the ideals embodied in the struggle for free public education to Tennesseans while endowing the forgotten community a tangible sense of place. The challenge of preserving the built rural environment and keeping the historical accuracy of stories of vanishing Appalachian culture are many. The paper examines some of the ways and approaches to preserve the building while enhancing its ability to serve the public.

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CHAPTER I: A HISTORIC PLACE IN DIRE STRAITS: BUFFALO VALLEY SCHOOL HOUSE

The Buffalo Valley School House sits alone beside Interstate 40 in rural Putnam County. As over 40,000 vehicles a day passed this way in the early years of the twenty-first century, the preservation future of this historic school was uncertain. Buffalo Valley School opened in 1929 as a show place, but now its original material fabric was being lost. The struggling efforts of a few were holding onto this historical place for the school was a symbol of how the community prospered, suffered, and stayed alive in the twentieth century.

The school for instance survived a terrible fire that destroyed Buffalo Valley's business district in the mid 1930's. A lack of water to fight the fire hastened the town's destruction. Ironically, twenty years later the U. S. Corps of Engineers dammed the Caney Fork River and suddenly too much water – not the lack of it – reshaped the surrounding rural landscape, nearly destroying the school. Then came the interstate highway

and further irony when a cattle trailer hauling buffalo overturned at this place and for the only time in factual memory, there were actual buffalo roaming in Buffalo Valley, since they considered it a cultural backwater but the families who lived here, like most in southern Appalachia, valued education.[1] The Buffalo Valley community and education were referenced in a WPA transcription in 1936 as dating to 1857. The WPA worker described the document "as dated October 1857 from a Free School at Pleasant Grove Camp Ground that was three months in length with teacher pay of $20.00 a month and a subscription fee of $4.00 per student."[2]

As the building aged, it became discarded as primary school. By the late 1960s, the school board gave it to the Putnam County Parks and Recreation Department, thus shifting what had become a liability to the school system to county parks. At that point, officials designated it as a community center.[3] It was not very productive for several years until the political prodding of Erlene Pullum Mikitka turned it into a viable operation. Mikitka, a native of Buffalo Valley, had returned to her home place following a career of assisting Democratic politicians in state government. She was a strong willed visionary with a devotion to serving the public. Having spent a career in politics, she saw the building as an economical way to bring social services to the rural populace.

It was a fortuitous marriage for the building and Mikitka. She was an advocate against inequity in the original community center operations and she knew how to work the system. She applied for funding from the Livingston, Byrdstown, Jamestown & Cookeville Development Corporation (LBJ&C), one of the quasi-governmental mechanisms to channel federal monies to local constituencies. The LBJ&C apportioned funding for programs such as Head Start and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) that came out of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society." She was able to use a variety of additional grants to establish a number of craft programs, resembling in part the old Tomato Clubs of Tennessee.[4]

With Mikitka at the helm, the center was able to implement numerous community outreach courses and programs including an annual Christmas Party for children in the community was well as using the building for family reunions, quiltings, and concerts. Erlene and her husband Pete Mikitka taught ceramics and other local artists participated in additional craft instruction. The area was beginning to come to life again. For a while, one of the classrooms was used as an inside gymnasium for basketball for youth in the ara and at various times, revenues were derived from church rentals. Mikitka always invited Senator Al Gore and other local leaders to be part of the local festivities of the day, a connection that served the center well because all had been to Buffalo Valley House and Community Center, thus becoming part of its historical "place."[5]

By the early twenty-first century, the building had crossed the line from county asset to county liability. It needed new windows, roof repairs, floor repairs and other improvements. In addition the surrounding five acres of land needed attention and investment. At the same time public funding was disappearing; county officials even deterred the local bookmobile was too extravagant to continue to serve the shrinking populace of Buffalo Valley. The community center and its land were becoming expensive surplus assets in a changing economic climate.

Landowners of tangent property began to anticipate their acquisition of good tillable land and perhaps a large brick building. Thus are framed the questions and arguments agency, audience, and authority that so interest public historians and preservationists.

Whose history is it embodied in the walls of Buffalo Valley School House? How important is it to urban and suburban taxpayers to preserve what they see as a financial drain? What history actually happened there? It is not a school attended by national figures; there were no battles fought on the grounds that might make the place better appreciate by the public. An argument can be made there was no reason to maintain the building or its property since its original intent, an education facility, had disappeared and no other viable uses had been identified. What possible arguments could be made to preserve a building and grounds of such an isolated spot? Can the costs be justified? What is the real story told here?

Buffalo Valley School is important to the preservation and understanding of our history at all levels. It is the symbol of what is possible in a community when it comes together to accomplish a common goal. The

building, grounds, and stories associated with this place exemplify the bridge from rural agrarian life to urban industrial Tennessee. Constructed just prior to the Great Depression, it opened in 1929 and served continuously as an education facility until 1966. It has withstood floods, neglect, misuse, politics, and modernization as the once thriving community gave way to urban consolidation. The school stands as an architectural cornerstone of early free rural education in the American south. It is an important example of rural education philosophy and it still serves the community it was erected to serve. The school belies the myth that the region was "so unbelievably backwards, economically, politically, and socially, they were incapable of sustaining any liberal reforms."[7]

In South following the Civil War that "progress," as it is often referred to, began to extend into the isolated areas of our nation. Progress first in the form of better roads, better farm tools, and eventually the Tennessee Central Railroad of Jere Baxter, began to open the geographically isolated areas to new ideas and new methods.[8] However, education was primarily limited to an elementary curriculum in rural areas, in part because children were expected participants in the farm work, which limited their ability to attend more continuous education and in part because of the cost to the families. In Tennessee, it was not until World War I that public education reforms began to make serious headway.

The slow nature of progressive education reform shaped Buffalo Valley School as its "modern" building was not opened until 1929. The delay in part is explained by its location and its status as an unincorporated village. Nearby Baxter and Algood were larger towns and already had new schools. Construction of Buffalo Valley School began in 1923 but was suspended for six years due to budget concerns and disputes among county officials. County officials resumed construction at the school with monies coming from local dollars, cake sales, donations, and the labor skills of community.[9]

Having the biggest and best school in the area with an auditorium to house community gatherings, plays, or theater was a statement to themselves and in a broader sense, a statement to the county and society as a whole. It created a tangible sense of place and a statement of their dignity and honor.[10] The school was the "cornerstone" of Buffalo Valley. Locals viewed the brick building, following a standardized Tennessee school plan, as a statement of who they were, what they were, and in spite of hardships, what they could build. Rooted in the reform movements of the Progressive Party, the building embodies the educational reforms of far-sighted educators and leaders like Perry Harned, Fletcher Dresslar, and Austin Peay. The building and its purpose is tangible proof that rural education really mattered in Buffalo Valley.

The story of the "School House," its meaning in Tennessee history and how it came to be told is a testament to local questions arising from perceived needs to serve the community. Historians "got their nose under the tent" almost by accident. The combination of community public place, public authority, and public agency forced the local community to reach out to whatever resources they could find and they found an audience of public historians. A concerned group of ladies, two of them new to the area and one local resident recognized the value of the building to the rural community and realized it may also be a link in Tennessee's public education history. Barbara Markel, Missouri native, Char Wanser of Wisconsin, and Carolyn Huddleston of Buffalo Valley initially coalesced around the notion of using one of the rooms of the building for a lending library for the community since the elimination of public funding for the rural bookmobile that serviced the area. They shortly added two more residents to their group, Pauline Vogel, formerly of Connecticut, and Darla Runge of Michigan. After gaining approval from the community center board and the county governing agency, the Putnam County Parks and Recreation the group set about breathing new life into the building by opening a lending library formed from their personal libraries. The bankruptcy of a Cookeville bookstore, soon after the library opened, offered a slim window of opportunity for them to garner 20,000 new books, shelving, and other equipment but only if they could empty the premises within twenty-four hours. The women galvanized their husbands and all the pickups in the area into action and the Buffalo Valley Leading Library blossomed.[11]

They recognized that volunteer organizations experience a fare share of energy and personnel ebbs and flows which led to a bigger question. What about the long term stability of the building and its preservation? Funding, always a key concern of agricultural communities, especially more isolated ones with shrinking population and increasing expenses, forced the ladies to look for more permanent solutions to save the building for posterity. Someone told them that if they formed a non-profit, they could apply for

grants to preserve it, thus was born a 501 C3 organization titled, The Friends of Buffalo Valley Library. After its formation, their first act was to contact the Center for Historic Preservation, a Center of Excellence of Middle Tennessee State University, which introduced public historians and preservationists to the building. A preliminary assessment of the building resulted in a recommendation for subsequent in-dept investigation of the Buffalo Valley School House. Once the historians became involved it raised many questions from its location, physical condition, its architectural significance and its role in Tennessee's rural free public education history and importantly what might happen to it in the future.[12]

The use of the words "School House" to the historian connotes that the building and its use made it more important within the community. It married the public notion of "school," a building place for training the mind, with the private one of "house" which was a more personalized place; and by doing so, "School House" in Tennessee and most of the south achieved a special stature within its community, not unlike a place of worship. In the best traditions of Progressive reforms, the joining of redundant words by educators and architects firmly established in the rural public mind that this "place" was endowed almost a spirituality and should be treated with reverence. Fletcher B. Dresslar, one of America's leading progressive educators wrote and spoke often to these ideas. He perceived the Progressive ideals of education being the first line of instruction for community betterment in housing, health and standards of living, especially for the rural community.[13] While the community that built the school has ceased to be recognized as anything but a part of the county and zip code, the school house stands today because locals saw the value of their past, of their in narrative of Tennessee history. Their efforts vindicate the authors of Nearby History that history is local. Without a handful of residents believing that local history matter, the building and its stories might have vanished into the surrounding farmland.[14]

The first impressions upon entering Buffalo Valley via Center Hill Dam from U. S. 70N are of a ghost town. The remaining buildings of the commercial district consists of a decrepit bank structure and a building formerly known as Acorn's General Store. The only signs of life are the sounds of traffic along the nearby interstate. Crossing under the bridges of the Interstate 40 overpass, winding beyond Hopewell Road to the east, a few abandoned houses are visible, and through leafless trees an open field reveals a brick school. Up close, over the double doors is a painted nameplate, Buffalo Valley School, 1929. Tucked under an open foyer, the transom above the doors was evidence of its pre-electricity construction. From a distance, the exterior appears intact, its brick pointing in a very good shape and the grounds recently groomed; however, the absence of much activity nearby, raises superficial questions of long term viability.

Buffalo Valley, an unincorporated village situated on the eastern slope of the great Tennessee Basin, had been seen as being populated with hardheaded unsophisticated folk by the more urban elements of southern society in part because of the difficult terrain and the lack of societal niceties in these agrarian communities. One of those perceived lack of niceties was education, in part because the physical geography, and in part because they were not very sociable to outsiders. Because of their remote locations, and dependency on agriculture, their life produced an adherence and trust among family and friends seen as unskilled in social graces of culture.[15] Even though Putnam County was finally established as a county with its own government in 1854, the status of Buffalo Valley, with its prosperous farms and growing population, reflect the contentious nature of national, state, and local politics. Putnam County's creation in many ways is a microcosm of American history.[16] In 1841, Putnam County was carved out of Smith County to be part of Putnam County. However, court battles lasted until January 1854, when in defiance of the legislature, the new county was reinstated as a viable county with a seat of local government. Newspaper reports from Smith County indicate Buffalo Valley originally was one mile wide and six miles long and by the 1880s it was home to prosperous farms and a growing population.

During Reconstruction, isolated rural farmer were seen as followers incapable of leading while the more urban or wealthy former Confederate officers snatched that Mantle. The Populist movement allied with the organized agricultural interest of the "wool hat boys" to force accommodations to the small farmer.[17] Geographical remoteness was part of Buffalo Valley's change in the era, and it influenced their culture, social mores, and buildings making it impossible to really grasp the impact of the school without a discussion of this. Agriculture had been a major economic factor before the Civil War in the state and that role continued with the introduction of industrialization; but public education had never been far beneath

the surface as an issue of improving that wealth. The first public education bill in Tennessee was passed in 1845. The need for some sort of standardized approach to education was recognized, but those standards would be argued for years to come. In the post war years, the Democratic Party in the Eastern Highland Rim operated "more as an amalgam of interests rather than a unified political whole" and it wielded such power that it earned them the nickname Boubons.[18] Composed of former Confederate officers and wealthy locals, in Tennessee, they controlled the urban landscape by intimidation, excluding the small farmers in favor of rapid industrialization requiring ever larger urban populations. Out of frustrated neglect and improved nations communication, small farmer across the state began ot organize undet the Agriculture Wheel and Farmer's Alliance as the national Populist Movement was spreading. The local farm movement was derisively referred to as the "wool hat boys" and was perceived as naïve and unsophisticated until they slowly gained political power to improve their lot.[19] Among the improvements they campaigned for were better roads, access to markets and new modern rural schools. Change is never easily accomplished regardless of its nature, and public policy seems to be the most difficult to do.

From the cauldron of heritage, politics, religion, race, class, prohibition, economics, and power, the issue of standard public education began to be recognized at the state level. Urban areas needing more socially acceptable and literate workers recognized the need to fill their workforces and populous counties began establishing their own systems but lacked the ability to control more remote areas of their counties. According to historian William Link, alcohol was a tradition of southern hospitality until the Prohibition movement gained strength. It was such a part of the white social hierarchy that even Baptist ministers would have a drink before their sermons. As the Temperance movement took hold across the South, led by women, it changed the moral and social consequences of alcohol, which created a non-alcoholic public culture enforced by evangelicals. That influenced further pursuit of pubic purity, and dancing was seen as another "terrible peril to purity and Christian character: as it encouraged the loss of individual and collective control; hence, two cornerstones of urban religion hit a conflict with the realities of rural Tennessee. The other scourge of lower classes, as seen by the social moralist, was the "race peril." Urbanites saw the south as being overrun by a "Crab Apple Civilization" composed of lower classes or inbred isolated farmers intermingled with the recently freed African Americans.[20] These contradictions of social morality and southern traditional mores of hospitality led to the establishment of illegal saloons referred to politely as "Blind Tigers."[21] What is led to is a battle of school areas and saloons in incorporated towns.

Tennessee, perhaps because of the diverse geographical ranges of steep mountains, large rivers, a great basin area of fertile lands and the fluvial delta regions, ahs been a mirror of American life and its contradictions. Whether trying to secede from North Carolina in 1784 to establish its own State of Franklin, vacillating on remaining in the Union in 1861, fighting for both sides during the Civil War, or accepting government in their everyday lives, Tennesseans historically wear their arguments in public.

Scarcely any battle was waged longer or with more controversy that that of public education. The battle that began before the Civil War continued for over a hundred years and Buffalo Valley and its school were role players in this struggle that pitted urban culture against agrarian, social and economic classes against one another and even various religious factors. The passage of Women's Suffrage in 1920 in Tennessee, opened the doors for women to participate publicly in the argument.[22] Education's role as a pawn in the political game was illustrated in the Peeler Act of 1899 which forbid alcohol sales within four miles of a school in incorporated cities or towns of less than 2,000, a law which led to the incorporation and incorporation battles since most schools were within the city limits. This law was later amended in 1903 and known as the Adams Law, which extended the size limits to those of 5000. Little wonder then that Buffalo Valley, the most fertile land in Putnam County, and large grower of corn, central ingredients in the making of local alcohol, remained unincorporated while Baxter, Algood, and Cookeville were incorporated by 1915. Little wonder too that there was a continued battle over exactly what authority would control the funding, staffing, salaries, and curriculum of public schools. Was it the city, its voting districts, county, state or federal that was to have the preeminent position in this fight to establish standards?

The state legislature passed a general education act in 1903, but it failed to gain much traction in rural counties. Coming of age during the Progressive Movement reforms, farmers began to realize there were already public dollars in their counties being raised to support public schools. Buffalo Valley began

construction of its rural school in 1923, was but was suspended for years as farm incomes plummeted following World War One and political argument over funding and standardization continued in Tennessee. Under the political leadership of Governor Austin Peay and the backing of state education leader, Perry Harned, the General Education Bill of 1925 was passed.[23] The bill set a standard school year of eight months and required teachers to be paid according to the state salary schedule and allowed the counties to levy fifty cents tax on property for every 100 acres of value and in turn agreed to fund schools.[24] While Governor Peay signed the bill, he died before the impact could be seen except for the unintended "Monkey Law" codification of evolution. New Governor Henry Horton with Harned's backing, was able to get the 1928 Legislature to fund the program and Buffalo Valley construction started anew.[25]

The "School House" created a tangible sense of place. It was an expression of their Scotch Irish feudal heritage and more it was a statement of their dignity and honor.[26] Link concludes that schools and churches occurred at crossroads that resulted in strong familial ties that were expressed as honor and a closing of the community to outsiders. The school became that focal point of Buffalo Valley. Locals viewed the brick school, built from a Tennessee School Plan, as the statement of who they were, what they were, and in spite of hardships they could build. It is what is left of the original architecture of Buffalo Valley.[27] The building defines "place" as that elusive thing that historians mean when they refer to it as incorporating humanity, community, space, tangible and intangible things that articulate where the past lives. In *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, author Wallace Stegner observes: "No place is a place until the things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments."[28] The school building embodies that past. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.[29]

CHAPTER II: THE ARCHITECTURE AND STORIES OF BUFFALO VALLEY SCHOOL:

Buffalo Valley School House is significant in architectural, educational, and social history. The first part of this chapter deals with the architectural exterior and interior descriptions for which it was listed in the National Register of Historic Register. The second part will include some of the memories, legends, persons, and events that became part of its significance within the National Register process.

The building architecturally is a good example of a Colonial Revival-influenced building in Putnam County. The builders followed the construction guidelines issued by the State Department of Education in its Bulletin Number One for either a four-teacher or five-teacher building. The exterior is relatively unchanged except for some cosmetic and comfort changes. These changes include replacement of wooden siding on gables and oval vents with vinyl, the addition of window air-conditioners placed in the central windows of each classroom, and a handicapped access ramp. The building resembles both plans 4A and 5A T-plans as outlined in the department of education's bulletin on rural schools; unfortunately in spite of the minute details of the list of materials required, the sizes of the two planes are not given and differ only in slight amounts.[1] Both building plans require the building to face west.[2] The foundation is poured concrete. A one-story red brick building with an asphalt shingled gable roof sits atop the foundation. Local labor and carpenters built it, and situated it on the north side of Indian Creek, a tributary to the Caney Fork.

The front façade of the T-plan building is composed of three bays or sections, with the principal entry to the school being the projecting central capped by a front gable roof. This portion of the roof is slightly lower than the main roof and is flanked by two narrow brick chimneys and has a semicircular gable vent. Paired nine-over-nine double hung window flank the central inset entry. Although the multi-lights and transom window are historic, the double leaf front door and vinyl siding that sheaths the inset are recent additions to the building. Banks of five nine-over-nine double hung windows flank the central entry projection. The central window of each bank contains a portable window air-conditioner. All windows in the school are toped by concrete lintels and rest on concrete sills.[3]

The rear ell forming the leg of the "T" extends from the center of the east elevation. Along the south side of it are two sets of three nine-over-nine double hung windows, and one smaller six-over-six window found on the east end of this elevation. The rear elevation of the projecting ell originally had a door and two windows but these have been filled with vinyl. The northern elevation of the rear ell is identical to the southern elevation and contains two window air-conditioners in the bottom halves of them. Continuing

around the building, the north and south elevations contain recessed central entries. Replacement double leaf glass and wood doors are capped by a multi light transom. As on other exterior entrances, modern vinyl siding surround the doors.[4] Completing the external description, a photo of the school taken in 1930 indicates a school bell cupola was part of the original roof. Its date of removal is unknown.[5]

Upon entering the building the historic integrity of materials, design, and workmanship are readily apparent. The historic eight-inch baseboards, bead-board wainscoting, horizontal wood siding above the chair rails, door surrounds, and several glass transoms are extant. The foot wide foyer leads from the main entrance to the auditorium. The auditorium served as the center for creative group activity in the building. The right side of the foyer once served as the school offices but was converted to a kitchen in the mid 1930s and indoor plumbing has replaced the cloakrooms on its left sides. Running hot and cold water and the plumbing was added to the building in 1955 according to school board records.[7] The foyer meets with a wide hallway running north and south and the entrance walls to the auditorium. The kitchen was updated to include wood laminated cabinets, counters, a center island and linoleum floors circa 1977 according to Erlene Mikitka.[8] The original pass-through wooden widow that served students is still intact and operational.

Occupying the rear ell of the building, the auditorium contains the original hardwood floors stage and hand painted rear screen and historic chairs. Currently there are 112 molded maple wood seats which are duplicate replacements of polychromatic Art Deco detailing featuring at an unknown time. Three fans and two rows of fluorescent lights hang from the original wood ceiling. The stage is thirty inches high and ten and a half feet wide. It has a skirt of beadboard but the original curtains have been removed from the cased opening of the stage, so today it is exposed. The stage floor retains the original cakewalk outlines.[10] The most significant cultural feature is the hand painted advertising mural that provides a rear screen to the auditorium. According to Erlene Mikitka these are original advertisements by the community businesses but they were retouched by an area artist in the 1980s. The auditorium itself is further symbol of competing small communities, as it was hoped it would become the high school for the area of the county.

The room in the southwest corner of the building is accessed from either the south wall of the kitchen or through one of two doors from the main hallway. Originally a classroom, it now serves as a meeting room and an exhibit space containing memorabilia and photographs from when the building was a school. This room, like the other classrooms, contains wooden floors covered by carpet, baseboards, vertical bead board wainscoting, wood walls and a wood ceiling.

A non historic fan and fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling. Across the hallway is the southeast classroom which is now used as the community lending library. It is accessed by one of two doors. It has original hardwood floors, baseboards, vertical bead board wainscoting, wood walls and ceiling. Vandals broke the original windows, which have been refurbished with vinyl and glass duplicates.

On the north side of the building are two more classrooms. The northeast classroom is now being used as storage fro community garage sales held semi-annually. Its placement and access are the minor image of the southeast library or classroom. This room contains wood floors covered by carpet, baseboards, vertical bead board wainscoting, wood walls and ceiling. The historic blackboard has been painted over. Formerly heated by a stove, the brick flue is still in the southwest corner of the room, although no longer functional. All the windows have been recently replaced due to insect infestation. On the east side of the hallway, outside the classroom, is now a wall of fame for veterans who were former students.

The northwest classroom is now used as a classroom or meeting room. Its placement and access are the mirror image of the northeast classroom. This room contains wood floors covered by carpet, baseboards, vertical bead board wainscoting, wood walls and ceiling. The historic blackboard has been painted over. Formerly heated by a stove, the brick flue is still in the southwest corner of the room, although no longer functional. All the windows have been recently replaced due to insect infestation. On the west side of the hallway, outside of the classroom, is now a wall of fame for veterans who were former students. Between this classroom and the restrooms is a small storage room accessed from the main hallway.

According to a former student, Mr. Bud Maddux, the Tennessee Valley Authority electrified the building in 1936.[11] The original lights were a single light bulb hanging from a cord in the center of each room. The auditorium was originally lit by kerosene lamps and their wall placements are still visible. Today simple fluorescents hanging from the ceilings light the rooms. Coal burning pot bellied stoves in each room originally heated the building. School board minutes indicate on July 17, 1950, a motion was made to solicit bids for a central heating furnace at the Buffalo Valley School. Phillips and Buttdorf, furnace fabricators in Nashville, later installed two basement furnaces.[12]

The school is accessed from the main road by a circular gravel driveway. Just west of the school building are open fields that were used as a playground by the school children. Adjacent to the school building, to the south, the county has moved some dumpsters and set up a community garbage collection area and a portable shed.

Buffalo Valley School was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for its significance in Architecture, Education, and Social History. The building has been a center of community life in Buffalo Valley since its construction in 1929. Used as a school until its closing in 1966, it has been adaptively reused since the mid 1970s as a community center for a variety of events and currently uses one room as a leading library. Throughout its history, fairs, plays, movies and musical performances have been held there. The building is significant educationally as remaining early symbol of the rural education reforms that were instituted by Governor Austin Peay and education reform leaders, Perry L. Harned.

Over the years the building has remained an important source of pride for the citizenry of the community. An annual homecoming reunion draws former students and families from as far away as Florida and Illinois and approaches 100 people. In addition to its role of educating the rural children of Buffalo Valley, it was the gathering place for the community. In the 1930's movies were shown and prior to electrification, Spurrel and Goldie Heflin from Lancaster, pioneering entertainment vendors, traveled rural areas showing the movie of the week. They used a dynamo powered by a Model T. Ford automobile, with cables running through the auditorium windows to energize their projector.[13]

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, thanks to the efforts of progressive principal, many of the stars of Grand Ole Opry regularly played the Buffalo Valley School stage. The procession of country stars stopping over for local performances enroute to large venues included Johnny Cash, Flatt and Scruggs, Uncle Dave Macon, The Carter Family, Chet Atkins, and others according to Dorothy Denny Stout.[14] No one realized that the stage they had played on was the last work of Waymon Leftwich, one of the local carpenters, who completed the stage, went home, had supper, laid down and passed away.[15]

The Leftwich family would go on to prominence in the county and state as newspaper journalists, but never lost their unique ties to their school. Other laborers from the community who are recalled for their contributions include Henry Buckner, Cass Leftwich (brother of Waymon), Jo Bo Medley, and Lem Brown. Bricks to build the school were brought by rail from Nashville and the movement of the bricks to the school site was one that involved most of the kids of the area. The rail siding was located on the southern side of the commercial district and Indian Creek. The children were paid a penny per brick fro carrying them across from the rail siding to the building site.[16] While it may seem a triviality, this simple act of involvement of the future students in the building process of the structure was important. It was an investment by the students in their place of education, and perhaps as much as any financial investment, the inclusion of the young to help their parents build represented the importance of education and the value it represented to the future of their children.

The Maddux family played a major role in Buffalo Valley School's establishment and student population. Henry Grady Maddux donated the land for the school and his eight sons attended it. One son, Bud, was drafted into the Army in World War Two and served in the famed 82nd Airborne Division. As a paratrooper, he jumped into Holland on Operation Market Garden and the story of that action has been immortalized in the book, *A Bridge Too Far*, by Cornelius Ryan. Maddux earned the distinction of being Buffalo Valley's only Prisoner of War as he was captured by the Germans during the battle and served out the war in the coal mines of Poland.[17] He returned to Putnam County and led a good life. Buffalo Valley

School furnished veterans in other wars beside Bud Maddux, perhaps none with as colorful story of their wartime experiences, but nevertheless, they served in World War Two in the European and Pacific theaters, Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War. The wall of heroes that lines the halls attest to the sacrifice for the nation that is remarkable for such a small school and small community.

Jack Williams, retired Tennessee Valley Authority worker, recounted some of his memories during one of the homecomings. Jack was a student from 1942 to 1951. He recalled the spring day he and some of his buddies sneaked off the playground, removed their clothes and proceeded to take a skinny dip in the nearby Indian Creek. The teachers who caught them did not punish them early as severely as they were when they got home. Williams also noted that hey would also climb out of the window in the classroom that is currently used as the library and pull themselves onto the roof where they hid behind the cupola that held the school bell, and smoked cigarettes. Jack and others told the story of the time some nearby fields of corn had been harvested, and for some reason, the boys playing nearby at recess, started a corn cob fight. Before it was over, the entire school was involved and he got sent home for his part.[18]

Luke Leftwich also recounted his tales of remembrances to a group of Buffalo Valley community center gatherings for birthday celebration in 2005. Luke was three when his father died, and for some reason recalls that day, not for his father's death, but because the cows had gotten out of the pasture and he had to help round them up. According to Luke, Cedar Hill, a nearby community, furnished the bead board while Whitson's Planning did the hardwood flowing. He recalled some local "colored boys brought the material into the school. He did recall their last name was DuBois. Luke Leftwich spoke of blacksmith families who earned livings in Buffalo Valley, and the death of Ewing Medley, who fell into the "scalding box" during he fall hog harvest. Among his stories, he told of turning eighteen on Okinawa during World War Two. He was a Marine. Following the war, he was a millwright in Flint Michigan until he retired back to Putnam County.[19]

J. T. Askew originally attended the subscription school in Buffalo Valley. He entered Buffalo Valley School in 1929 in the third grade. He volunteered that his father and Charlie Maddux were against building such a large school until the county agreed to the state mandated funding support. He fondly recalled bringing his lunch to school wrapped in newspapers and proudly of his assignment to go bring the water pail from the Maxwell Store a quarter of a mile away. In 1938, the school, with funding from the Works Progress Administration, brought in cooks, Mrs. Randolph and Mrs. Carlin from Monterrey area. They lived with the Askew family during the week and in exchange the family got the leftovers from the school lunches.[20]

Listening to the accounts of the former students and reading a variety of news articles, the stories of the ordinary events of the times are still recalled with fondness and consistency. These stories are important parts of the documentation underscoring the social history significance of the Buffalo Valley School.

CHAPTER III: THE CHALLENGES OF ADAPTIVE REUSE IN RURAL COMMUNITES:

Rural agriculture America is a vanishing culture. Not one the one romanticized in movie and television, but the one recalled by J. T. Askew, of Buffalo Valley, when he speaks of poverty, mules, and hard work. As the twentieth century brought improved roads and communications, it also brought industrial jobs. The jobs lured the farmers and their offspring to an easier life in the suburbs. As America becomes further removed from the farm, here was a lessening of rural familial ties and distaste for the cultivation of garden foods and "home grown" meat. Often, especially in the south, farm life has been associated with ignorance and lack of sophistication in dress and culture. Thus, following two World Wars, it was difficult to bring them back "down on the farm."

The rural built environment that exemplified a way of life for millions is also being abandoned. The notion of "end destinations" of excitement and artificially generated "pseudo history" properties have diminished the value of rural places in the eyes of many middle class tourists. The challenges for the rural communities to find adaptive reuses for their community buildings will involve local government, local citizen support, and investors working together. Taking a holistic approach to preserving the rural landscape appears to be a logical extension of resources and talents for the common good. It need not be a

reinvention of the wheel but rather a shift in the paradigm of traditional historic preservationist. In many ways, especially in Tennessee, this approach borrows from Tennessee Valley Authority director David Lilienthal's methodology as he convinced local citizens that by working good together good things could be accomplished.

Many of the community buildings survive and therein is the two headed monster of utility (audience) and economics (agency) of ruralism. Is there a population that cares enough to save a way of life, or is the attractions of money for real estate too great to overcome? Some former farm communities now are in city limits or suburban communities that have forced the tax so high the "community" just disappears into the landscape. Such phenomena are happening all around Middle Tennessee. Rural America is faced with economic tensions it has little control over in the form of urban sprawl or increased inability to earn a living. With these issues confronting rural areas, it is difficult to focus a communal attention and resources on preserving local history.

The sustainability of Buffalo Valley School House raises a number of challenging questions. Is Buffalo Valley important enough in these stories to keep the building viable? What are the threats to the preservation of a rural place? Is adaptive reuse economical in the rural setting? Can the historian find a way to tell these stories to an increased audience while its authority and agency are rapidly evolving in an electronic media age? What is the roll of the public historian in these rural situations?

This thesis already has documented that, yes, Buffalo Valley School is important; it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This work also has explored the second questions of the preservation challenges faced by the school and it supporters. This chapter explores the third key question: was the adaptive reuse of the school met with success and is the initial plan sustainable for the future.

The adaptive reuse of Buffalo Valley School, to date, has concentrated on alternatives that serve the public interest and preserve the stories of the place and its surrounding community while using the built environment for a variety of public endeavors. The transformation of the school into a community center serves many needs. The grounds of the school are used for a county-maintained public garbage collection facility. The school serves such public functions as a voting center and the lending library. The lending library currently established in the building is a viable and creative example of adaptive reuse and expanding the value of the community center. The story of the library, its creation and funding can be an attraction for preservationists across the state and nation and it can be used as the catalyst to keep the valley history alive and host the expansion of additional narratives. Population trends however indicate these methods may not long suffice to justify keeping the building and grounds as public property as gerrymandering of voting districts in Putnam County shift with voting patterns.

Buffalo Valley is serving the community, but the question lingers, how can the cost of keeping the building alive be justified without change? Today with only 269 registered voters and limited local resources, what are some of the alternatives.?

The best alternative is to recognize the school as a heritage asset, with many possible uses. The community already has taken important steps in this direction. They are using the school's history and National Register listing as strengths. The most important positive of the school, however, is its location-it is adjacent to an Interstate. It has a large recreational area nearby, and a specialized group of fishing hobbyists that regularly ply the Caney Fork River. It has electricity, plumbing, heating and air controls, though limited. If formerly had central heat that can be restored in conjunction with air conditioning. It is situated on five acres of flat land and has adequate parking areas. It can continue to serve as Community Center as a means of adaptive reuse and survive relatively intact for a while but the challenge if faces currently is a plan for increasing its value to Putnam County not only by preserving its story, but also to defray the real expenses of upkeep. Strategically, the residents of the area have done an excellent job of keeping local officials involved in all of their activities and dialog regarding the building. The citizens did a good job of finding preservation help in assessing the environment and investigating the story which led to its nomination and subsequent placement on the National Register of Historic Places for architectural and cultural contributions to the state and national history of free public rural education. They have established a 501 c 3 non profit as a means of fund raising and grant applications. They have erected a

state historic sign at the school site and they have exposed the school to a variety of professional state historians, raising its unique awareness statewide. These include not only the state folklorist and directors of the Historical Commission and Center for Historic Preservation. For limited resources, the story has done very well in expanding its audience and improving its agency and authority.

To build upon these strengths, however, school supporters should embrace a working plan of inclusiveness and continuity. For instance, they should seek to make the story as broad as possible to accommodate more stakeholders. This is critical in all preservation areas but especially so in rural areas, primarily because the initial stakeholders or locals will be limited in resources and involvement. They are more apt to be willing to volunteer some time or donate a small amount of money, but are likely to have the wider vision of story as it relates to place. Were it not for the widespread interest of citizens and professionals, our national battlefields, from Sandy Hook to Gettysburg would have been overrun with pure commercialization and myth making. The professional public historian has the knowledge and skills to guide the process toward more inclusiveness.

The inclusiveness can be extended to historical resources from graduate assistantships, to local preservation regional planners that report to the mayors and local commissioners. These planners often have connections in other governmental agencies, such as transportation departments at the state level and in the case of rural areas, the U. S. Department of Agriculture as possible partners to include the social and commercial interest that may be overlooked. Caney Fork River near by is a premier trout fly fishing venue. Perhaps there are ways to reach the recreational fishing industry which is American's largest participatory sport and its most expensive. Would the industry be interested in holding workshops and clinics at the school? Officials from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Department may be partners to reach such an audience and the auditorium could be a resource for a variety of programs related to conservation. In addition, in the case of special buildings such as a school, it may be helpful to seek school board or teacher association involvement in formulating the preservation plan. Once the initial plan and direction of the story lines to be preserved, the State Historic Preservation Office can be involved in directing the group toward grants to fund a more definitive and professional long range plane.

With more definitive and inclusive plan, logic follows that the funding agencies are also broadened. Perhaps there are railroad groups that have foundations that can contribute to the important rail story of central Tennessee; likely there are a variety of forest product foundations that might like to preserve the story of wood harvests by Cordell Hull's ancestors. Because there are a number of agricultural products that comprise the story of Buffalo Valley, such as tobacco crops, there may be room to accommodate the Tennessee tobacco story of Middle Tennessee into that of Buffalo Valley; likewise, the whiskey runners of the day the inspired NASCAR may be a source of stakeholders, not to mention the legal distilleries nearby of George Dickel and Jack Daniel. The Tennessee Valley Authority is the largest potential partner in the area along with the U. S. Forest Service. These are all potential stakeholders who seek favorable venues for their history to be presented and can be courted for money, materials, and personnel to preserve the School House.

With a plan, a building, a vision, and persistence, the historian can then move to incorporate the story of place with the ghosts of the past, the raison d'etre of the building and strengthen the historical accuracy of the local story rooted in fact. Here is where we can develop the outlines for answer's to this chapter's fourth and fifth questions: Can the historian find a way to tell these stories to an increased audience while its authority and agency are rapidly evolving in an electronic media age? What is the role of the public historian in these rural situations?

Broader, more inclusive themes have the potential of widening the audience interested in the sustainability of the school. The broadened stakeholder group can then decide how best to put into place future permanent funding sources. Such funding sources may be "piggybacking" onto existing county or state approved programs such as the Cumberland Plateau Heritage Area or the National Scenic Byways Program that may be able to provide trail heads from the School to nearby Caney Fork. Tennessee Tech University, located in Cookeville, is a resource for a variety of projects that may foster day conferences covering subjects from nuclear technology to industrial architecture. The challenges or rural preservation are many and varied. Its greatest challenge is to continue to provide value to its public. Vale can take many forms

but it has to have an audience that influences the authority. Competing interest of private investments for land use often conflict with public wants to preserve. Shrinking tax bases in rural areas are not encouraging to politicians and residents of more densely populated areas who compete for the public dollar. It is no longer sufficient to say that an isolated building is an important architectural structure; nor can it costs be justified by the accident of a public persona is attached. The rural building has to continue to provide tangible value to the community as it did when it was originally built. The original purpose may be altered, but the original stories it represents that make the fabric of place can still be saved and interpreted and grow in importance to future generations as it adds more threads to the fabric of place and value to society.

Again, here is a key role for public historians. Adaptive reuse of a historic building will change the building but it dose not have to change or eliminate the stories associated with that place. The history and meaning of the school must remain integral to its future. That places a burden of the public historian, for the story told at the school cannot be dull and boring. It must come alive and spark dialogue across generations, across cultures, and across competing interest, making the story one that the public can embrace and readily see the property's valuable contribution to society. Selling is a form of storytelling; historians age going to need to adapt themselves as well as the built environment to protect those stories and places we hold dear.

The internet, that wonderfully intrusive took that is growing by the minute in accessibility and technique, is going to shape our future actions as "keepers of the secrets" or being the "decision makers" on what is "important to keep or discard." I means that history as a profession may become more democratic and more participatory audience. It means that agency as we historians traditionally define it is becoming more of a process, constantly shifting, and forcing us to evaluate priority. It will also change the authority of who controls the telling of the past. The changes in technology need to enhance rather than impede the historian's role to be an honest broker, an accurate as possible storyteller and a diligent researcher to find ways for the building, place, and story to benefit the public.

Those who want to preserve our rural landmarks have to be as visionary and committed as were the creators of the buildings. The have to be innovative. They have to engage the audience, agency and authority equally so that a property's value is increased to the public.

Consider, for a final time, Buffalo Valley School House took several important steps with their limited knowledge and human resources. The first was their recognition the building might be part of a larger story than a small Appalachian village, and the second was their desire to use the building in some way to better serve the community's public. Their decision to form a lending library in the building is a great example of local people thinking about helping their local community on a voluntary basis. They followed that decision by asking politicians, librarians, citizens, literally anyone who would listen, to see how they might make a more permanent solution to increasing the building's access to the county. Someone suggested they needed to form a non-profit organization representing the interest of the buildings and library as a means of attracting some recognition and funding. They raised the hundred dollars to form such, figured out how to fill out the paper work and got a state charter for the Friends of the Buffalo Valley School and Library.

Simultaneously, they contacted local historians who led them to the Center for Historic Preservation and place on their waiting list for inspection. The logical first move to save the building after it was determined to have architectural integrity of significance was to search for additional criteria that might make a case for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Though the mantle of protection offered by being recognized for its role in the American story is fragile, it places a large, "Do Not Disturb" sign in front of the building and local politicians. But the role and involvement of public historians as an active participant in the preservation process did not end there – they continued to work with the community to ensure a long future for this significant Tennessee landmark.

CHAPTER IV: ESCAPING DIRE STRAITS:

Essayist and poet Wendell Berry observed: "If you don't know where you're from you'll have a hard time saying where you are going."[1] In *The Art of the Common Place*, he advocates "thinking small"[2] Certainly the preservation of Buffalo Valley School House has required a great deal of thinking small as Berry

advocates. He argues that rather than wait for government to act in “Big” ways, it is far better for locals to act on their own behalf when they see the need to preserve. Erlene Mikitka, Carolyn Huddleston, Barbara Markel, Char Wanser, Pauline Vogel, and their husbands and neighbors saw that need to serve the local public and to act when they may not have realized at the time, they were joining the likes of Bill McKibben in not only preserving buildings, community, and energy, but they were.[3]

Adaptive reuse-a grand concept, a “big concept” – easily captures the imagination of politicians, city planners, and financiers when it is conceived as urban renewal, tax incentives, grants, a chance to make big money with little risk, or garner professional credit when done in heavily populated areas where the stories of adaptive reuse reach mythical proportion. It is not so easily done in rural areas, where population is aging and its density diminishing and where public funding is rationed according to voting trends. The reality of saving the rural story as authentic is that it is challenging but not impossible. There is not a professional historian in Buffalo Valley, or for that matter, few college degrees in the community. Of those directly involved in the preservation efforts only Mikitka and Huddleston are natives of the area, but all have a deep sense of the “place” and the role the school plays in preserving that sense.

The community holds bake sales, ice cream parties, birthday parties, fish fries, small local concerts and hot dog lunches all for donations and fund raising activities to benefit the building and supplement the public dollars from the county. There is no commercial activity close at hand. There is the strong sense of who they are and where they are. A current commercial by Dove, a beauty product of Unilever, is featuring celebrity athletes and actors, used the message, “I am comfortable in my skin.” The people of Buffalo Valley School are that, “comfortable in their skin.” Their story is authentic Appalachian rural life. Their sense of pride and accomplishment in that brick building transcends generations, wealth, and the technical miracles of the twentieth century. The school is that tangible connection to the past; that touchstone to the past not captured in books, movies, or artificial parks or replaced in their hearts by other places they have lived or visited. Long mythologized as ignorant, uneducated, unsophisticated, illiterate farm hicks from the sticks, Buffalo Valley School House of Appalachian Putnam County, decries that tale.

A similar site, Snow Hill School in Bradley County on the Ooltewah and Georgetown Road, is another example of “little” thinking in a rural community with the benefit of being closer to large population centers in Cleveland and Chattanooga. The county government owns Snow Hill school and it serves now as the local volunteer firemen’s headquarters. Aside from its community service use for public safety, it hosts a large gathering of musicians on the first Saturday night of every month for the “Snow Hill Bluegrass Jamboree.” The gymnasium has been converted to seats and stage with band changes every thirty minutes. Every classroom is filled with amateur pickers and players jamming to their content on Appalachian music. The hat is passed once during the night to defray expenses of the fire department equipment and contributions are voluntary. The residents of Snow Hill, like Buffalo Valley, also put on some dinner events for the community and are especially known for their barbecue.[4]

Wallace Stegner, Pulitzer Prize winning author and Professor has written continuously of the importance of the sense of place in our human history. *Angle of Repose*, his award-winning novel, speaks to the narrative of rural humanity as it is contrasted to urban driven progress; but he continues to speak to the need of man to the notion of “place” as reflective of their humanity. From *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* in 1943, his earliest novel, to his last collection of essays, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* in 1992, Stegner eschews the attachment of his characters to that tangible longing to place. His last published essays in that publication are entitled, “A Sense of Place” and “A Letter to Wendell Berry.” In speaking to Berry, he says, “The nature you love in not wild but humanized, disciplined to the support of human families.,.your province in not the wilderness, but the farm, the neighborhood, the town, the memory of the past and hope of the future…everything that is subsumed under the word ‘place’”[5] J. B. Leftwich, a graduate of Buffalo Valley School, and retired columnist of *The Tennesseean*, wrote a piece for the *Cookeville Herald-Citizen* in May 23, 2010. He titled it “Reflecting on Buffalo Valley School” and wrote it following the dedication of the state historical maker placed there.

That day, May 12, there were close to a hundred people on hand for the brief ceremony including the Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Commission, Patrick McIntyre. He came across as equally impressed with the sense of history, the sense of importance, the attachment of so many people that they

still came to a distant place to be with one another and to add to the stories of Buffalo Valley School and affirm its place in their hearts and Tennessee's.

Adaptive reuse? So far it has worked in Buffalo Valley School, but how do they perpetuate the preservation of it? How do they do conserve the historic fabric? How can it be a model to others who might seek to follow in rural preservation with all its obstacles? The Friends of the Library have taken several of the first steps. They recognized their story and its relevance. They sought permission to use the building from proper authority. They have broadened their audience and authority by promoting its placement on the National Register of Historic Places, which affords a degree of future protection by the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office. By having the Center of Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University to sponsor and prepare the National Register nomination and by having state and local politicians involved in their events, they have extended the influence of their local agency. By continually collecting and telling the local stories and making it part of the state and national history of free public education to all in the nation, they have taken long strides for the building's preservation. What other steps might they take to assure long term survival?

The Friends of the Library need to establish an ongoing liaison with the county executive director, Kim Blalock. This is a critical initial step since the country is undergoing internal restructuring and the current Community Center Boards will vanish along with the Parks and Recreation Department for Putnam County. This is a move mandated by new Tennessee state audit requirements. The local politics are unclear at the moment making this a priority to maintain their authority to use the building and hold a variety of events and to secure some rural community control. With continuity and communication established the possibilities can be expanded in many directions to protect the historic integrity and take advantage of their easy accessibility and access. Since the voting population is likely to remain small, the more funding mechanisms the supporters of the school establish will make it easier to preserve the building.

One of the more innovative approaches recently has been the efforts of the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area in Maryland. Lacking a large tangible "place" they took advantage of technology to write a narrative script of local stories of places as told by local people and created a CD for sale to tourists that could be played as visitors drove through the heritage area. A state heritage area grant initially funded the project. The Buffalo Valley Friends of the Library could develop a similar product, seeking help from the State Folklorist and the Mass Communication staffs at either Tennessee Tech in Cookeville or Middle Tennessee State Universities. The state department of tourism may be a funding source or partial resource for such a project. The Center for Historic Preservation may also have some support mechanism. The essence of an undertaking like this is to expand the audience and story. It should be an easy marketing task to local markets along Interstate 40 or over 40,000 vehicles daily. With no publicity dollars available to the small groups, it is feasible to expand their authority by sharing it with partners.

A weekly television program produced by Nashville Public Television titled *Tennessee Crossroads* focuses on rural state historical stories and may be a source of free publicity to create more awareness of the education story and the importance of Buffalo Valley School in our state's rural history.

There success at Snow Hill School is another potential source for publicity and funds. Music and food at Buffalo Valley School on a regular basis can make it a special venue attraction for heritage tourists. This offers a way to enhance revenue with a minimal disturbance to the building and grounds by only having it as a monthly or special holiday event. Will the school's existing wall displays, such public events would also bring new attention to the property's education. It expands the importance of story and place within the county and state and offers the opportunity for easier sources for funding its preservation. Entrepreneurially, there are many ways to promote a variety of revenue streams following a business model of very high quality product, licensing, sound marketing and careful stewardship of the funds raised to continually update the story of Buffalo Valley and rural Putnam County.

It may be possible for the Friends group to reach out to the county and regional education boards for it to be used as a venue for certain grades to use to teach Tennessee history for a day. This can involve bag lunches, school bus delivery, supervision of the students, teacher, and parents, and a liaison person to tell

some of the local stories. Limited festival days that preserve the integrity of place and story offer another possible means of extending the audience. Such past historic events like May Day in the spring offer the chance for a bazaar like festival of limited quantities. Arbor Day and Earth Day are additional days on the calendar that offer Buffalo Valley the opportunities to attract different groups to the school.

The school's rural setting also creates potential opportunities. Cracker Barrel, Logan's Steakhouse and other successful corporate food marketers that ply to the rural food oriented customer base might use the site for a special event for their training seminars in leadership or sponsor a meal. The First Tennessee Bank might be a corporate sponsor due to its demonstrated interest in Tennessee history and culture.

Lastly, venues like Buffalo Valley School will need to avail itself of the electronic media of the internet. A website can be set up by a variety of specialists today for a nominal feel of less than two hundred dollars and maintained by that contractor for approximately thirty dollars a month. These costs can be defrayed in part by tapping into available state resources to place their message on the site. Also the school's nonprofit status can access the private sector for advertisements, but care should be exercised that the mission of the nonprofit and its preservation efforts are not compromised. In all endeavors, the nonprofit preservation organization must ensure that all protocols and etiquettes are observed, especially with other local sites within the region that they are respectful of those days or occasions that are already being used by them. Character is of the highest requirement for maintaining the credibility of the organization and the venue it represents.

Rural historic venues will have to seek innovative methods to continue their preservation efforts. They must find their way off the *Big Rock Candy Mountain*. A song of specious origins credited to Harry McClintock in post World War One and popularized by the late Burl Ives, the song is about the dependency upon the government and those rural chasers of rainbows.[6] Some of their stories can be found in Audrey June Lambert's books at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville and family stories found on her website, http://www.ajlambert.com. *Place* is about values, historically, contributory, truth, and in the sense of the School of Annales, "little." If these "little" values contribute to the fabric of history, they warrant preserving. In the case of the rural forgotten community it is important that their stories be honestly expanded in truth to larger audience to increase their agency. What is meant in this sense is the vernacular for "clout" and Wendell Berry aside, evolutionary survival for these sites will be those which are able to do this by drawing on all resources available to them. It may mean a combination of means, private, government, trusts, foundations, or by suing outside marketing consultants to help them Whatever the approach, public historians need to be engaged and involved because places like Buffalo Valley School help them reach that new audience to create awareness of history's values to our society.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER I.

[1]Charles E. Martin, *Hollybush: folk building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984) and Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988) both underscore the Appalachian values of education.

[2]Byron Sistler & Associates, *Putnam County Tennessee, Miscellaneous Records, WPA Transcript, 1936,* (Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1998), 85. Other inclusions in the transcriptions are property descriptions of Virgil Denny.

[3]*Putnam County School Board Minute Boos, Book 7-61-8-68,* p. 85, dated January 19, 1963, "School attendance was discussed at length, the Board agreed that since no school age child in the county is to be denied entrance in Public Schools of the county, the superintendent should convey the decision of the board to principals now working in the county system in order that schools in the county system in the county may enjoy a continuing successful operation for all students and teacher." This appears to begin the integration process legally within county schools. Mrs. Clara Denny Principle at Buffalo Valley was reassigned to that position at Baxter Elementary as school began on September 9, 1965. Mrs. Craighead

was promoted to principal from teacher, and by September 24, 1965, low attendance was reported for several county schools including Buffalo Valley. On page 199 of these minutes, dated November 5, 1965, "Mrs. Beatrice Craighead and her sister, Mrs. Lena Plunkett along with several parents stated they would not go back to Buffalo Valley School to teach or principal under circumstances." The school was closed at the end of the school year and the issue was apparently integration.

[4]Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 163-164.

[5]Homecomins 86 Scrapbook, Buffalo Valley School National Register Nomination File, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

[6]*Cookeville Herald Citizen*, November 18, 1992.

[7]William A. Link, "The Social Context of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930," *The Wilson Era: Essay in Honor of Arthur S. Link,* ed. By John M. Cooper and Charles E. Neu (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1991), 55.

[8]"Baxter, Jere," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.* Ed. By Carroll Van West, (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 51-52. Also see: Jeanette Keith *Country People in the New South: Tennessee's Upper Cumberland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[9]Buffalo Valley School National Register Nomination File.

[10]A common theme among writers known as the Agrarians or the Twelve Southerners, was that in spite of shortcomings, the south was culturally based on Scotch Irish feudalism that gave it a common heritage of government confiscation of their land and rights. It was a culture based upon chivalric notion, an ancient concept of the Gentleman; honor a non creedal faith and the linking of name to land. The most well known of these writers is Robert Warren Penn and their collectively best known publication is *I Will Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930).

[11]Buffalo Valley School Nomination File.

[12]*Building Plans for Rural School House* (Nashville: State Department of Education, 1928), 4-5.

[13]Fletcher B. Dresslar Papers, Vanderbilt University, Special Collections and Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Nashville, Tennessee, Assorted manuscripts, boxes 1-5.

[14]David E. Kyvig and Myron E. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You, Second Edition,* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 2000), serves as a guidebook to assist citizens as well as professionals to uncover hidden stories.

[15]William A. Link, *The Paradox of Souther Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 4-8.

[16]Jean Thomas, *Blue Ridge Country,* ed by Erskine Caldwell. (New York: Duell, Sloan, & Pearce, 1942).

[17]Connie L. Lester, *Up From the Mudsills of Hell: The Farmer's Alliance, Populism, and Progressive Agriculture in Tennessee* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 157-162.

[18]Ralph E. Samples, "The Development of Public Education in Tennessee During the Bourbon Era, 1870-1900." (Phd. diss., University of Tennessee, 1965), 3.

[19]Lester, *Up From the Mudsills of Hell,* 130-134, 177.

[20]Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930,* 32-59.

[21]Ibid, 4.

[22]Following ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution by Tennessee on August 18, 1920, several formal national education organizations formed. The Parent Teacher Association was formed in 1924 and became a local tool for rural women's voices in the state education reforms.

[23]David Andrew Holt, *The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 1903-1936* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938), 329-330. State Education Superintendent Brown and Harned were able to create an attitude among educators to improve progress by improving instruction in the public school, this moving the debate from the public forum to school people themselves. Also see: Keith, *Country People,* 118-42.

[24]Holt, 343, 345.

[25]Holt, Ibid., 366-375.

[26]Link, "The Social Context of Southern Progressivism," 55-82 and Thomas, *Blue Ridge Country,* 10-16 explain the origins of the importance of land to the Scotch Irish settlers and their fears of governmental confiscation and discuss the importance of honor and opinions the culture was based upon a chivalric notion, and concept of the Gentleman.

[27]There are several architects attributed to the standard Tennessee School Plans and it is likely some of these have their roots in the Rosenwald School Plans under S. L. Smith in conjunction with Dr. Fletcher B. Dresslar, Agent for the US Bureau of Education and professor at Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville. Respectively their papers can be found at Fisk University and the Heard Special Collections Library of Vanderbilt University.

[28]Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* (New York: Random House, 1992), 205.

.[29]National Register records are at the Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville.

CHAPTER II

[1]*Building Plans*, 26-31.

[2]Dresslar Papers, Heard Library, Nashville. Orientation for light was an insistence by Fletcher Dresslar as well as window height to afford maximum interior brightness for students. Among his other requirements were the shad of paint, height of windows in conjunction with student desks to optimize light and minimize glare.

[3]National Register Nomination of Historic Places, Buffalo Valley School, Putnam County, TN, Section 7, page 1. Copies are located at the Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville and MTSU, Center for Historic Preservation, Murfreesboro

[4]Ibid., 2.

[5]Photo provided to author by Mrs. Carolyn Huddleston of Buffalo Valley.

[6]Dresslar Papers, Heard Library. Wainscoting is thirty three inches high and eight inch protective baseboards were features to protect the building from damage while moving desks to maximize student access. The ceiling heights are important to maximize light in lieu of electricity and to allow better air circulation in an age of high communicable diseases and poor rural hygiene.

[7] *Putanm County School Board Minutes Book,* p. 241. Records indicate that a new well was authorized at the same time.

[8] Buffalo Valley School National Register Nomination File.

[9] Mark Wretschko, National Sales Manager, American Chair Company, furnished the copy of the order authorized by the school board and placed by the Nashville Products Company, along with the factory order dated 18 February 1949.

[10] Cakewalks were a game on the order of musical chairs, and the winners won a cake. Music was played and numbers of the squares were drawn to establish the winner. A participant purchased a ticket for each cakewalk. They were used for fund raising in the south at a variety of functions from fairs, churches, schools, and assorted fundraising activities.

[11] Buffalo Valley School National Register Nomination File.

[12] *Putnam County School Board Minutes,* 7-29-1-35, 187. R. L. Polk, *Polk's City Directory, 1950,* Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

[13] Buffalo Valley School National Register Nomination File..

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV:

[1] Berry cited in the website, goodreads.com/wendellberry (accessed January 31, 2011).

[2] Wendell, Berry, *The Art of the Common Place: The Agrarian Essays,* ed by Norman Wirzba, (Washington, D. C.: Counterpoint, 2002), 87-88.

[3] Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (new York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008).

[4] "Snow Hill School Bluegrass Jamboree website:" http://sites.google.com/site/snowhillbluegrass (accessed March 22, 2001). Bill McClure, retired General Manager of Maytag in Cleveland and former fellows officer in the Army, is an avid bluegrass and Appalachian enthusiast and on many occasion has shared the stories of the Saturday night sessions.

[5] Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs,* 209.

[6] Harry McClintock, songwriter, is the attributed author of the song that came out of the depression about those men who had always envisioned a bigger payday or more wonderful life, primarily based on

slackardness and alcohol. It is also the title of Wallace Stegner's first novel, a biographical fiction about such a dream weaver.

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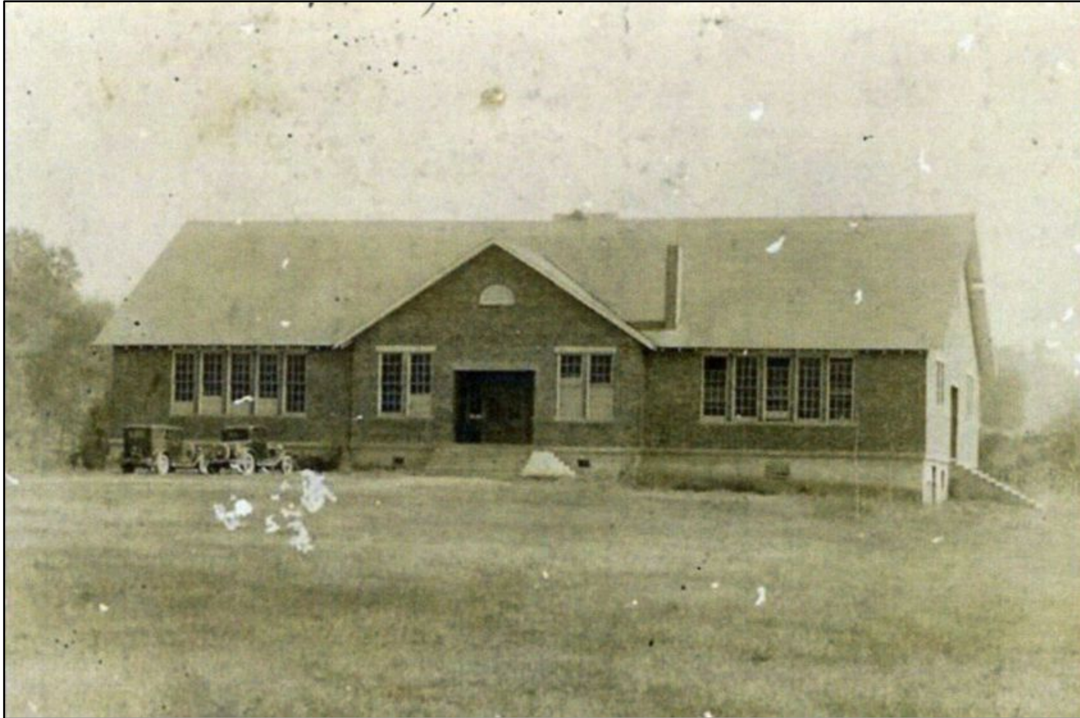
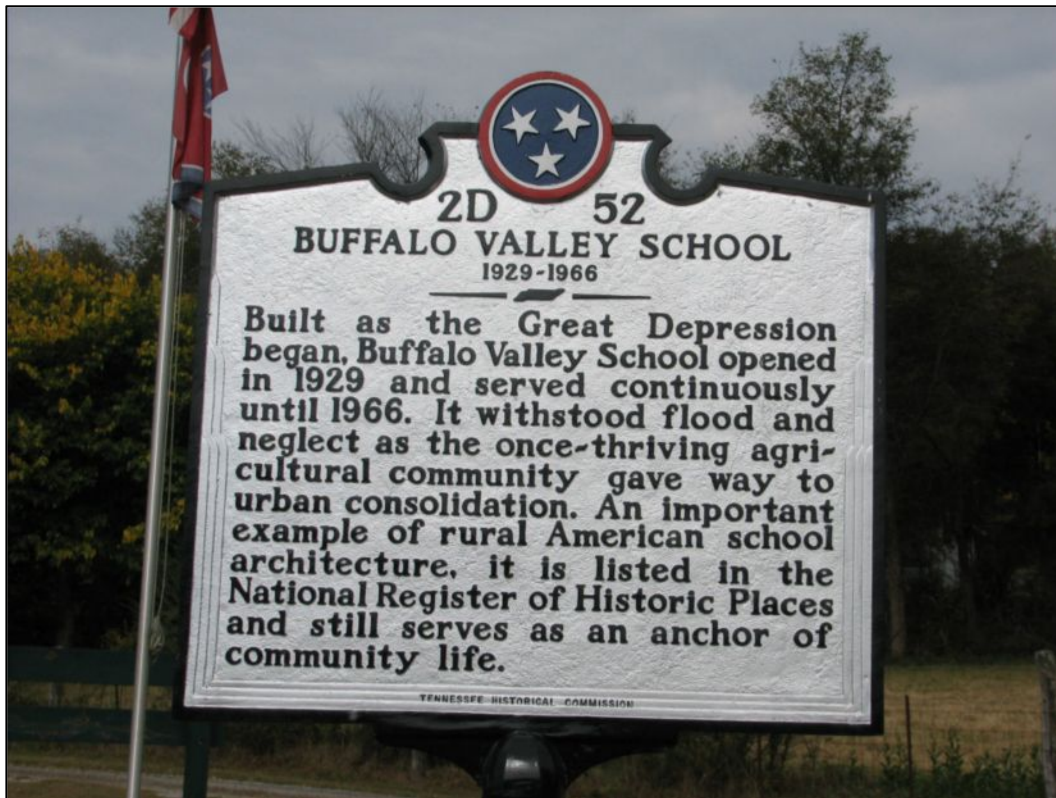


FIG. 1. Historic Image of Buffalo Valley School, c. 1930

FIG. 2 Buffalo Valley School

FIG. 3 Buffalo Valley School Marker, courtesy of Audrey June Lambert



*Read more about Buffalo Valley School and Community Center at:
http://www.ajlambert.com