

Roanoke River Blueway

Historic Resources, Landmarks and Points of Interest



Prepared by the Roanoke Valley – Alleghany Regional Commission
November 2015

Roanoke River Blueway – Historic Resources , Landmarks and Points of Interest

Name	Type	Latitude	Longitude	River Right/Left	Visible from River	Locality	Land Access	Source	Description
Legal Head of Navigation North Fork Roanoke River	Geographical Site	37.232515	-80.253968	N/A	N/A	Elliston	Rt. 603, North Fork	Grumman 1976	Determined by the US Army Corps of Engineers, this is the highest navigable point on the North Fork of the Roanoke River.
Big Spring Mill	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.222264	-80.228847	Right	?	Elliston	Rt. 745, South Fork, Call 540-268-2267 for information or to place an order	Trout	Big Spring Mill is an early 20th century mill that is still in operation, now under electric power. It is presently a family owned feed and flour mill that manufactures dairy, swine, poultry, and equine feeds.
Legal Head of Navigation SF	Geographical Site	37.220965	-80.226588	N/A	N/A	Elliston	US 11, South Fork	Grumman 1976	Determined by the US Army Corps of Engineers, this is the highest navigable point on the South Fork of the Roanoke River.
Concrete Railroad Bridge Piers	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.226928	-80.208446	N/A	Yes	Elliston	US 11, South Fork	Trout	The Norfolk and Western railroad bridge just upstream of US 11/460 has concrete piers. It's possible that the nearby rip-rap was made from the older stone piers.
Start of Blueway	Geographical Site	37.22768	-80.208682	N/A	N/A	Lafayette	US 11, South Fork		Start of the Roanoke River Blueway, Elliston Volunteer Fire Department on river left.
Forks Mile Zero	Geographical Site	37.237487	-80.213875	N/A	N/A	Lafayette		Trout	Confluence of the South and North Forks of the Roanoke River.
Deyetl's Mill	Historical Site	37.234155	-80.177568	Right	?	Roanoke County	US 11	Trout, Map of Botetourt and Roanoke counties 1885 (A.H. Campbell, Jed Hotchkiss, and Walter Izard), Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	The concrete building on river right may stand on the site of the 19th century Deyetl's Mill. The small stream that enters on the right flows down from the Spring Hollow Reservoir.
Dyerley Mill	Historical Site	37.243893	-80.176452	Right	?	Roanoke County	Rt. 821	Trout, "Survey for a canal between the Roanoke and James rivers" C. Crozet	An early 19th century map suggests Dyerly Mill may have stood on this sharp right turn at the small community of Riverside.
Dixie Caverns	Attraction	37.25245	-80.174822	Left	No	Salem	W Main St. (US 11), Call 540-380-2085	Trout	Discovered in 1920, these limestone caverns are open year round.
Scenic Bluff	Landmark	37.253236	-80.169071	No	Yes	Salem		Trout	As the river bends right around the Western Virginia Regional Jail, look for the scenic bluffs on river left.
Tower and Remains of Bridge	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.246984	-80.16553	Both	Yes	Salem	Rt. 639	Trout	After crossing under the Norfolk and Western Railway there is a tower (right) and the remains of a low-water bridge.
Polka Dot Bridge	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.242475	-80.14933	N/A	Defunct	Salem	Rt. 639	Trout	Just below the stone Norfolk and Western railroad bridge once stood Polka Dot bridge which connected Rt. 891 and Rt. 893

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Norfolk and Western Bridges	Landmark	37.242851	-80.143558	N/A	Yes	Salem	Rt. 639	Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	After a sharp left bend, there are two interesting N&W bridges in three dimensional topography. The lower one, with stone piers, is on maps dating back to the Civil War.
Wabun, Va	Geographical Site	37.25356	-80.135715	Right	?	Salem	Poor Moutain Rd (Rt. 639)	Trout	On the right hand side sits the scenic riverside community of Wabun
Railroad Culvert	Landmark	37.270578	-80.138467	Left	Yes	Salem	US 11	Trout	As the river bends right near the neighborhood of Glenvar, a large railroad culvert accomodates the entrance of Stypes Branch on river left.
Concrete Bridge Remains	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.270194	-80.118592	Left	Yes	Salem		Trout	Just upstream of Green Hill park one can find the remains of a low-level concrete bridge. Below sits a long rock garden for kayakers to test their skills.
Restored Norfolk and Western Caboose	Landmark	37.276648	-80.112798	Right	?	Salem	Green Hill Park	Trout	N&W Caboose #555025, restored by the non-profit Roanoke Valley Central RY.
Concrete Dam Remains	Historical Site	37.282112	-80.093518	N/A	Yes	Salem	W Riverside Dr. (Rt. 639)	Trout	At the right kink in the river lie remains of a concrete dam. A Civil War era map shows this to be the site of Wm Diuguid's foundry.
Ruins of Moore Mill	Historical Site	37.286499	-80.078729	Left	?	Salem	Mill Ln.	Trout	Also know as Roanoke, Bellevue, Chapman's, Langhorne's, and Shank Mill, the mill was variously a sawmill, brick plant, and grist mill. It operated from before 1844 until 1947.
Dam of rocks	Landmark	37.284886	-80.072173	Left	Yes	Salem	W Riverside Dr. (Rt. 639)	Trout	At the intake of Spring Lake Branch is a dam of large rocks. On the right side is a small pull-off from Riverside Dr.
Change of Course	Geographical Site	37.284092	-80.062255	N/A	Yes	Salem		Trout	In 1901 the river was shifted right from its natural bend by the creation of a railroad embankment.
Salem Mills Dam (Old Salem Harbor)	Historical Site	37.281804	-80.058907	N/A	Yes	Salem	Eddy Ave.	Trout	Located at the site of the Salem Mills Dam, Salem's harbor was the upper terminus of navigation on the Roanoke River. In 1828 three Batteaux from the Roanoke Navigation Company reached this point brcoming the first to succesfully navigate the river.
Roanoke Navigation Company	Historical Site	37.29228	-80.060847	Left	No	Salem	Union St. and Main St.	Trout, "Salem: A Virginia Chronicle" Norwood C. Middleton, Salem Historical society, 1986	The office and warehouse of the Roanoke Navigation Company were located at the Boyer-Ross House on the corner of Union and Main St. in downtown Salem. The orginial building (1816-1930) stood on the present day site
Stone Abutments	Landmark	37.276512	-80.05402	N/A	Yes	Salem	Apperson Dr. US 11	Trout	The stone abutments hold up Apperson Dr. as it becomes Colorado St. running into downtown Salem.
Site of Salem Furnace	Historical Site	37.275846	-80.048227	Left	Defunct	Salem	Riverside Dr.	Trout, Directory to the Iron and Steel Works of the United States (1898) p. 31	Onriver left, across from Riverside Park, was the location of the Salem Furnace. Built in 1889-91, the furnace had 3 Whitwell stoves that produced foundry pig iron at an annual capacity of 35,000 tons.

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Quarry	Historical Site	37.272946	-80.038584	Left	Yes	Salem	Riverside Dr.	Trout	As the river bends right before crossing under US 11 there is an interesting rock formation at the site of an old quarry. 2" diameter blasting holes can still be seen.
Remains of Iron Bridge Piers	Historical Site	37.271727	-80.038783	N/A	Yes	Salem	Apperson Dr. US 11	Trout	At the crossing US 11, Apperson Dr., can be found the stumps of iron cylinder piers from an earlier bridge.
Ford	Historical Site	37.268201	-80.038257	N/A	Defunct	Salem	Salem Park off of Electric Road	Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	The left bend around Salem Park may have been the site of a 19th century ford according to a civil war era map.
Ford	Historical Site	37.269789	-80.024009	N/A	Defunct	Salem		Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	Near the mouth of Mason Creek may have been a 19th century ford according to a Civil War era map.
Evidence of Blasting	Landmark/ Historical Site	37.271355	-80.020369	Both	Yes	Salem		Trout	As the river passed below the Salem VA, huge rock slabs with fossil wave patterns cut with 1 1/4" splitting holes protect the right bank while large rocks blasted with 2 1/2" holes protect the railroad bank on river left.
Ford	Historical Site	37.27144	-80.008031	N/A		Roanoke	Peter's Creek Rd.	Trout	Where Peter's Creek crosses the river is designated as the site of a ford on a Civil War era map.
Persinger Mill, Dam, (Lock)	Historical Site	37.2723	-79.993142	Right	Yes	Roanoke		Trout, Roanoke Preservation Society Endangered Sites 2015	A 1820's map indicates this to be the spot of Persinger's Mill and Dam. Presently a pile of stones can be found on the right side which may have formed part of the mill's foundation or perhaps been an abutment for a 1890's bridge. A 1828 report. indicates Persinger may have constructed a lock as well.
Peter's Creek Crib Dam	Historical Dam	37.27291	-79.993308	Left	Yes	Roanoke		Trout	An interesting example of a crib dam for canoeists to examine. Though not too old, it is a rare example of a wooden dam made of logs planked to be watertight.
Change of Course	Geographic	37.27366	-79.992152	N/A	Yes	Roanoke		Trout	In 1941 the river was shifted right from its natural course to make way for the railyard.
Persinger Mill	Historical Site	37.273233	-79.986466	Right	Defunct	Roanoke		Trout	Late 19th century maps put Persinger's (Bolin's) Mill here. That a mill was in this spot as late as 1937 is confirmed by aerial photographs.
Riprap	Landmark	37.272772	-79.984728	Right	Yes	Roanoke		Trout	At the sharp left bend after crossing under the railroad, one can find furnace slag mixed with the N&W riprap on river right.
Roanoke Iron Works Furnace	Historical Site	37.276512	-79.981563	Left	No	Roanoke	Patterson Ave. SW	Trout, Directory to the Iron and Steel Works of the United States (1898) p. 31	Built in 1890, the Roanoke Iron Works Furnace included four Massicks and Crooke stoves that produced foundry and forged pig iron. It had an annual capacity of 48,000 tons.
Ford and mill	Historical Site	37.274907	-79.980265	Right	Defunct	Roanoke	Bridge St.	Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	A civil war era map indicates that a ford and mill may have existed at the present day Bridge st. bridge.

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Turkey Bottom	Historical Site	37.273865	-79.978108						The area on river right, presently known as Norwich, was once called Turkey Bottom. Though well suited for agriculture the arrival of the N&W railroad in 1882 transformed the area into a major industrial site. The neighborhood got its present name from the Norwich Lock Co. which located there in 1891. Also there was the Roanoke Cotton Mill which attracted national media attention for its use of child labor. Today only Walker Machine and Foundry remains of Norwich's early industrial boom.
Railroad Culvert	Landmark	37.274206	-79.976445	Left	Yes	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Bridge St.	Trout	As the river rounds Norwich Park there is a large railroad culvert entering on river left.
Narrow-gauge Railroad Crossing	Historical Site	37.272738	-79.974943	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Bridge St.	Trout, Roanoke Count Deed Book 1901	A 1901 source indicates that there may have been a narrow-gauge railroad crossing at the present day site of the greenway bridge.
Ford	Historical Site	37.271705	-79.973897	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Bridge St.	Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	Downstream of the greenway bridge may have been the site of a 19th century ford according to a civil war era map.
Woodrum Bridge Piers	Historical Site	37.267547	-79.96724	Center	Yes	Roanoke	Memorial Ave. SW	Trout	The piers of the old Woodrum Bridge (1891) can be found below Memorial Bridge (1926). On them are unique mason's marks, the personal symbols of the original stonemasons
Narrow-gauge Railroad Crossing	Historical Site	37.266147	-79.956318	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Wasena Park	Trout, Barnes	Here, at what was one time know as the Blue Rock swimming hole, was a narrow gauge railroad crossing. The railroad led to the Rorer Mines on Mill Mountain.
Coon's Ford	Historical Site	37.263653	-79.956383	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Wiley Dr.	Trout, Map of Roanoke Co. 1864 Gilmer Coll.	According to a 1864 map, the low bridge entering Smith Park is close to the site of the 19th century Coon Ford
Norfolk and Western Trestle	Landmark	37.258003	-79.956648	Right	Yes	Roanoke	Wiley Dr.	Trout	A scenic railroad trestle above the mouth of Murray Run can be scene on river right. It is no longer in use.
Tosh's (Colonial) Ford	Historical Site	37.255268	-79.949538	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Wiley Dr.	Trout, 1864, 1827	Where the river passes beneath Franklin Rd. was the site on Tosh's or Colonial Ford which is marked on maps as early as 1827.
Snow Steam Pump	Attraction/Historical Site	37.249815	-79.94424	Right	No	Roanoke	S Jefferson St. (300 yds up from river)	Trout	Located in Crystal Spring Park, the Snow Steam Pump supplied Roanoke with spring water between 1905 and 1957. Near this site was a mill built by Daniel Evans (1750's) and visited by George Washington (1752). The mill, powered by the spring, was later called McLanahan's and Big Spring Mills and burned down in 1886.

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Mill Mountain	Attraction/Land mark	37.250178	-79.935504	Right	Yes	Roanoke	Walnut Ave/Fishburn Pky. or Star Trail		Named for Evans's Mill (see Snow Steam Pump), Mill Mountain boasts the world's largest freestanding man-made star (1949). Between 1910 and 1930 an inclined railway once ran from Crystal Spring to the top (see the
Tinsley Ford	Historical Site	37.261596	-79.936003	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Piedmont St.	Trout	The pipe dam at the sharp right bend downstream of Walnut Bridge may have been the site of Tinsley's Ford according to a civil war era map
Flat Rock Ford	Historical Site	37.261263	-79.933627	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Piedmont St.	Trout	An 1864 map places Flat Rock Ford here at Piedmont Park.
Taylor's Mill Ford	Historical Site	37.252262	-79.923627	N/A	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Riverland Rd.	Trout	An 1864 map places Taylor's Mill Ford just downstream of the 9th St. bridge.
Keyeauger's Saw & Grist Mill	Historical Site	37.252518	-79.91704	Right	Defunct	Roanoke	Roanoke River Greenway off of Bennington St.	Trout	As the river bends left at Bennington Place, modern rubble marks the supposed site of the 19th century Keyeauger's Saw and Grist Mill according to 1864 and 1885 maps.
Buzzard Rock	Landmark	37.266317	-79.915259	Left	Yes	Roanoke	Tayloe Ave. SE off of 13th St.	Trout	A formation known as Buzzard Rock is visible on the lefthand side as the river takes a sharp right after 13th St.
Confluence of Tinker Creek	Geographical Site	37.266403	-79.904734	Left	Yes	Roanoke/Roanoke County line	Tinker Creek Greenway	Trout	The confluence of Tinker Creek marks the border between Roanoke City and Roanoke County. In the early 1900's there were public boat excursions from this point down to Niagra Dam. It is possible that batteaux traveled north along Tinker Creek as far as Mason Mill Rd.
Vinegrode's Mill, Hokrider's Ford	Historical Site	37.258018	-79.87921	Left	Defunct	Roanoke County		Trout	Just upstream of Niagara Dam, at the mouth of Wolf Creek (Right), is the site of the 19th century Vinegrode's Mill and Hokrider's Ford according to maps from 1864 and 1885. Presently there is a large railroad culvert to allow the creek to flow beneath the tracks.
Niagara Dam	Landmark	37.254611	-79.875364	Left	Yes	Roanoke County	Blue Ridge Parkway	Trout	Completed in 1906, Niagara Dam (operated by American Electric Power) diverts water to the nearby Niagara Hydroelectric Plant. At 52 feet high and 452 feet long, the dam backs up the Roanoke River for over 2 miles. There is a Canoe portage on river left.
Blue Ridge Parkway	Landmark	37.254517	-79.870675	N/A	Yes	Roanoke County	Blue Ridge Parkway	Trout	The high bridge just downstream of Niagara Dam is the Blueridge Parkway, a 469 mile long road between Waynesboro VA and Smoky Mountain National Park in NC .

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Explore Park	Attraction	37.236948	-79.844701	Right	?	Roanoke County	Blue Ridge Parkway (milepost 115), (540) 427-1800	Trout	Explore park currently includes a visitor's center, over 14 miles of trails, two 18th century style buildings, and access to the Roanoke River. Admission to historic buildings such as the Blacksmith Shop, Schoolhouse, or Grist Mill is currently unavailable.
McGee's Ford	Historical Site	37.24391	-79.84962	NA	Defunct	Roanoke County	Explore Park Trails	Trout, Dickerson 2010	At a set of rapids just upstream of Explore Park was the site of McGee's (McKee's) Ford according to Civil war era maps and a 2010 affidavit. Ruth Dickerson's grandfather, a full-blooded Cherokee, died of hypothermia at this site while attempting a winter crossing.
Large Railroad Culvert	Landmark	37.241911	-79.847732	Left	Yes	Roanoke Co./Bedford Co.	Explore Park Trails	Trout	The large railroad culvert that enters on river left across from Explore Park is the approximate point at which the river becomes the border of Bedford (left) and Roanoke (right) counties.
Start of Smith Mountain Lake	Geographical Site	37.23026	-79.842067	N/A	No	Roanoke Co./Bedford Co.		Trout	Smith Mountain Lake backs up to this point, inundating river sites for the next 37 miles.
Blackwater Ford	Historical Site	37.226348	-79.846594	N/A	No	Roanoke Co./Bedford Co.		Trout, Dickerson 2010	Just upstream of Back Creek, at the end of Rutrough Rd., was Blackwater Ford. The ford was in use into the 1940's when it accomadated both horse and buggies as well as motorized vehicles. Much of the traffic carried wheat, hay, and corn to be processed at the neaby Whirley's Mill. The river used to be narrower and shallower with less steep banks. It's gradual widening was quickened by the backing up of Smith Mountain Lake.
Change of name to Staunton River	Geographical Site	37.225664	-79.847184	N/A	Yes	Roanoke County/Franklin County Line	Rt. 618	Trout	At the entrance of Back Creek on river right, the waterway changes name from the Roanoke to the Staunton (or Roanoke/Staunton) River. It reverts back to the just the Roanoke over a 100 miles downstream at the confluence of the Dan River near Clarksville Va. The mouth of Backcreek is the tripoint where Roanoke, Franklin, and Bedford Counties all meet. Downstream the river forms the border of Franklin (right) and Bedford (left) counties.
Whirley's Mill	Historical Site	37.225852	-79.847721	Right	?	Roanoke County/Franklin County Line	Rt. 618	Trout, Dickerson 2010	Spikes in a huge rockbed spanning Back Creek are what remain of the dam at Whirley's Mill. In the mid-20th century the mill burned down and one eyewitness suggests there may still be parts of the millwheel in the bottom of Back Creek.

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Timber and stone groins	Historical Site	37.222435	-79.847174	?	?	Franklin Co./Bedford Co.		Trout	Downstream of Back Creek are timber and stone groins. Maps from 1864 and 1891 suggest this may have been the site of Horn's Ford.
Devil's Dice	Landmark	37.216386	-79.843097	Right	?	Franklin Co./Bedford Co.		Trout	As the river bends left downstream of Back Creek, look for huge rock cubes on left known locally as the Devil's Dice.
Macrey's Ford	Historical Site	37.217274	-79.831982	N/A	Defunct	Franklin Co./Bedford Co.		Trout	A quick right-left kink in the river may have been the site of Macrey's (Macvey's) Ford according to 1864, 1891, and 1930 maps.
Hardy Va (End of Blueway)	Geographical Site	37.219615	-79.799141	Take out on River Left	Yes	Hardy	Rt. 634	Trout	The official end of the Roanoke River Blueway is DGIF Hardy Ford Boating Access.

Source:

Trout, W.E & Trout, N.R (2006). *The Roanoke River/Staunton River Atlas*. Virginia Canals and Navigations Society. ISBN 978-1-888838-11-4

The Roanoke River/Staunton River Atlas is available for purchase from the [Virginia Canals and Navigations Society](http://www.virginiacanals.com).