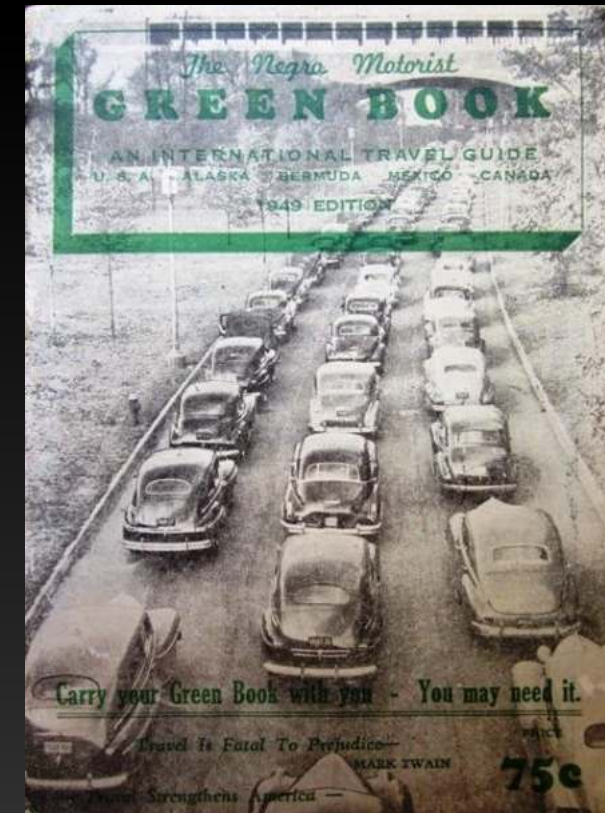


Re-Visiting Virginia's Frontier Icon: Black Lives at Natural Bridge, from Patrick Henry & Thomas Jefferson to *The Green Book*

Eric Wilson, Rockbridge Historical Society



Institutional & Personal Thanks

Matthew Jackson, Natural Bridge State Park

Jurette Heckscher, Library of Congress

Jefferson Looney, Monticello

Christopher Oliver, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

David Coffey, Rockbridge Historical Society & VMI

Seth Goodhart & Lisa McCown, Washington & Lee Univ. Archives

Ted DeLaney, W&L Dept. of History

Alison Bell, W&L Dept. of Anthropology

Lynn Rainville, W&L Institutional History & Museums

Julie Goyette, Rockbridge Regional Library

Christopher Wilson, Smithsonian Museum of American History

Henry Louis Gates, Harvard Univ. Hutchins Center for Af-Am Research

Matthew Gibson, Virginia Humanities

Dorette Sobolewski, Frontier Culture Museum

Na'im Ziyad

Pat Wright

Lois Nadine Carter Hubbard

Michelle Cooper

Beatrice Johnson

Richard Hubbard

Michael Blankenship

Beverly Tucker

Larry Spurgeon

Cinder Stanton

Charles Patrick Henry

First Baptist Church, Natural Bridge

First Baptist Church, Lexington

Natural Bridge Historic Hotel

Natural Bridge State Park

KEY THEMES:

*Frontier Progressions: Late 18th → Mid-20th Centuries:
Re-Visioning Frontiers: In the Valley, at the Bridge*

- * Frontiers: Where? When? For Whom?
- * Labor → Leisure (Traditional Frontier Narrative)
- * Tourism ← Transportation (Grounding Traditional Bridge Narrative)
- * Native ↔ Visitor (Who does the Bridge Serve?)
- * Local ~ Global (Frames of Reference, and Reach)
- * Singular + Collective (Individuals & Institutions)

How do you come to See
Natural Bridge?

Who's there?

3 Images I 'Arrived With,'
From the Span of Time.



**Frederic Edwin Church, “Natural Bridge of Virginia” (1852)
Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia**



David Johnson, 1860, Reynolda House



a 'natural' *tchotchke*: RHS Exhibit & Jefferson 250th Anniversary (2017)

4 Images that Changed
How I saw the Bridge...
And Who I see.

August 11 1817

My Dear Virginia

~~My Dear Virginia~~

We are returned from the natural
bridge more anxious to see it again than we were at first
because in the first place it far surpassed our expectations,
and in the second we saw it under many great advantages, which
will be removed when we go again, & grandpapa has promised
that we shall, our trip was attended with disasters & accidents
~~at several~~ times we set off until we returned again, the morning
we were to go when we got up we found it was a damp cloudy day, but
grandpapa decided at breakfast that it would not rain & sister
Ellen and myself rejoiced that the sun did not shine & that we
should have a cool day for our journey we set off accordingly,

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

Letter to her sister, traveling to Natural Bridge with “grandpapa,” notes

“the exertions of Patrick Henry a mulatto ... he keeps the key”

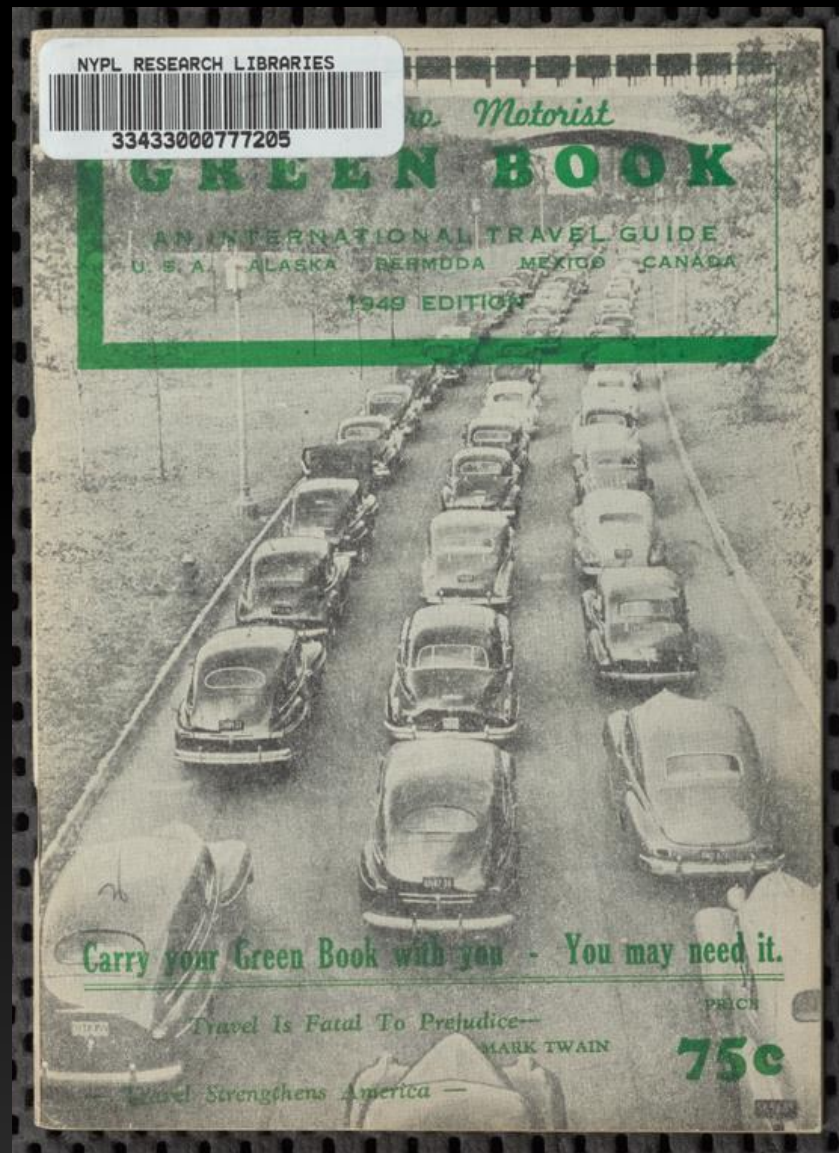
*Keystone View Company,
Manufacturers and Publishers*



*Headville, Va. St. Louis, Mo.
Copyright, 1898, by W. F. Longley*

3338—Baptizing in Cedar Creek under the Great Natural Bridge, Va.

1898 'Colored Baptism': 'Double-Vision'



1949 Green Book: Mtn. View Cottage, NB
Auto-Mobility & Accessibility

African-Americans
in the Shadow of The Bridge



*The Diamonds and Neighboring Families
Natural Bridge, Virginia
1806 - 2019*

Pat Wright and Na'im Ziyad

Family & Neighborhood Histories: Community Connections

When, Where, with Whom
The 'Bridge Narrative'
Usually Starts:
Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson, owner Natural Bridge 1774-1826

Contracted with Patrick Henry, free black, as caretaker, 1817

Painted by Caleb Boyle, ca. 1801

Looking West, two years before Lewis & Clark

August 17 1817

My Dear Virginia

~~My Dear Virginia~~

We are returned from the natural
bridge more anxious to see it again than we were at first,
because in the first place it has surpassed your expectations,
and in the second we saw it under many disadvantages which
will be removed when we go again, & grandpapa has promised
that we shall, our trip was attended with disasters & accidents
~~at some times~~ we set off until we returned again, the morning
we were to go when we got up we found it was a damp cloudy day
but grandpapa decided to breakfast that it would not rain & sister
Ellen and myself rejoiced that the sun did not shine & that we
should have a cool day for our journey we set off accordingly

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

“the exertions of Patrick Henry, a mulatto ... he keeps the key”

Letter to her sister, after traveling to Natural Bridge with ‘grandpapa’

Freeman Patrick Henry: Caretaker of “the Most Sublime of Nature’s Works”

In 1787, Patrick Henry was born enslaved on Martin Tapscott's Westmoreland County, Virginia plantation. Most likely Patrick Henry's father, Tapscott initially freed Lavinia, her son Patrick Henry, and his three brothers in his will. However, Henry found himself having to purchase his own freedom from Martin's brother, when he did not honor his deed of manumission upon inheritance of his brother's estate. The rest of his family in the meantime relocated to what is now Rockbridge County.

After 7 years of enslavement to Martin's brother, Patrick Henry purchased his freedom for \$300 at the age of 24 and moved to meet the rest of his family. Henry was later able to purchase the freedom of his wife, Louisa, from Benjamin Darst of Lexington in 1815.

In 1774, 13 years before Patrick Henry's birth, Thomas Jefferson took a liking to the Natural Bridge and purchased it. However, as a chronic debtor, Jefferson resorted to leasing out this unprofitable property – most notably to Dr. Thornton in 1814 who desired to convert the Bridge into a Shot Tower.

After a string of irresponsible tenants who neglected to pay the property tax, Jefferson sought a reliable tenant. Jefferson found such a tenant in Patrick Henry, to whom he leased all arable land on the bridge, rent free, on the stipulation that he pay the property tax each year.

Henry probably settled into his Natural Bridge cabin in 1817, and in time, Jefferson would pay the taxes himself and even pay Henry a stipend. Their relationship grew to be amicable. Indeed, the elderly Jefferson even lodged with Patrick Henry on a journey to visit the Bridge with his Granddaughters in 1817.

Why Jefferson chose Patrick Henry to be his representative and protector of his beloved Natural Bridge property is unknown. Nonetheless, Patrick Henry found himself in the peculiar position of being formerly enslaved, now paid caretaker of a President's property deep in the wilderness, surrounded by somewhat hostile white frontiersmen, who trespassed, poached, and logged a President's land.

Patrick Henry would live the rest of his days with his wife and two children under, in Jefferson's own words, “the most sublime of nature's works,” the Natural Bridge.
- By Brooks Rometry, Virginia Tech '21

Patrick Henry: Purchased his Freedom (1811) & Wife Louisa (1815)

From 1817-1829: Henry is Natural Bridge Farmer, Caretaker, Guide; Spouse, Parent, Brother (Despite my title's pairing with Jefferson, he's not previously tied before contracting as free tenant, 1817)

... tomorrow sister Ellen & myself have to paste numbers on all of grand papa's books & it will take us nearly the whole day which I am very sorry for because besides wishing to write another letter...

I should like very well to have copied {from *Othello*} beautiful Desdemona from Shakespear which I am afraid I cant do now for I only draw on sundays, & after this we shall only be here one more sunday & there is more to do in it than I can do in a day.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

Letter to her sister, *after* returning to Poplar Forest with “grandpapa”

...but to go on with our journey to the Natural bridge, after we had cross'd that delightful mountain where the temperature of the air was the most charming that I ever felt ...

... the streams, the most clear & rapid & the prospect which we saw here & there through the openings of the trees the finest I ever saw, we came to a level part of the country that was entirely clear'd & in cultivation & surrounded every where by mountains

... when we had gone a mile or two grandpapa called to us to look back & I never was more surpris'd than to see the mountain we had crossed, so long that it seem'd from that distance to extend at least half way round the horizon in one continued & unbroken ridge.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

... the mountains here are of entirely a different shape from those in Albemarle

they are not round & regular as ours are but some are these long ones

... others are shap'd like sugar loaves, one that we saw, the sides seem'd quite as perpendicular as those of a sugar loaf, I suppose it must be impossible to climb up it.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

... the next day it rain'd as hard as it could pour untill one o'clock it held up then & we went to the bridge tho' it was showery all day,

...about two or three hundred yards from the bridge
Patrick Henry a mulatto man lives, on the land of the widow Ochiltree

...he keeps the key of the shot tower & generally goes with persons who go to see the bridge.

... He went with us.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

... we knew the instant we were on the bridge &
I cant conceive how any one can go on it without knowing,
for you see the sides of the precipice;

... on looking down it has very much the effect on your head
that looking down a well has...

...we stood on the edge & look'd down with perfect safety.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

...There was only one steep difficult path to get down the hill & after we got there we found that a dam had been made which together with the rise of the water prevented us entirely from getting under the bridge.

... We should have been oblig'd to come away with scarcely an idea of the bridge if it had not been for the exertions of Patrick Henry

... who worked for nearly an hour to contrive us a way by which we might get along, which he did by laying planks & logs from one point of the rock to another.

Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, August 30, 1817

Re-Visiting Virginia's Patrick Henry: *'he keeps the key'* Where and How does He Guide us?

Historical Ties: Henry's Relationships: Exception-al?

*via Rockbridge: David Coffey, *RHS Proceedings XII*

*via Jefferson: Arthur Scherr (beliefs on race, equality) *Virginia Magazine History&Biography*

Cultural Frontiers: Henry's Legacies: Precedent?

*'first park ranger': precedent as conservationist & tour guide: Matthew Jackson (NBSP)

*genealogical precedent: Charles Patrick Henry (also, Elizabeth Hemings descendants in NB)

***SELF-Determined**: farmer, spouse, father: his labor? Louisa's labor(s)?

Literate? Negotiating through Lexington businessman (Caruthers), professor (Graham) surveyor (Reid)

Freeman Patrick Henry: Caretaker of “the Most Sublime of Nature’s Works”

In 1787, Patrick Henry was born enslaved on Martin Tapscott’s Westmoreland County, Virginia plantation. Most likely Patrick Henry’s father, Tapscott initially freed Lavinia, her son Patrick Henry, and his three brothers in his will. However, Henry found himself having to purchase his own freedom from Martin’s brother, when he did not honor his deed of manumission upon inheritance of his brother’s estate. The rest of his family in the meantime relocated to what is now Rockbridge County.

After 7 years of enslavement to Martin’s brother, Patrick Henry purchased his freedom for \$300 at the age of 24 and moved to meet the rest of his family. Henry was later able to purchase the freedom of his wife, Louisa, from Benjamin Darst of Lexington in 1815.

In 1774, 13 years before Patrick Henry’s birth, Thomas Jefferson took a liking to the Natural Bridge and purchased it. However, as a chronic debtor, Jefferson resorted to leasing out this unprofitable property – most notably to Dr. Thornton in 1814 who desired to convert the Bridge into a Shot Tower.

After a string of irresponsible tenants who neglected to pay the property tax, Jefferson sought a reliable tenant. Jefferson found such a tenant in Patrick Henry, to whom he leased all arable land on the bridge, rent free, on the stipulation that he pay the property tax each year.

Henry probably settled into his Natural Bridge cabin in 1817, and in time, Jefferson would pay the taxes himself and even pay Henry a stipend. Their relationship grew to be amicable. Indeed, the elderly Jefferson even lodged with Patrick Henry on a journey to visit the Bridge with his Granddaughters in 1817.

Why Jefferson chose Patrick Henry to be his representative and protector of his beloved Natural Bridge property is unknown. Nonetheless, Patrick Henry found himself in the peculiar position of being formerly enslaved, now paid caretaker of a President’s property deep in the wilderness, surrounded by somewhat hostile white frontiersmen, who trespassed, poached, and logged a President’s land.

Patrick Henry would live the rest of his days with his wife and two children under, in Jefferson’s own words, “the most sublime of nature’s works,” the Natural Bridge.
- By Brooks Rometry, Virginia Tech ‘21

Patrick Henry: Rockbridge resident, family for 12+ years

Purchased His own & his Wife’s Freedoms; Parents to Two Free Children; Free brother in Lexington; Louisa stays with children, works after Patrick’s death (1829-1833) until Bridge sold to pay Jefferson’s estate debt.



Jean Deltil, Natural Bridge, *Views of North America* (1834)
French Wallpaper Series, Zuber et Cie



Tourism, Transportation, Labor

Democracy in America (1835): contemporary travelogue, Alexis de Tocqueville
French Wallpaper, 1834: 'Imagined Communities'
(projecting styles of French *bourgeoisie*, rather than Black tourist class in Virginia)



Baltimore Painted 'Fancy Chair' with Natural Bridge, 1820s

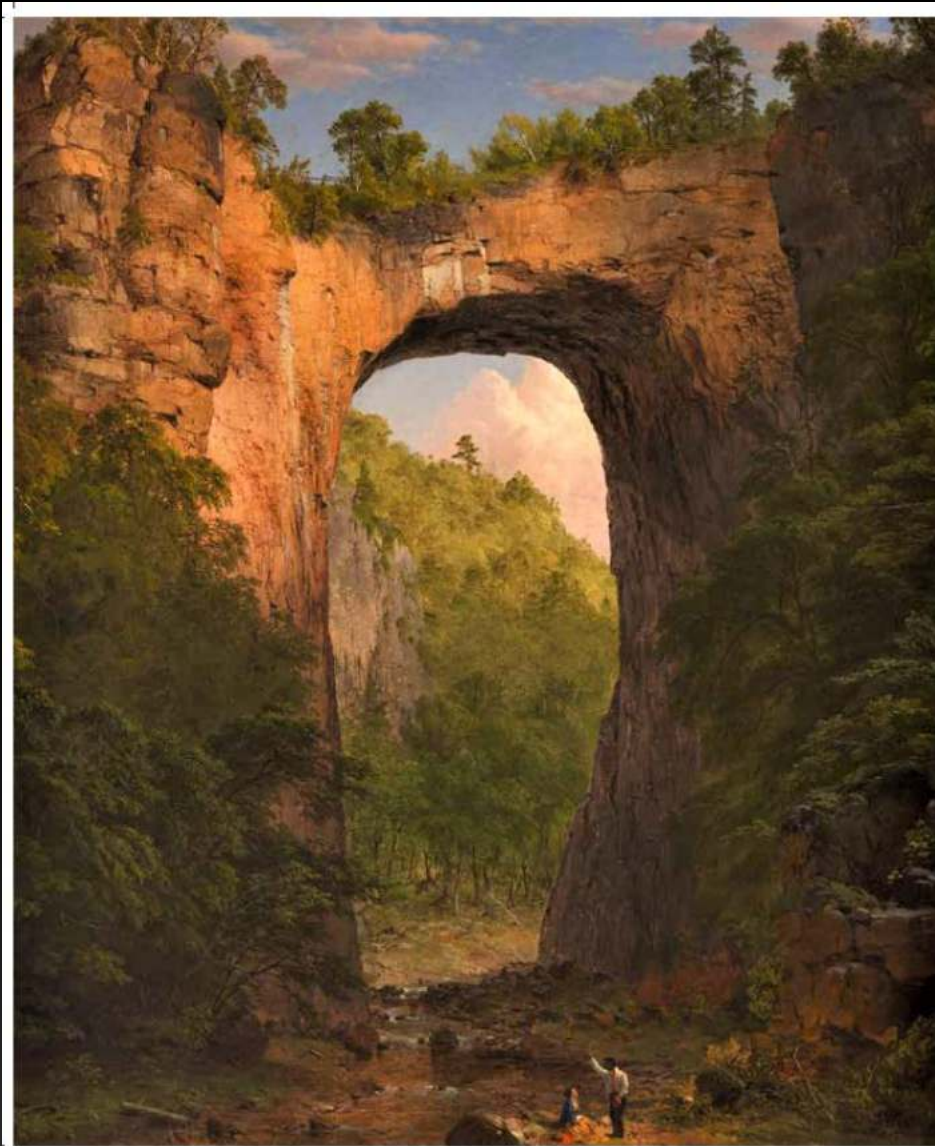
Owned by Lexington Poet, Diarist, Teacher, Margaret Junkin Preston: RHS Collections
Spectral Analysis, W&L Chemistry Dept; Surface Restoration & Stabilization, VMFA - 2020



RHS' Natural Bridge Painted Chair: on loan, 2021 VMFA Exhibit

"Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge in American Art:" Christopher Oliver, Curator

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Feb-Aug 2021 Taubman Museum of Art, April – Aug 2022



Virginia Arcadia

The Natural Bridge in American Art

Christopher C. Oliver

VMFA
VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

VMFA, “Virginia Arcadia: Natural Bridge in American Art” Feb. 6 – Aug. 1, 2021
Opening Lecture: Curator Christopher Oliver Feb 5, 2021



Frederic Edwin Church, “Natural Bridge of Virginia” (1852)
Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia



**Frederic Edwin Church, “Natural Bridge of Virginia” (1852)
Black Guide, White Tourist: Climbing Gazes, Gestures; Fencerail at Top**

ALBUM OF VIRGINIA.



NATURAL BRIDGE

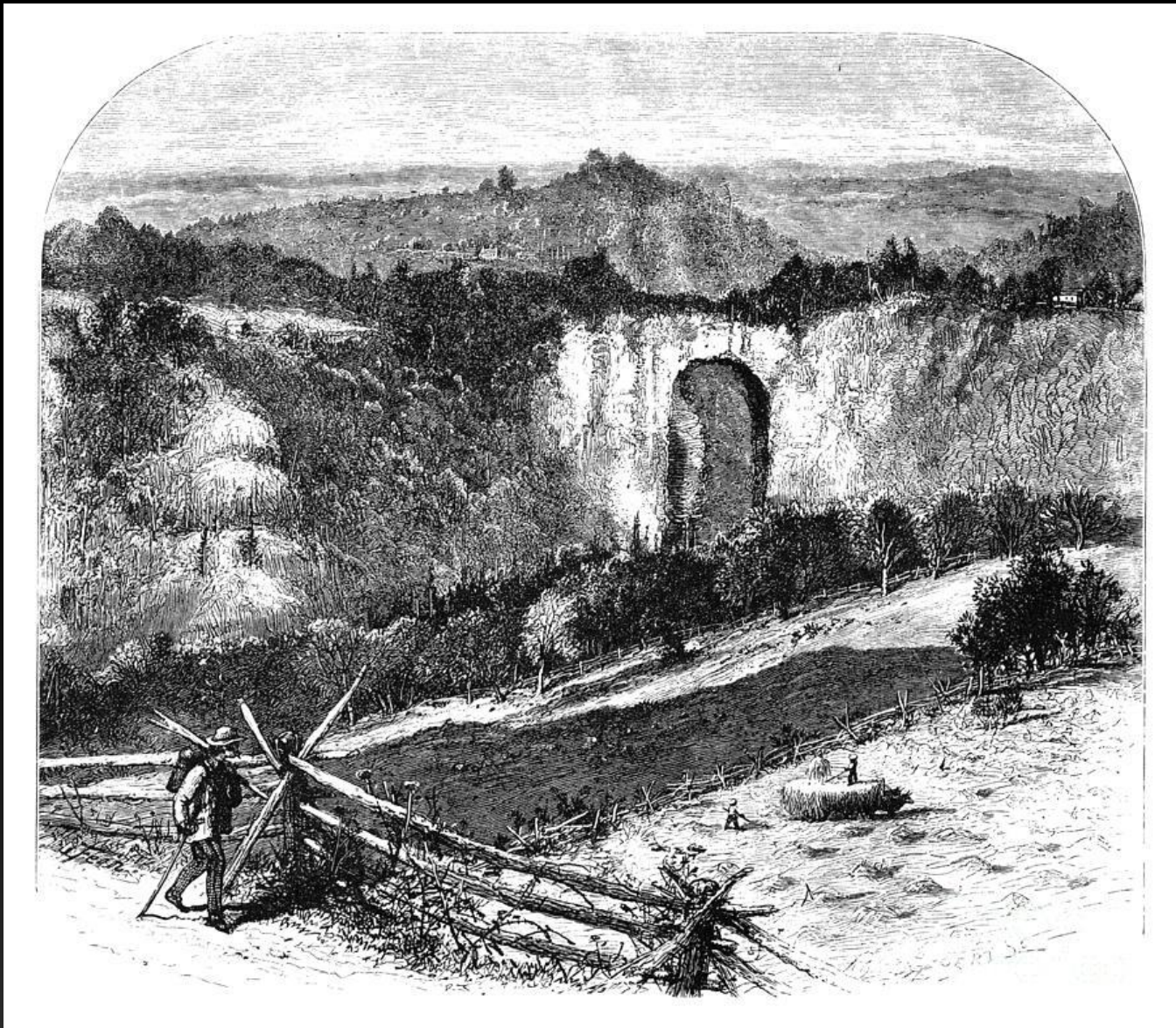
Edward Beyer, *Album of Virginia* (1858)



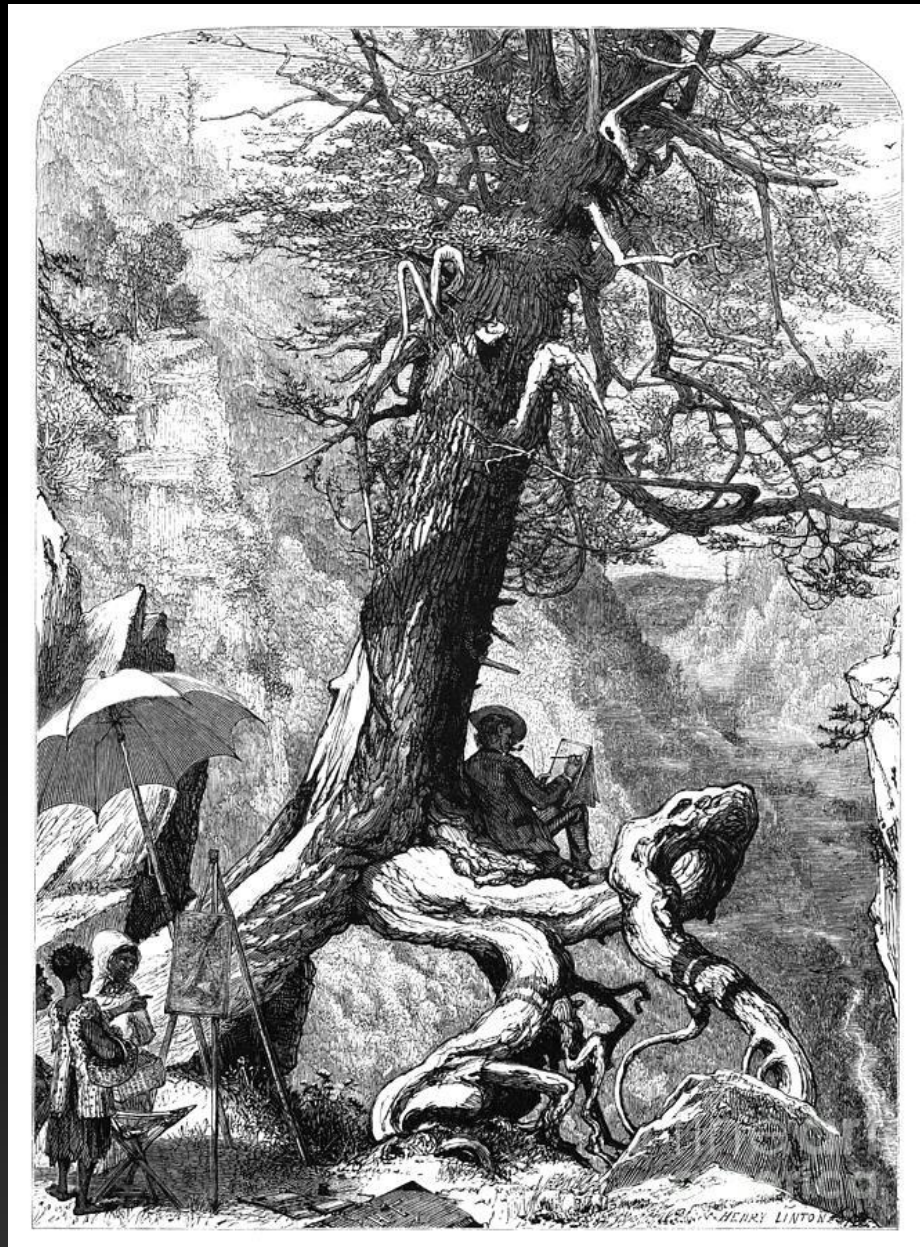
David Johnson, “Natural Bridge” (1860), Reynolda House



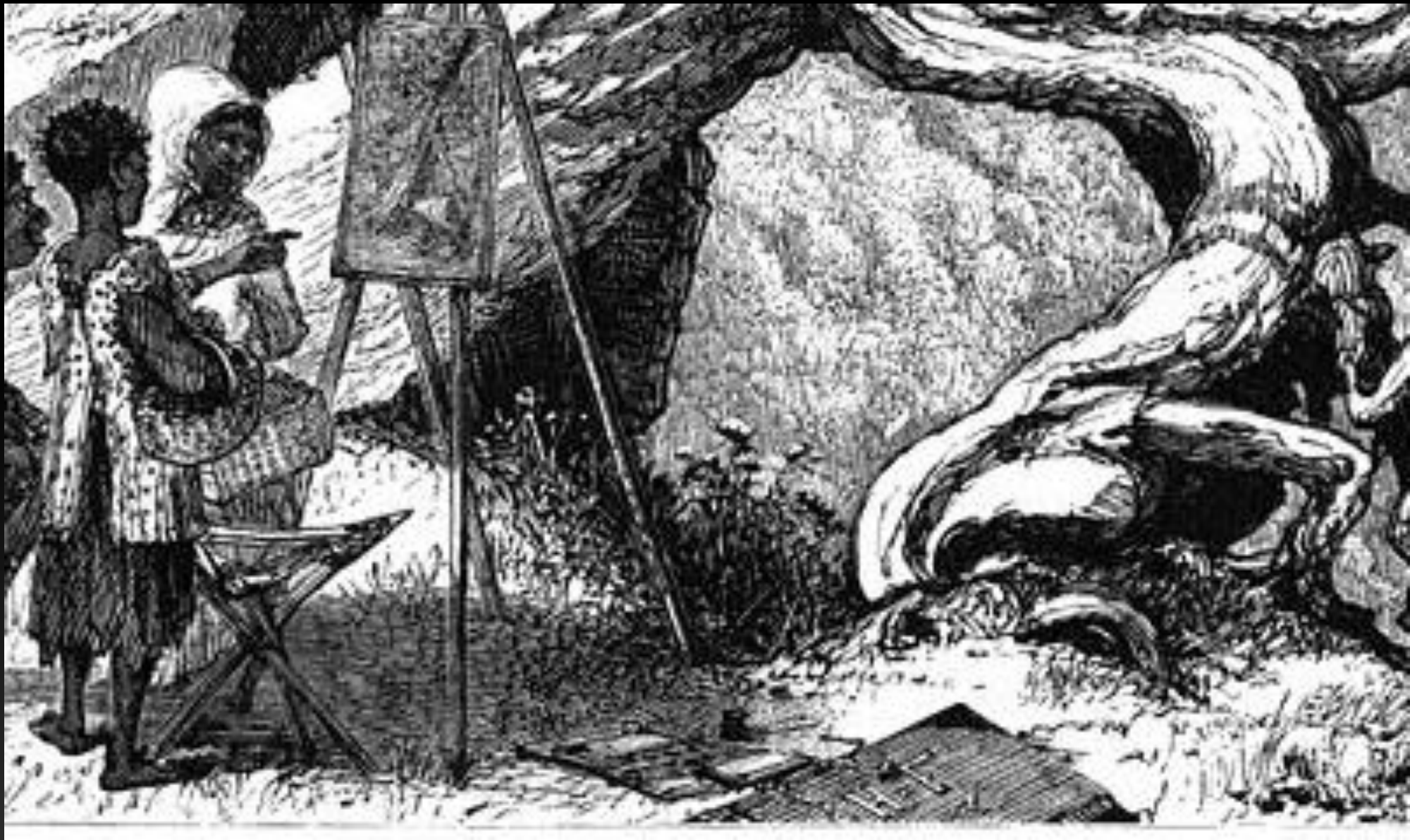
Who's working the land, the roads in 1860? Before the Civil War?



Who's working the land, the roads, after the Civil War??
Harry Fenn, *Picturesque America*, 1872



Harry Fenn, 'Above the Natural Bridge'
Picturesque America (1872)



Harry Fenn, 'Above the Natural Bridge,' *Picturesque America* (1872)
Artist's Initials on Portfolio, at Bottom



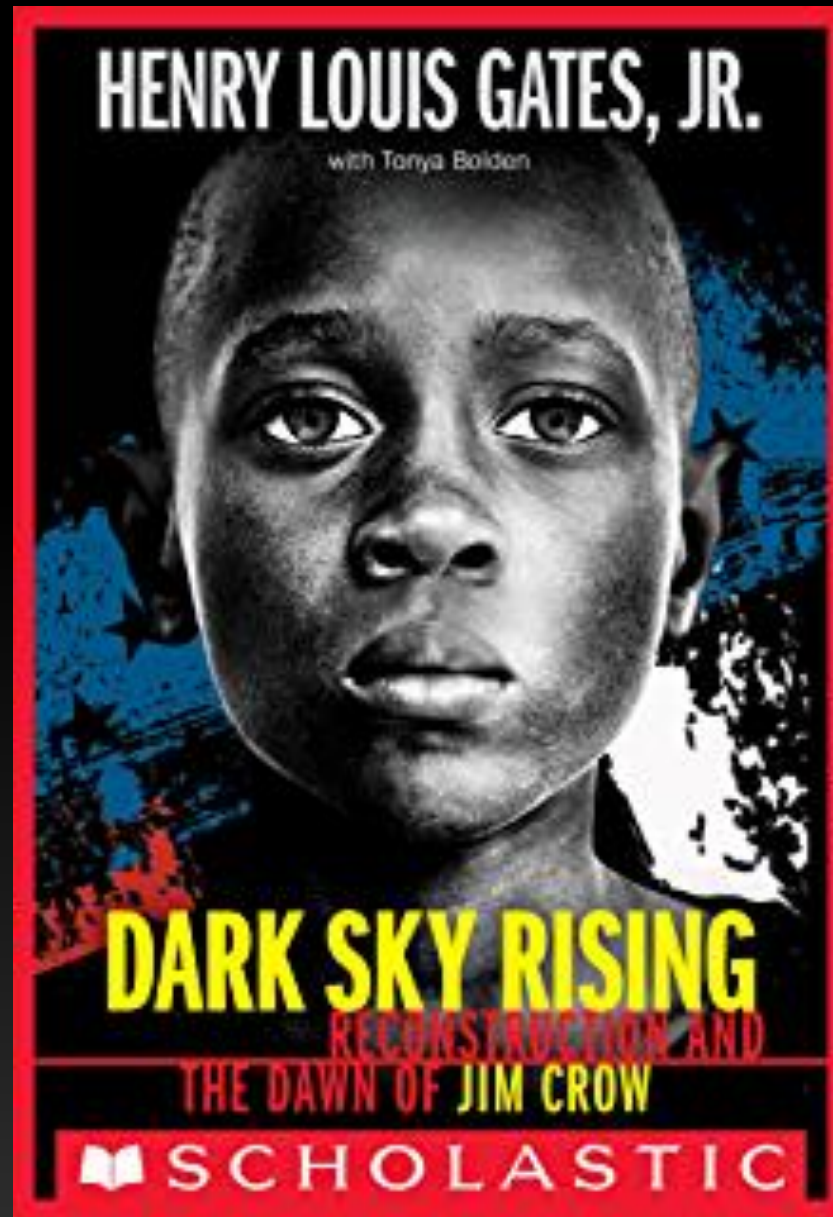
Who are We Watching? Who's Viewing What? What Images & Words?



COLORED TRAVELERS

*Mobility and the Fight for
Citizenship before the Civil War*

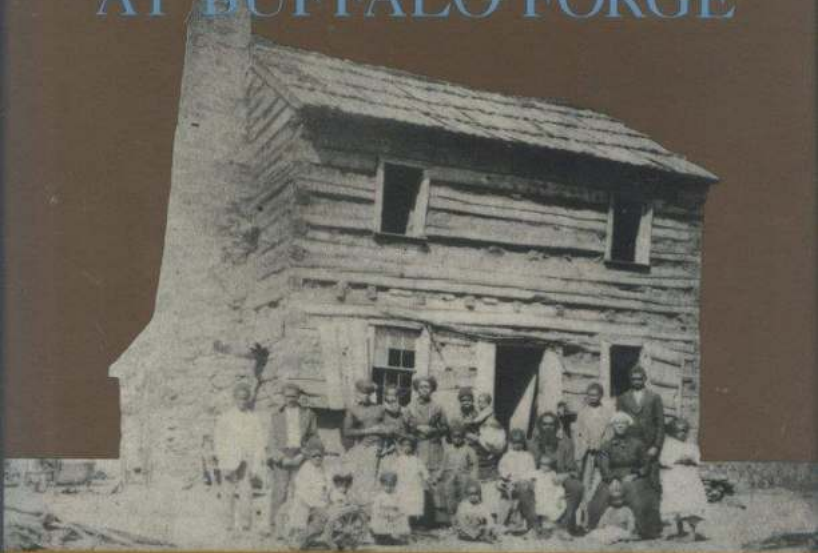
ELIZABETH STORDEUR PRYOR



Steps in the Journey: for Social Historians, and Young Adult Readers
Mobility, Opportunity, Constraint: Individuals & Groups

BOND of IRON

MASTER AND SLAVE
AT BUFFALO FORGE



CHARLES B. DEW



Garland Thompson, Jr., his wife Esther, and their children and grandchildren posing in front of their home. Courtesy of Charles B. Dew from "Bond of iron, Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge"

Garland Thompson: Enslaved, Freedman, Farmer, Family Man
Buffalo Forge, Natural Bridge District; "Bond of Iron," Charles Dew

Descendant Histories

*Erin Schwartz: W&L Anthropology, William & Mary PhD – Women’s Work at Buffalo Forge

*Garland Thompson descendants:

James Edward Thompson, Sr. (Glasgow School Principal),

Vaden “Sticks” Thompson (Driver, Drummer);

Wife Irene Thompson has been crucial partner in various neighborhood and church projects

*Elizabeth Hemings descendants (mother to Sally Hemings):

Brown Colbert (grandson, enslaved at Monticello; to Lexington, 1807), father to:

Melinda Colbert (b. 1806, Rockbridge), mother to:

Julia/Judy Edmondson (b. 1832, moved to Natural Bridge, ca 1860, married David Moore,

Parents to 13 Children, incl. Margaret, grandmother of:

Lois Nadine Carter Moore Hubbard (b.1926): Vital Oral History

sister-in-law to Guy O. Hunt; grandmother of Ryan Hubbard, Pastor 1st Baptist Natural Bridge Church

Descendant Histories

Diamond Family History: “In the Shadow of Natural Bridge” (at Library of Virginia, W&L)
by Na'im Ziyad & Pat Wright

Among these families, generous with their time and witness, I've spoken with descendants of the Diamond, Hunt, Dixon, Hubbard, Dunn, Elliott families, across the South, East Coast, Midwest.

The Dixons have been particularly important, for reasons below.

Consider what you can contribute to Family, Local, National Histories?

There are more Bridges than you may think, between them.

Keystone View Company,
Manufacturers and Publishers



Meadsville, Pa. St. Louis, Mo.
Copyright, 1898, by B. L. Singley

9338—Baptizing in Cedar Creek under the Great Natural Bridge, Va.

Cedar Creek "Colored Baptism" 1898

Stereopticon Photo, B.L. Singley, for Keystone Co., Meadsville PA, St. Louis, MO: National Image



Cedar Creek “Colored Baptism” 1898
‘Ole Colored Church,” ¼ mile away



Cedar Creek “Colored Baptism” 1898
Note the numbers gathered, their dress



**Here, or in Stereopticon 3-D Viewfinder:
Who do we Focus on? Who's looking at Whom?**

“From the cliffs it is no uncommon sight of a Sunday to look down upon a baptizing. The deep pool which the creek forms almost under the bridge is a favorite choice for immersion, both of white & colored. Usually a little tent of sheets is put up.

From one of the churches file down those who have experienced a ‘change of heart,’ and are come to have their sins washed away.

The colored baptisms are more impressive
because these people seem more deeply impressed.”

Katherine Loomis Parsons, *New England Magazine*, 1891
(daughter of Col. Parsons: late owner, Natural Bridge)



**Three Daughters of Col. Parsons: 10th Owner of Natural Bridge, 1881-1884
Natural Bridge Forest Company; Expanded Hotels, Roads, Stables**



Natural Bridge Stable Masters, and Children Prepare for a Ride
40-50 Horses often Stabled at NB during Parsons' Tenure, 1880s



Stage Livery in front of Forest Inn, Natural Bridge, 1890s
1912 Richmond Travelers Brochure: "First-Class Livery"



Natural Bridge Hotel Stage to Lexington, 1906
Young Teamster (could be Guy Hunt, age 15?)



Unidentified Waiters at Natural Bridge Hotel (1903)

Parallels: see later slide, generations of leadership: DeLaney family

Guy Hunt worked in various capacities in Hotel, for decades

World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 record for Guy Oeffert Hunt

REGISTRATION CARD No. 66

1 Name *Guy Oeffert Hunt* Age *25*

2 *Natural Bridge Virginia*

3 Date of birth *July 11 1892*

4 *Natural Born*

5 Where born *Natural Bridge Va OSA*

6 If not a citizen, what country and was a citizen of before?

7 What is your occupation? *Teamster*

8 Where employed? *Natural Bridge Hotel Co
Natural Bridge*

9 Place and date of last service, when, where, and in what service? or whether under Federal Government or was for

10 Gender? Specify which? *Mother*

11 Married or single? *Single* Race (specify class) *African*

12 Check military service here checked: Enlist _____ Search _____

13 Do you depend on others for support? *Yes Dependents*

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

H. O. Hunt
Guy Oeffert Hunt

2-40 1913

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

1 I am under the name of *Thomas* *William*

2 I am a *Black* *Black* *no*

3 The person for whom this card is filed, is or has been a *U*

I certify that the person is now true, that the person registered has read the card and that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of the answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

John K. McCalland

Natural Bridge

Rockbridge

Virginia *June 17 1917*

Guy O. Hunt's WWI Draft Registration Card, Rockbridge Co.: Age 25 (1917)
Employment: Teamster, Natural Bridge Hotel; Mother, as Dependent



Pvt. Guy O. Hunt, WWI Service Uniform, 'Campaign Hat'



Pvt. Guy O. Hunt, Armed for Service



**Pvt. Guy O. Hunt, U.S. Army Teamster, 407th Labor Battalion, France
(see wagon wheel, behind him)**



**PFC Guy Occefert Hunt (1891-1964) Diamond Family Cemetery
WWI Soldier: 407th Labor Battalion Teamster**

**Lifelong Employee Natural Bridge Hotel: Livery Driver, Night Watch, Head Bellman,
1st person in Natural Bridge 'Enclave' to own a new Chevrolet**



Eliza Bannister Walker (b. Natural Bridge, 1874-1939)
Social Reformer, Nurse, Poet, Singer, National Fundraiser, Political Activist



**1921: VA Federation of Colored Women, Eliza Walker, Chapter President
Meets at Blandome, with outing to Natural Bridge & Picnic at Cedar Creek
(First State Conference after 19th Amendment passed, 1920)**

Help Her Build It - Buy a Memorial Block - Now! -

LEXINGTON MEMORIAL OLD FOLKS HOME AND ORPHANAGE

Rev. J. I. MARSHALL WASH. D.C.	MORRIS CAFETERIA RICHMOND, VA
Mrs. Bessie Briggs WASH. D.C.	COLUMBIA LODGE ELKS - WASH. D.C.
"LUCKY" ROBERTS NEW YORK CITY	DR. I. THEO. PARKER WASH. D.C.
BUY A BLOCK	DIXIE SCOTT LEXINGTON, VA
YOUR CLUB SHOULD BUY ONE	REV. WM. MANAKOO WASH. D.C.
YOUR CHURCH SHOULD BUY ONE	S.A. WAR VETERANS WASH. D.C.

REV. G. B. HOWARD
PITTS. PA.

REV. E. CARTER
PITTS. PA.

REV. J. ASHBURN
COL. O.

DR. A. BROWN
RICH. VA

MRS. G. CHAPMAN
PHILA. PA.

REV. E. COLEMAN
GOLDSBORO, N.C.

HOWARD DENTAL
COLLEGE, WASH. D.C.

WM. M. DAVIS
WASH. D.C.

WRIGHT'S COL.
ORCHESTRA LOUIS

PROF. J. S. HARRIS
K.C. MO.

REV. S. THURSTON
LEXINGTON, VA.

J. FINLEY WILSON
THE EAGLE WASH. DC

REV. W. R. BROWN
PITTS. PA.

DR. HUB. McLENNAN
WASH. D.C.

DOCTOR
R. NAPPER
WASH. D.C.

ALL OF US

Mrs. H. L. WALKER

NOT A SHADOW BUT A REALITY. THIS HOME WILL BE BUILT OF CEMENT BLOCKS AND A MEMORIAL BLOCK WILL BE PLACED IN ITS WALL FOR EACH CONTRIBUTOR. LET US MAKE A BLOCK FOR YOUR CHURCH, LODGE, SELF, ETC., ADDRESS LEXINGTON OLD FOLKS HOME at 1832-9th St., N.W.

**Eliza Walker: Community Building, Social Networks
Natural Bridge ~ Lexington ~ Washington, D.C.
Advertisement: Washington Eagle, 1920**



Eliza Bannister Walker: Building an Orphanage

1) *Violet, born without hands* 2) *Virginia, cannot walk* 3) *Annie, cannot talk*



Walker & Wood Sanitary Meat Market & Grocery (1910s)

Supplied meat to VMI, W&L from family farm on Buena Vista Rd (now US 60)

One of Lexington's most noted businesses, N. Main Street

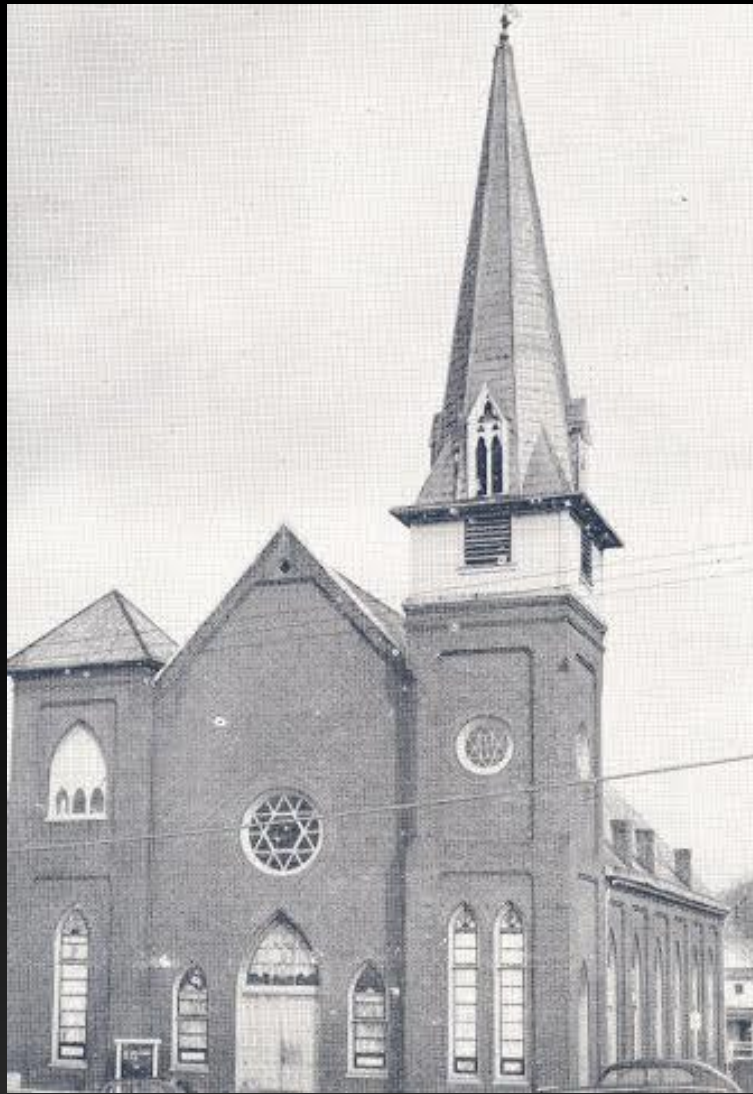


Willson-Walker House

Built in 1812 by Robert Willson as a family Home

**100 years later: Harry Lee Walker buys to use as a Meat Market & Grocery, 30 N. Main
Eliza Walker writes from here to build an Orphanage & better Lexington Schools**

100 years later still: Macado's serves Lexington as a Restaurant

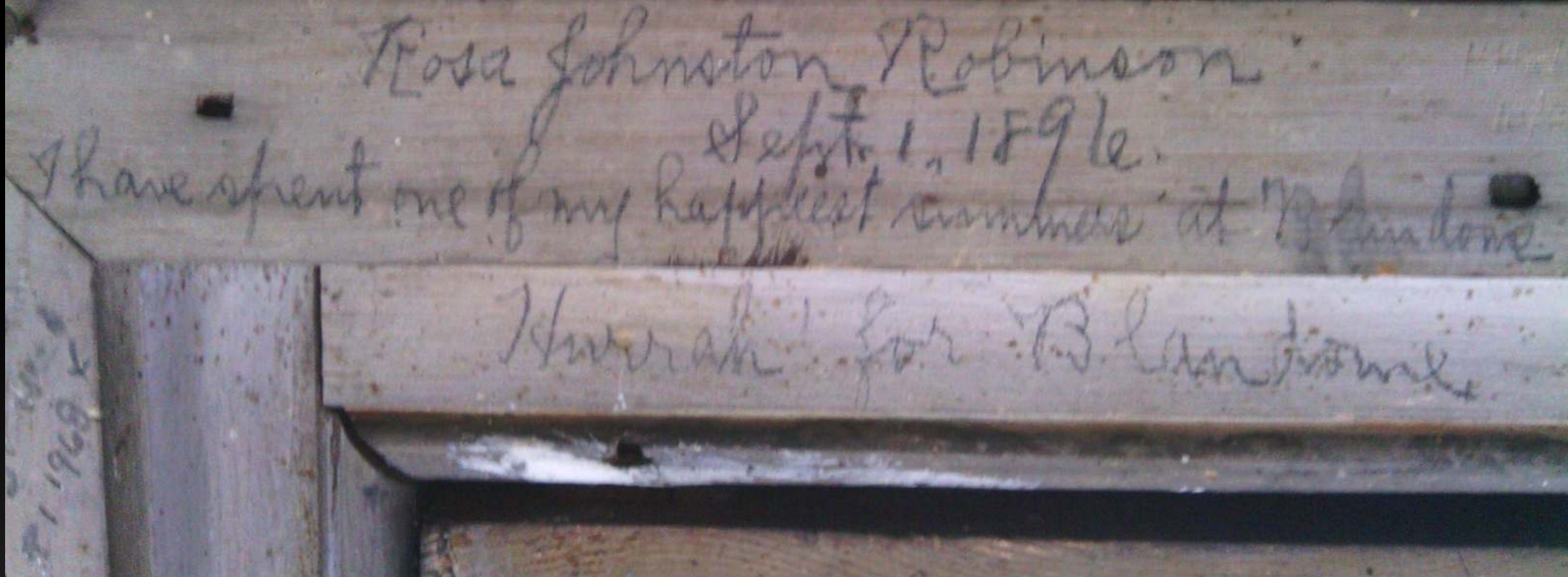


**First Baptist Church – 107 N. Main
Est. 1867, Large Brick Expansion Built 1896
Walkers centrally involved**



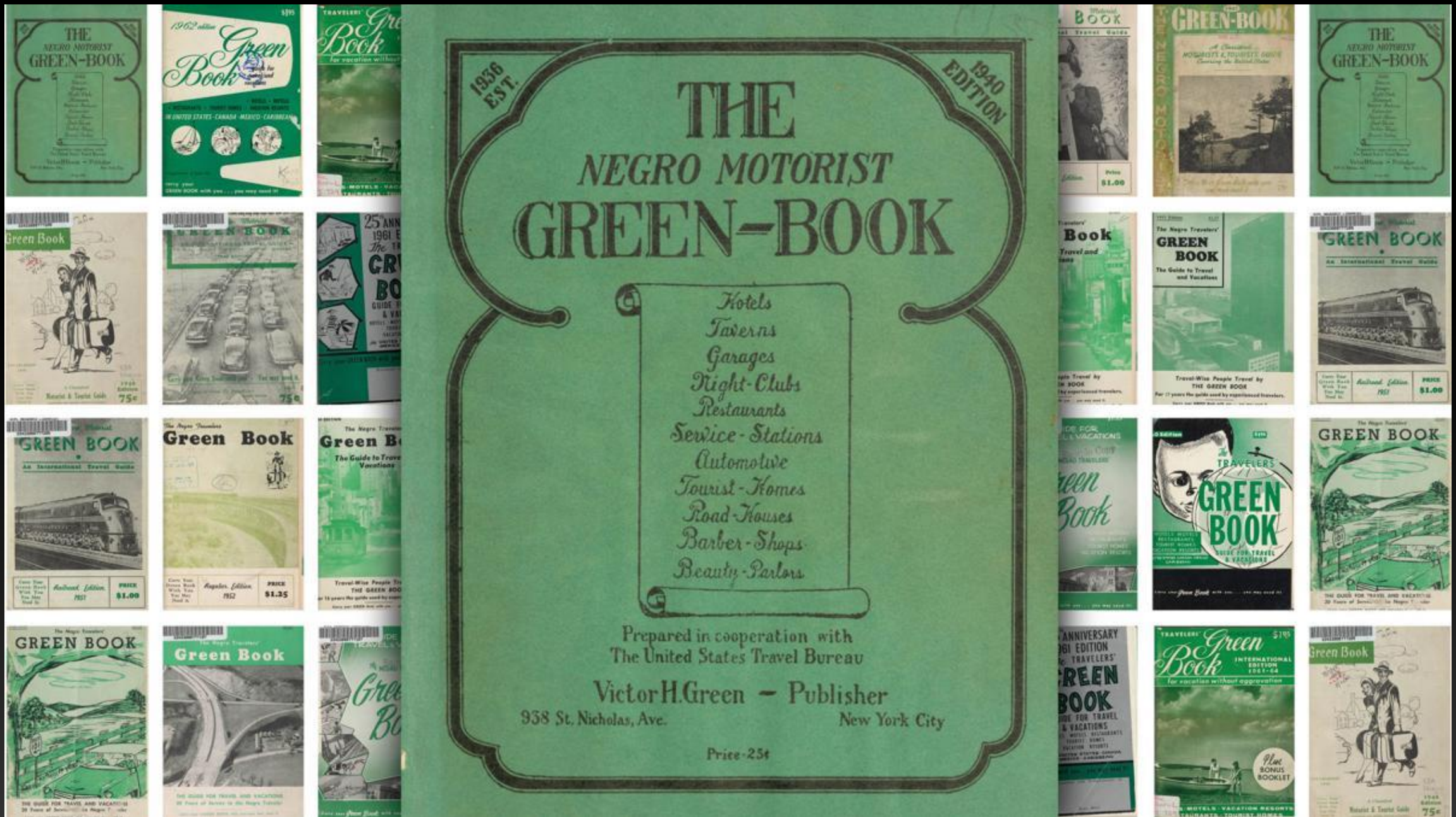
Blandome

**Purchased by Harry Lee Walker in 1917
Family played important roles in establishing
Lylburn Downing School, for Lexington's Black students, 1927**

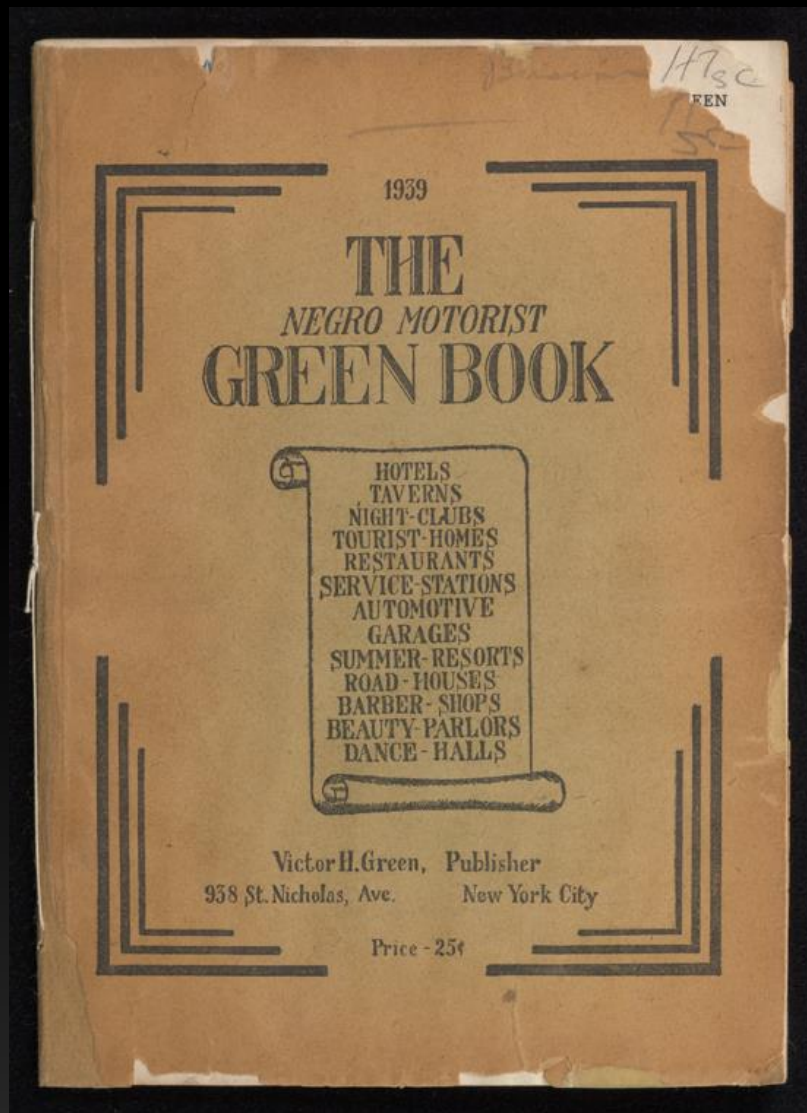


**“I have spent one of my happiest summers at Blandome...
Hurrah for Blandome”**

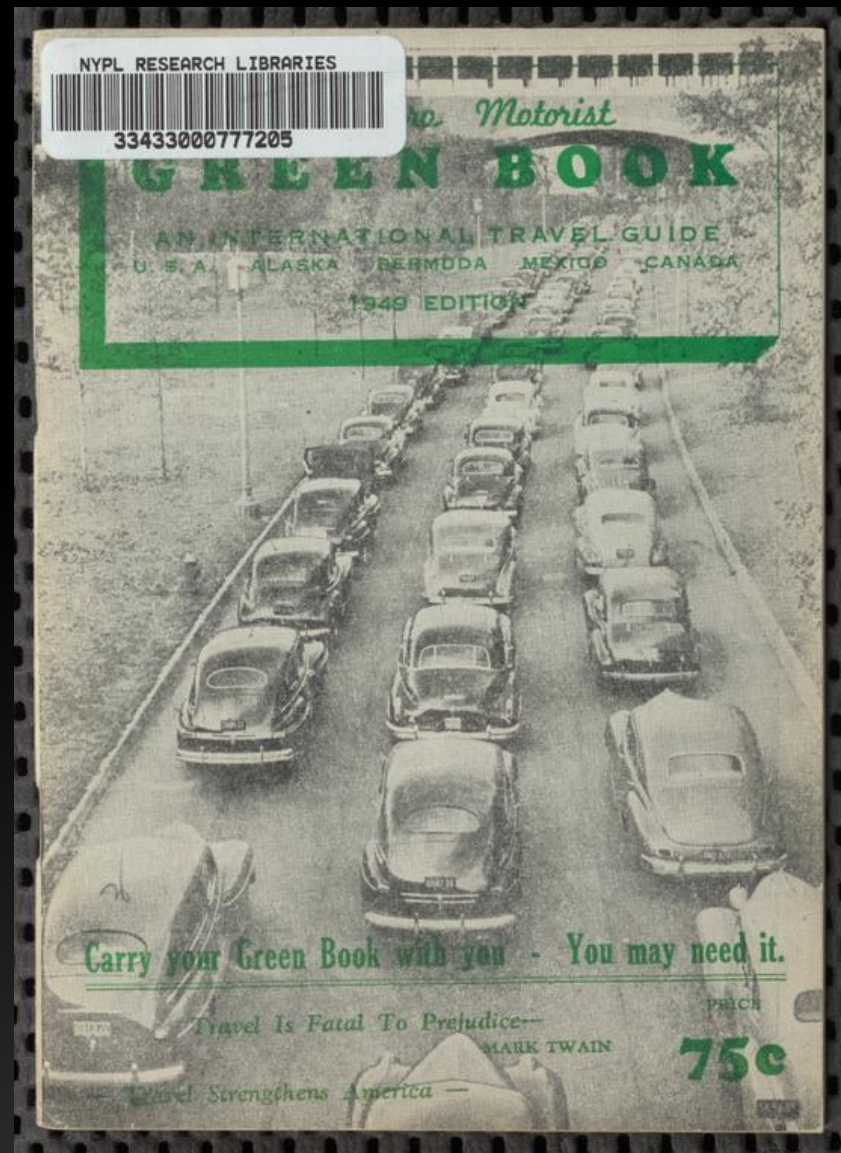
**Inscribed, Blandome Cupola: Rosa Johnston Robinson, Sept. 1, 1896:
Patterns of Seasonal Stays in Rockbridge, from further Cities**



Covers of “The Negro Motorist Green Book” (1936-1966)



**1939 Green Book:
First Year of Lexington Listings &
Rockbridge Historical Society Founded**



**1949 Green Book:
'Mountain View Cottage, Natural Bridge' and 3 Lexington Listings**

CHARLOTTESVILLE**HOTELS**

Carver Inn—701 Preston Ave.

TOURIST HOMES

Virginia Inn—W. Main St.

Chauffeur's Rest—129 Preston Ave.

Alexander's—413 Dyce St.

BEAUTY PARLORS

Apex—211 W. Main St.

BARBER SHOPS

Jokers—North 4th St.

CHRISTIANBURG**HOTELS**

Eureka

DANVILLE**TOURIST HOMES**

Yancey's—320 Holbrook St.

Mrs. M. K. Page—434 Holbrook St.

Mrs. S. A. Overby—Holbrook St.

DUNBARTON**TOURIST HOMES**

H. Jackson—Route No. 1, Box 322

FARMVILLE**TOURIST HOMES**

Mrs. Kate Wiley—626 S. Main St.

RESTAURANTS

Reid's—236 Main St.

TAVERNS

Ried's—200 Block, Main St.

SERVICE STATIONS

Clark's—Main St.

HEWLETT**TAVERNS**

Beverly Bros—R. F. D. No. 1

LEXINGTON**TOURIST HOMES**

The Franklin—9 Tucker St.

RESTAURANTS

Washington—16 N. Main St.

TAVERNS

Rose Inn—331 N. Main St.

LURAY**TOURIST HOMES**

Camp Lewis Mountain—Skyline Drive

LYNCHBURG**HOTELS**

Phyllis Wheatley YWCA—613 Monroe St.

TOURIST HOMES

Mrs. C. Harper—1109 8th St.

Mrs. M. Thomas—919 Polk St.

Mrs. Smith—504 Jackson

Happyland Lake—812 5th Ave.

BEAUTY PARLORS

Selma's—1002 5th St.

NATURAL BRIDGE**TOURIST HOMES**

Mountain View Cottage

NEWPORT NEWS



**Rose Inn Tavern & Tourist Home (Colored), with Mary Rose
331 N. Main St., Lexington, built over by VMI Training Facility
Green Book listed annually, 1939-1966**



**Franklin Tourist Home: 9 Tucker St.
Green Book listed annually, 1939-1966**



**Washington Restaurant (black awning)
16 N. Main Street (Duke's Antiques/ Sugar Maple Trading)
Lexington's 'Black Business Corridor'; Green Book listed annually, 1947-1957**

Diamond Hill Development - 1877

The overlaid maps, photographs, and panoramic views jointly provide you the opportunity to visualize change in the Diamond Hill neighborhood – overlooking Lexington, Virginia and the historical center of its African-American community – between post-war and mid-20th century. Find your way into the past by sliding between Historic street maps from the 1870s and 1890s, as well as Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Click on the thumbnailed 'Points of Interest' for more detailed captions, and a collage of images related to cultural institutions, commercial establishments, 'Green Book businesses,' schools, churches, homes, notable residents, and facilities at the Virginia Military Institute that have overtaken parts of the neighborhood. Click here for Thanks and Credits

Panoramas

POIs



Knights of Pythias Hall



Rose Inn Colored Tourist Home



Old School Book Depository/
Red Hen



Rockbridge Historical Society's Campbell House



Lyburn Downing School



Old Lexington Jail



The Castle



Old Colored School



Pure Oil Station



First Baptist Church



Washington Restaurant



G.U.O. of Odd Fellows,
Lexington Lodge



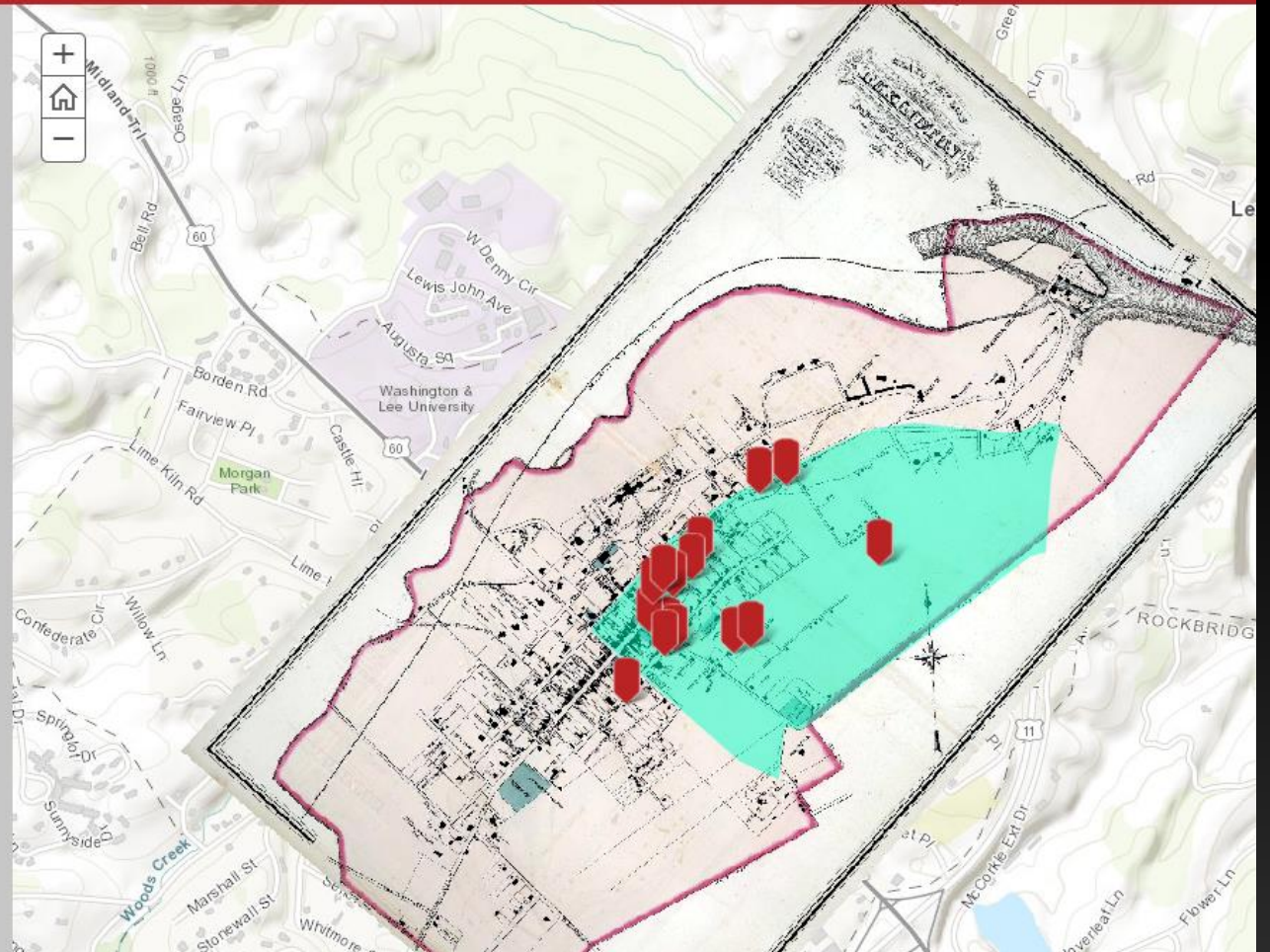
Willson-Walker House



Franklin Tourist Home



Blandome



**RHS Interactive Map (with JMU Public History & Computer Sci. Students)
Green Hill, Diamond Hill & VMI: Historic Sites & Change over Time**

11. **109 Henry Street** With the construction of the railroad following the Civil War, the area's Irish immigrant population grew. In 1873, St. Patrick's Parish was formed in Lexington. The same year, construction began on the parish church at 109 Henry Street. Irish immigrant John Sheridan played a major role in the establishment of the parish and construction of St. Patrick's Church.

12. **103 N. Main Street*** The present First Baptist Church building was completed in 1896. The Negro membership of the Lexington Baptist Church (now Manly Memorial) requested and received letters of dismission in 1867 in order to found the Lexington African Baptist Church. For 25 years, worship services were held in a frame building on a lot adjacent to the present building. One of the first financial contributions to build the 1896 church came from Lyburn Downing, Lexington-born African-American minister at Roanoke's First Avenue Presbyterian Church.

13. **29-33 N. Main Street** The Sheridan Livery Stable was completed in 1887 for John Sheridan. Sheridan had the responsibility for carrying the mail and operating the stagecoach line between Lexington, Staunton, and Hot Springs. In 1919, the building became the Rockbridge Steam Laundry Corporation.

14. **23 N. Main Street** The John Ruff House was built in 1811 and served as the Ruff family residence and hat factory for the next 70 years. In 1883, Lexington Lodge No. 2461, G.U.D. of Odd Fellows, established residence in the building. The Grand United Order was the African-American Odd Fellows organization founded in 1843, whereas the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was the white counterpart.

15. **30 N. Main Street** The Willson-Walker House was built in 1820 as the residence of Captain William Willson, local merchant, postmaster, and treasurer of Washington College. In 1911, Harry Lee Walker acquired the property and turned the ground floor into his butcher shop, while the family lived above. He would subsequently purchase Blandome (see 101 Tucker Street) and move his family to Tucker Street.

16. **118 S. Randolph Street** In 1864, the black and white members of the Randolph Street Methodist Church separated. The white congregation built a new church, while the black congregation retained the frame church building on Randolph Street. The congregation tore down this building in 1892 and replaced it with the present brick structure. Andrew Carnegie donated half of the cost of the church's pipe organ.

17. **300 Diamond Street*** Now a community center, the school was dedicated on September 11, 1927 in honor of the African-American minister Lyburn Downing. Downing was born in 1862 in Lexington in the household of wartime Governor James McDowell. The school served Lexington's black students grade 1 through 10 until 1944, when it added grades 11 and 12. It was only then that black students in Lexington could graduate from high school without having to leave Lexington.

18. **321 N. Main Street** In 1927, Progressive Lodge No. 266 of the Knights of Pythias purchased this property and built the current structure. The African-American Knights of Pythias was a secret society founded in Richmond in 1864 and dedicated to the principles of Friendship, Benevolence, and Charity. After the lodge failed to make payments during the beginning of the Great Depression, the building was purchased at auction by Knights of Pythias Trustee John B. Thompson. It continued to operate as the Knights of Pythias and was a major center of the African-American community. Members of the Count Basie Orchestra are said to have jammed there during one Fancy Dress performance. Following John Thompson's death, the property was sold in 1977 to American Legion Post 291.

**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places*

THE DIAMOND HILL & GREEN HILL COMMUNITY OF LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

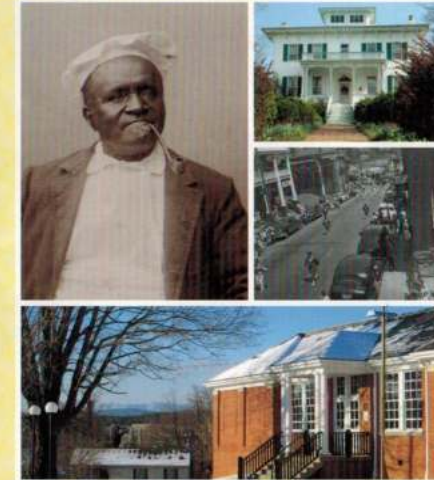
Diamond Hill is the story of people. It is the story of African-Americans, such as William Hayden Holmes, Harry Lee Walker, John B. Thompson, and Zach and Arlena Franklin. It is also the story of European-Americans like Irish immigrant and Civil War veteran John Sheridan, who lived on Diamond Hill and helped in its development.

Diamond Hill is also a lesson in 19th and 20th century architecture, from the elegant "Blandome," an Italianate villa built in the late 1820s, to numerous vernacular styles of the early 20th century. Additionally, the neighborhood and nearby North Main Street is home to several late 19th century churches and a National Register designated building constructed in the late 1920s as Lexington's "Colored School."

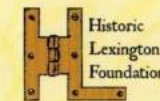
Following the Civil War in 1865, nearly 4,000 African-Americans in Rockbridge County had been freed, and they joined several hundred others known as free blacks. Many came to Lexington to seek work and an education. They settled mainly along north Main Street and eastward along Randolph Street. Across from VMI lay a largely open hill that became known as Diamond Hill. The origin of its name is unknown.

In 1883, a street from North Main to the top of the hill was called Diamond Street. Other streets followed. Fuller Street had begun as an antebellum lane where Jacob Fuller, a classical scholar and librarian at Washington College, built a large brick house, later known as "Blandome." In 1883, Maury Street, named after oceanographer Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury, was also laid out. On top of the hill, Lewis Street, named for attorney William C. Lewis, was recognized in 1912 as the town's northeastern boundary.

John Sheridan, local land speculator, who owned most of the upper hill, created the Green Hill Subdivision in 1925. With its fifty lots, it became the nucleus of the town's black community. Other African-Americans also lived on Davidson and Moore Streets and along North Main Street. After World War II, most of Diamond Hill's lots were filled.



WALKING TOUR
OF THE
DIAMOND HILL
& GREEN HILL
COMMUNITY
Lexington, Va



Historic Lexington Foundation Walking Tour RHS Museum Exhibit, 2012



Mountain View Cottage Ruins: Green Book Site
Overlooking Natural Bridge: Uphill from Rte 130
East of Hotel & NB Baptist Church



Mountain View Cottage: Green Book Colored Tourist Home
Natural Bridge State Park Ranger, Matthew Jackson
Remains of metal roof, limestone foundation & brick rubble



History's Remains ~ Archaeologist's Goldmine: Mountain View Cottage



Natural Bridge Hotel Scrapbooks: Commercial Advertising & National Notice

Visit



Natural Bridge

on your way to

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR

Higher than Niagara ...
Old as the Dawn ...
Natural Bridge is one of
the Seven Natural Won-
ders of the World. By
all means see it on your
way to the New York
World's Fair. Exqui-
site night illumination.
Excellent accomoda-
tions to suit any purse.

HOTEL \$1.50
Rooms 1 and up
COTTAGES \$1.00
Double Rooms 1 Person

For only 10c we will send you
a beautiful 8 x 10 picture of
Natural Bridge in four colors,
suitable for framing, together
with a 32-page booklet en-
titled "The Story of Natural
Bridge of Virginia"

NATURAL BRIDGE, VIRGINIA

Natural Bridge Hotel: How to Advertise?...
... right on your way to the 1939 New York World's Fair
"Excellent accommodations to suit any purse" (... but, any person?)

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Sunday, April 22, 1951

Enjoy a real vacation at world famous

NATURAL BRIDGE

HOTEL and MOTOR LODGE

in the Beautiful
Shenandoah Valley
of Virginia



A "miracle in stone," owned by Jefferson, surveyed by Washington. Higher than Niagara. Nightly illumination, musical pageant. One of 7 Natural Wonders of the World.



Natural Bridge Hotel, a famous landmark. Completely modern. Ideal for honeymoons, vacations. Open the year 'round. Recommended by Duncan Hines.

Natural Bridge is a complete resort . . . 1600 acres . . . hotel, cottages, motor lodge . . . swimming, fishing, golf in nearby historic Lexington, tennis, shuffleboard, dancing, playground for children. Excellent food. Moderate rates. Make your reservations now. Write for rates and illustrated folder.



The new 52-unit Natural Bridge Motor Lodge - A Quality Court.

Write for free illustrated folder. Moderate rates. Congenial surroundings. Every employee trained in courtesy and service. Address Dept. CD

NATURAL BRIDGE OF VIRGINIA
INCORPORATED
NATURAL BRIDGE, VA.
JAMES H. HUNTER Gen. Mgr.

1951: Hotel, Motor Court, Amenities for White Guests



**Be Happy -
Go Lucky!**

EILEEN WILSON, Lucky Star of TV and Radio, says:
**At football games I love to cheer
 "Go team!" and "Hip Hooray!"
 But for a better taste I shout,
 "Go Lucky Strike today!"**
(Luckies taste better than any other cigarette)

**LUCKIES TASTE BETTER
 THAN ANY OTHER CIGARETTE !**
L.S./M.F.T.-
Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco

See Spectacular
NATURAL BRIDGE



Famed Natural Bridge. One of the 7 Natural Wonders of the World. Nightly illumination and musical pageant. Higher than Niagara.

Your Complete Resort in the
 Beautiful Shenandoah
 Valley of Virginia

1,800-acre-resort estate—hotel, cottages, new 32-unit motor lodge offering splendid vacations at moderate cost. Swimming pool . . . golf, tennis . . . shuffleboard, dancing, indoor games. Playground for children. Excellent food. Unsurpassed scenery, tonic mountain air. Make this charming resort headquarters for seeing historic Shenandoah Valley. Thrill to famous Natural Bridge, "The Miracle In Stone" owned by Jefferson and surveyed by Washington. Make reservations now . . . for an unforgettable vacation at Natural Bridge!

Hotel, Cottages and new 32-unit Motor Lodge. Modern, new decor. Pleasant surroundings, traditional hospitality and flawless service. Moderate rates.

NATURAL BRIDGE OF VIRGINIA
 INCORPORATED

Natural Bridge, Virginia
 James N. Hunter, Gen. Mgr.

CONVENTION FACILITIES

The hotel offers especially attractive facilities for sales meeting groups and conventions.

Get Lucky at Natural Bridge: Resort and Convention Facilities



Waiters at Natural Bridge Hotel (1903)

“Every employee trained in courtesy and service.”

Some people come back just for our spoonbread.

A funny way to choose a hotel? Don't say so until you've tasted our spoonbread yourself. I have some every chance I get. I'm the doorman here at the Roanoke.

Lots of other things people like about us. The modern, comfortable rooms, the more-than-comfortable rates, the 750 free parking spaces. The old silver, fresh flowers and sparkling crystal chandeliers in our dining rooms. The ten acres of private park our hotel sits in. And the feeling of being a guest in one of the great houses of the South. (Not so surprising, considering that we've been serving travelers for over 85 years.)

Conventioneers appreciate all those things—plus the Roanoke's extremely fine convention facilities. For instance, we've got over 15,000 square feet of exhibit space.

Come see us soon. And be sure to try that spoonbread. Until then, in case you want to make some spoonbread yourself, write our Chef Brown for the recipe.



- Located in area famous for scenic beauty, historical significance.
- Excellent highway, rail, bus and airline service.
- 750 free parking spaces—plus 150-car service garage in hotel.
- Heated Olympic swimming pool with crystal-clear mountain water.
- Barber shop, beauty shop, health club with steam bath.
- 425 centrally air-conditioned rooms and suites—with radio, TV, direct-dialing telephone.
- Rates start at \$9.00 for single rooms.
- Children free if sharing parents' room.



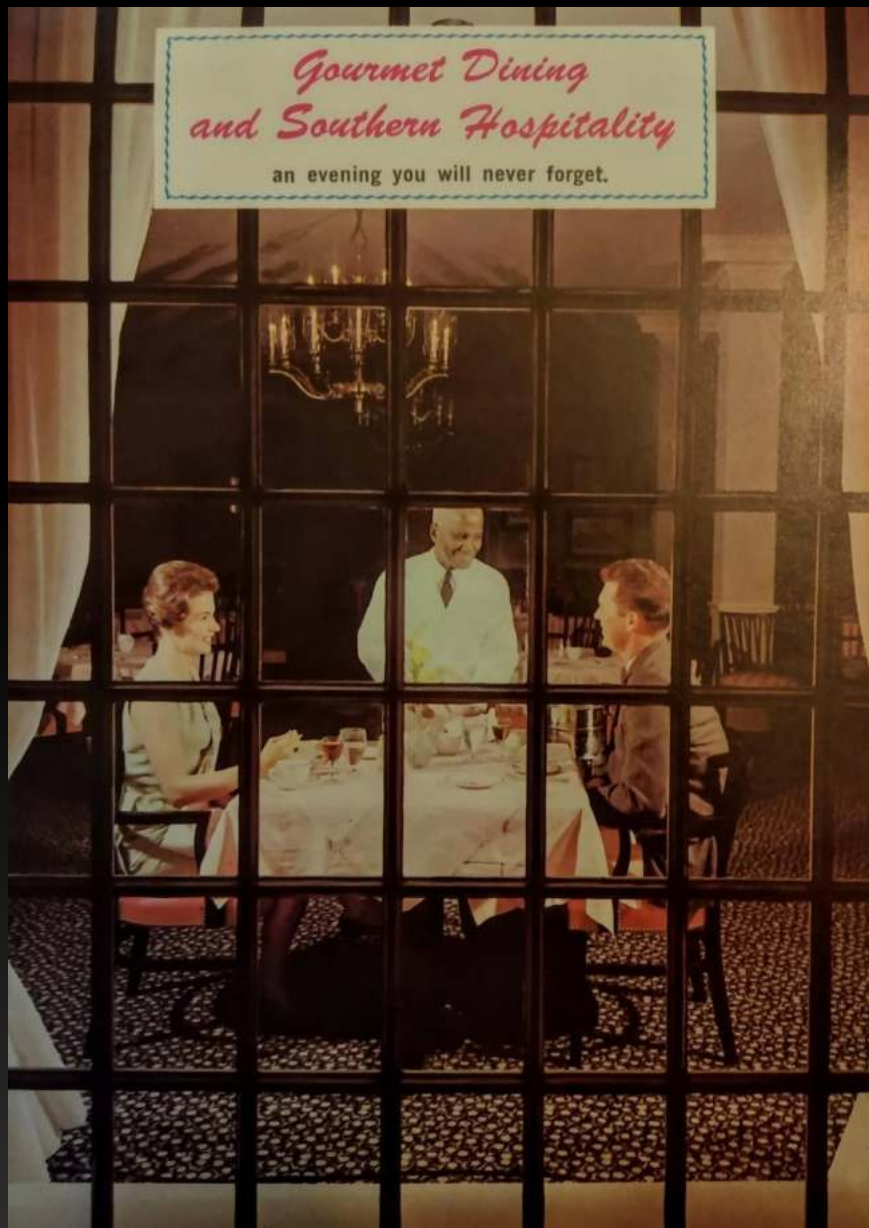
Hotel Roanoke

Roanoke, Virginia, 24006
Phone (703) 343-6992
Carl G. Thurston, Gen'l Mgr.
Fred W. Walker, Dir. of Sales

A Norfolk & Western Railway Property.



not pictured: Sterling Byars DeLaney, Sr. (father to Theodore, Sr., maître'd, NB Hotel)
(L): Theodore C. DeLaney, Sr., Hotel Roanoke (b. Natural Bridge, 1918-1976)
(R): Ted C. DeLaney, Jr., Chair, W&L History Dept. (b. Lexington, 1943-2020)



Selling 'Southern Hospitality,' Two Styles: NB Hotel Brochures, 1960s

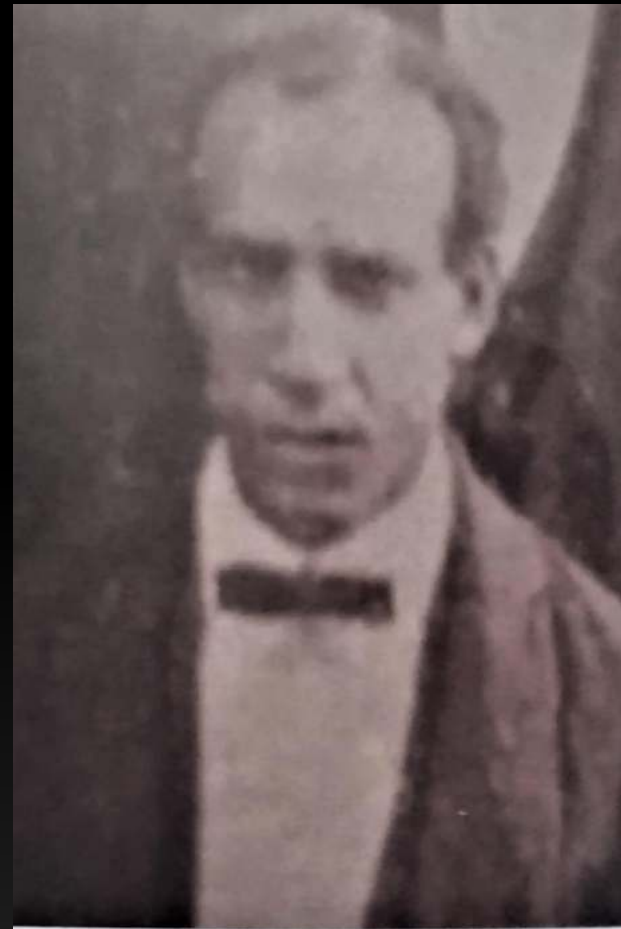


Dixon Family Home, Farm, & Guest Home

**Buck Hill Road, 'The Enclave': 1 mi. from Natural Bridge Hotel
Built by James Dixon; Managed by Annie Virginia Sadler Dixon**



*Anna "Annie" Virginia
Sadler-Dixon 1893-1974*



*James William Dixon, Sr.
1869-1963*

Mr. & Mrs. James and Annie Dixon



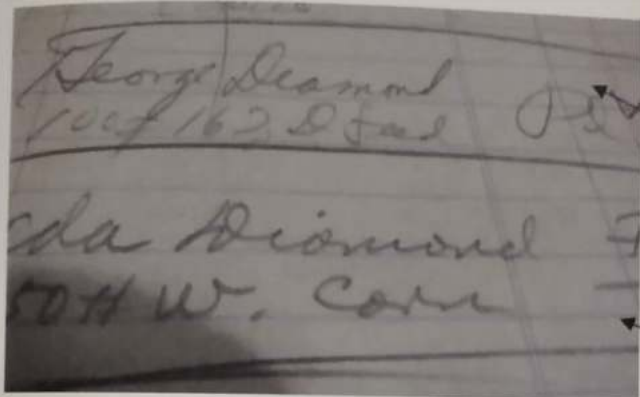
**Dixon House: Backyard, from Farm:
Expands to over 12 rooms; Tables to seat 20+ guests
Guests housed Upstairs; Family lives Downstairs**



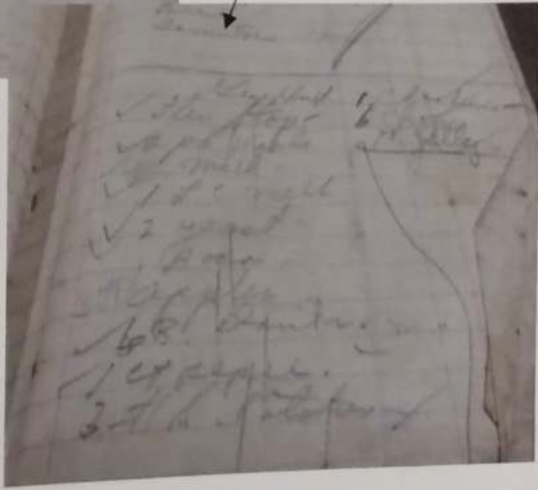
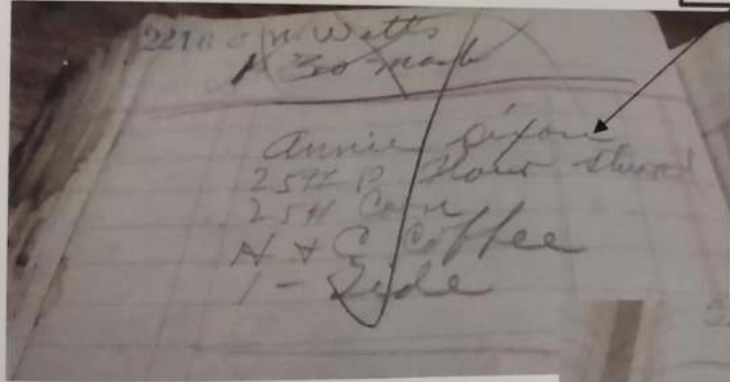
Dixons' 20 Acre Farm, Hilltop Barn



House & all structures built by James Dixon



Entries for George Diamond, Emily Hunt, Ada Diamond, Annie Dixon, and Guy Hunt



Sample of commodities and items purchased: corn for feeding hogs; laying mash to help hens produce eggs, fatback, coffee, pepsi, 7-up, yeast, flour, tide detergent; kennebec potatoes, bread, bologna, apples, bacon, jelly, canned milk, etc. Many families raised their own produce and when they ran short of certain commodities and items, they would purchase them.

1957 Natural Bridge General Store Ledger

Purchases by Annie Dixon & Guy Hunt (Compare William Caruthers Ledger, 1798 (RHS))



**Home of Watts Family, also operated as Tourist Home
Forge Road, Natural Bridge**



**Boarded teachers for neighboring 2-room school
Domestic Entrepreneurship**



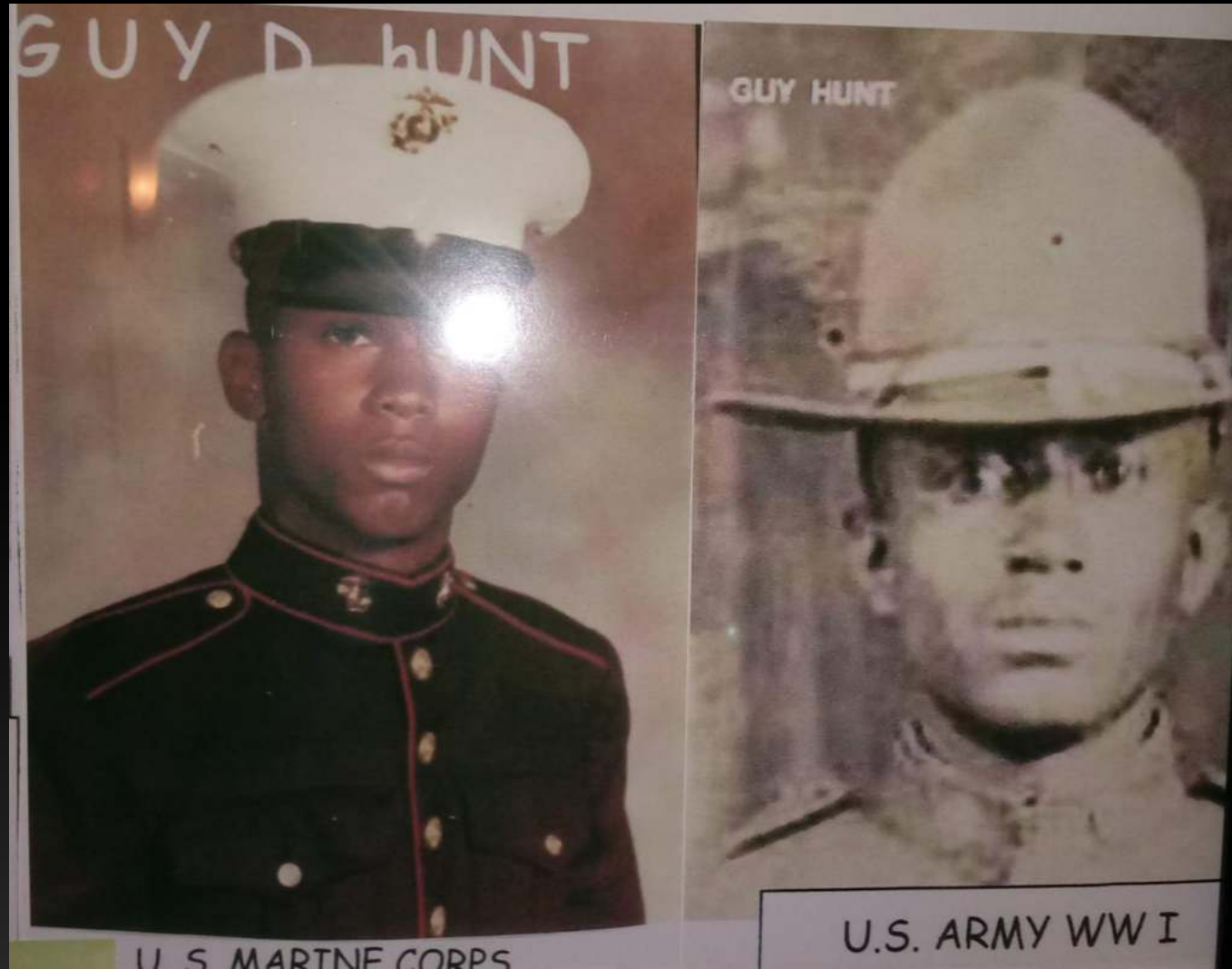
**‘Old Swimming Pool,’ fronting the ‘Tea Room’
Across from ‘Ole Chicken Shack’: Dance Room, Bar, Social Hall
Corner of Forge & Buck Hill Roads; Community Water Spring, to the Left**



First Baptist Natural Bridge, Pastor Ryan Hubbard
 ‘Ole Colored Church’ – Shafer Ln. (1865) New Building – Buck Hill Rd. Enclave (1926)



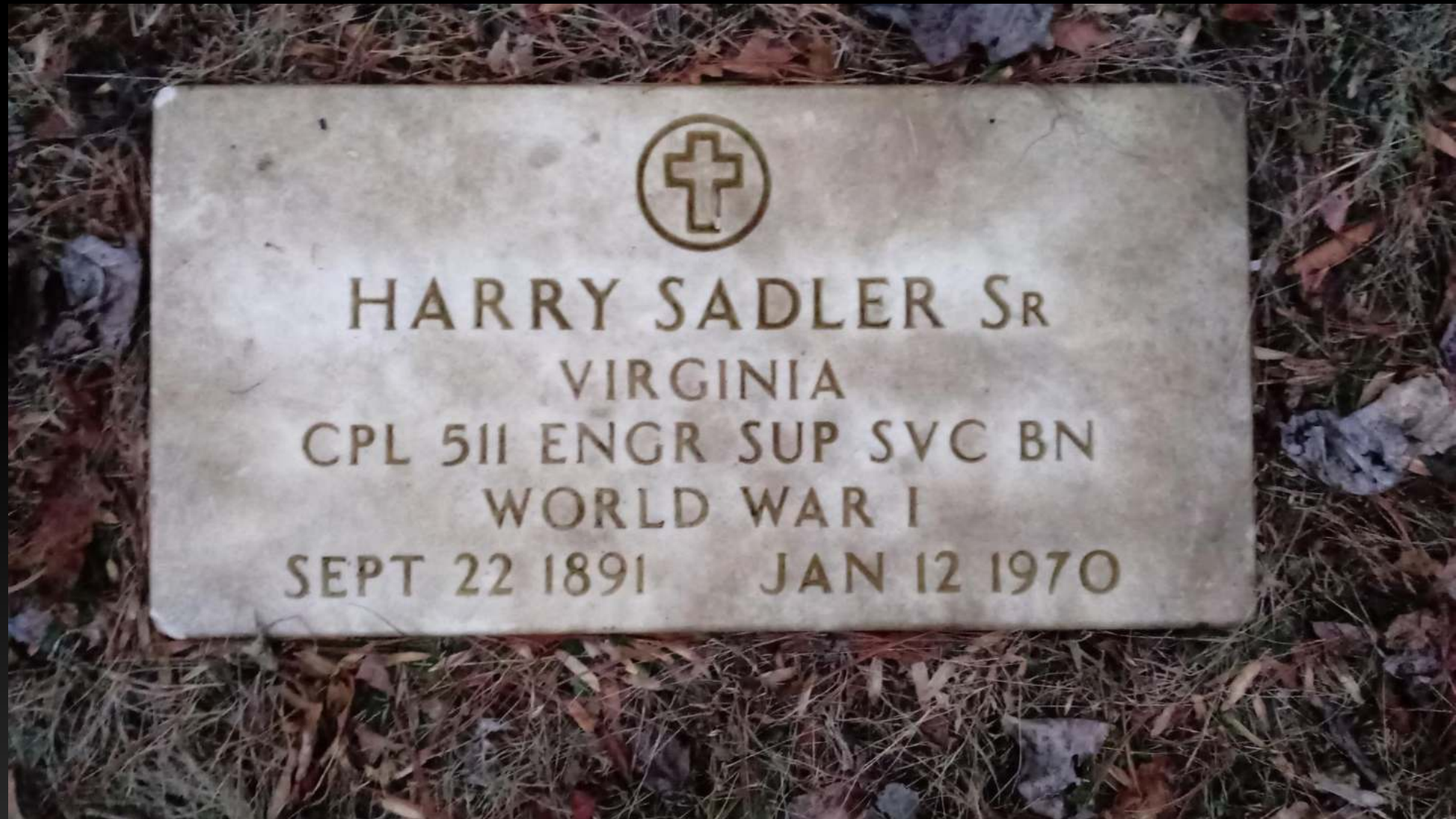
**1951 Sunday School, First Baptist Natural Bridge
(Annie Dixon, pictured at Right)**



**Father & Son Guy O. Hunt, Sr. & Guy D. Hunt, Jr.
International Frontiers: Families Fight in Vietnam & WWI
Display by Bea Johnson; First Baptist Natural Bridge**



**PFC 'Pope' Hunt (1920-2007), Diamond Family Cemetery
Fought in Pacific Campaigns, in US Marine Corps, WWII
Like Father Guy O. Hunt: Longtime Employee NB Hotel, Head Bellman**



**Cpl. Harry Sadler, Sr. (1891-1970), Brother to Annie [Sadler] Dixon
WWI Veteran, Engineering Battalion, Natural Bridge Native
Mt. View Cemetery, NB: Home & Away from Jim Crow → Kennedy New Frontier**

African-Americans
in the Shadow of The Bridge



*The Diamonds and Neighboring Families
Natural Bridge, Virginia
1806 - 2019*

Pat Wright and Na'im Ziyad

The Vitality & Value of YOUR Family, Neighborhood, Local Histories



RHS' Natural Bridge Chair on Loan: 2021 VMFA Exhibit
"Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge in American Art" Christopher Oliver, Curator
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Feb-Aug 2021; Taubman Museum of Art, April – Aug 2022

*Keystone View Company,
Manufacturers and Publishers*



*Headville, Pa. St. Louis, Mo.
Copyright, 1898, by B. F. Singleton*

3338—Baptizing in Cedar Creek under the Great Natural Bridge, Va.

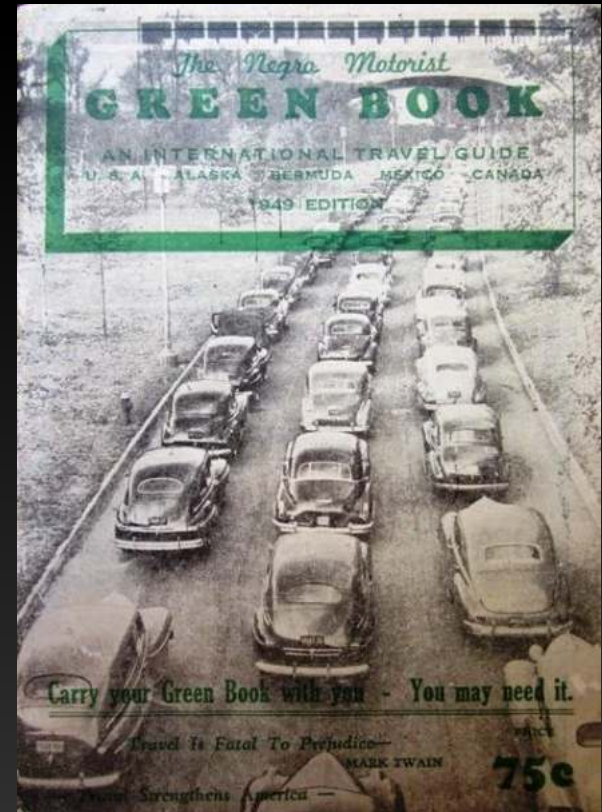
Black Histories at Natural Bridge

History's Double Vision: Do we See in Stereo? In Counterpoint?

Black Histories at Natural Bridge:

Re-Imagining Virginia's Frontier Icon, from
Patrick Henry & Thomas Jefferson to *The Green Book*

Eric Wilson, Rockbridge Historical Society



Institutional & Personal Thanks

Matthew Jackson, Natural Bridge State Park

Jurette Heckscher, Library of Congress

Jefferson Looney, Monticello

Cinder Stanton, Monticello

Christopher Oliver, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Seth McCormick-Goodhart, Washington & Lee Univ. Archives

Lisa McCown, W&L Archives

Ted DeLaney, W&L Dept. of History

Alison Bell, W&L Dept. of Anthropology

Lynn Rainville, W&L Institutional History & Museums

Julie Goyette, Rockbridge Regional Library

Christopher Wilson, Smithsonian Museum of American History

Henry Louis Gates, Harvard Univ. Hutchins Center for Af-Am Research

Matthew Gibson, Virginia Humanities

Dorette Sobolewski, Frontier Culture Museum

Na'im Ziyad

Pat Wright

Lois Nadine Carter Hubbard

Beatrice Johnson

Michelle Cooper

Larry Spurgeon

Richard Hubbard

Michael Blankenship

Beverly Tucker

Charles Patrick Henry

First Baptist Church, Natural Bridge

First Baptist Church, Lexington

Natural Bridge Historic Hotel

Natural Bridge State Park

Re-Visiting Virginia's Frontier Icon:

Black Lives at Natural Bridge, from
Patrick Henry & Thomas Jefferson to *The Green Book*

Eric Wilson, Rockbridge Historical Society

