

Pleasant Valley Historic District Listed in the National Register

ATLANTA (October 15, 2009) – The Pleasant Valley Historic District, located approximately one and one-half miles south of Crandall on the east side of the CSX rail line in Murray County, was listed in the National Register on September 24, 2009. The property owners and the Whitfield-Murray Historical Society sponsored the nomination. A consultant prepared the nomination materials. The Pleasant Valley Historic District was listed at the state level of significance as a rare, intact, rural, historic agricultural district that has remained relatively unchanged since the early 19th century.

Historic development in Pleasant Valley began in 1832 with the Cherokee Land Lottery that opened the area to white settlement. David Westfield (1786-1865) purchased several land lots in the area from the original owners and by 1837, owned 2,800 acres. Westfield built a road to connect Murray and Gilmer counties and the present-day Crandall-Ellijay Road follows the 1830s road. In 1839, Westfield sold 2,400 acres to brothers John and Julius Bates, and by 1840, there were three major farms within the valley, the John Bates farm, the Julius Bates farm, and the William McDonald farm. By 1850, two additional families, the Edward Adair family and the Benjamin Loughridge family, also built farms in the valley, and the main crops grown were wheat, corn, oats, potatoes, and livestock.

After the Civil War, the area continued to be farmed by members of the founding families, and cotton was added as a cash crop due to high cotton prices. The railroad did not arrive in the area until 1904 and the nearby towns of Eton, Crandall, and Chatsworth were founded. During the 1930s, Pleasant Valley farmers began new agricultural practices such as crop rotation and diversification. By the 1950s, the trend turned to livestock and poultry production. Members of the original families own many of the farms. The district is significant in the area of agriculture for its intact, historic farmsteads and land use patterns associated with historic agricultural practices that have remained since the early 1800s to the present day. Farms in the valley have received Centennial Family Farm awards that recognize their continued use for over 100 years.

The district is significant in the area of architecture for its intact collection of historic houses and agricultural-related outbuildings that represent common house and outbuilding types and styles found in Georgia from the early 19th through the mid-20th centuries.

The district is also significant in the area of exploration/settlement for its direct association with the early settlement of north Georgia and Murray County. In addition, a portion of the Federal Road, one of the first public works projects by the federal government, is included in the district.

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The Pleasant Valley Historic District is a historic rural, agricultural area located in a valley in the north Georgia mountains. The three main roads in the district are Loughridge Road, Crandall-Ellijay Road, and the Old Federal Road. The western boundary of the district is the rail line and includes a historic 1908 underpass. Another historic structure is the 1922 Mill Creek Bridge.

The district is comprised of several historic farmhouses and farmsteads. The Bates-Loughridge Farm has a circa 1836 log house built by Julius Bates with later additions including a second floor built circa 1870 when the Loughridge family purchased the land, a circa 1880 barn, a circa 1880 smokehouse, a 1950s wellhouse, and a 1950 farm office building. The T.R. Bates-Loughridge Farm has a 1882 Folk Victorian-style one-and-a-half-story, frame central hall-type house, a 1950 concrete-block tenant house, and a circa 1940 barn. The Plemons-O'Neal Farm has a circa 1919 frame I-house, a 1945 smokehouse, and a 1945 barn. The Loughridge Family Farm has a 1951 ranch house that replaced the earlier 1903 farmhouse, a few noncontributing agricultural buildings, and agricultural fields.

The remaining property in the district consists of historic agricultural fields. There are a few noncontributing modern houses and a number of noncontributing poultry houses, sheds, and other modern outbuildings that do not detract from the historic character of the district and in fact, represent the continuation of agricultural production in the 21st century.

The National Register of Historic Places is our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. The National Register provides formal recognition of a property's architectural, historical or archaeological significance. It also identifies historic properties for planning purposes and insures that these properties will be considered in the planning of state or federally assisted projects. National Register listing encourages preservation of historic properties through public awareness, federal and state tax incentives, and grants. Listing in the National Register does not place obligations or restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance.

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

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