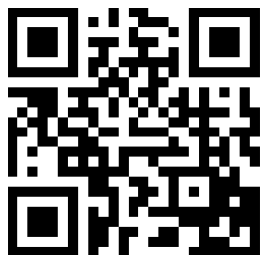


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T O U R G U I D E



Historic Fincastle

The History, Sites, and Structures
of Fincastle, Virginia



The Town of Fincastle

Fincastle, located 20 miles north of Roanoke on U.S. 220, was established in 1770. Incorporated in 1772, today the quiet and quaint village is a virtual museum of American architecture from the late 1770s through the 21st century.

The town began as and remains the seat of Botetourt County. Fincastle was the governmental center of a vast tract of land that once included the present state of Kentucky and much of what is now West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and the southern tip of Wisconsin.

George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and other prominent Virginians either appeared in Fincastle or sent their agents to lay claim to tracts of wilderness lands. Thousands of English, German, and Scots-Irish pioneers passed through on their way on The Great Valley Road which traversed the famed Shenandoah Valley to settle the western frontier country.

Combining the talents of German craftsmen and Scots-Irish merchants and lawyers, early Fincastle residents built a town of well-proportioned houses and public buildings, a substantial number of which still survive. Court House Square contains the Jeffersonian-style courthouse, a jail and the old Western Hotel.

Three antebellum and two late 19th century churches still serve their congregations. The narrow streets are lined with a variety of architectural styles. Houses of early smiths, wagon makers, and saddlers were usually built of logs and covered with clapboards. Commercial establishments and houses of the more wealthy were built of brick. The surrounding countryside is also rich in frontier architecture and historic lore.

Residents of Fincastle and Botetourt County welcome those who wish to explore the past and see a glimpse of American history.

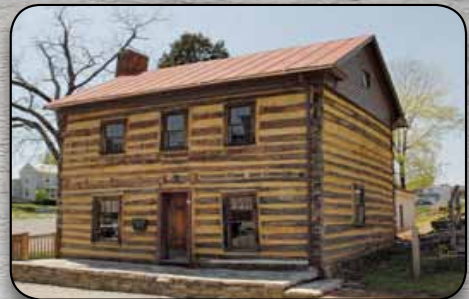


Kyle House/Bolton's Store *(site 26)*



Fincastle Presbyterian Church *(site 28)*

*The Fincastle Historic District was named to the **National Register of Historic Places** and the **Virginia Landmarks Register** in 1969.*



Crowder House *(site 25)*

Fincastle began as a colonial frontier village. During its early years it was one of the last outposts for pioneers moving westward down through the Valley of Virginia.

- 1 Botetourt County Court House** [1 W. Main St.] *rebuilt 3 times* The Court House is the 4th such building to occupy the present site. The first building was a log structure. The second courthouse building was erected in 1818 with plans provided to James Breckinridge by Thomas Jefferson and may have had a dome rather than a steeple. The third courthouse, built in 1845, was partially destroyed by fire in 1970. The present courthouse was rebuilt and rededicated in 1975. During the fire, records dating to 1770 survived within the building's vault and are available for historical and genealogical research. In the early 1970s, HFI coordinated with other groups in the placement of utility wires underground around Court House Square.



Lewis & Clark NOAA Disc [Court House lawn] *installed 2012* This marker commemorates the relationship between explorers Lewis and Clark and Fincastle. William Clark was honored in a town celebration in 1807.



- 2 Museum Building** [3 W. Main St.] *circa 1800* Located in Court House Square, this building houses the Botetourt County Museum. One room is thought to be the law office of General James Breckinridge.

- 3 Western Hotel** [5 W. Main St.] *circa 1809* A destination hotel through the early 1900s, it also served as the Federal Courthouse. The brick building was built after the great fire of 1870, which started in the hotel stable. The earlier hotel was a wooden structure.

- 4 Tavern** [9 W. Main St.] *circa 1809* The site of entertainment for hotel guests and locals. A frame addition burned in 1968 and was the first restoration of HFI.

- 5 Old Jail Building** [13 W. Main St.] *circa 1897* Restored by HFI after the first Fall Festival in 1968, it is best known for its New Orleans-influenced iron and grill work. In early times, the jailer lived downstairs, women prisoners were on the second floor, and men on the third. The ceiling of the Jailer's quarters is steel reinforced concrete to prevent an inmate from 'digging out of jail'. It ceased to be a jail in 1962 and was used as a library.



- 6 Douglas Building** [10 W. Main St.] *circa 1820/rebuilt* Two story brick building with double front porches built on a stone foundation that encloses a basement dating to the 1820s. The building burned in an 1870 fire and was rebuilt on the old foundation. It was restored by HFI in 1977 with protective covenants and sold in 1981.

- 7 Blacksmith Shop/Wysong Park** [W. Main St.] *circa 1840* Restored in 1978 by HFI and the Wysong family whose ancestor, Fiatt Wysong, was a blacksmith in Fincastle. It contains many old blacksmith tools. The Park was donated by Wysong descendants to HFI.

- 8 Hayth Hotel** [19 Roanoke St.] *circa 1872* Accommodated up to 150 guests and was the scene of costume balls, musicales and dances in the ballroom that no longer exists. A destination hotel to avoid the heat and mosquitoes of the south. 1880 room rates were \$25 a month. HFI purchased and resold the house with protective covenants in 1981.



- 9 The Luster Building** [2 W. Main St.] *circa 1884* Completed in 1894 and housed the J. O. Luster Tin and Stove Establishment. Iron cornice, window capping on the front of the building, and stained and penciled brickwork survives to this day. The bay window was constructed to provide light for a dentist, later used by the first telephone operators.



- 10 Bank of Fincastle** [17 Roanoke St.] *circa 1875* Botetourt County's oldest bank originally named the Farmers Bank. The Bank of Fincastle was founded on September 22, 1875. The bank moved to its current location in 1908. Two Fincastle businesses have conducted business each workday for over 135 years. The oldest, The Fincastle Herald, began its publication in 1866 and for the past 145 years has published one paper per week. The Bank of Fincastle is the second oldest business.



- 11 Carper House** [28 Roanoke St.] *circa 1831* A back section dates to 1831. The front Victorian addition was added to the structure between 1890 and 1904.

- 12 Methodist Parsonage** [29 Roanoke St.] *circa 1875* This house was used as a parsonage from 1891 – 1969.

- 13 Hedrick House** [19 Murray St.] *circa 1835* The building was a chair factory and in later years was used as a dressmaker's and tailor's shop by the Hedrick family. Confederate uniforms were made in this house and later the first Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) uniforms were made here. Fincastle was once considered as a location for VPI.



- 14 Smith-Switzer House** [102 Roanoke St.] *circa 1876* Built after the original dwelling was destroyed by fire. The iron work reflects the New Orleans influence.

- 15 Boarding House** [103 Roanoke St.] *circa 1885* Used in part as a tourist-boarding house. Features ornamental trim on the top porch and a medallion at the 2nd floor eave near the driveway.

- 16 Thompson-Carper-Slicer House** [110 Roanoke St.] *circa 1792 (log portion)* Has a log shop built in 1792, a brick house in 1830, and a frame addition in 1880. This is one of the few brick homes with Georgian characteristics in Fincastle.



- 17 St. Mark's Episcopal Church** [211 Roanoke St.] *after 1837* In 1837, the Vestry of the Botetourt Anglican Parish bought land on the west side of Roanoke Street in Fincastle for the sum of \$175. Gothic influence shows in its pointed arches over the doorway and windows; however, the interior is traditionally colonial in style. The electrified lighting fixtures are probably original to the building. The church still has the King George III era communion service which dates from the early church and was preserved during the Civil War by the Breckinridge family. The congregation dates from the 1770s and at that time was the 'established' Church of England.



- 18 Godwin Cemetery** [Church St.] Earliest graves date from the mid 1800s and are located along Church Street, on land purchased by James Godwin in 1801 for a family graveyard. A portion of his property was deeded to John Slicer in 1891 for his family burials. At the top of the hill was land owned by A.E.G. Aurick, which passed to the Bolton family. By 1898, the Godwin Cemetery Trustees acquired the properties. The honey locust tree near the entrance of the church is listed on the American Forests Big Tree Registry.

- 19 Fincastle United Methodist Church** [136 Church St.] *circa 1840* The congregation was formed in 1789. The original building was condemned, torn down with the aid of oxen teams, and replaced by the present Greek Revival style structure in 1840 following a great revival conducted by William Craft. The Botetourt Circuit was formed in 1789 under Bishop Francis Asbury's leadership.



- 20 Old Saddler Shop** [120 Church St.] *circa 1795* Houses along Church Street are some of the earliest remaining dwellings in Fincastle. These buildings were able to escape the two great fires that swept the town in 1820 and again in 1870. The bottom part of the house was the shop and the upper floors were used as living quarters. In 1983, HFI purchased and restored the Saddler's Shop for \$30,000.



- 21 Helms-Ayers House** [115 Church St.] *circa 1799* Originally was constructed as a four room log cabin. HFI purchased and later sold the home with protective covenants in 1987.

- 22 Hatter's Shop** [116 Church St.] *circa 1834* Housed the shop on the 1st floor and living quarters on the 2nd floor.



- 23 Backenstoe House** [102 Church St.] *circa 1783* Originally a two story structure built of logs and covered with clapboard. House shown on Gray's 1880 map of Fincastle as a one-room structure with a porch.

- 24 James Matten Early Cabin** [121 Murray St.] *circa 1796* Log portion of this building was built between 1796 and 1798 of rough-hewn logs by the town tailor, James Matten Early and was restored by HFI. The front log room contains the kitchen, dining, sleeping, and gathering area with a stone fireplace. A sleeping loft is above. In 1982, HFI received a \$25,000 grant from the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission and completed restoration in 1987 with an additional \$53,000 contributed by HFI. The cabin was a gift to HFI from Aurich Bolton.



- 25 Crowder House** [17 Church St.] *circa 1791* Restored by HFI in 1976 for \$8000 to the original log structure. Stuart Carter gave the house to HFI.

- 26 Kyle House/Bolton's Store** [101 E. Main St.] *circa 1830* Robert Kyle, a prosperous landowner and merchant, built this house as a residence and a store. In 1833, the property was operated as a hotel. From 1914 until the 1970s, the house was known as Bolton's Store. The three-story brick structure has a hand-laid limestone foundation. Interior walls are also brick, covered by plaster. The building was originally L-shaped with a separate outdoor kitchen. Limestone frames the tops and bottoms of the doors and windows. The building is best known for exquisitely carved interior woodwork on fireplace mantels, archways, door frames, and the large scale three-story open staircase. Tradition has it that an itinerant German woodcarver rendered the carvings. Floor and ceiling beams are hand-hewn and pegged. A prominent feature is the large second-story ballroom.



- 27 Fincastle Baptist Church** [45 E. Main St.] *circa 1895* Organized in August 1831 under Absalom Dempsey. Construction began in January 1891 in Victorian Romanesque style. This structure was used by the congregation until 2005 when they outgrew the facilities. It is now a private residence.



- 28 Fincastle Presbyterian Church and Cemetery** [108 E. Back St.] *circa 1771* On this site is the original Church of England building erected in 1771. The Presbyterian congregation began in 1754 as the Sinking Spring Congregation. In 1840, the entrance was changed from facing east to face south, and the Greek Revival Style columns and tall steeple were added. Some of the pews are original. The original bell is said to have been the sister to the Liberty Bell. J. Wellbank of Philadelphia cast the present bell in 1829. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and with the Virginia Landmarks Commission within the Fincastle Historic District. The southwest area of the cemetery, where no gravestones are visible, is the burial place of some of the Botetourt Revolutionary War area soldiers and patriots of the Fincastle community. In June 1973, a Memorial Grave marker was erected to honor these soldiers and American patriots.



- 29 The Big Spring** [Back St.] A public watering place from Indian days, it was part of the land granted by King George III to Israel Christian, who included it in the original boundaries of Fincastle in 1770. Water Street served as a market area for vendors and Back Street was known as Jockey Alley for horse trading. In 1979, HFI built a Gazebo at a cost of \$3,500. The park is now owned and maintained by the Town of Fincastle.

- 30 Godwin Cottage** [21 Water St.] *before 1880* An example of Federal architecture and believed to have been based on a design by Thomas Jefferson. Built by Dr. Williams and sold to Dr. Godwin, practicing physicians in Fincastle.



- 31 Peck Cottage** [119 Jefferson St.] *circa 1784* One of the very early small log homes clustered around the town spring. A simple log structure of rough cut logs that are exposed in the original front room and loft. Original casement windows can be seen in the loft. A dugout for food storage still remains. The original dimension of the one-room house was 16x20 feet.



- 32 Peck Corner House** [120 Jefferson St.] *circa 1791* Early small log home near the town spring built on land deeded from Israel Christian to George Hancock.

- 33 Stoner House** [202 Carper St.] *circa 1790* The left-side of this house is believed to have been built as early as 1790 as identified on the earliest maps of Fincastle. The right-side addition was added in the 1850s. There is a distinctive difference between the brick work on the left and right sides.



- 34 Ware House** [117 N. Monroe St.] *circa 1790* The front two-story rooms are log construction. The kitchen and dining rooms were added in the early 1800s and back rooms in the mid-1900s.

- 35 Hancock House** [224 Back St.] *circa 1786* This cottage-type house was built by George Hancock of Santillane. It is believed he built this house for use by tradesmen. The original structure is log and consisted of two rooms with a sleeping loft. The floors are wide board planks.



- 36 Israel Christian House** [312 Back St.] *circa 1772 (West side)* Thought to be the oldest house in Fincastle, the original structure is a one-story log building constructed in 1772 by Israel Christian. A second floor was added above the log structure sometime later. Christian willed the home to one of his slaves, Becky Holmes. The first black school



Godwin Cemetery (site 18)

may have been in the basement room of this house and according to published accounts, the first black church services were held in an adjoining room. In 1811, a post and beam addition was constructed to the east of the log structure. A rear addition was added in the late 1800s. Interior rooms are connected directly to each other with no hallways.

- 37 Sally Douglas House** [315 Back St.] *circa 1790s* An early house that is believed to have been a potter's house. Two large fireplaces are evidence of pottery making.

- 38 Aspen Hill** [322 E. Main St.] *circa 1835* Built by Captain Sam Figgat in classical style called "Tuscan idiom" or Italianate architecture. The once separate kitchen has been connected by a passageway, known because the dining room windows look out to a hall.



- 39 Mays Cottage** [313 E. Main St.] *circa 1830* Built by F. H. Mays and includes a mantel and beams from earlier dwellings in other parts of Virginia. It survived a fire which destroyed an adjacent home.

- 40 Reinhart-Luster House** [210 E. Main St.] *circa 1890* This large house has a wide center hallway and stairway. The structure was a female academy.

- 41 Hammit House** [20 E. Main St.] *circa 1858* This is a wonderful example of early Fincastle structures. The house has been restored to protect the original structure. Its plants are a wonderful example of a cottage-type garden.



- 42 Kyle House** [123 E. Main St.] *early 1800s* Built by Robert Kyle. The front door opened directly onto the street. Part of house was destroyed in fire, exposing the fireplace on the west side. Restored in 2012. Bungalows west of Kyle House were built by Mr. French Bolton of Academy Hill for his sons. Once run as a tavern by Mrs. Backus, an early tavern owner.



- 43 Oliver House** [112 E. Main St.] *circa 1871* Originally a two room house with four additional rooms added later.

- 44 Lewis Houseman House (Solitude)** [108 E. Main St.] *circa 1802* Built by a local store owner. Housman's store was at the northeast corner of Main and Roanoke Street. This house has four major fireplaces but the chimneys are not visible from Main Street. The Federal Style house was later embellished with gingerbread railings and a center medallion.



- 45 Carper House (Price Lunsford House)** [35 E. Main St.] *circa 1883* Built by George W. Carper as a wedding gift for one of his daughters, Mrs. John Slicer, who refused to live in it. It was later sold to the Presbyterian congregation for use as their manse.



- 46 Price House** [25 E. Main St.] *circa 1870* Built by Judge Hudson, this Victorian style has 11 ft. ceilings on the first floor, 16 ft. ceilings on the 2nd floor, multi-storied bay windows, and a suspended staircase. Ornate wrought iron over the windows adds a New Orleans influence.



- 47 Gray House** [26 E. Main St.] *circa 1870* Built by Rev. Gray, a Baptist minister, the original structure burned in 1870. The rebuilt house has bay windows, four full porches, upper and lower, in front and back, and two separate basements.

- 48 Figgat House and law offices** [20 E. Main St.] *circa 1880* Built by Captain Jim Figgat with 18 inch brick outer walls, high ceilings, and imported marble fireplaces is built in the Victorian style. The widow's walk on the top is very unusual architecture in the area.

- 49 Ammen House** [203 Botetourt Rd.] *circa 1826* Recipient of Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation's 2008 Renovation Award. Built by Benjamin Ammen close to his woolen mill. The woodwork in this Federal style has Gothic arches on the living room mantelpiece and Adam fan over front door. It has 10-foot ceilings, rooms that measure 20x20 and heart of pine floors.



Historic buildings outside of the town's limits:

- 50 Academy Hill** [325 Church St.] *circa 1873* One of Fincastle's most unique houses. The Victorian house was constructed in the shape of a cross and has encircling porches and large airy rooms with front and back stairways. It has a 3-story turret, referred to as a widow's walk, and is fronted by a stone wall.



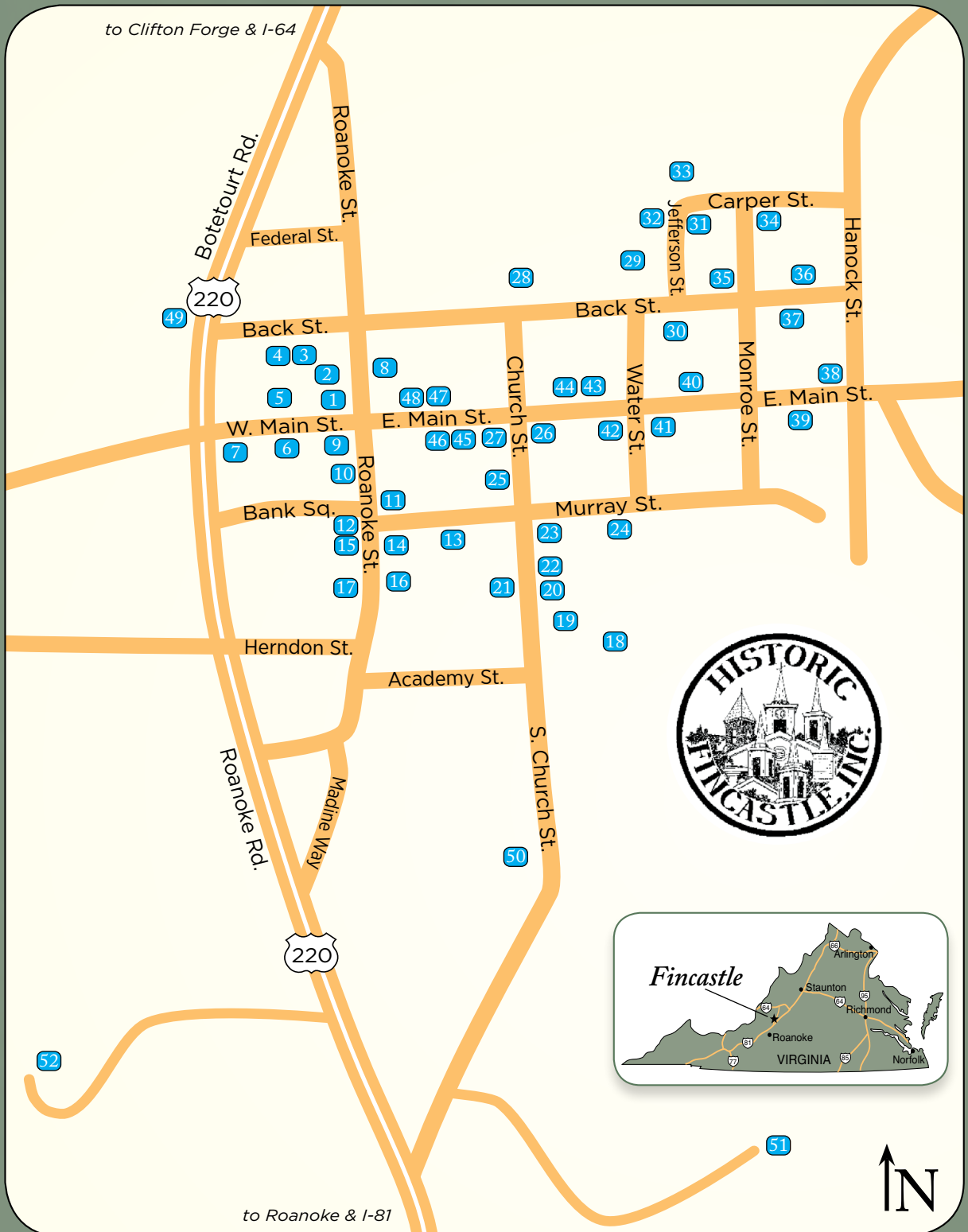
- 51 Prospect Hill** [420 Church St.] *circa 1837* Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and with the Virginia Landmarks Commission is this large Federal style home with a two-level portico and rare flush-board siding. Two side wings were added in the 1940s. Built by Mr. John Gray and known as Gray's Folly. A large center hallway has an open stairway to the second floor.



- 52 Santillane** [99 Housman St.] *circa 1820* Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A marker on US 220 calls it "one of Botetourt County's most distinguished properties." The Greek Revival house sits on a tract of land originally owned by Colonel George Hancock, a member of the United States Congress from 1793-1797. The original 1795 structure burned in 1812 and the house you see today was completed in 1820. In 1808 Hancock's daughter, Judith, married General William Clark, who served from 1803 to 1806 as a leader of Thomas Jefferson's famous Lewis and Clark Expedition which was instrumental in opening the West for American settlement. Clark reportedly named the Judith River in Montana after the young girl he left in Fincastle while he sought a route to the Pacific.



to Clifton Forge & I-64



to Roanoke & I-81

STREET MAP OF FINCASTLE