



New River Land Trust

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NEWS

Conserving farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia's New River region

Your Land and Its Story

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by Jim Glanville

If you have conserved land through the New River Land Trust or even if you are only considering conserving land through the New River Land Trust, you are part of a mighty stream of history that flows through our region.

The region of the New River Land Trust in Virginia in the watershed of the New River (earlier known as Woods River or the Kanawha River) has been called "the Beckoning Land," and so it was. Around 1745, the first European settlers arrived

on what they called the "western waters" in reference to the water's eventual outflow via the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico. However, this beckoning land of opportunity was also a dangerous land – American Indians resisted the settlers' encroachment.

In 1745, the westernmost outpost of Virginia government was the court house of Augusta County (see picture) in present day Staunton. It was to that court house the surveyors returned from their land measuring trips across a vast region

to the south-west. Today, Augusta's citizens take great pride that they live in a county that once covered an area of comparable size to western Europe (see map). This map was made by Stonewall Jackson's "topographical engineer" Jedediah Hotchkiss. Today, a six-foot stone reproduction of



it, erected in 1988, stands on the forecourt of the court house.

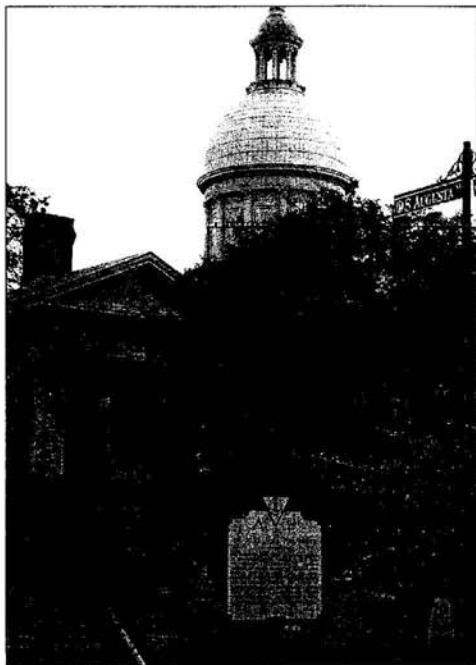
The eight-county area today covered by the New River Land Trust straddles the river toward the bottom of the map labeled Kanawha R. The original Augusta County has long since been divided into over a thousand counties: 40 in western Virginia, 55 in West Virginia, 95 in Tennessee, 120 in Kentucky, and so on. The formation history of these counties tells the story of the political and human expansion of the United States and its evolution from a string of infant colonies along the Atlantic coastal plain into a continent-spanning world power.

It was the prospect of land, new opportunities, and a better life, that energized the expansion. By 1770, the narrow, rutted wagon road from Staunton to Wytheville had, in the words of historian Carl Bridenbaugh, become "... the most heavily

travelled road in all America, and must have had more vehicles jolting along its rough and tortuous way than all other main roads put together." So the region of the New River Land Trust stands squarely on the thoroughfare along which passed the men and women who powered the nation building of the United States.

So when you pass by your local court house, pause briefly to think about the land records that it holds, and of all the predecessor court houses with their earlier records, and especially of Augusta Court House where it all began. The land is truly a historic heritage worthy of protection.

Jim Glanville lives in Blacksburg and is a former Virginia Tech chemistry professor who has published over twenty articles in history and archeology journals since he retired seven years ago.



Appendix

Four Added Pictures

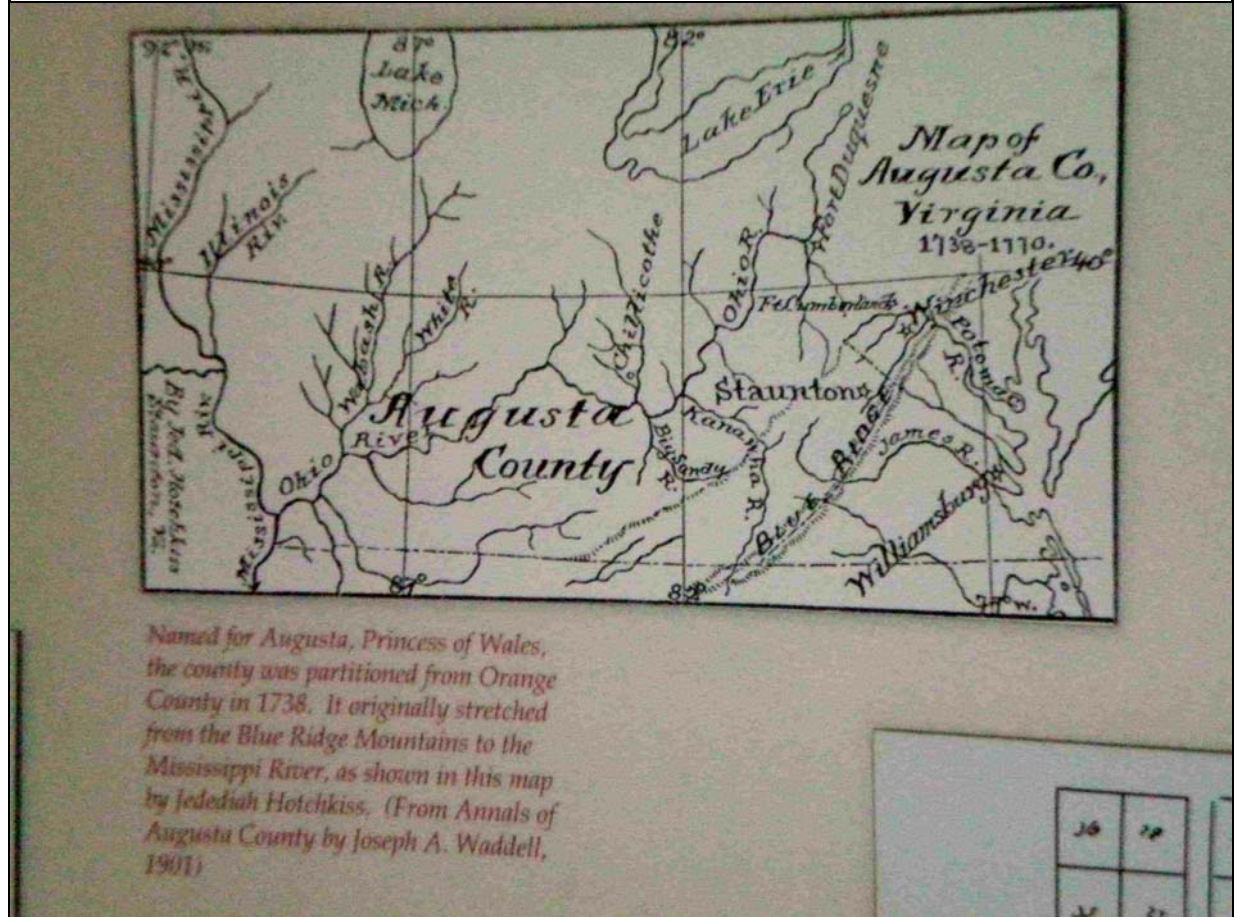
1. The picture of Augusta Court House taken on a rainy day on 2 November 2010 used in the above article.



2. A second picture of Augusta Court House taken the same day.



3. Map of Augusta County by Jedediah Hotchkiss on a sign board in lobby of Staunton City Hall. This map comes from Waddell, Joseph Addison. *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia, from 1726 to 1871*, second edition. Staunton: C. Russell Caldwell, 1902. On line at <http://books.google.com/books?id=rZbEC1kEdpcC>.



4. The stone embodiment of the map of Augusta County by Jedediah Hotchkiss in the forecourt of the Augusta Court House. This stone map can be seen in the lower right hand corner of picture 2.

