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“You Can’t Put a Price on Something That’s Not for Sale”: The Fight Against Eminent Domain
in St. Paul, Virginia (1970 – 1985)

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Appalachian Studies

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Appalachian Studies

by

Evan Couch

May 2018

Dr. Tom Lee, Chair

Dr. Ted Olson

Dr. Kevin O’Donnell

Keywords: Eminent Domain, St. Paul, Property, Land, Government

ABSTRACT

“You Can’t Put a Price on Something That’s Not for Sale”: Eminent Domain in St. Paul,
Virginia (1970 – 1985)

by
Evan Couch

The St. Paul Redevelopment Project serves as a small case study of government intervention in the Appalachian region and of resistance. St. Paul as a community and “place” has been shaped by elected officials and government agencies, but ‘place’ also belongs to individuals. The example of redevelopment in St. Paul, Virginia, and the use of eminent domain exposes a complex system of power relations at work in Appalachia, that at least in the case under study, suggests how the response of one family, the Couches, reflected both participation in the dominant system of commodification and a rejection of it.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of Dule Couch.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents Faron and Pam Couch for their lifelong love and support in and outside the academic realm. Additionally, I am indebted to the time, information, letters, and newspaper articles my great-aunt Eloise Buchanan provided me with to carry out this paper.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The lumber companies had opened the door to the outside world. We became aware of ‘things’ - things that money could buy, things that made life easier (or harder), things to see, things to do. Our isolation had ended. They had opened a door - a door we were forced to use as an exit from our ancestral homes. Then, after the exit, the door was closed to us. We were given visitors’ rights to the land - to come and look, but not to stay.¹

- Dorie Bush

On August 16, 1982, my great-grandfather Dule Couch was detained and sent to Abingdon, Virginia, spending the last three years of his life at Cedar Lawn Rest Home. After years of “withdrawing from reality”² when the town of St. Paul took his and his families property, Dule finally snapped; chasing his wife, Edith, around their recently purchased Dungannon, Virginia home with a chainsaw. A man now approaching eighty was choked out by his eldest son and my grandfather, Dule Patrick “Pat” Couch.³

The eldest son of Henry and Maude Couch, Dule possessed a starkly different personality from his father Henry’s. According to one of Henry’s grandsons, Henry was easily angered, a tendency exacerbated by his alcoholism, whereas Dule was a “quite person by nature with a good sense of humor.” However, when his family’s farm, known as “Couch Hill,” was taken from him, it took a tremendous toll to his psyche and affected him for the rest of his life. The condemnation proceedings resulted in severe mental stress for him to the point where Dr. David Wayne, a renowned southwest Virginia psychologist reported that Dule was “suffering from a chronic, progressive psychiatric disorder; a severe, chronic paranoid state; and severe, chronic depressive neurosis precipitated by the circumstances surrounding the condemnation proceedings

¹ Florence Cope Bush, *Dorie: Woman of the Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 225-226.

² Constantine G. Demopoulos and David M. Wayne to Strother Smith III, September 19, 1974, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

³ Eloise Buchanan, interview with author, July 20, 2016.

of his and his entire family's property."⁴ My Papaw Dule Couch was unable to comprehend how his private property could be seized without his willing consent, stating continuously that it would "never be for sale."⁵

This very personal family event and the idea of private property versus public policy and the "common good" are at the core of my thesis. My family's twenty-two-acre farm known as "Couch Hill" was seized and demolished to rechannel the Clinch River in St. Paul, Virginia. The long, heated legal battle to evict the Couches and other South St. Paul residents and business owners began in the early 1970s and ended once eminent domain was granted in 1976. The tremendous fight and emotional toll it placed on my Great-Grandfather Dule Couch was in many aspects unique, but not unusual given the wide-scale, controversial use of eminent domain. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have begun to condemn the process as more detrimental than developmental due to the human distress placed on the affected residents. Several stories have been recounted of Appalachian residents who were devastated after being evicted from their land. These comparisons play a vital role in the paper.

In Appalachia, land taken from the 1930s to 1970s forced several thousand mountain families off their land to make way for the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, and various projects carried out by the Tennessee Valley Authority and Army Corps of Engineers. When these projects began, outsiders often gave little consideration to planning, zoning, or the basic knowledge or respect for Appalachian culture. The trauma of these removals persisted for decades in local memory.⁶ Nearly all communities and affected people of development projects are from poorer, marginalized areas; the wealthy

⁴ S. Strother Smith, III to Senator William B. Hopkins, 1976, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

⁵ John Clark, "Couch Brothers Awarded \$212,880," *Clinch Valley Times*, Feb. 12, 1976.

⁶ Mari-Lynn Evans, Holly George-Warren, and Robert Santelli, *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier* (New York: Random House, 2004), xxvii.

and elite are very rarely if at all forced off their property. Local elite and government agencies have shaped the lives of thousands, often with little regard for the “little man,” putting environmental factors, capital income, the town, etc. ahead of the property owner.⁷

Florence Cope Bush was forced to leave her home when she was three years old to make way for the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. She published an autobiography of her mother, Dorie, in which Dorie recollects the rapid changes that took place in early twentieth-century Appalachia. Although, Bush was forced to leave her home when she was just three years old to make way for the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and has no memory of ever living there, she says that she is “ever drawn back to the place of my birth.”⁸ In my circumstance, I never lived on “Couch Hill” nor had the opportunity to meet my great-grandfather Dule Couch (who passed away five years prior to my birth.) Although as a child I heard relatives reminiscing about Mamaw and Papaw Couches’ house “next to the river” in St. Paul, I was unaware of how or why they ended up moving to their secluded home in Dungannon, Virginia. I was completely oblivious that the Clinch River in St. Paul had even been rechanneled until I was a teenager. Florence Cope Bush’s sentiments reflect a similar sentiment, writing, “My heart has always been in the mountains....Granny and I spent evenings going through the family pictures and records she kept in a large trunk beside their bed. Even then, I felt a sense of loss because no one seemed to care about the lives these people had led, how they got to where they were, or that they even existed.”⁹ There are no traces that Couch Hill ever existed or the other 100 families dispossessed from South St. Paul.

⁷ Abigail R. Hall, “Mountains of Disappointment: The Failure of State-led Development Aid in Appalachia,” *Journal of Private Enterprise*, 29(2), (2014), 83-100, accessed October 15, 2015, ProQuest Ebrary.

⁸ Bush, *Dorie: Woman of the Mountains*, ix.

⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 1

Couch Family at Oxbow Lake in 2015.

Left to Right: Wayne Buchanan, Roger Couch, Dule Jackson “D.J.” Couch. The three were trying to remember where Couch Hill and the old family cemetery were prior to the redevelopment project. Photo taken by author.

Eminent domain has been used throughout Appalachia for numerous purposes. One example comes from the popular television series, *The Andy Griffith Show*. In an episode entitled “Aunt Bee the Crusader,” eminent domain is the central theme when a chicken farmer, Mr. Frisby, finds his land is in jeopardy so the state can construct a public highway. The interactions between Aunt Bee, Mr. Frisby, and Andy Griffith provide a vehicle for teasing out the pros and

cons of eminent domain. At the start of the episode, Mr. Frisby tells Aunt Bee that the county is running him off his property to extend the highway through his land. Aunt Bee questions him of the legality of the procedure, in which Mr. Frisby replied, “I don’t know, but they’re doing it, known as a condemnation, evict me if I don’t get out...evicting me from the land I was born on and my pa before me; they tear up my roots I guess I’ll just wither and die.” Aunt Bee galvanized a group to protest the eviction, which was effective until it was revealed that Mr. Frisby was a moonshiner.¹⁰ While the episode delved into some major issues on eminent domain, the sitcom’s ending further blurs the actual issue at hand. Most landowners in Appalachia were not moonshiners but were still forced off their land.

In *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence in an Appalachian Valley*, John Gaventa delves into the dynamics of power. Gaventa utilizes a three-dimensional approach to power in explaining why miners and residents of Middlesboro, Kentucky and the surrounding area do not fight back against the inequalities and oppression they faced. The one-dimensional approach is power that is exercised. The first dimension of power uses force to get the other party to do something they ordinarily would not do by using force or violence. The second dimension of power is power that is accepted. This is when individuals develop a fatalistic approach to their livelihoods. The third dimension of power is power that is adopted. In the third-dimensional approach, an individual adopts the thinking of the powerful and if they fight back they have to overcome the power that is exercised or forced.¹¹

In *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915*, a book about land owners in Floyd County, Kentucky, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, historian Robert Weise wrote about local farmers’ efforts

¹⁰ *The Andy Griffith Show*, “Aunt Bee the Crusader,” January 20, 1964. 2:08.

¹¹ John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980.)

to retain control of their land and property at a time when corporate interests were invading the region. Farmers in Floyd County prior to and during the twentieth century lived in a male dominated society that practiced “household localism” favoring the interests of the individual and household over the civic sense of the public good. Weise described the complicated nature this had on the area, stating that “localist behavior combined the virtues of democracy, equality, and personal (male) liberty with qualities that weakened its ability to forge healthy communities with the alienating context of industrial capitalism.”¹²

This paper traces the Jeffersonian ideal of the agrarian folk-hero, the yeoman farmer who was idealized “not for his capacity to exploit opportunities and make money” but for “his industry, his independence, his frank spirit of equality, and his ability to produce and enjoy a simple abundance.” Although scholars debate the effect industrialization had on the transformation of Appalachia into a capitalistic society, some emphasizing an “agrarian myth” of a subsistence culture and others bemoaning a region entrapped within colonialism.¹³ I am examining those forces within St. Paul, Virginia. Over 100 families were relocated out of South Paul for the St. Paul Redevelopment Project; leaving many people, such as the Couches, without a “place.”

“Place” is a widely discussed topic in Appalachian studies and ancestral homes are a quintessential definition of an individual’s “place.” When homes are taken away for redevelopment projects, individuals’ rights and feelings are rarely considered. Anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith described development-induced resettlement as “one of the most acute

¹² Robert Weise, *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 292.

¹³ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 2-3.

expressions of powerlessness because it constitutes a loss of control over one's physical space."¹⁴
This is an evident factor in redevelopment projects but is often overlooked or devalued.

The use of local, state and federal power for redevelopment reflected a desire for both economic development and flood control, two goals that affected the interests of both town elites and town residents. However, not all town residents or even town elites agreed on the benefit of redevelopment. The reaction of local businessmen who felt that dislocation threatened their livelihoods reflected one basis for reaction and one reason to fight against the proposed changes. As in John Gaventa's understanding of power, however, many of the people of St. Paul had adopted a commodifying system not of their own making. Their resistance stemmed from a desire to reap the rewards of the system in which they already functioned. The case of Dule Couch, however, offers yet another factor to consider, one keeping with the work of Weise, Gregg, and Newfont. While Couch did seek a fair value for his land, reflecting an understanding of land and the coal under it as a cash commodity, his initial urge for fighting back and indeed the cause of his psychological issues resulted from his attachment to the family homeplace. Dr. David Wayne noted in his clinical analysis of Dule Couch that the "long association with closeness to the land that belongs to him and his family is the basis for his successful adjustment in his life. The aggression of his personality has been undermined by this threat to his basic security."¹⁵

¹⁴ Thayer Scudder, *The Future of Large Dams: Dealing with Social, Environmental, Institutional and Political Costs* (London: Earthscan, 2012), 22.

¹⁵ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.



Figure 2

Couch Family on Couch Hill in 1945.

Back Row: Edith Couch holding baby Don Couch, and Dule Couch.

Front Row: Dule Patrick "Pat" Couch and Eloise Couch Buchanan.

Photo courtesy of Eloise Buchanan.

CHAPTER 2

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN APPALACHIA

In what is widely regarded as the most “historically accurate” biography of the Appalachia region in the 1920s, John C. Campbell wrote a critique of the missionary efforts going on at that time and offered some sound advice to outsiders coming into the region. Wrote Campbell, “whatever the place, whatever the method, the people themselves must first be considered.” Although Campbell provided this foresight years and in several cases decades before government intervention in the region, his thoughtful guidance appears to be disregarded. Campbell stated that “the social salvation of the mountains will not be won by putting its people forward as pawns to advance others, nor by using them as filling to make the highway of progress smoother.” Campbell continued, arguing that outside agencies would never “be a substitute for self-direction under the impulse of ideals voluntarily accepted.”¹⁶

Perhaps the most impactful figure on forcing government intervention in Appalachia was East Kentucky lawyer, Harry Caudill. As well as many other suggestions in his infamous 1964 work, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*, Caudill was a strong proponent of ridding the region of the blight problem. Caudill wrote that “it is vital to the health, happiness and welfare of the plateau dwellers that they be sheltered in better-planned and more adequately housed communities.” Caudill then proposed the foundations and roles that housing authorities, such as the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, should have in the region, writing that “certain carefully selected county seats should be slated for general reconstruction and expansion through planned housing developments. Areas on their outskirts should be zoned and reserved for orderly future expansion.” Caudill said, the “rural folk” should

¹⁶ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1929), 299.

be encouraged to move into towns where jobs would be created for them rather than “continue their existence on the distance and incredibly rough creeks.” He added that the “widely dispersed” contribute “nothing to the happiness of families;” concluding that “attractive towns with adequate public facilities would be immeasurably more pleasant places in which to live.” Once the Authority commenced programs to improve the increasingly dilapidated coal towns of central Appalachia coal towns, that “there is sound reason to believe that...the people would begin to abandon their old unprofitable isolation and move into them.”¹⁷ However, the “happiness of families” that are forcibly removed from their “widely dispersed homes” become overwhelmingly negative.

In 1967, Clyde Warrior, a founding member of the National Indian Youth Council spoke at a public hearing on Lyndon B. Johnson’s National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty. He had a different take than Caudill on redevelopment projects. Warrior emphasized the devastating effects federal intervention programs were having on the poor and the disempowered, and specifically members of the Indian community, stating that the Youth Council recognizes the struggle going on in America between “those who want more ‘local’ control of programs and those who would keep the power and the purse strings in the hands of the Federal Government.” However, Warrior continued by saying that he is unconcerned with this struggle because “no one is arguing that the dispossessed, the poor, be given any control over their own destiny.” Warrior then criticized “the local white power elites” stating they protested the loudest against Federal control, yet, were the “very ones who would keep us poor in spirit and worldly goods in order to enhance their own personal and economic station in the

¹⁷ Harry Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberland’s: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1963), 385.

world.”¹⁸ Warrior’s statement is a very profound and enlightened comment and one that should be taken into more consideration when approaching redevelopment programs; too often projects are formed, spearheaded, and determined by a small group of “local white power elites.” Rich members of communities rarely suffer the consequences of eminent domain. The rich are often “political savvy enough” to avoid being forcibly removed.¹⁹

Eminent Domain

Eminent domain is defined as the government’s power to take an individual’s private property for public use while fairly compensating the property owner and to assemble land needed to meet constituents’ various public needs. Eminent domain is a controversial subject because “The protection of property rights plays a vital role within a market economy by allowing property owners to control their property and therefore benefit from its use, sale, or value. However, elected federal, state, and local government officials long have relied on eminent domain.”²⁰

Each year, an estimated 10 to 15 million people worldwide are displaced for developmental purposes (dams, mines, power plants, roads). Individuals and communities at large affected by displacement and resettlement share comparable experiences regardless of country or geographic location. Most people that have been forcibly displaced belong to poor and marginalized communities. Most development projects result in impoverishing the “displacees” and destroying their cultural identity and heritage. In India, for example, of the 20 million people displaced since 1947, three-fourths are estimated to have been impoverished due

¹⁸ Bob Blaisdell, *Great Speeches by Native Americans* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), 206.

¹⁹ Lyla Mehta, *Displaced by Development: Confronting Marginalisation and Gender Injustice* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2009), 140, accessed September 28, 2016, EBSCOhost.

²⁰ United States Government Accountability Office, *Eminent Domain: Information About its Uses and Effect on Property Owners and Communities is Limited* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

to development projects.²¹ Of 44 case studies analyzed by anthropologist Thayer Scudder, 36 (or 82%) of the displaced were worse off after resettlement.²² In addition, resettlement results in impoverishing the people involved because “it takes away economic, social and cultural resources all at the same time and it takes away political power, most dramatically the power to make a decision about how and where to live.”²³

Government agencies, however, emphasize the positive impacts resulting from redevelopment projects, including employment opportunities and improved housing in an area. Land owners point out the negative effects of eminent domain, such as the dispersal of long-standing communities.²⁴ A 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report noted a lack of data about local governments' use of eminent domain authority: “eminent domain represents a forced transaction between the public and private sectors that we know very little about.” In addition, “eminent domain has become increasingly linked with concerns over government’s role in economic development.” The same report categorized the two ways eminent domain is carried out: narrow purposes and broad purposes. Traditional and general public use purposes such as, roads, water and sewer systems are placed under the “narrow” justification of eminent domain. The second category, the “broad” interpretation of the government’s power of eminent domain is for the “public good”, such as private redevelopment projects that arguably would benefit the community at large, by providing jobs and local revenue. The GAO notes that the “narrow” justification is more commonly applied to eminent cases.²⁵ The St. Paul Redevelopment Project interweaved both “narrow” and “broad” purposes.

²¹ Renu Modi, *Beyond Relocation: The Imperative of Sustainable Resettlement* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt., Ltd, 2009), xxi-xxii.

²² Scudder, *The Future of Large Dams*, 48.

²³ *Ibid*, 23.

²⁴ Modi, *Beyond Relocation*, xxii.

²⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, *Eminent Domain*.

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution allows for eminent domain, stating that private property cannot be taken for public use without “just compensation.”²⁶ In January 2003, the Supreme Court affirmed that “so long as the public purpose subsists, the exercise of the power by the State to acquire the land of its subjects without regard to the wishes of the owner or person interested in the land cannot be questioned.”²⁷ Consequently, “personal choice and local option have been supplemented by state control of the land. Environmental management has taken priority over another--property rights.”²⁸ Environmental purposes seemed to have been a higher priority in several redevelopment projects, including the project in St. Paul.

Developmental projects shape communities and lives, in what is regarded as “place-making” or the “process of selectively cultivating some narratives of belonging while erasing other meanings from public discourse.” Even more narrowly defined, the St. Paul Redevelopment Project is shaped by “Appalachian place-making;” which is “often dominated by powerful economic and political actors, such as elected officials, who define resource exploitation as a way of ensuring regional economic development.” However, other definitions “derive from local experiences that enable resistance to dominant, exploitive narratives and encourage solutions to pressing problems.”²⁹ The former in this case would be the town of St. Paul, the latter being South St. Paul residents, such as the Couches.

²⁶ Patrick, John J., Richard M. Pious, and Donald A. Ritchie, *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Mehta, *Displaced by Development*, 140.

²⁸ Parker G. Marden and Alan M. Schwartz, “Comparative Regional Issues: Land Use and Environmental Planning in the Adirondacks and Appalachians,” in *Proceedings of the 1980 Appalachian Studies Conference* (Johnson City, TN: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1981), 95.

²⁹ William Schumann and Rebecca Adkins-Fletcher, *Appalachia Revisited: New Perspectives on Place, Tradition, and Progress* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 9.

Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) holds a historically poor record in handling relocation affairs. When building dams, the Corps has often been charged with “low-balling” property owners. If the owner resisted, they simply told the owner to take the matter to court, knowing that most mountain families were too poor and inexperienced to hire a lawyer and eventually just accept the amount.³⁰

Mari-Lynn Currence Evans, one of the authors and filmmakers of *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier*, shared a remarkable encounter that occurred when the government seized her grandparents' property in Bulltown, West Virginia. Evans lived in a handmade farmhouse built by her great-grandfather in the 1800s. Her grandfather and his four brothers worked the land until the 1960s when the Army Corps of Engineers began buying land in central West Virginia for developing lakes to attract tourists. Evans reflected on the incident decades later in her book saying that “the government successfully invoked ‘eminent domain,’ and we lost our land.”³¹ It was very difficult to explain to outsiders what the land being taken meant to the people. At the 1980 Appalachian Studies Conference, John Opie reiterated the importance of land to native mountaineers. “By hard physical labor, the farmer acquired a close identity with his land. The land was part of his own personal identity; he invented the place where he lived, creating it out of placelessness. He experienced a high degree of success and standard of living.”³² The identity of “place” is a key topic in the field of Appalachian Studies and is an evident factor in the emotions involved with many residents displaced.

³⁰ Jack Weller, “Appalachia: America’s Mineral Colony,” in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 53.

³¹ Mari-Lynn Evans et al., *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier*, xv.

³² John Opie, “Where American History Began: Appalachia and the Small Independent Family Farm,” in *Proceedings of the 1980 Appalachian Studies Conference* (Johnson City: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1981), 62.

William Schumann offers several helpful definitions of place in *Appalachia Revisited: New Perspectives on Place, Tradition, and Progress*. Schumann writes that place “offers a way of thinking about time (or change) and physical space (or built and natural environments) intersect and take on meaning through human interactions.”³³ One example of this place based perspective comes from William Currence, the grandfather of Mari-Lynn Currence Evans. In a 1976 diary entry before he was evicted, Currence wrote, “I looked out at my land today. For as far the eye can see is the land my great grandfather settled. We worked this land, we built the house with our very hands. This land is as familiar to me as my own skin.”³⁴ Place is altered dramatically during redevelopment projects; as place reflects past and ongoing social relations and actions. In addition, place indicates relations of power between individuals and groups.³⁵

Place “reflects the negotiations of actors representing diverse interests and operating at multiple levels of authority and influence.”³⁶ Take William Currence, as an example of the importance land held for Appalachians. In 1976, Currence wrote his final diary entry before he was forced to relocate. “Those bastards at the Corps of Engineers are burying me. They are stealing our land. There’s nothing left for me now. I don’t give a damn if I live another day. I am already dead.”³⁷ My Papaw Dule Couches psychiatric evaluation read similarly to Currence’s diary entry on the importance land held on their lives:

The patient stated that sometimes he would not care if he were to commit suicide or hurt somebody. Whenever he thinks about them taking his property away, he feels confused. He gets to the point where he breaks down and cries, particularly when he thinks about his property. He stated that if they take his property, he does not care if he lives or dies.³⁸

³³ Schumann and Adkins-Fletcher, *Appalachia Revisited*, 9.

³⁴ Mari-Lynn Evans et al., *The Appalachians: America’s First and Last Frontier*, xv.

³⁵ Schumann, Adkins-Fletcher, *Appalachia Revisited*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid*, *Appalachia Revisited*, 9.

³⁷ Mari-Lynn Evans et al., *The Appalachians: America’s First and Last Frontier*, xv.

³⁸ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

National Park Service (NPS) and United States Forest Service (USFS)

Prior to 1911, the federal government did not hold any Appalachian national forest land; all the land was privately owned, used as “commons”, and subject to local property taxes. The national forests of the eastern United States were assembled primarily from land nobody wanted. From the beginning, the Government purchased only from willing sellers, who either volunteered their land for sale or, approached by Government agents, could reach agreeable settlements with the Forest Service. In the early years, most of the acreage acquired in the Southern Appalachians was from large timber and landholding companies, who then transferred their absentee ownership to the Federal Government. Some of the largest and most finely timbered acreage was initially acquired in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia, where nearly 30 percent of the acreage obtained was virgin timber.³⁹

Hundreds of small landholders of the region sold willingly as well, in plots as little of five to nearly 1,000 acres. Established in 1916, Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina was the first National Forest in the eastern United States. By 1920, five more Southern Appalachian forests were claimed. The government’s role in Federal land acquisition in the early twentieth-century accelerated the decline of the farming economy in the region that had begun in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁰

Although the TVA has a more negative connotation in the region and has contributed to more displacements; the United States Forest Service (USFS) owns substantially more land in the region and puts very little back in the local economy. In the late 1970s, activist Si Kahn noted that in Polk County, the Forest Service owns forty-four times as much land as TVA, yet TVA paid the county eleven times as much in taxes. Kahn concluded that national forests “are *not*

³⁹ Shelley Smith Mastran and Nan Lowerre, *Mountaineers and Rangers: A History of the Federal Forest Management in the Southern Appalachians, 1900-81* (Washington, D.C.: Forest Service, 1983), viii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

contributing nearly as much as the Forest Service claims to the economic growth of the counties where they are located.” Ultimately, “the control of so much land has artificially driven prices up for mountain land.” In effect, Kahn says, “the people of Appalachia are being taxed to provide recreation and relaxation for people from other wealthier areas.”⁴¹

The Forest Service encountered deep resentment from the families they were forcing out. In 1964, Congress removed the USFS power to condemn land for National Forests after decades of resentment the Forest Service encountered when taking homes and farms away from families, Congress removed the USFS power to condemn land for National Forests.⁴² Shelley Smith-Mastran and Nan Lowerre described the complex role eminent domain has had on the region:

Although land prices paid for the Appalachian National Parks were often higher than comparable land in the National Forests, the use of the power of eminent domain to create the parks resulted in great misunderstanding and bitterness, which continued for generations. The same can be said of the land acquisition by the Tennessee Valley Authority to construct dams and reservoirs on the mountain tributaries of the Tennessee River.⁴³

As the case of South St. Paul also shows, the use of eminent domain in smaller projects causes just as much bitterness towards government agencies.

In 1905, Gifford Pinchot, creator and first head of the USFS wrote, “All land is to be devoted to its most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people, and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies.” Pinchot strongly believed that decisions on forest management should be made by experts rather than through democratic participation. Pinchot established the USFS culture on this belief.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Si Kahn, “The Forest Service and Appalachia,” in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 98.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴³ Smith Mastran and Nan Lowerre, *Mountaineers and Rangers*, ix.

⁴⁴ Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons*, 54.

Most national parks were formed by preserving untouched forests during the 1930s and 1940s. Shenandoah National Park, however, was created from land inhabited by hundreds of families, some for generations. In the early 1900s, Virginia congressmen were interested in establishing a national park and distributed surveys across the state to attract interest. In addition, local businessmen formed organizations like the Northern Virginia Park Association to persuade Congress to approve a park in the area. In 1925, Congress passed a resolution that designated an area surrounding the Shenandoah Valley, including the ridgeline that is now the Skyline Drive. However, the resolution stated that the land must be donated to the federal government by the state of Virginia. To aid in this objective, the Shenandoah National Park Association, Inc. was formed to raise the funds necessary to purchase the private lands within the Blue Ridge. Along with outlining the financial benefits of the park, the brochure distributed by the Shenandoah National Park Association explained that the “450,000-acre vacation paradise almost at your door, which you can leave as a heritage to your children and your children’s children, is worth even more, and is a challenge to every American who wants to enrich the future of his country.”⁴⁵ The narratives constructed at this time were very influential in shaping the region.

Sporadic academic attention focused on mountain communities in the Blue Ridge during the Great Depression. In 1931, Margaret Hitch wrote, *Life in a Blue Ridge Hollow* documenting the poorest residents of Corbin and Nicholson Hollows prior to the formation of the Shenandoah National Park. This was one of the earliest isolated community case studies in the region. NPS used these studies to justify the ousting of residents for national parks.⁴⁶ The Blue Ridge farmers of the early 1930s were largely self-sufficient and disengaged from the market and cash

⁴⁵ Katrina M. Powell, “Writing the Geography of the Blue Ridge Mountains: How Displacement Recorded History,” *Biography*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2002, 76, accessed October 23, 2015, Project MUSE.

⁴⁶ Sara Gregg, *Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, The New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 33.

economy. In industrialized Appalachia (such as St. Paul), however, men often farmed to supplement low wages from mining or lumbering.⁴⁷ Hitch stated that the future of the Blue Ridge “may be in marked contrast to its past.” This “contrast” was based on several months of appraising private property in the park area by the National Park Commission. Hitch remarked that “Some of the mountaineers are making tentative plans for leaving their mountain homes; one family has already left.” But she noted, “One of the problems confronting the authorities in converting this region into a park is the satisfactory disposition of the people now living within the area. The mountaineers doubtless will have difficulty in adjusting themselves to other environments.” She continued that if plans materialized for the proposed Shenandoah Park that the region “should become one of the most popular national parks since it is within a two-day drive, or less of a large percentage of the country’s population.” Hitch correctly concluded that “In all probability within another decade a new era will have begun in these mountains and the day of the Blue Ridge mountaineer will have passed.”⁴⁸

In 1933, Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry published *Hollow Folk*, a book largely based on the perceptions of Miriam Sizer, a hired educator by the Commonwealth of Virginia, to conduct surveys of local mountain residents, and make recommendations for relocation problems. After only two months teaching at a school near Old Rag Mountain, Sizer concluded that the mountain people were in desperate need of civilized help. Appalachians were looked down upon by academics and writers for over a century. *Life in a Blue Ridge Hollow* and *Hollow Folk* follows this similar archetype, only modified slightly shaping the American public’s perspective on the region, further justifying the displacement of the residents.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 17-18.

⁴⁸ Margaret A. Hitch, “Life in a Blue Ridge Hollow,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture* (Second Edition), ed. W.K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 252-253.

In a 1932 letter, the Associate Director of the National Park Service summarized his inspection of the proposed Blue Ridge park area, stating that “This particular class of mountain people is as low in the social order and as destitute as it seems for humans to get . . . everyone of them being a potential beggar.”⁴⁹ Gifford Pinchot commented that the German forester Carl Alwin Schenck thought of mountaineers “as peasants. They thought of themselves as independent American citizens - and of course, they were right.”⁵⁰ Cultural prejudices such as these, predisposed people in authority to question their right to the land.

Kathryn Newfont described the TVA and NPS as “projects [that] required local sacrifice on behalf of national goals.” Parks downplayed the negative effects projects had on local people, but in some cases the effects were devastating; with entire communities forcibly removed and their histories erased to make way for national parks. The park took away not only homes and communities, but livelihoods. The removal of residents in establishing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway had legal and public ramifications for the National Park Service even into the twenty-first century.⁵¹

The timber boom affected the human landscape of the Blue Ridge nearly as dramatically as its physical landscape, with entire communities displaced. Nearly five hundred families from eight counties were displaced to form the Shenandoah National Park. The timber boom spurred outmigration, displaced many mountain families, left most of those who stayed with less acreage, and slowed population growth.⁵²

Bush’s mother Dorie Woodruff Cope said that when the land was sold for the Great Smoky National Park, the lumber company still had cutting rights for the next fifteen years, so

⁴⁹ Powell, “Writing the Geography of the Blue Ridge Mountains,” 79.

⁵⁰ Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons*, 57.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 104.

⁵² *Ibid*, 47.

she would not be affected soon. But, made long-term arrangements to leave the mountains. Dorie stated that:

Nothing changed on the surface, but we knew how the loggers felt about moving out and looking for work. Many of these people had lived their lives in the shadows of the mountain peaks. Generations of ancestors lived and died there. Now their descendants were displaced citizens with no claim on the land. Eventually, they would have to go.⁵³

The last tree was cut by the Little River Company in the spring of 1938. Dorie said, “the end of an era had come” and:

Once again, the mountains were silent. No trains, no skidders, no portable housing stuck on the hillside. Tiny seedlings would grow over the scars left by man. The only sounds would be the rushing rivers, singing birds, and, at night, the piercing scream of the panther - just as our ancestors heard them many years ago.⁵⁴

Katrina M. Powell grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains and loved hiking there; although she went to school with kids whose families had been ousted from the Park. Powell said that “There was and is a sense of rebellion against the Park, and ultimately against the government, because many people felt they were unjustly removed and misled about how the whole process would take place.”⁵⁵ However flawed the NPS has been in the land acquisition process, displacements created by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) “dwarfed those of the national parks.”⁵⁶

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

In 1933, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was established as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Great Depression-era New Deal programs, providing jobs and electricity to the rural south. The express purpose of TVA was to control flooding, improve navigation, and produce electric power through the construction of dams and reservoirs in the

⁵³ Bush, *Dorie: Woman of the Mountains*, 175-176.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 225-226.

⁵⁵ Powell, “Writing the Geography of the Blue Ridge Mountains,” 75.

⁵⁶ John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 302.

Tennessee Valley.⁵⁷ On June 22, 1936, the United States Congress declared destructive floods a “menace to national welfare” and that flood control was a “proper activity of the Federal Government.”⁵⁸

John Alexander Williams wrote in *Appalachia: A History* that “The TVA, profiting from the experience of the Park and Forest Services, enjoyed an explicit power of eminent domain, granted by Congress, from the very beginning.” Williams also noted that the agency had “the force of logic behind its actions, since the construction of a dam could not begin until the lands it would drown had been secured, and construction jobs were the most immediate benefit local people expected.”⁵⁹ This “force of logic” was a crucial element for the St. Paul Redevelopment Project as well; as the town promised construction jobs to residents once the land was acquired in hopes to boost the “towns stagnant economy.”⁶⁰

In 1963, Harry Caudill lamented that “Thirty years ago, the Valley of the Tennessee was as grim and forbidding an expanse of real estate as could be found on this continent...The American Dream had passed the inhabitants by.” Caudill commended TVA for restoring the “once wasted yellow hills” back to green, clean, and prosperous. The chain of dams created numerous lakes to attract tourists. Caudill continued to applaud the agency writing that “the region has given birth to a number of new towns while the old ones scarcely resemble the drab communities which once bore their names.” TVA is a “showpiece of effective planning and accomplishment of which every American can feel proud” demonstrating that “enlightened government intervention under the auspices of careful planners can accomplish far-reaching and

⁵⁷ Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography; Land, People, and Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 249.

⁵⁸ Robert William Kates, *Hazard and Choice Perception in Flood Plain Management* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 2.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, 302.

⁶⁰ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Guide to the Town of St. Paul*, 29.

social improvements.”⁶¹ The TVA was envisioned as a federally-owned electric utility and regional economic development agency. It still exists today as the nation’s largest public power provider.

However, TVA has removed thousands of people from their homes to make way for their dams. Between 1933 and 1953, 125,000 people were forced to leave their land to make way for dam related projects.⁶² TVA removed over 6,600 families from their homes and over 3,500 from the Norris Basin alone.⁶³ In addition, TVA has been charged with being “little more than a gigantic electric power corporation;” however, Caudill feels that “detracts nothing from the illustrious accomplishments of its first two decades.”⁶⁴

Williams added that “Appraisals did not take into account that a mountain farm, however ramshackle, provided a viable sustenance at a time when few alternatives were available, much less the psychic trauma of being thrown off of family homeplaces and out of shattered communities.” Reactions varied when residents were approached with appraisal estimates, removal of the families was unsettling. As Williams wrote, “Some sold quickly and were glad to get the price; others convinced they should get more, had to decide whether to sell eventually or go to condemnation proceedings.”⁶⁵ Eloise stated of her parent’s property on Couch Hill, “I think if it was mommy, she would have just took the \$16,000 or whatever.”⁶⁶

Senator L.D. Tyson of Tennessee issued a statement reassuring residents of Cade’s Cove that their homes would not be taken from them in the construction of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Tyson stated that “The bill introduced for this proposed park carries no authority

⁶¹ Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, 367.

⁶² Raitz and Ulack, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography*, 347.

⁶³ Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, 302.

⁶⁴ Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberland’s*, 367.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, 306.

⁶⁶ Eloise Buchanan, discussed with author, July 15, 2017.

to move anyone for buying any land or of doing anything in regard to the land except to receive it as a donation. No person within the boundary limits is compelled to move or in any way to be disturbed nor their land taken over under this bill.”⁶⁷ In April 1927, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill providing \$1,500,000 to purchase park lands, and giving the newly created Park Commission “the power to seize homes within the proposed boundaries by right of eminent domain.” That same month an editorial written in the *Progressive Labor* condemned state officials and the Park Commission for lying to the people of Cade’s Cove about seizing their homes. “However worthy and desirable the establishment of a national park in the Great Smokies might be for the commercial advancement of Knoxville,” the editorial concluded that “the price being asked of the ‘unsuspecting’ mountaineers was far too high.” A September 1932, edition of the *Nashville Tennessean* read, “The eviction of the mountain people after they had been promised they could remain during their lifetime was a shocking breach of faith on the part of this legalized agency of the state of Tennessee, the park commission.”⁶⁸ Ultimately, thousands of people have been evicted in Appalachia for various redevelopment projects.

John Rice Irwin was removed for the Norris Basin project when he was five years old. His family had been there for generations back in the days of “Indians.” He created the museum of Appalachia in Andersonville Tennessee. Irwin spoke of the displacement process: “I recall many, many times hearing them say that they hated to leave more than anything in the world, but they felt it was a worthwhile project, and they held little bitterness for it. Some of them that held those same sentiments, though, felt that the TVA did not reimburse them enough for the land, and for the inconvenience it caused in moving and relocating and buying-replacing a property.” Irwin continued, “They didn’t want to go, they dreaded to go, and it was disruptive, but at the

⁶⁷ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 244.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 245-247.

same time they felt some obligations.”⁶⁹ Evelyn Longmire recalled her feelings of being displaced, “The thing that hurt so bad was that we just didn’t want to be taken away from the place we loved. Even if we went away, we would like to come back and see the place again. Now it’s a hundred feet under water. We can never go home again.” “A small number (6 families of a total of nearly 3,000) did nothing, and were forcibly evicted when the rising waters behind the dam made their continued presence dangerous.”⁷⁰ Mrs. Taylor, whom was removed from the Norris Basin for a TVA project, reacted to the Tellico Dam snail darter controversy that took place in the 1980s; “we were *people*, and those little old fish that isn’t worth two cents, they tried to stop that dam over it. They wouldn’t let *us* do that.”⁷¹ Environmental factors appeared to have had a higher priority in several redevelopment projects, including St. Paul’s, as an endangered mussel impeded the progress of the St. Paul Redevelopment Project for nearly four years, whereas, it was deemed an “emergency” to remove residents out of South St. Paul immediately.⁷²

Curtis Stiner, a self-sufficient farmer relocated from the Norris Basin reservoir recalled his first encounter with a TVA agent, “I was cutting wheat up here on this land. I said, ‘I don’t want nothin’ you’ve got to offer me no way you can preach it or talk it.’”⁷³ Claude Longmire stated, “Some protested, but the majority of the people accepted what was offered....A lot of them was like my granddad, thought you just had to go along and take what was offered.”⁷⁴ Myers Hill said of the residents relocated by the TVA for the Norris Basin project, “Some of the older people I don’t think ever really adjusted to their new localities...Even though they had

⁶⁹ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 56-57.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 61-62.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 64.

⁷² Smith, III to Hopkins, 1976.

⁷³ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 64-65.

better living conditions, they were still, I don't think, quite as well satisfied." Ruble Palmer recalled "a lot of the old people never did actually adjust to it. Lived there sixty, seventy-five years. You had to force them out. If they had left there on their own accord, it wouldn't have been so bad, but they had to go, see, and they never did actually adjust." Bill Taylor continued by saying, "for the younger generation who had to move out of that area, it may have been a blessing for them. But the older people resented it. That was the history of it. My way of looking at it, the older people were harder hit."⁷⁵ H. Clay Stiner said that when residents were forced out of their communities of the Norris Basin that it was "just like a funeral."⁷⁶ Former resident of Cades Cove, Kermit Caughron, said that the seizure of their land and homes "sent a lot of people in their 60's and 70's to their graves."⁷⁷

Anthropologist and dam expert, Thayer Scudder wrote that "Educated, mobile, professionals continue to be unaware of how stressful involuntarily resettlement is for people with strong ties to their homes who have had little education and experience of the 'outside world.'"⁷⁸ This could be said of many of the families who were so deeply hurt about losing their land.

Lou Emma Taylor recalled the hurt and anger she and her family felt for the TVA, much like the Couch family had toward the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Taylor's father would not take TVA's allotted price, however a TVA agent came to her parents' home and told them they had a specified number of days to leave the premises and accept the price offered. This demand caused her elderly parents to cry. Taylor said that "just flew all over me, that my old daddy and mother was being rooted out of where they had roots;" when that man

⁷⁵ Ibid, 60-61.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 38.

⁷⁷ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 253.

⁷⁸ Scudder, *The Future of Large Dams*, 22.

came along “treating them like they were simpletons that didn’t know nothing and tearing [them] apart like that!” Taylor went back and told the man, “now, listen, they have a lawyer handling this, and they don’t have to get out until they get a fair price....You just [leave] them alone! I’m not having my mother and daddy, and them old, stirred up like this and torn to pieces.”⁷⁹

Taylor’s statement about her parents resonates and coincides with the sentiments felt by Dule Couch’s daughter, Eloise Buchanan. Buchanan lived in Sugar Gove, North Carolina during St. Paul’s Redevelopment Project, but was the most heavily involved family member in the legal proceedings of Dule’s five children. While over fifty miles away in another state, she subscribed to St. Paul’s weekly newspaper, *The Clinch Valley Times*, corresponded with the Couches’ lawyers, St. Paul officials, and Virginia lawmakers in hopes to save her father’s property. Ultimately, it was to no avail with eminent domain used to carry out the project.

The most interesting, infamous and longstanding resistance case TVA faced was against Mattie Randolph. Mattie, her husband Jim, and six of their seven children lived in a “two-room shack” down a holler alongside the Powell River in the Norris Basin. Several TVA Family Removal Section caseworkers were sent to the home in hopes of convincing them to leave, but Mattie was firmly against it. She was accused of pulling a shotgun on some of the caseworkers.

TVA and the Randolph’s had a vastly different perspective on what it meant to be happy. The caseworker noted that the “six children seemed happy, but why or how is the question. They were dirty, needed more warm clothes, they had no play things at all.” The notes pointed out that Mrs. Randolph was a “bad housekeeper”, the home was in poor shape, the thirteen-year-old daughter chewed tobacco, the seven-year-old girl was “crosseyed and has skin trouble all over her body,” and due to the lack of indoor toilets, a four-year old daughter used the bathroom on

⁷⁹ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 64.

the porch while the caseworker was there. The TVA worker summed up the Randolph family by saying, “It is evident that this family has a very low standard of living.”⁸⁰

A 1936 New York newspaper described the TVA’s eviction of the Randolph’s. “Mattie is a valley resident whose opposition to change threatened the \$36,000,000 Norris Dam.” TVA’s Family Removal Section “had gently persuaded 3,000 other families to move – but not Mattie.” Mattie declared, “She would hold on it in spite of hell and high water. And she did.” TVA noted it was the first case in 3,000 where they were forced to evict a family. The following account was provided by the *Perry Herald*:

As the impounded waters crept up to the Randolph home, TVA officials placed a tent on higher land and urged the family to move. They refused. The water came higher. TVA tied a boat to her doorstep. Still the Randolphs held on. When the water advanced further, TVA officials were obliged to step in and evict by force. They removed all belongings to a new site and set up two tents there.⁸¹

The 1960 film, *Wild River* was partially inspired by Mattie Randolph and her fight with the TVA. An eighty-year-old matriarch, Ella Garth resists any attempt to move off of “Garth Island,” land her family has held for generations. One of the more interesting examples of eminent domain is wrong is when Ella attempts to force her black tenant worker, Sam to sell his beloved dog, Ol’ Blue to her. Sam politely declines her offer, when Ella ups the offer, Sam still refuses, she tells him he’s right, it would not be right to force the dog away for any amount of money because it was his.⁸²

Wild River was the first feature film shot entirely on location in Tennessee. Charleston, Tennessee celebrates “Wild River Days” honoring the movie. In 2010, the 50th anniversary of the

⁸⁰ Rebecca Onion, “The Tennessee Valley Authority vs. the Family That Just Wouldn’t Leave,” *Slate*, September 5, 2013, accessed November 5, 2017, http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2013/09/05/tennessee_valley_authority_the_agency_s_fight_against_one_family_that_wouldn.html.

⁸¹ *Perry Herald*, “TVA Eviction,” February 12, 1936, (Perry, NY: Perry Harald), 3.

⁸² *Wild River*, Directed by Elia Kazan, (Twentieth Century Fox, 1960), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQ023XyNYig>.

movie was held. To commemorate the event, *The Cleveland Daily Banner* interviewed Mattie's son, Charlie Randolph, who lived the real "Wild River" and was nine-years-old at the time his family was evicted. Over seventy years later, he still expressed resentment and bitterness about the experience.⁸³

In addition to these larger projects, the circumstances that hit South St. Paul residents, and particularly, Dule Couch, highlight the similarities of the detrimental effects that forced removals have had on individuals in the region.

⁸³ Onion, "The Tennessee Valley Authority vs. the Family That Just Wouldn't Leave."

CHAPTER 3

INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ST. PAUL AND WISE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Until just a few years ago, the mountaineers of the Southern Appalachians lived as the pioneers had lived, the axe and the rifle were still their weapons, they still had the same fight with nature; they were still dependent upon their own resources; most of their clothing came from the home loom and the spinning wheel. They developed in hardiness, self-reliance, independence, pride, hospitality, and good-heartedness. These people retain the characteristics that have been born and bred in them for generations past.⁸⁴

- Supplementary statement filed on behalf of Wise County by the Hospitalization Committee at a hearing in Washington, D.C. on January 27, 1932.

Wise County is situated in southwestern Virginia bordering Kentucky. The town of St. Paul runs through Wise and Russell Counties. St. Paul is known as the “gateway to the west”, separating the agricultural based economy to the east and the “coal country” to the west.⁸⁵ Thus, due to St. Paul’s geographic location it has an even more complicated nature with the industrial rural collide.

The early settlers of extreme Southwest Virginia were described as “in many cases poorer people who were not able to buy the richer lands of the valley country.” They were “the more adventurous spirits...who tired of the older settlements.”⁸⁶ The area in what is now St. Paul was initially occupied by Francois Pierre De Tebeuf, a French aristocrat from oddly enough Saint Paul Parish in Paris, France. Southwest Virginia’s “Coal Boom” began when the French coal speculator and developer purchased 54,000 acres of land in Russell County (part of what is now Wise County) in 1790. Locals pronounced the Frenchman’s last name “Debuff” and he was known as “Baron,” another oddity considering the term “coal baron” has become the common terminology for wealthy capitalists profiting from the natural resources underneath Appalachia

⁸⁴ Denise E. Gabriele, *Hospital Committee on Wise County 1932*, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.stanthonycatholic.org/historic-info-wise-co-history.htm>.

⁸⁵ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., “St. Paul Strategic Plan 2017-2027,” accessed Oct. 17, 2017, <http://www.stpaulmainstreet.org/strategicplan.html>.

⁸⁶ Chester K. Wentworth, *The Geology and Coal Resources of Russell County, Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1922), 2.

and elsewhere. This eighteenth-century oddity marks the first coal baron of Appalachia.⁸⁷ How he knew coal was here, or what inspired him to move thousands of miles to live on the American frontier is still unknown. “Debuff” lived atop a “bluff” known as “Sugar Hill,” now a walking trail extended from Oxbow Lake. The home became known as “Saint Marie on the Clinch” and is thought to be the first in Wise County. De Tebeuf planned to expand the settlement with other French aristocrats but was robbed and murdered on election day in April 1795.⁸⁸ The coincidences and overlapping history Francois Pierre De Tebeuf has with St. Paul and Southwest Virginia’s past and future is quite remarkable.

In search of economic and social independence, Francois Pierre “Baron” De Tebuef settled on the Clinch River in the late eighteenth century. Growing up in St. Paul Parish France, the Baron purchased thousands of acres in the American backcountry in what over one hundred years later would become St. Paul, Virginia. The Baron knew coal was in Southwest Virginia, but the technology was not advanced enough for him to exploit it, so he farmed and worked the land like the generations of residents who held the land after he was murdered. A small portion of De Tebeuf’s home remains on the “Sugar Hill” walking trail above Oxbow Lake.

De Tebuef was not the only immigrant to make a mark on the town, however; as the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought in an influx a variety of European immigrants to work in the region. Several of St. Paul’s original businesses were owned and operated by first-generation immigrants from various countries. Although most of the businesses and families have vanished into the town’s history, some still remain influential and relevant in the community.

⁸⁷ Jerry F. Couch, *St. Paul, Virginia: A Centennial Journey*, 2.

⁸⁸ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 22-23.

Industrialization Era in Wise County

One of the longest running court cases involving private property in the United States took place in Wise County. The lawsuit was filed in 1955 when the Brooks family sued a coal company for four million dollars over land once owned by the family, the case was undecided up until 1992.

The timber industry had an early and dramatic effect on Wise County, Virginia. Prior to the logging industry, Wise County was virtually self-sufficient. In 1881, Charles Rufus Boyd wrote that “too much cannot be said [of] the variety and beauty of fine woods in [Wise] County.”⁸⁹ That same year, F.M. Gardner raved about a 25,000-acre tract of land he evaluated in Wise County. Riding horseback, Gardner looked up timber lands for the past year. He concluded of all the land he is traveled that it “contain(s) the finest timber, the greatest number of trees to the acre, the best seams of coal and other minerals; are the best farming lands, and are better located for shipping timber than any that I have yet examined, and I can safely and conscientiously recommend this property to anyone wishing to invest money in timber lands, as a paying investment.”⁹⁰

In 1887, logging began in the county, where “on all sides can be heard the sound of the axe and the saw cutting the best of hardwood.”⁹¹ In 1931, the McCorkle Lumber Corporation Sawmill in Stonega, Wise County harvested a single yellow poplar tree that produced 15,000 board feet of timber and filled an entire train.⁹² In 1940, the last virgin timber was cut in the county; after depleting the county of its forests, McCorkle Lumber Corporation moved to

⁸⁹ Boyd, *Resources of Southwest Virginia*, 244.

⁹⁰ James B. Frye, *Report on lands in the counties of Wise and Buchanan, Virginia, and McDowell, West Virginia* (Philadelphia: Press of W.J. Murphy's Sons, 1882), 5.

⁹¹ Bruce, *Southwest Virginia and Shenandoah Valley*, 93.

⁹² Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 53.

Kentucky later that same year.⁹³ In the early twentieth century, The Clinch Valley Lumber Company in St. Paul was also a benefactor of the vast timber of Wise County.⁹⁴

Former Confederate General John Daniel Imboden was one of the earliest developers of the area. In 1872, Imboden told legislators and prominent citizens in Richmond that “Within this imperial domain of Virginia, lie almost unknown to the outer world, and not fully appreciated by their owners,” with mineral resources that surpass those of England and could “attract hither millions of money, and enterprising thousands of people.”⁹⁵ Later, he bought 21,000 acres for only 35 cents an acre for “certain gentlemen of large means” who were officials of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Imboden purchased land, built the railroad into the coal fields, and later was a lobbyist in North Carolina for the coal interests. After a stint at the North Carolina state capitol in Raleigh he wrote about the elegant people he was meeting in Wise County. Imboden told them how nice the county was and he said it “interested them so much that when our road is built they are coming out to see for themselves. They think it must be delightful to see and mingle with such primitive people.”⁹⁶ In December 1879, Imboden spoke at a club dinner in Pittsburg and talked of the rich undeveloped coal and iron ores of Southwest Virginia. His speech persuaded a number of businessmen to invest and they “at once made up a purse” to send General Imboden to the region to compile a report. He took the train to the then nearest railroad point, Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee, and then rode on horseback to the coalfields in Wise County. After an examination of the area, he purchased 42,000 acres of the Olinger property for C. S. O. Tintsman of Pittsburg and associates. In 1880, he bought an additional 47,000 acres of mineral lands in the

⁹³ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 4, 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 91.

⁹⁵ Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, 31.

⁹⁶ Shearer, *Memories from Dante*, 141.

county. Imboden was instrumental in acquiring land and promoting the mineral wealth of Wise County.⁹⁷

In 1881, Charles Rufus Boyd published a book on the abundance of resources in southwestern Virginia. Boyd was a southwest Virginia native who worked as an engineer and mining consultant.⁹⁸ He later wrote as a mineral specialist and advertiser for General Jediadiah Hotchkiss industrial and mineral resource journal, *The Virginia's*.⁹⁹ Of pre-industrialized Southwest Virginia, Boyd wrote:

Could any landscape exceed in beauty Rosedale and Elk Garden? They are only equaled by a few places in Southwestern Virginia. In Russell, they may find almost a counterpart in Cassel's Woods, some parts of the county toward Hansonville and Dickinsonville, and occasional spots about New Garden, including the river scenery afforded by the different branches of Clinch River.

Despite the picturesque natural beauty, Boyd felt that the area was not being taken advantage of correctly, stating, "it is singular that so much natural wealth should have lain so long among so progressive a people without fuller development."¹⁰⁰ However, the same year as Boyd's publication, 1881, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company arrived in the region. Ten years later, in 1891, the N&W railroad was complete. The culmination of the two had a dramatic effect on the county; accelerating industrialization, economic development, exploitation of the area's natural resources, and spurring immigration.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ General Rufus Ayers, "Wise County: Her Industries, Resources and Prominent Men: A Specially Prepared History of Wise County," *Crawford's Weekly Industrial Edition* (Norton: October 1920), accessed October 12, 2017

⁹⁸ Randal L. Hall, *Mountains on the Market: Industry, the Environment, and the South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 86.

⁹⁹ Douglas, W. Ogle, "The Highest Mountains in Virginia: Mt. Rogers and Whitetop or...Balsam and Meadow Mountains," *Virginia Minerals, Vol. 41, No. 4*, (Charlottesville: November 1995), accessed November 17, 2016, https://www.dmme.virginia.gov/commercedocs/VAMIN_VOL41_NO04.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Rufus Boyd, *Resources of Southwest Virginia Showing the Mineral Deposits of Iron, Coal, Zinc, Copper and Lead. Also, The Staples of the Various Counties, Methods of Transportation, Access, Etc.* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1881.)

¹⁰¹ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 52.

Until 1890, there was only one railroad within 100 miles of Wise County, Virginia. By 1891, the first regularly scheduled passenger train from Bristol arrived in Wise County.¹⁰² In 1891, Thomas Bruce wrote an inquiry into the development of the resources of Southwest Virginia. Bruce said that “there are but few people, comparing the number with its immense space, and almost unbounded resources yet to become developed. Geographically, this country is most happily situated. Almost the centre of it is pierced by a part of that line which sooner or later will be the great direct thoroughfare from east to west...”¹⁰³ The following year, in 1892, the first load of coal was shipped by train out of Southwest Virginia.¹⁰⁴

The opening of the coal mines gave rise to manufacturing in the region, and there was very little to speak of prior to the mines. The primary industry consisted of mills prior to the timber and coal booms of the late nineteenth-century. Nearly every family in Wise County made their living from farming. Corn was quickly replaced by coal as the county’s major export.¹⁰⁵ The 1860 U.S. Census counted more hogs than people (4,508) in Wise County. In 1900, there were fifty manufacturing operations, 1,196 farms, and twelve mining companies.¹⁰⁶ In the 1950s, over 90 percent of the farms in Wise County produced corn, hay, potatoes, grain, hogs, cattle, and chickens primarily for home use.¹⁰⁷

Historian Robert Weise noted that when railroads had difficulty securing rights-of-way to build tracks through farmers’ land, railroads encouraged voluntary sales by offering large sums

¹⁰² Ibid, 31.

¹⁰³ Thomas Bruce, *Southwest Virginia and Shenandoah Valley: An Inquiry into the Causes of the Rapid Growth and Wonderful Development of Southwest Virginia and Shenandoah Valley, With A History of the Norfolk and Western and Shenandoah Valley Railroads; and Sketches of the Principal Cities and Towns Instrumental in the Progress of These Sections* (Richmond: J.L. Hill Publishing Co., 1891), 24.

¹⁰⁴ Helen M. Lewis and Edward E. Knipe, “The Colonialism Model: The Appalachian Case,” in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, ed. Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, 30-32.

¹⁰⁷ H.H. Perry, *Soil Survey of Wise County, Virginia* (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, May 1954), 6.

of money for little acreage. When farmers still refused to sell, railroads forced the sale. Most states had a General Railroad Law in which railroad companies, if they proved and justified that the rail line served the public good, would be granted the power of eminent domain in exchange, the state had the power to regulate rates. The county circuit court handled the cases when railroads invoked their power of eminent domain. Court appointed commissioners were assigned to assess compensation. Like most land acquisition processes, the two would disagree on the price, and more often than not in these early court cases the commissioners sided with the farmers rather than the railroads. They often were children of landowning farmers, who understood and sympathized with their peers.¹⁰⁸

In a 1906 publication, Morgan County, Kentucky native William H. Haney condemned the colonial aspects of eastern Kentucky's industrial economy, writing that "foreign capitalists are largely doing the business and receiving the income, without any sense of local, civic improvement, while residents 'receive small compensation...and often become day laborers.'" Haney concluded that the region would be better served by slowing development than by allowing nonnative companies to "carry away the wealth and leave the country in no better condition." Haney saw the improvement of the local community as development's primary purpose.¹⁰⁹ The St. Paul Redevelopment Project emphasized the improvement the project would have on the community and town.

Kathy Shearer, a local historian on the nearby coal camp of Dante, wrote that the early settlers of Southwest Virginia "made their living, a hard one, from the land. Many years later, when the coal industry beckoned, their descendants sought prosperity in the mines, but often

¹⁰⁸ Weise, *Grasping at Independence*, 279.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 283.

retained their farming ways.”¹¹⁰ Perry noted that “The ridge slopes are usually too steep for efficient farming” in Wise County “but are held open as low-grade pasture, mainly by miners who choose to live in the country rather than in mining communities.”¹¹¹ This was the case of many people in central Appalachia, including the Couches.

More than half of the coal mined in the entire state of Virginia was from Wise County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As early as 1897, the Wise County coalfields produced over 660,000 tons of coal.¹¹² A year later, in 1898, George L. Carter bought several hundred thousand acres of coal and timber land in a section of Wise County known as Tom’s Creek. Carter developed the land and built over 800 coke ovens.¹¹³ In 1900, the mines produced 2.5 million tons of coal, half of which the ovens converted to coke. In 1910, there were around 4,400 coke ovens in Wise County, the last oven built in 1958.¹¹⁴ By 1920, two-thirds of the land in Wise County belonged to four major coal companies.

With the increase of coal mining in the region the population rose considerably in Appalachia. In 1890, when industries were just developing in the region, the population in Wise County was 9,345, and most residents were natives of the county or surrounding counties. In 1920, after thirty years of coal production, the population had jumped to 46,5000, and thousands of whom were immigrants from Eastern Europe or African Americans from the Deep South.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Kathy Shearer, *Memories from Dante: The Life of a Coal Town* (Abingdon: People Incorporated of America, 2001), 30.

¹¹¹ Perry, *Soil Survey of Wise County, Virginia*, 6.

¹¹² Albert H. Fay, *Coal-Mine Fatalities in the United States, 1870-1914: With Statistics of Coal Production, Labor, and Mining Methods, by States and Calendar Years* (Washington: Washington Government Printing Office, 1916), 393.

¹¹³ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹⁵ Shifflett, *Coal Towns*, 32.

The population of Wise County in 1990 was 39,537, and in 1988 the coal mining industry employed 35.5 percent of the county.¹¹⁶

In 1891, Thomas Bruce wrote that “no place in the Southwest is superior and richer” in its livestock and agriculture than Wise County. In 1922, geologist Chester Wentworth visited southwest Virginia. Wentworth said, “Cattle and hogs are raised to considerable extent for purely local markets and home consumption, but take slight part in outside markets. Proximity to coal-mining towns has given considerable impetus to farming and production of dairy products and permitted a competition in these commodities with more remote centers of production.”

Wentworth continued by describing employment in Russell County, “With the development of the coal-mining and lumber-cutting industries, occupation has been furnished to many of the inhabitants of this part of the county, either for a part or the whole of the year.”¹¹⁷ Perry echoed Wentworth’s sentiments of neighboring Wise County decades later in the early 1950s, “Mining has greatly affected development of agriculture. Farmers work in the mines in winter when farm work is slack and grow crops for home use in summer when mining decreases. By rough estimate, two-thirds of the farmers work part-time in the mines.”¹¹⁸ The shift from an agrarian to industrial society in central Appalachia at this time had a dramatic impact on the future of the region.

In 1915, Berea College’s Norman Frost spent time visiting six mountain counties preparing a report for the Bureau of Education. Of the six counties, he visited; Wise County, Virginia was included. Frost said Wise County “is in the main a rough, mountainous, mining

¹¹⁶ Thomas G. Johnson and David E. Broomhall, *Education and Economic Development in Rural Appalachia*, in David L. Debertin’s *Off-Farm Employment and Rural Economic Development: Perspectives from States in the Southeast* presented at the Proceedings of a Rural Development Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association, (Lexington: 1922), 21-22, accessed May 8, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED358978#page/n3/mode/2up.

¹¹⁷ Wentworth, *The Geology and Coal Resources of Russell County, Virginia*, 7.

¹¹⁸ Perry, *Soil Survey of Wise County, Virginia*, 11.

county; yet a 40 acre-farm about half a mile south of Coeburn sold for \$10,700 in the spring of 1913.” Coeburn is the closest town located to St. Paul in Wise County and in 1913 had a population of less than 700 people.¹¹⁹ Across the Clinch River in Russell County, the county was even more sparsely dispersed as the mineral resources were not as rich and not as many coal towns sprang up. Geologist Chester Wentworth described the people in 1922 as living “in isolated cabins often some distance from their neighbors.”¹²⁰

Russell and Wise County have always been difficult to travel due to its mountainous terrain. Wentworth wrote that “Foremost among geographic influences on the life of man are routes of travel.” In the pioneer days and perhaps much earlier only a bridle path was needed to connect communities. Fincastle road was built and used prior to the counties formation in 1837, but by 1856 the road was nearly impassable. At that time, the responsibility of providing funds for roads fell to the county, so the court assigned all males between sixteen and sixty (except for teachers and preachers) to road duty. All the men were expected to provide their own tools. No hard-surfaced road was built in Wise County until 1910 or in any adjoining county until 1915; by 1928 there were eighty miles of hard surfaced roads in Wise County.¹²¹ In 1922, Wentworth described the coalfields of neighboring Russell County saying that it is

poor in natural routes of travel, its upland is too deeply dissected to permit travel for any considerable distance along the ridge tops, its valleys are not yet widened sufficiently to make road-building practicable except where a large volume of traffic justifies great expense...the volume of agricultural products from this region is not sufficient to pay for such outlay and the nature of the two other great products of the region, coal and timber, favors their development largely by great corporations which build tramways and railroads rather than wagon roads. As a result, Russell coal field is still largely without

¹¹⁹ Norman Frost, *A Statistical Study of the Public Schools of the Southern Appalachians*, United States Bureau of Education, No. 11 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915), 8, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://archive.org/stream/statisticalstudy00fros#page/28/mode/2up>.

¹²⁰ Wentworth, *The Geology and Coal Resources of Russell County, Virginia*, 2.

¹²¹ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 19.

roads and nearly all travel is by trails on foot or horseback. The trails follow the stream courses most commonly and cross the ridges at the lowest passes.¹²²

Industrialization Era in St. Paul, Virginia

St. Paul, Virginia, a town with a thousand residents, occupies one square mile along the Clinch River on the border between Wise and Russell counties. Although most of St. Paul is north of the river in Wise County, South St. Paul -- the area most affected by the St. Paul Redevelopment Project -- is south of the river and in Russell County. This seemingly meaningless boarder line holds significance in the St. Paul Redevelopment Project. Sara Gregg noted in her comparison of Virginia and Vermont during the New Deal that local participation was less prominent in Virginia than Vermont. Policymakers in Virginia are decided by large counties whereas in Vermont is dictated by small townships.¹²³

St. Paul served as a gateway to the Southwest Virginia coalfields. A project engineered by some of America's leading capitalists planned to construct a railroad connecting the three major cities of Charleston, Cincinnati, and Chicago (3-Cs.) This road was to be built through Saint Paul. The Clinch Valley Division of the Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway was being constructed to Norton at the time, and was expected to arrive at Saint Paul about the same time the 3-C Railway would get there. This situation brought on the "wild and wooly boom days of 1885 to 1889."¹²⁴

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, St. Paul was envisioned as a future industrial stronghold of the Appalachian coalfields. St. Paul was initially known as "Estanoa", but residents and local officials boldly bought the town's namesake from Carroll County, Virginia to become "St. Paul" for \$100. The area that is and was South St. Paul was coined as

¹²² Wentworth, *The Geology and Coal Resources of Russell County, Virginia*, 2.

¹²³ Gregg, *Managing the Mountains*, 5

¹²⁴ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 24.

“Minneapolis.” The initial thought process was that Estanoa (or St. Paul) and South St. Paul (or Minneapolis) could develop into the twin cities on the Clinch River (renamed after the twin cities in Minnesota.) J.L. Dingus was the first postmaster of Estanoa and was instrumental in renaming the town to St. Paul. On April 12, 1911, St. Paul was officially granted its town charter from the Commonwealth of Virginia.¹²⁵

John M. Hillman and his uncle J.L. Dingus were the first two to move to St. Paul or “Estanoa” as it was then called. The two hoped to capitalize on the railroad boom and established the first hotel and general store in 1890.¹²⁶ In October 1889, Hillman’s wife and nine-month-old daughter, Lora Hillman Hancock moved to “Estanoa.” Hancock says she was the “first white child to live here.” Hancock recalled that when her family initially moved to St. Paul work was underway on the 3-C railroad and the grading work for the N & W Railway was just started in the town. The following year, in 1890, the Clinch Valley Line of the N & W Railroad was completed from Bluefield, West Virginia through St. Paul, Virginia. In the next two years, tunnels and trestles drove the line through Norton connecting the N & W to other parts of the country by a complex set of rail lines.¹²⁷ By 1893, the 3-C railroad was completed from Johnson City, Tennessee to St. Paul, Virginia costing and subsequently losing millions of dollars. The plans for the rest of the railroad “went up in smoke when the boom for the twin cities burst.” In 1904, George L. Carter purchased the rights of the old 3-C railway and began the construction of the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio (CC&O) Railroad from Spartanburg, South Carolina, to Elkhorn City, Kentucky.¹²⁸ The railway was constructed through St. Paul during 1905-1906, using part of the old 3-Cs right of way, into the coal fields, through the breaks of the mountain

¹²⁵ Jerry F. Couch, “From the Village of St. Paul to the Town of St. Paul,” *Clinch Valley Times* (St. Paul, VA), June 16, 2011.

¹²⁶ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 14.

¹²⁷ Jerry F. Couch, *St. Paul, Virginia: A Centennial Journey* (St. Paul, VA: 2011), 1-3.

¹²⁸ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 24.

into Kentucky. Hancock noted that “the junction of these two railroads caused another boom in this town.”¹²⁹ In 1910, the CC&O completed the rail line connection from nearby Dante, Virginia to Spartanburg, South Carolina. The CC&O helped further exploit the coal fields of extreme southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky.¹³⁰

In 1891, Thomas Bruce wrote of the numerous towns that have “sprung up” in Wise County (in what he refers to as “the heart of coal country.”) Among the six towns listed to “bid fair to become cities at no great future date” were both Saint Paul and Minneapolis. He continued to say that the Clinch Valley Line of the Norfolk and Western (N&W) railroad has opened up the “kingdom of lumber and coal” in southwestern Virginia where “mines are being opened and branch roads constructed to them.”¹³¹ Charles Rufus Boyd’s 1891 map of southwest Virginia shows both St. Paul and Minneapolis on the map.¹³²

South St. Paul was originally a portion of George Banner’s 946-acre farm. In 1887, Banner sold the farm to General Thomas Rooser for \$90,400 to develop the city of “Minneapolis.” Rooser was president of the New South Mining and Improvement Company (later reorganized and known as the Minneapolis Improvement Company). Banner’s former home served as the Minneapolis land office, hosting prospective investors. The Minneapolis Company laid out a water system on their side of the river; sewer and water pipelines were laid, and streets were graded as Minneapolis prepared to meet the needs of thousands of people. Many lots were sold in Minneapolis, single lots sold for \$200 and entire blocks of 40 lots at \$8,000.

The 3-Cs became bankrupt and investors pulled out. One of the early small lines of the 3-C

¹²⁹ Jerry F. Couch, *St. Paul, Virginia: A Centennial Journey* (St. Paul, VA: 2011), 3.

¹³⁰ Arthur Hull, *Coal Men of America: A Biographical and Historical Review of the World's Greatest Industry* (New York: Retail Coalman, 1918), 424.

¹³¹ Bruce, *Southwest Virginia and Shenandoah Valley*, 93.

¹³² Charles Rufus Boyd, “Map of Washington Co., Virginia and Contiguous Territory: Showing Mineral Resources, Agricultural Areas, Water-Powers, Railway Facilities, Roads, Streams, Educational Institutions, Names and Residences of Many Land-owners, Post-offices, &c”, (Philadelphia, PA: J.L. Smith Map Publisher Company, 1890), accessed November 3, 2016, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3883w.1a001363>.

between Dante and Boody was named “Lake Erie” after the Great Lake of the Twin Cities.¹³³

Although the Twin Cities on the Clinch was considered a failure before the nineteenth century had even began; as late as 1919, a coal company in St. Paul was called “Twin City Coal Corporation.”¹³⁴

St. Paul’s long-time town historian, Leroy Hilton described the demise of Minneapolis, saying that “many fortunes were lost, where they paid thousands of dollars for the lots across river, and it’s mostly hilly, bluffy, country. It’s called South St. Paul now.” The lack of flat land discouraged developers from investing more money into the “twin cities on the Clinch.”¹³⁵ Since “Minneapolis” never arrived, the land was sectioned off and sold to local farmers; one of the lots was sold to my great-great grandfather, Henry Floyd Couch. Henry’s father, Andrew, purchased the adjoining lot, both of which were nearly the same size. Their land would subsequently be known as “Couch Hill” during the redevelopment project. Couch Hill was originally designated as a railroad reserve and ordered not to be subdivided in order for future railroad needs, but due to the twin cities failure to launch it was sold.¹³⁶

In 1916, the St. Paul Land Company subdivided a narrow strip of land between the CC&O railroad tracks and highway offering for sale 18 building lots and a row of commercial buildings. Saloons, bordellos, dance halls and drunkards occupied the strip. The area was known for the abundance of brawls and subsequently became known as the “Western Front,” nicknamed after the battles in World War I and has become a legendary era in St. Paul’s history. Saloons, bordellos, dance halls and drunkards occupied the Western Front. Hilton said that “the town sort of separated in two sections” reflecting the divisions that existed between St. Paul and South St.

¹³³ Jerry F. Couch, “The Saga of South St. Paul Part I,” *Clinch Valley Times*, May 7, 2015.

¹³⁴ Wentworth, *The Geology and Coal Resources of Russell County*, 118.

¹³⁵ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 15.

¹³⁶ Jerry F. Couch, “The Saga of South St. Paul Part I,” *Clinch Valley Times*, May 7, 2015.

Paul. Residents of South St. Paul and the Western Front lived on the “wrong side of the tracks.” Women and “well thought-of people” steered away from the Western Front because “once you crossed the railroad tracks you were in a different world.” Hilton said that he never saw a drunk, unless he was “across the tracks on the Western Front.” However, even “the solid citizen types” would venture across the tracks and “do their drinking and their gambling or whatnot.”¹³⁷

The only “big industry” that came to St. Paul was an extract plant, Swift and Company. The plant opened in 1916 and operated during World War I to produce tanning acid/solution for boots and other leather materials to aid the soldiers overseas in the war effort. The plant closed shortly after the war in 1920, however.¹³⁸ During World War I, on April 12, 1917, Farmville Guard was dispatched to St. Paul to protect the railroads, bridges, and tunnels in St. Paul from German threats. At its peak, the Clinch River Extract Plant employed three hundred people and was the largest employer in Wise County aside from the coal mines.¹³⁹ Swift and Company, the old extract plant, or “old smokestack” turned tree bark into tanning acid wasting much of the lumber. The extract plant only needed the bark to make the tanning solution and left thousands of peeled chestnut oaks to rot on the mountainsides. The mud road that led to the old extract plant later became U.S. #58, a major component in the St. Paul Redevelopment Project.¹⁴⁰ My great-grandfather Dule Couch took the stand in February 1976 and told the court about how he and his family sold coal to the old extract plant in St. Paul.¹⁴¹ When he was a young boy, he remembered the extract plant being constructed; during a particularly bad thunderstorm he watched in horror as a worker nearly toppled off the top of the smokestack.¹⁴² The Couches’ former neighbor

¹³⁷ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 34.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 35-36.

¹³⁹ Jerry F. Couch, *St. Paul, Virginia: A Centennial Journey* (St. Paul, VA: 2011), 1-3.

¹⁴⁰ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 14.

¹⁴¹ John Clark, “Couch Brothers Awarded 212,880,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Feb. 12, 1976.

¹⁴² Jerry F. Couch, “St. Paul During The ‘Teens,” *Clinch Valley Times*, June 23, 2011.

reiterated this by saying, “the coal reserve where the Couch boys and their granddads had supplied the old extract plant right across the river. They supplied the coal.”¹⁴³

The old smokestack was destroyed to make way for the St. Paul Redevelopment Project. The old smokestack was located where the Riverside Shopping Center (Rite-Aid, Roses, ABC) is currently located. *St. Paul Tomorrow Inc.* described the day of the demolition as filled with “a holiday-like atmosphere” that was “complete with television cameras and reporters from several newspapers.” The holiday like atmosphere dissipated momentarily, however; when the countdown was nearly complete to detonate the smokestack, a train showed up nearly causing a catastrophe due to the proximity of the N&W railroad tracks and the smokestack.¹⁴⁴ McConnell suggested “Couch Hill” as the safest spot for onlookers to observe the demolition.¹⁴⁵

However, another prominent and more lasting corporation in the town of St. Paul was Gin-Gera Bottling Company, which subsequently became the St. Paul Coca-Cola Bottling Company located on Riverside Drive in South St. Paul. In 1914, the St. Paul Gin-Gera Bottling received its charter, but, was quickly amended in 1916 when the company failed to take off. The building was used by various companies over the years until 1947, when its name was changed to the St. Paul Coca-Cola Bottling Company. The St. Paul Coca-Cola Bottling Company remained in business until around 1980, when the redevelopment project was finally underway. In addition, these smaller plants were being succumbed by larger corporate Coca-Cola factories at this time making St. Paul’s no longer useful. Most of the building currently remains, but is in very poor condition.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 113.

¹⁴⁴ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 30.

¹⁴⁵ “Project Groundbreaking and Smokestack Demolition Thursday,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Aug. 13, 1981.

¹⁴⁶ Jerry F. Couch, “The St. Paul Gin-Gera Bottling Company,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Aug. 25, 2011.

Aside from the redevelopment project that occurred in St. Paul in the 1970s and 1980s, another drastic change occurred in the town during the Great Depression. When life-long resident of St. Paul, LeRoy Hilton was a young child, cows ran loose throughout the town, causing big erosion ditches in which the boardwalk was “like four or five feet off of the ground because of the swampy area that was always through here.” The “swampy area” Hilton referred to was a series of nearly five acres of ponds spread throughout the town up until the 1930s. One of these swampy areas was transformed by former St. Paul students and the community from the “towns giant mud puddle” into a nationally renowned environmental education site, known as “Wetlands Estanoa” or “Lake Estanoa.” The Wetlands Estanoa Project was initiated by St. Paul High School and introduces students to scientific and environmental research. Lake Estanoa is located near St. Paul Elementary School where town founder John Hillman once lived. Hilton was a neighbor of Hillman and recalled there was a cave with several ponds on Hillman’s land, “Every bit of it, plumb to the sidewalk where the houses are, was all water.” During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) paved the streets and roads of St. Paul for ten cents an hour and blasted the cave, drained and filled in the lake, and built the current Methodist Church atop of it.¹⁴⁷

The town of St. Paul has never shied away from remodeling itself when it was deemed publicly beneficial. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 1970s and 1980s when St. Paul’s “Impossible Dream” came to fruition; rechanneling the Clinch River, making a cut in a mountain, demolishing Couch Hill and much of South St. Paul, and the entire landscape of St. Paul altered.

¹⁴⁷ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 36-37.



Figure 3

St. Paul Redevelopment Project Area, circa 1983.

Far left corner is where Oxbow lake currently sits, central flat area contains various businesses, the majority of the area was formerly occupied the Couch Brothers and was leveled out for industrial and commercial purposes. Photo courtesy of Pam Vance.

CHAPER 4

ST. PAUL'S IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

In the early 1950s, H.H. Perry conducted a soil survey in Wise County. The analysis he provided on the county gives insight on why St. Paul was particularly prone to flooding in the county. Whereas St. Paul and Powell Valley is underlain by limestone, with no definite drainage pattern, the rest of the county is underlain by sandstone and shale, which provides a treelike drainage pattern. In addition, High Knob near Coeburn has the highest peak in the county at 4,162 feet above sea level; St. Paul is 1600 feet above sea level, one of the lowest peaks in the county.¹⁴⁸ In addition Perry spoke of agriculture in the region, “The ridge slopes are usually too steep for efficient farming but are held open as low-grade pasture, mainly by miners who choose to live in the country rather than in mining communities.” Over 90 percent of the farms in Wise County in the 1950s produced corn, hay, potatoes, a little grain, hogs, cattle, and chickens mainly for home use. Perry also noted that “...the limestone area near St. Paul contain most of the cropland and pasture. In the rest of the county, topography limits farming to isolated areas along creek bottoms and moderate slopes on the ridges.”¹⁴⁹

The small Appalachian town of St. Paul, Virginia has had major flooding issues in its history. With the region void of a lot of flat, developable land, early settlers settled close to rivers. However, agencies such as Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] have made rebuilding in flood zones off limits now.¹⁵⁰ The town has experienced several floods, most notably in 1957 and 1977. While the bridge in town was washed away by a flood in 1902,¹⁵¹ the major flood in 1957 threatened to wash away the bridge once again as onlookers watched the

¹⁴⁸ Perry, *Soil Survey of Wise County, Virginia*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁵⁰ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 105.

¹⁵¹ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 27.

Clinch River from the CC&O overpass on Riverside Drive in South St. Paul.¹⁵² St. Paul is certainly not the only southwestern Virginia town to suffer from flooding (past or present); in fact, the entire Appalachian region has been prone to flooding. In spring 1917, for example, the Powell River flooded the new up-and-coming coal town, Dorchester, in Wise County, Virginia. Luckily, most of the company houses had not been built until after that time however.¹⁵³ Harry Caudill described a catastrophic flood that took place in January, 1957, in another Wise County town. The town of Pound, Virginia, which sits on the banks of the Pound River, was overwhelmed by more than 20 feet of water, sweeping into houses and business after “a period of prolonged rain sent water into streams from hillsides.” That same year, 1957, Grundy, the county seat of neighboring Buchanan County, experienced such severe flooding that, according to, Caudill, “Rescue boats sailed over top of the city’s street lights.”¹⁵⁴ The “one-hundred-year flood” took place in 1977, in which several southwestern Virginia towns were hit with devastating flooding. Grundy was the most impacted of the towns in 1977, with the flood cresting to 36 feet and three people even dying. However, Grundy, like St. Paul, had an innovative way to combat the devastation with the ultimate outcome of relocating and flood-proofing the entire town.¹⁵⁵

The story of Grundy’s relocation is an interesting and complex story in itself. Grundy, originally a logging town, lies on the confluence of the Levisa River and Slate Creek. Since 1929, Grundy has experienced nine major floods, the town never totally recovered from the devastation of the 1977 with several of the businesses never reopening. In the early 1990s the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along with the town council and former Congressman Rick

¹⁵² Jerry Couch, *St. Paul, Virginia: A Centennial Journey* (St. Paul, VA, 2011), 25.

¹⁵³ Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, *Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years*, 99.

¹⁵⁴ Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, 322.

¹⁵⁵ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 102.

Boucher began working together to resolve Grundy's flooding problem as the town flooded four times alone in 1998. The parties involved decided it was no longer economically feasible to try and maintain the dilapidated downtown. Much like St. Paul, the project took cooperation from all three levels of government; local, state, and federal. Grundy's Relocation Project is the most expensive single project in southwest Virginia, amassing over 200 million dollars.¹⁵⁶ The revitalization project centralized around the Grundy Town Center, with Wal-Mart as the focal point (to the distain of some.) When taking the town center into account the project has cost over 300 million dollars. The Wal-Mart is one of the most unique in the country sitting on a two-story parking garage with an escalator sitting atop the side of a newly blasted mountain of 13 acres of land.¹⁵⁷ Unlike in St. Paul, however, the river was not changed, thus environmental groups did not try to stop the project.¹⁵⁸ Grundy's nearby Kentucky neighbor, Pikeville combated their flooding problem in the similar vein as Grundy and St. Paul, but unique unto itself.

Pikeville, Kentucky began working to solve its flooding problems in the 1960s. In November 1973, the Pikeville Cut-Through Project was underway. Spearheaded by former Mayor William C. Hambley, the Pikeville Cut-Through Project is considered an engineering marvel that was called "the eighth wonder of the world" by *The New York Times*. The Pikeville Cut-Through Project is the largest "earth removal project" in the history of the United States, trailing only the Panama Cannel as the largest in the world. The project relocated the Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River away from the downtown area relieving traffic from three major highways and a railroad. The project created a three-quarter long mile through Peach Orchard

¹⁵⁶ Charles Boothe, "\$200M Relocation Project that moved a mountain to save Grundy pays off," *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 2016, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.bdtonline.com/news/m-relocation-project-that-moved-a-mountain-to-save-grundy/article_8d92ed9c-ee48-11e5-9336-3769bae935de.html.

¹⁵⁷ "Grundy Town Center," *People Incorporated of Virginia*, accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.peopleinc.net/projects-grundy-town-center.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ Louis Jacobson, "Flood-prone Appalachian Town to Move Mountain, then Downtown," (*Planning*, Vol. 68, Issue 4, April 2002), 30, accessed October 12, 2017, ProQuest Ebrary.

Mountain providing a new area to construct railroad tracks and highways. After 14 years and \$80 million dollars, the project was complete. The Cut-Through Project created 400 useable acres of land after its completion in 1987.¹⁵⁹

TVA completed a project in Coeburn in the early 1960s and began to take interest in other southwest Virginia communities at that time. The Coeburn project included downtown renovation, flood proofing, and floodwalls.¹⁶⁰ TVA dug the channel and provided the “manpower” to rechannel the river. But, due to funding issues, TVA could not justify moving people out of the floodplain, which is how HUD and the highway department became involved.¹⁶¹ Prior to the rechannelization of the Clinch River, the river ran uphill through South St. Paul coming down to make a half mile horseshoe loop. Leroy Hilton described St. Paul’s flooding problems at the time, saying, “every time you got any kind of water, immediately it would flood, all over this area. All of it would be underwater.” In order to alleviate the situation a channel was cut, cutting half a mile of the river out.¹⁶²

Federal assistance programs were implemented to eliminate blight and slums that are detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare to the community. Additionally, redevelopment programs sought to provide a “more rational utilization of the land” allowing for a “better arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, and other needed activity centers.”¹⁶³ St. Paul used the channel change as an opportunity to provide the town with a “more rational utilization of the land”, shortening the Clinch River would create more open space for

¹⁵⁹ “Pikeville Cut-Through Project,” *Tour Pike County*, accessed October 15, 2017, https://www.tourpikecounty.com/things-to-see-do/outdoor_adventure/pikeville-cut-through-project/.

¹⁶⁰ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 102.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 107.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁶³ Mayor Terry Livingston, “Notice for Public Review of Project Proposed in Floodplain,” *Clinch Valley Times* (St. Paul, VA), Aug. 7, 1980, 8.

the “residential, commercial, industrial, and activity centers” needed. The objectives highlighted by government programs gave St. Paul and other similar towns to carry out such projects.

In 1968, Ralph Widner, the first executive director of the Appalachian Regional Commission serving from 1965-1971, stated that “America now has only two choices: either (a) urbanization or (b) urbanization.” Widner summed up this statement by saying that “in order for the quality of life in Appalachia to improve, ‘mountaineers ‘must give up the old American dream’ of living a pastoral life on small farms.”¹⁶⁴ However, this viewpoint can be questioned in hindsight as more and more capital has been offered and granted to farmers in Appalachia to sustain agriculture in the area.

Established in 1969 under the Virginia Regional Cooperation Act, the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission is one of 21 planning district commissions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. LENOWISCO serves the counties of Lee, Scott, and Wise and the City of Norton. LENOWISCO is heavily involved in local infrastructure and development planning and prides itself “on adjusting to the changing needs of [the] region.”¹⁶⁵ The commission “was all local initiative” “enabling legislation in the state code.” Virginia serves under the infamous Dillon rule, meaning localities cannot do anything not specifically provided for in the statutes of the Virginia General Assembly. After LENOWISCO was organized in 1969, it gave the redevelopment project the authority for local units to gather together for planning and economic development purposes.

The directors before Bruce Robinette were “outsiders” who never gained the “confidence of the people.” Robinette was hired around 1965 because he grew up in Big Stone Gap. Robinette said the county “needed to get somebody locally that they could relate to. So at least

¹⁶⁴ Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 183-184.

¹⁶⁵ LENOWISCO, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.lenowisco.org/>.

they would give me a chance.” Robinette’s local ties still did not prepare him for the local resistance he received, “I realized I had made a big mistake. They thought the regional effort was basically a communistic threat toward local government.” Robinette recalled the residents’ reactions towards him and his staff, “You all are down here to take over our county and our towns and our city. And we’re going to have to answer to another level of government bureaucracy.” After Robinette became director of LENOWISCO he met with former St. Paul Mayor Holland Fletcher and offered to provide a comprehensive plan to address the town’s flooding problems. Fletcher replied, “Boy, we are doing just fine up here now. And if we need some planning done, I’ll call you down there in Big Stone Gap.” Robinette assumed that would be the response, “because I know Holland, and he was coming from the right place, and the town is fine, and he doesn’t want to make any ripples, and he’s running the show, and we’re outsiders.”¹⁶⁶ Robinette hoped to address the flooding issue with a local medical doctor in St. Paul, Dr. George Cain.

Cain engineered the initiative by running for mayor against incumbent long-time mayor Holland Fletcher. The 1969 election was the most heated in the town’s history, Cain won on the fact that he vowed to take on some “monumental projects” and “on the fact they wanted to do some things in town. And they wanted to get all the outside help to come in.” Holland Fletcher has two sons; Tom is the former principal of St. Paul High School and Kyle is the current mayor of St. Paul. Tom recalls that the “people who had lived around here for several generations” (such as the Couches) were “a little leery of a lot of outside people directing the traffic.” He continued by saying the “old-timers” of the town wanted to “to sit down and talk about this a little more” before any drastic measures were taken. He said his father understood the need for the river relocation, but “all the different things that went along with it were not exactly the way

¹⁶⁶ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 101-102.

he would have preferred they did it.” He recalls watching the massive construction with his father one day in which a channel was cut through the mountain next to the shopping center where the old smokestack was located. Tom recalls his father telling him that the project is “probably a good idea. [But], If it had been me and I had that much money to work with, I believe I would have done something different than what we are doing.”¹⁶⁷ Fletcher’s other son, Kyle, is the current mayor of St. Paul and has been very influential over the last several years in promoting tourism to the town and the revitalization and reconstruction of many of the dilapidated buildings in town.

Several government agencies worked together in various capacities to get the St. Paul Redevelopment Project underway. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Army Corps of Engineers, TVA, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were all involved and instrumental in the St. Paul Redevelopment Project. The parties involved first met in May 1970 but the project took another twelve years to complete; at the frustration of everyone involved. McConnell described the process saying that a “snail’s pace is an overstatement, because it was terrible.” Flood control experts from the TVA were at the meeting because they had a “genuine interest and all this history on the flooding” in the region.¹⁶⁸ The periodic flooding that faced St. Paul led to a July 1970 meeting between Mayor George Cain, Engineer Bill Thompson, and LENOWISCO Director Bruce Robinette. The three discussed ways to resolve several problems that faced St. Paul at the time such as a sagging economy and “an extensive area of primarily substandard

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 103-104.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 105-106.

housing.” The St. Paul Redevelopment Project was born over coffee that night when the three men sketched the plan on a paper napkin.¹⁶⁹

At the May 1970 meeting, the highway department was “elated” at the prospects of building a new highway through the town, as the two-lane highway was “less-than-adequate” and looked to build a new four-lane highway through the town. The Virginia Department of Highways constructed highway 58 through St. Paul (the highway was completely state funded). Problems and disagreements with the contractor ensued on how to route the new highway bypass. According to Bruce Robinette, the idea of rechanneling the river came about when the highway department came into the picture.¹⁷⁰ The highway department was looking for a route to get around St. Paul, and there was steep terrain, mountains, and the river, which was meandering through town.¹⁷¹ Flooding often blocked route 58, and alternate routes would have to be taken. The highway department constructed highway 58, and raised the floodplain, creating commercial and industrial space.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 29.

¹⁷⁰ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 102.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 107.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 105.



Figure 4

Former Bickley Bridge going into St. Paul.

Right, Former Bickley Bridge going into St. Paul, circa 1983. *Left center*, former road to South St. Paul. Photo courtesy of Pam Vance.

The Federal Fish and Wildlife agency was against St. Paul's Redevelopment Project due to the many endangered mussels and various species in the Clinch River. Changes in legislation relative to the river, such as the requirement for a "404 Permit" from the Army Corps of Engineers, delayed the project for four years until Senator John Warner and then Secretary of the Army Cecil Andrus intervened to issue the permit.¹⁷³ LeRoy Hilton said that after the channel was cut, there were fish trapped in numerous deep water holes. He described the incident, "we

¹⁷³ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 30.

talked to the Game Commission to see what they were going to do, and they said it is easier to raise more fish than to try to recover them. They gave us permission to seine the river.” Locals picked up fish in barrels to supply their farm ponds, hundreds more were dumped in nearby streams along with at least two thousand Hilton personally knows of that he put in Lake Bonaventure’s nearby golf course.¹⁷⁴

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) oversaw relocating residents out of the flood zone and providing them with housing. Houses were relocated out of the flood zone from St. Paul by 1977 (the year of the 100-year flood), but the channel was not changed until 1981. The Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (WCRHA) served as a branch under HUD and became the primary “player” in purchasing property and relocating South St. Paul residents. WCRHA acquired the first piece of property for the project in 1974. The first offer for Dule Couches property was on April 18, 1974. The project was quickly besieged by outcries and lawsuits from residents and business owners alike who did not want to sell. The United States Supreme Court finally ruled in favor of the town, ruling that private property may ultimately be destined for private ownership does not exempt it from condemnation through the doctrine of eminent domain.”¹⁷⁵ HUD had just reorganized in Richmond, and created a Neighborhood Development Program designed to acquire real estate, an extension of which was the St. Paul Neighborhood Development Program (VA-A-13).¹⁷⁶

The St. Paul Neighborhood Development Program, was established as a grassroots program to spearhead the redevelopment project. However, like many grassroots organizations, the St. Paul Neighborhood Development Program was spearheaded by local elite, and not the community members most affected. In fact, residents of South St. Paul had no vote in the matter

¹⁷⁴ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 99-100.

¹⁷⁵ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 108.

at all because they were within Russell County's boundaries and the town of St. Paul lies in Wise County. St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., the brainchild of the St. Paul Neighborhood Development Program, is still led by many of the same people and published *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul* around 2000. The booklet highlights the transformation of the town, as well as future endeavors the town hoped to accomplish by 2020. They consider the St. Paul Redevelopment Project to be the town's greatest accomplishment and described it as "now shrouded in the stuff of legends."¹⁷⁷

Charles McConnell, then assistant director of the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, took over the project from Robinette and LENOWISCO.¹⁷⁸ McConnell said he did not have "that much experience in buying or doing that sort of thing." So, a residential committee (the St. Paul Neighborhood Development Program) was created and "the first thing we did was acquire the property."¹⁷⁹ LENOWISCO's primary purpose was targeting regional economic development solutions for the area's water, potable water, and indoor plumbing. McConnell said that a major issue St. Paul faced was from residents "straight-piping their wastewater sewage directly into the river, which was becoming totally unacceptable." According to Robinette, prior to the 1970s there was no water sewage treatment anywhere in the region and that a major priority of EPA at the time was implementing sewer plants in communities.¹⁸⁰ EPA told towns throughout southwest Virginia to stop dumping raw and partially raw sewage into river streams. Salyers reiterated the sewer situation, "St. Paul had a sewer, but it was all going in the river."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 29.

¹⁷⁸ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 105-106.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁸⁰ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 101.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 114.

There were several complications involved with EPA over the redevelopment project in St. Paul. The town compiled an environmental impact statement that was “incredibly thick.” But much like the snail darter controversy that took place during the Tellico Project, endangered mussels were found in the Clinch River in St. Paul. McConnell and other town officials thought that would kill the entire project.¹⁸² In 1976, S. Strother Smith III, the lawyer who represented the Couch family and other South St. Paul community members, wrote to Senator William B. Hopkins about the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent studying the environmental impacts the rechanneling would have on various species in the Clinch River (such as 107 species of frogs), yet did not conduct any analysis on the residents involved at all.¹⁸³ As extensive as the environmental study on the species directly involved in the Clinch River was however, Smith argued that HUD’s environmental report in St. Paul was “inadequate in that no visits have been made to the impacted area or studies performed on the flora and fauna of the impacted area. The statement of possible animal and wildlife to be affected was lifted directly from a textbook and not by actual field experience.”¹⁸⁴

A law passed in 1976 mandated that the Army Corps of Engineers had to approve a channel cut if a river were to be changed. Although St. Paul’s project was sketched six years prior to the law, it was subject to the approval process retroactively. This put the project on hold for three and a half years when approval was officially granted in August 1980.¹⁸⁵

St. Paul’s “incredible political connections” was the deciding factor in forcing certain projects through, whereas the project would otherwise collapse. There was a financial freeze on

¹⁸² Ibid, 111.

¹⁸³ Smith, III to Hopkins, 1976.

¹⁸⁴ S. Strother Smith, III to Department of Housing and Urban Development, Sept. 19, 1975, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

¹⁸⁵ “St. Paul Gets Official ‘go ahead’ for Project: Department of the Army Approves 404 Permit,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Aug. 7, 1980.

funds in 1973 that threatened the project, but a St. Paul resident named Fred Bolton helped push the project through due to his friendly ties with Governor Linwood Holton. Governor Holton grew up in Wise County, in nearby Big Stone Gap. Governor Holton knew Richard Nixon, who unfroze the money.¹⁸⁶

The Couches tried to take their own political action; but their limited political connections and limited means were no match for the affluent political elite at home and statewide. In 1973, Dule's wife, Edith, wrote a letter to Governor Holton. Holton's special assistant, Alexander Gilliam, Jr., wrote back in February 1973 thanking her for the letter and telling her it was not within Governor Holton's jurisdiction and "must be decided by the courts" and added that he felt "certain the lawyers you and your neighbors have retained will do everything they can to argue your position in the courts."¹⁸⁷ Shortly after, in April 1973, Henry Couch attended a special open-door meeting in Russell County concerning the redevelopment project. Congressman William C. "Bill" Wampler wrote Henry Couch a letter thanking him for attending the meeting by saying; "I enjoyed talking with you and the other persons that are interested in the St. Paul River and Highway Relocation Project." Wampler continued to say that the "project is still being considered, and as soon as a resolution has been reached on this matter, I will write you again."¹⁸⁸ Wampler later headed a "slick presentation" trying to gain support for the St. Paul project. The EPA and Fish and Wildlife Agency told the Congressman they still opposed the project after the presentation, much to the surprise of Wampler, TVA, Robinette, and Thompson. McConnell thought EPA was "afraid of setting a precedent."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 107.

¹⁸⁷ Alexander G. Gilliam Jr. to Edith Couch, Feb. 21, 1973, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

¹⁸⁸ Congressman William C. Wampler to Henry Couch, April 19, 1973, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

¹⁸⁹ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 107.

To try and combat the “total opposition” posed by EPA and Fish and Wildlife, TVA’s environmental department did an extensive analysis on the effect the channel change would have on the river and determined the river quality would improve if the channel was changed. Regardless, Fish and Wildlife and EPA still strongly opposed it due to endangered mussels. Beginning in 1976, McConnell and others worked to get the permit but was not granted until Congressman Bill Wampler bypassed the employees and went directly to the head of the agencies in Washington, D.C. Senator John Warner, subsequently passed the permit through due to a friendly political connection with the town and a St. Paul resident, Fred Phillips.¹⁹⁰ Whether or not some of these actions were justifiable or even legal is debatable.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 110-112.

CHAPTER 5

COUCH HILL AND SOUTH ST. PAUL

Frankly, I am both perplexed and extremely angry over the exceptionally shoddy treatment the Couches have received from the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the State Department of Highways... Your attempt at this late date to circumvent your legal responsibility indicated to me that you are more concerned with saving money for the Department than you are with human needs and I am certainly going to insure that every member of the Department of Highways and Transportation listed on your letterhead.

- Attorney Robert T. Copeland to Engineer W.W. Williams¹⁹¹

The origin of the St. Paul Redevelopment Project began atop Couch Hill when core drillers discovered that the hill was made of dirt and not rock like initially believed, making Couch Hill a “constant rather than a variable.”¹⁹² Bill Thompson’s engineering firm, Thompson and Litton, supervised a core drilling project when the town was undergoing a new sewer project funded under Mayor Fletcher’s regime. On the top of “Couch Hill” the core drillers had discovered that instead of being entirely made up of solid rock which they had initially expected, that only one rock was on top of it. Soil made some things possible, that rock would prohibit. Thompson had the initial idea to change the course of the river, change and improve highway 58, and to relocate the residents already living in the floodplain.¹⁹³ The channel change would shorten the river creating more open space for various purposes. “Couch Hill” occupied the peninsula of land in what was then a thousand foot “horseshoe shaped loop” of the Clinch River along the old Riverside Drive portion of South St. Paul. The loop was “choked with silt” so if TVA dug a channel, the water speed would increase releasing oxygen. After “Couch Hill” was acquired, the town leveled the hill and raised the elevation of the property, much of this area was where current day Oxbow Lake is. The creation of Oxbow Lake in St. Paul was a concession

¹⁹¹ Robert T. Copeland to W.W. Williams, April 14, 1977, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

¹⁹² St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the town of St. Paul*, 29.

¹⁹³ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 105-106.

made for the EPA. Charles McConnell said that before the channel change, “the loop was a residential and small farm area, a little subdivision, and most of the acreage was two farms. One was owned by two brothers.” Salyers said that the “town didn’t have no place to build a sewer plant...So they had purchased property which adjoined the Couches’. And that’s why the town had to have that, because they couldn’t build their sewer plant.”¹⁹⁴ There was an area that could be used for the sewer treatment facility but McConnell noted that it “would be a lot easier to use that configuration if the river was moved.”¹⁹⁵ With Couch Hill, no longer in the flood plain, the town had 100 relatively flat acres of land available to use as they pleased for economic development purposes.¹⁹⁶

In 1901, Dule Couch’s father, Henry Floyd Couch, along with his father, Andrew Jackson Couch, purchased adjoining tracts for small farms, each consisting of roughly sixteen acres. The property consisted of four small sharecropper’s homes, a dilapidated barn, a couple of cows, and a few chickens. The sharecropper’s homes were compiled to create one large home by Henry Floyd Couch to accommodate his large family. The Couches’ kept farming on the land until the Redevelopment Project, keeping two jersey cows and chickens. In addition to the brothers’ two homes, a blacksmith shop, and the Couch Family Cemetery was on the property. Henry’s father, Andrew, purchased the adjoining lot, both of which were nearly the same size. Their land would subsequently be known as “Couch Hill” during the redevelopment project. Couch Hill was originally designated as a railroad reserve and ordered not to be subdivided in order for future railroad needs. But after Minneapolis failed to develop, the land was sold.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 114.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 108.

¹⁹⁶ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 29.

¹⁹⁷ Jerry F. Couch, “The Saga of South St. Paul,” *Clinch Valley Times*, May 7, 2015.

Prior to the timber and coal industry entering the region, the Couches worked as farmers in neighboring Russell County. But when the coal industry began operation in the 1890s, Henry Floyd Couch tried his hand at mining in nearby Virginia City. Soon thereafter, he and his father purchased adjoining small farms in South St. Paul in 1901. Henry Floyd continued to farm, mine, and work at a nearby rock quarry until he eventually lost his leg working at the quarry; leaving the brunt of the financial and familial responsibilities to his eldest son, Dule.¹⁹⁸



Figure 5

Dule, Henry and Adam Couch, circa 1918. *Left to Right:* Dule Couch, Henry Floyd Couch, and Adam Couch. Adam Couch was murdered overseas during World War II. Personal possession of author.

¹⁹⁸ Eloise Buchanan, e-mail message to author, July 12, 2016.

There were 3 small coal mines on the Couch property in South Saint Paul. Dule Couches daughter, Eloise Buchanan, described the coal located underneath Couch Hill, “My Grandpaw Hen Couch sold a lot of coal out of that hill. He used horse and handmade coal cars with iron wheels that fit on the little track and wagon to get the coal out and deliver to businesses and people all around the area. The last time they were in it, it fell in. Dad had heard the crack of the timber and ran out. He never tried to open it again.”¹⁹⁹

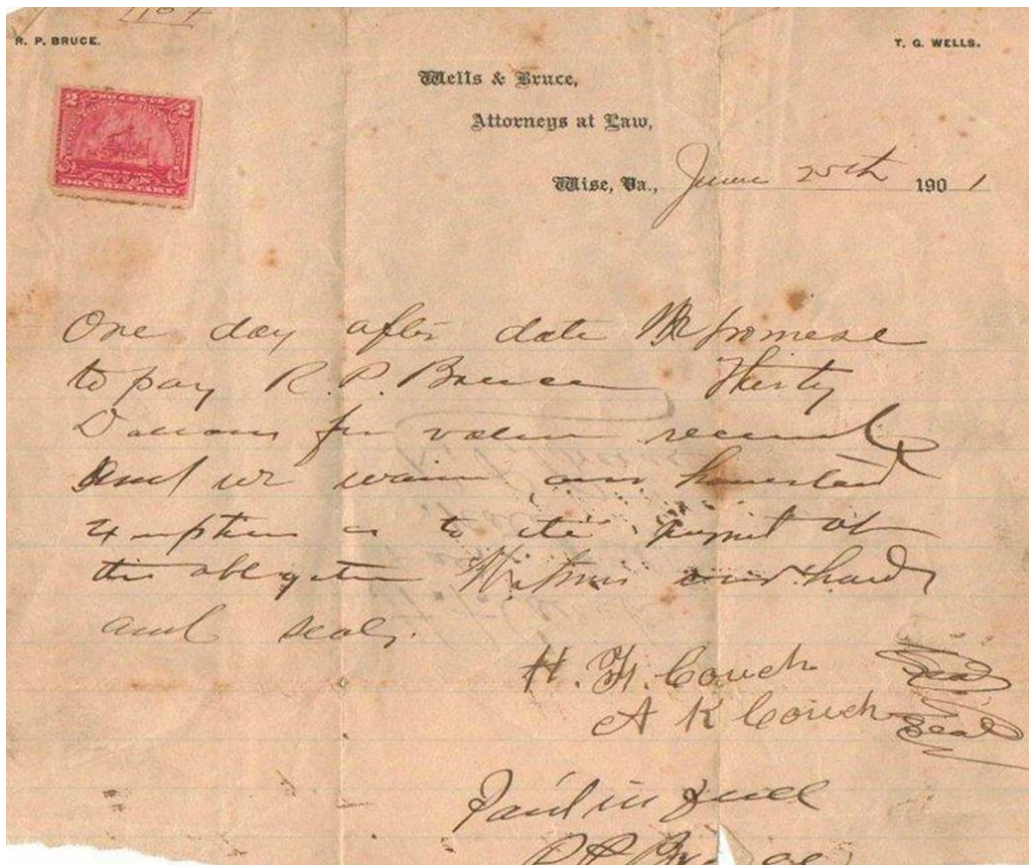


Figure 6

Promissory note for the purchase of Couch Hill in 1901. Personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

¹⁹⁹ Eloise Buchanan, e-mail message to author, March 18, 2016.

The men's plan was sketched in July 1970. On April 7, 1971, my great-aunt Eloise Buchanan wrote a letter to Mayor George Cain: Since my father, Dule Couch, owns property in South Saint Paul and I am an heir," She wrote, "could you please take time to send me information on the proposed by-pass, industrial park, and housing project that is planned for the city? Also if and how this would affect the property of Dule Couch. Please keep this letter confidential."²⁰⁰

Mayor Cain replied, "There is absolutely nothing definite at this time, either as to if anything will be done, if so what, where, or when. If you could keep in touch by getting the *Clinch Valley Times* you would be kept posted as to what is going on, for we certainly wouldn't keep any good news a secret."²⁰¹ Eloise reflected on this correspondence a couple of years later in a letter to Rev. B.S. Pitsinger:

When this redevelopment mess was started I wrote the late Mayor Cain and asked what affect it would have on Dad's land. He wrote back and said no definite plans were made - to keep in touch by the *Clinch Valley Times*. Well nothing was printed. Someone stopped Dad in the road one day with a petition to annex South St. Paul. Nothing printed in the *Clinch Valley Times* about it! Finally Dad hired a lawyer who had to go to court to get papers that were suppose to be on public file in order to prepare a defense case. If 'God knows whatever is right in this issue,' why did it have to be done so sneaky? Nobody asked Dad if he wanted to sell his land so the town of St. Paul could progress. They were going to steal his land right out from under him. One or two men on the town council tried to reason with Mayor Cain but they soon resigned for personal reasons (so the paper stated.)²⁰²

On August 20, 1973, Tyler Cornett sent a letter to Dule Couch to inform him of the relocation assistance available. Cornett wrote that "it is necessary for us to meet with you to discuss this assistance. Because of the 'no trespassing' sign on your property, we assume that

²⁰⁰ Mrs. Frank Buchanan, Jr. to Dr. George Cain, April 7, 1971, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁰¹ Mayor George Cain to Mrs. Eloise Couch Buchanan, April 9, 1971, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁰² Eloise Buchanan to Rev. B.S. Pitsinger, Feb. 16, 1976, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

you would rather meet us at some other place.”²⁰³ On January 15, 1974, Cornett contacted Couch again to discuss his reluctance to allow appraisers to gain access to his land in order to perform a property evaluation. Cornett enclosed a copy of the Code of Virginia that gives the Authority the legal right to enter property for real estate purposes (Virginia Code 25-232.1 and Virginia Code 24-466.33.) Cornett hoped the two references would aid Couch in “reaching a decision to allow us to enter your property to make appraisals of such.”²⁰⁴

On May 13, 1974, a second offer was sent to Dule Couch’s home reinstating the offer of \$16,000 for his home and property. It was sent via certified mail, after the Authority was told not to return on his property to hand deliver anything, with “no trespassing” signs leading to his home. According to his daughter, this was the reason Dule Couch was sent for a mental evaluation two months later in August 1974.²⁰⁵ The psychologist, Dr. David Wayne suggested that Dule “be removed from all legal proceedings and let other members of his family represent his interest.” Because “the more he becomes involved in legal proceedings, the worse his condition will become.”²⁰⁶ This was indeed the case, as his mental and physical health declined dramatically during and after the redevelopment project.

Extreme cases of psychological trauma occur when residents are forcibly removed from their land. H.E. Anderson of the Norris Basin area stated that he personally knew two people who committed suicide after they were removed for the TVA project there. Bill Taylor reiterated Anderson’s recollection by saying that when he was hunting, “a neighbor came through the field and said Uncle John hanged himself.”²⁰⁷ The same mindset overtook my great-grandfather

²⁰³ Tyler Cornett to Dule Couch, Aug. 20, 1973, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁰⁴ Tyler Cornett to Dule Couch, Jan. 15, 1974, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁰⁵ Eloise Buchanan, e-mail message to author, July 18, 2016.

²⁰⁶ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

²⁰⁷ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 60-61.

during the St. Paul Redevelopment Project in which Dr. David Wayne observed that “There is the danger of aggressive acts on his part toward himself and others,” and furthermore that:

The patient stated that sometimes he would not care if he were to commit suicide or hurt somebody. Whenever he thinks about them taking his property away, he feels confused. He gets to the point where he breaks down and cries, particularly when he thinks about his property. He stated that if they take his property, he does not care if he lives or dies.²⁰⁸

In an oral history interview for Peter Crow’s *Do, Die, or Get Along*; McConnell gave several statements about St. Paul’s Redevelopment Project. He said, “Initially, we had a lot of condemnation cases, but when they started seeing with the relocation money they really got an opportunity, the condemnations almost went away.”²⁰⁹ However, newspaper accounts, reflections from the period, and court documents show a different story, the relocation money for property and business owners forced them out of town with unsatisfactory compensation, with condemnation cases spanning a period of years. Henry “Rab” Couch stated of his fight against the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, “they harass you to death, and even though the price has been raised considerably we still lose because so much of it has to go for legal expenses.”²¹⁰ Dr. Wayne said Dule Couch was “very paranoid about the Wise County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.”²¹¹

A total of eighteen businesses were removed to carry out the redevelopment project, many of which never returned. The town newspaper of St. Paul, *The Clinch Valley Times*, began its first weekly update on St. Paul’s Redevelopment Project on January 26, 1976. The following update published the thoughts of South St. Paul business owners, titled, “Riverside Merchants Comment on Project, ‘They’re Taking Our Way of Life and Offering Nothing In Return!’” The article detailed the great disdain the businesses in the area had for the condemnation proceedings

²⁰⁸ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

²⁰⁹ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 114.

²¹⁰ Ronald Garland, “Court Action Threatens St. Paul Renewal Project,” *Coalfield Progress*, Feb. 12, 1976.

²¹¹ Demopoulos and Wayne to Strother Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

and their impending relocation. The business owners agreed that “better housing and a cleaner look are needed for St. Paul, but many seem furious with the housing authority and its handling of the situation. The relocates state that they are victims of poor management.” The businesses had highway frontage and with the relocation they felt they were going to be in a less lucrative location in the town or have to relocate out of the town completely. Hillman’s Motor Company, for example, was established by Grover W. Hillman in 1935, he was eighty-three years old when the development project forced his and numerous other businesses out. When asked about the redevelopment project at that time, he replied, “I don’t like it a damn bit! There is no place to move.” Hillman was in favor of the project while serving as a town councilman, but had a change of heart during the process, stating, “There were numerous houses with no indoor plumbing and redevelopment was needed. But the poor management of this project is forcing people to leave the immediate area. I can’t judge that as being beneficial.”²¹²

Rev. B.S. Pitsinger, who’s initials my Great Aunt Eloise sarcastically said stood for “Bull Shit,” wrote in an editorial letter directed to her that “Progress of any nature has always cost some more than others. People are usually given enough to buy a place ‘better than they had’! Some people have to be forced to improve. If this is a genuine improvement for a long time to come, as this appears - some families may have to ‘pay a price’ -- but ‘progress’ will benefit.”²¹³ The two had a “war of words” via newspaper rebuttals and personal correspondence over the use of eminent domain in St. Paul. Rev. Pitsinger, an “outsider” who was only living in St. Paul for three years, got a lot of grief over not knowing the Appalachian culture. Eloise wrote back, “I can’t see why you think my dad should be “forced to improve” - there is nothing wrong with

²¹² John Clark, “Riverside Merchants Comment on Project, ‘They’re Taking Our Way of Life and Offering Nothing in Return!’,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Jan. 29, 1976.

²¹³ “Editor’s Letter to Eloise Buchanan,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Feb. 5, 1976.

where he lives. He has worked hard. The church furnishes most pastors a house but nobody has ever furnished my dad with anything.”²¹⁴

Mayor Terry Livingston officially published a “Notice of Explanation of Action Proposed in Floodplain” in the *Clinch Valley Times* for St. Paul residents to read and comment on in 1980. A whole decade *after* the plan was sketched and already near completion. The explanation began with the “Reasons for Actions Proposed in Floodplain,” explaining that the Redevelopment Project Area has been “characterized by serious flooding, obsolete and dilapidated building conditions, inadequate utilities contributing to unsanitary living conditions, detrimental land uses, unsafe and deficient streets, and other equally significant blighting influences.”²¹⁵ However, this was a hotly contested issue because the residents living there did not feel the area was blighted. Such as in the courthouse when the lawyer for South St. Paul residents stated that the “defendants contend that the area is not a blighted area as defined by law and that there is no situation in fact which could allow even a reasonable body to determine that this area is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, and welfare of the community.”²¹⁶

McConnell described an elderly woman in St. Paul who had no running water or bathroom and “went to bed with a bat to beat the rats off of her. That’s all she had ever known. And we got her out of that and moved her into a decent home.” McConnell said of the residents that were being relocated out of South St. Paul, “A lot of people lived in deplorable conditions. Very low income, the majority of the people that lived down there. And it made you feel good to get them out of that threat. Some of them, though, that was their old home place, and they were

²¹⁴ Eloise Buchanan to Rev. B.S. Pitsinger, Feb. 19, 1976, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²¹⁵ Mayor Terry Livingston, “Notice for Public Review of Project Proposed in Floodplain,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Aug 7, 1980, 8.

²¹⁶ *S. Strother Smith III., Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority v. Henry Couch, et. al, case no 4290, v. Pearl Ball Case no. 4292, v. Edgar Barnes, et al, case no. 4288, Beulah Powers, et. al, case no 4286, v. Dule Couch, et al Case No 4289, v. James Harman, et. al Case No.4291*, Circuit Court of Russell County, Virginia, Honorable Glyn R. Phillips, 1976.

opposed to it.”²¹⁷ Robinette described South St. Paul at the time as having “houses on both sides of the road, near the railroad and up above, old dilapidated substandard housing. The best of them were wood frame and just wasn’t what you would call first-rate or even second-rate housing.”²¹⁸

Many of the tenants who did not own their land or homes were relocated to a new apartment complex built. A total of 65 houses were removed for the construction of the St. Paul Redevelopment Project. In 1979, “Clinchview” apartments began construction atop Gray Hill in St. Paul, with 60 public housing units available for rent. The apartment complex is still one of the few low income public housing units in the town.²¹⁹

McConnell said relocating the residents of South St. Paul would have been good even if the river had not been moved, just in order “to give people an opportunity and a means to relocate and get out of that threat.” Almost a quarter of the town of St. Paul was moved for the project. McConnell said that “Moving those people was very frightening for some, and some were thrilled to get out of the threat. A hundred families, and each one individually. I went over and helped a lady hoe her garden. We did everything to try to make them feel more comfortable about what was going on.”²²⁰

Mayor Terry Livingston said that the primary purpose of the Saint Paul Redevelopment Project was to remove economic barriers, provide job and housing opportunities for low income families and “eliminate blighted structures and environmental deficiencies that historically have inhabited or prevented economic growth and development.” In addition, Livingston stated that the project would provide a more rational utilization of the land and better arranged residential,

²¹⁷ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 113.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 105-106.

²¹⁹ *Clinch Valley Times*, May 24, 1979, 1.

²²⁰ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 113.

commercial, recreation and other activity centers. The proposed St. Paul Redevelopment Project would “reduce the isolation of income groups within the community”, “promote vitality of the neighborhood”; and “reduce the risk of flood loss and the impact of floods on the community.”²²¹

The land appraisal process begins once a project receives public approval. The original offer to the Couch Brothers property from the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority in June 1974 was for \$33,000 combined; \$17,000 for Henry Floyd “Rab” Couch and \$16,000 for Dule Couch when the condemnation suit was filed in June 1974.²²² In February 1976, after a three day hearing consisting of professional appraisers, mining engineers, geologists, auctioneers, property owners, and members of the coal industry, the amount ballooned to an award of \$94,324 for “Rab” Couch and \$118,556 for Dule Couch; amassing for over \$212,000. Appalachia is synonymous for offering unjust compensation to take natives land for development. This prompted Dule’s brother “Rab” Couch to say that the discrepancy “just shows how they try to beat people out of their homes.”²²³

²²¹ Mayor Terry Livingston, “Notice for Public Review of Project Proposed in Floodplain,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Aug. 7, 1980, 8.

²²² Ronald Garland, “Court Action Threatens St. Paul Renewal Project,” *Coalfield Progress*, Feb. 12, 1976.

²²³ John Clark “Couch Brothers Awarded \$212,880,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Feb. 12, 1976.



Figure 7

Couch family on Couch Hill in 1972. *Left to right*: Rab, Jack, Dule, and D.J. Couch in front of Rab Couches home. Dule Couches home is shown on the hill behind them. Personal possession of author.

“Rab” Couches’ wife, “Tommy” was asked in court if she could place a fair market price on the land, in which she replied, “You can’t put a price on something you don’t want to sell.” Dule Couch was also asked to set a price on his property, he replied, “No, I can’t. It’s not for sale.” The housing authority was upset over the new “high” mandated price to the Couches’, but, the Couch brothers were still considering an appeal themselves. “We don’t want to sell,” commented Henry Floyd Couch after the three-day hearing, “that’s been our position all along and it still is. My brother and I were born and raised here and we just don’t want to move.” He continued, “if they offered us a houseful of money it wouldn’t satisfy us.”²²⁴

²²⁴ John Clark, “Couch Brothers Awarded \$212,880,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Feb. 12, 1976.

However, McConnell described the redevelopment project as “a major impact on people who had never seen anything like this.”²²⁵ Thirty years after his role in improving the conditions of St. Paul, McConnell received a lifetime achievement award in 2006 presented annually to someone who “has made extraordinary contributions to the people he or she serve with a history of successfully implementing projects and contributing to the Virginia housing rehabilitation network.” The Associate Director of Community Development who presented the awards said that McConnell “literally moved a mountain and changed the course of a river” during his career. McConnell was not only instrumental in the St. Paul Redevelopment Project but in Wise County more broadly; he has relocated and/or rehabilitated more than 200 homes over the course of his career. In addition, McConnell implemented numerous housing projects throughout the state of Virginia including the “If I Had a Hammer” project providing on-the-job training and education to local residents.²²⁶

Former South St. Paul resident Bob Salyers commented on the redevelopment project, “The channeling of the river helped me. I think the town and everybody that was left really benefited from the project as a whole.”²²⁷ Salyers said that “most people were satisfied with how they were treated. A lot of them would have liked to got more money, but they didn’t want to go through the court system. So they settled.” However, the Couches, “felt fast that it was not for sale. And it went all through the court systems. The court ruled that they couldn’t stop the river channel because of the need for it, but the price that was agreed on was far too little.” The

²²⁵ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 114.

²²⁶ Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, “2006 Housing and Rehabilitation Award Winners Named Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Presented Awards During Annual Conference,” Sept. 1, 2006, accessed Aug. 12, 2016, http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/aboutdhcd/PDF_NewsReleases/pr_HousingRehabWinners_09_01_06.pdf.

²²⁷ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 105-106.

Couches “still didn’t want to leave. They maintained that it would never be for sale. But they were evicted.”²²⁸

The Russell County Circuit Court put the town of St. Paul in an “economic bind” when they ruled in favor of the Couch brothers. The property purchasing budget for that year was \$480,000; after paying the Couches it would leave only about \$270,000. Eloise described the effect the settlement had on the town. “The town used up most of the grant money paying for property that they thought was worthless and didn't have money to do all the things they were going to do to help business and jobs for the people it was supposed to bring back into town once it was all finished.”²²⁹ The decision to give such a high price for the Couches’ land in the 1976 court case was due to the presence of almost 50,000 tons of high grade coal in three seams under the Couch brothers’ hillside farm land.²³⁰

S. Strother Smith, III, the attorney who represented the Couch brothers, was extremely critical of the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (WCRHA) when the court introduced House Bill No. 1201 on January 9, 1975, exercising the power of eminent domain to remove the Couch family cemetery. The bill was introduced while still pending an outcome in Russell County circuit court, stating that an “emergency exists” in hopes to push the bill forward. Smith wrote to then Senator William B. Hopkins, that “The procedures used...in this case have been absolutely remarkable in the legal contortions and attempts to go through the back door where they could not get through the front door.” Smith continued to slam the tactics used by the Authority in the same letter to Sen. Hopkins,

There is no way that anyone who knows anything about this case can state that an emergency exists since it is very likely that the Federal and State Court actions involving

²²⁸ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 114.

²²⁹ Eloise Buchanan, e-mail message to author, March 18, 2016.

²³⁰ Ronald Garland, “Court Action Threatens St. Paul Renewal Project,” *Coalfield Progress*, Feb. 12, 1976.

this land may go on for another two or three years and since the housing authority has not even begun to condemn other land essential to this project.²³¹

On a more personal level, Eloise explained why the Couches' protested the cemetery move in a letter to Rev. Pitsinger, "My grandfather and several of his children are buried in the family cemetery because that is where he chose. Dad wants to be buried there too. Now HUD says they are going to court to get a special law passed that will let them move that one grave yard in the whole state of Va."²³² Smith wrote to Senator Hopkins, "I realize...that this bill has absolutely no significance on a state wide level, but I would sincerely hope that if you have any idea of passing this bill, you would at least take time to familiarize yourself with the human and legal issues involved."²³³ When discussing the law to Judge Glyn Phillips, who presided over the Couch court case, Smith III, wrote that the bill passed was in special legislation in violation of the Virginia Constitution, denying his clients "due process of law and equal protection of the law since the legislation did not allow the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (WCRHA) to condemn all family graveyards but only those belong to the Couches, and that the entire matter is the most blatant violation of the constitutional rights of my client that anyone could imagine."²³⁴ The Authority claimed the cemetery was "abandoned, unused, and neglected", but this was certainly untrue, as Dule kept the cemetery mowed with a "fence around it fixed so the cows couldn't get in it."²³⁵ My mother recalls walking around the cemetery when she was a child and how nice the cemetery was. Cornett defended the attempt to acquire the Couch family cemetery by saying it was necessary for the completion of the project and that the

²³¹ S. Strother Smith, III to Senator William B. Hopkins, Feb. 5, 1975, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²³² Eloise Buchanan to Rev. B.S. Pitsinger, Feb. 16, 1976.

²³³ Smith, III to Sen. Hopkins, Feb. 5, 1975.

²³⁴ S. Strother Smith, III to Judge Glyn Phillips, July 9, 1975, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²³⁵ Eloise Buchanan, e-mail message to author, Aug. 8, 2016.

WCRHA would “relocate it to where the Couches want and we will pay for the property.”²³⁶ On Saturday, July 15, 1978, the Couch family cemetery was relocated from Couch Hill to Temple Hill Cemetery in Castlewood, Virginia, about three miles from St. Paul. The Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority was the responsible party for relocating the graves to make way for the project.²³⁷

One of the key points of contention that existed between the Couch’s and the WCHA was the untimely manner of providing the money he was awarded. On December 22, 1976, Copeland wrote to Cornett regarding the matter, “On November 12, 1976 I submitted the relocation assistance forms executed by my clients. I have not heard back from them as to whether or not they have received their relocation, but additionally, I requested as of that time a full explanation as to the reasons for any relocation payments the Authority makes to Mr. Dule Couch so that we can bring Mr. Dule Couch’s case into line with the procedure of Mr. Henry Couch’s case and, if necessary, have unified hearings on both cases at the same time. Your prompt attention to Mr. Dule Couch’s case would be appreciated.”²³⁸

On February 4, 1977, Copeland wrote HUD requesting the General Counsel launch an official investigation as to whether the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority was following the proper grievance procedures set forth by the agency. At this point of the project and legal actions, Copeland suggested bypassing the grievance procedures and going immediately to Federal Court “since the Authority does not seem to wish to be responsive to my clients’ needs.”²³⁹ HUD was not the only government agency that the Couches attorney felt was out of line in their tactics, but after receiving a “new” grievance procedure from HUD Director,

²³⁶ Ronald Garland, “St. Paul Redevelopment Plagued by Public Outcry,” *Coalfield Progress*.

²³⁷ Monty Salyer to Dule Couch, July 12, 1978, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²³⁸ Robert T. Copeland to Tyler Cornett, Dec. 22, 1976, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²³⁹ Robert T. Copeland to General Counsel of HUD, Feb. 4, 1977, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

Tyler Cornett he wrote a scathing letter on March 23, 1977. The Highway Department Grievance Procedure Cornett sent was in fact not “new” at all. Cornett directed Copeland and the Couches file a multi-step appeals process, when in fact there was a two-step process all along that would have saved them much more time. Copeland writes:

I think you understand the extreme aggravation and distrust that my clients now have of your agency because of the run-around your agency has given them. I am sure you realize, as well as I do, that a great deal of time has gone by, but after reading the “new” grievance procedure you have furnished us I do not feel that it would be in our clients’ best interest to waive the interim appeal step...²⁴⁰

Copeland left to join another law firm shortly after the Couches’ case was completed, while his former partner, Robert A. Vinyard was hired to represent the Department of Highways and Transportation. The highway department was responsible for paying a portion of the Couch’s settlement fees, which created a “conflict of interest” for Vinyard. Dule’s daughter.

Eloise Buchanan wrote Vinyard on December 22, 1978:

I guess you know my fathers’ memory is getting poorer all the time. He had not told me of the letter you sent to him dated Oct. 18, 1978. He believes he paid you for the whole case and I think he doesn’t realize that you have dropped it. About all he remembers clearly is that some dishonest things were done and he doesn’t trust anyone. Why has this relocation case taken so long? He should have gotten that money like everyone else without fighting for it. Please answer my “why” as soon as possible, and any other information I may need, so I can then have a talk with my father. He gets so upset, no one will try to explain to him.²⁴¹

Vinyard advised Buchanan contact Copeland, but provided some information to the concerns she alluded to, writing,

It is my understanding, that the relocation suit was separate and apart from the condemnation suit where your father prevailed and received the funds...Mr. Copeland of this office was pursuing the relocation effort in an attempt to get those funds for your father over and above, of course, the work that we had performed for him in receiving the award from the Court.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Robert T. Copeland to Tyler Cornett, Mar. 23, 1977, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁴¹ Eloise Couch Buchanan to Robert A. Vinyard, Dec. 22, 1978, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁴² Robert Austin Vinyard to Eloise Couch Buchanan, Jan. 9, 1979, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

The Couches ultimately were not granted the usual standard relocation money, to the frustration of the Couches and their representatives.

According to Bob Salyers, the Couch brothers “had timber on their property that had never been cut. There was oak trees on there that was five and six feet in diameter. Because when they cut them, we took pictures of the stumps. Walnut trees that were so big that the company that purchased the walnut trees even dug up the roots.”²⁴³ Copeland asked if someone could appraise the Couches valuable timber on November 19, 1975 so they would receive proper compensation.²⁴⁴ Phase II of the St. Paul Redevelopment Project began with leveling and stripping “Couch Hill” bare in July 1982; with the excess dirt and materials used to fill the old river bed and the spare firewood available to the community.²⁴⁵ The river was finally diverted to its new channel in 1983, after over a decade in progress.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 113.

²⁴⁴ Robert T. Copeland to Steve Wise, Nov. 19, 1975, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁴⁵ “Work Begins on Project’s Phase II,” *Clinch Valley Times*, July 19, 1982.

²⁴⁶ St. Paul Tomorrow Inc., *A Strategic Plan for the Town of St. Paul*, 30.



Figure 8

St. Paul, Virginia during the redevelopment project, circa 1983.
Photo courtesy of Pam Vance.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Mr. Couch opened the interview by stating that for several months now he has been very nervous and very upset because they are threatening to take his property away. He gets to the point where he feels everybody is against him. The patient is not able to sleep at night. He has some kind of spells of shaking on the inside and he constantly has a pressure on his chest. He feels extremely weak and tired.²⁴⁷

- Dr. David Wayne

Whether in Cade's Cove, St. Paul, or India, most landowners dreaded the prospect of being forced to sell their lands and to relocate. In a letter to Eloise Buchanan, the Couches' lawyer, Robert T. Copeland, wrote, "I, myself, feel very ashamed over the way your father and I have been misled in this entire matter. I am asking that the seller of the Scott County farm enter into an option contract for the purchase of the property so I can then take a copy of that option contract with the relocation forms and force the Housing Authority to provide him with the amount of relocation they are going to offer him."²⁴⁸

My Great-Grandfather Dule's physical and mental health quickly deteriorated when he was forced to sell his land. Dr. David Wayne noted in his clinical analysis of Dule Couch that the "long association with closeness to the land that belongs to him and his family is the basis for his successful adjustment in his life. The aggression of his personality has been undermined by this threat to his basic security."²⁴⁹ This was the case for many land owners in Appalachia. Mary Lynn Currence Evans spoke of the detrimental effects eminent domain has on residents in the region, including her grandfather, stating that "the government stripped these people of what formed their very identity, and most of them died within five years. Their family members will

²⁴⁷ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

²⁴⁸ Robert T. Copeland to Eloise Buchanan, Sept. 27, 1976, personal possession of Eloise Buchanan.

²⁴⁹ Demopoulos and Wayne to Smith III, Sept. 19, 1974.

tell you they died of broken hearts. That story is repeated so often in our region.”²⁵⁰ On April 17, 1985, Dule Couch died at an Abingdon Nursing Home. My own family members would tell you that he, too, died of a broken heart.

The St. Paul Redevelopment Project was unique and touted as the first-of-its-kind to feature cooperation from all three levels of government. Several government agencies helped St. Paul accomplish an “impossible dream,” spending an estimated thirty million dollars to rechannel the Clinch River in the 1970s and 1980s. The small town of 1,000 residents relocated 100 families from South St. Paul to carry out the project, much to the dismay of many of the residents. A primary factor in enforcing the power of eminent domain in the St. Paul Redevelopment Project was the idea of “progress,” a commonality of many redevelopment projects.

Although the redevelopment project has certainly alleviated the flooding problems in St. Paul, the influx of industry and economic development town officials claimed would benefit the town was overexaggerated and could be considered a failure in a commercial sense. Beside of Oxbow Lake, a manufacturing plant was built which was projected to create hundreds of jobs and inject “new life” in the town. Aside from a short-stint from 1998-2003 as a furniture manufacture employing 140 people, the building has spent the majority of the time empty.²⁵¹ The initial “shopping center” built currently holds an ABC liquor store, Rose’s department store, and Rite-Aid drug store. Beside of it is a Dollar General store, adjacent from an Advanced Auto Parts, Huddle House, Pizza Plus, doctor’s office, McDonalds, Food City, an empty building, two gas stations, a donut shop, and a Hardees that sits where Dule Couch’s home used to be.

²⁵⁰ Evans, George-Warren, and Santelli, *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier*, xxvii.

²⁵¹ Amy Gatley, “Bush Industries Closing St. Paul VA Furniture Plant,” Mar. 7, 2003, *Kingsport Times News*, accessed Nov. 7, 2017, http://www.sullivan-county.com/z/bush_gone.htm

St. Paul, along with other Appalachian towns are looking to attract “Mom and Pop” shops downtown. However, prior to the St. Paul Redevelopment Project in the early 1980s, St. Paul had an abundance of such stores. Several businesses were impacted by the redevelopment project, many of which did not reopen or moved elsewhere. Several of these locally owned businesses were grocery stores, all of which have vanished and succumbed to the Food City corporation. In 1979, St. Paul had several small locally owned grocery stores, B & S Grocery, Darwin’s Minute Mart, Red’s Grocery, Jesse’s Food Market and Sabo’s Grocery, in addition to a Piggly Wiggly.²⁵² Careful planning was put into what businesses would be allowed to move into the newly acquired 100 acres. One of the planners commented, “We’re not going to allow a dozen service stations and self-service food markets to move in overnight.”²⁵³ However, until very recently, those were the only stores the town has been able to attract.

The leadership behind the town of St. Paul over the past two decades has been very ambitious and is becoming a model for other local small towns in the region. For example, in 2011, St. Paul became the smallest town in Virginia to receive “Main Street” status.²⁵⁴ John Hillman’s original house built at the turn of the twentieth-century in St. Paul is the headquarters of the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority. In 1993, the Virginia General Assembly established the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority to promote tourism in the coalfield counties of Southwest Virginia.²⁵⁵

Recently, the town has focused on promoting its recreational and environmental resources. By the town’s admission, the most desirable tourist attraction in St. Paul is the Clinch

²⁵² Jerry F. Couch, “Local Businesses – 1979,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Nov. 19, 2015.

²⁵³ John Clark, “St. Paul Redevelopment Project Nears Construction Stage,” *Clinch Valley Times*, Jan. 22, 1976.

²⁵⁴ Department of Housing and Community Development, “Virginia Main Street Designates Four New Communities,” Aug. 16, 2011, accessed, Nov. 8, 2017, <https://dhcdvms.wordpress.com/tag/st-paul/page/2/>.

²⁵⁵ Heart of Appalachia, 2015, accessed Nov. 8, 2017, www.heartofappalachia.com.

River, touted as Virginia's "hidden river." Plans for a State Park centralized on the Clinch River in Southwest Virginia are underway with St. Paul as the focal point.²⁵⁶ The Clinch River is the most biologically diverse river in the Northern Hemisphere, second only to the Amazon River for the most bio-diverse river in the world.²⁵⁷

St. Paul has begun to capitalize on one of the newest trends in Appalachian tourism, catering to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs.) St. Paul is an "ATV friendly" community, allowing the vehicles to ride throughout the town. Spearhead Trails offers over 100 miles of ATV trails throughout Southwest Virginia, with trails continuing to expand. The Mountainview Trail branch runs through St. Paul, looping around the surrounding countryside.²⁵⁸

The 100-year-old Willis and Dye buildings downtown have undergone a 7.7-million-dollar renovation transforming into the Western Front Hotel. In winter 2017, the Western Front Hotel will begin operation. Major funding for the hotel was provided by the Virginia Coalfield and Economic Development Authority (VCEDA). In addition, the hotel was granted the first ever Virginia Tourism Growth Fund grant, receiving \$250,000. Heralded as a 33-room "boutique" hotel; the hotel holds a music venue, restaurant, and rooftop bar. The Western Front Hotel is named after St. Paul's railroad legacy, while catering to modern day travelers offering washing stations, parking, and storage facilities for ATVs.²⁵⁹ The building easily could have been demolished but the "place" the building holds to the community was a key component in the renovation. The floors had rotted through, the plumbing was the worst that project

²⁵⁶ Daniel White, "Coming Attractions: Clinch River State Park," *The Nature Conservancy*, Nov. 30, 2015, accessed Nov. 8, 2017, <https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/virginia/blog/clinch-river-state-park-passport-to-nature.xml>.

²⁵⁷ Heart of Appalachia, "The Clinch," 2015, accessed Nov. 8, 2017, <http://www.heartofappalachia.com/the-clinch/>.

²⁵⁸ Heart of Appalachia, "Spearhead Trails – Mountain View Trail System," 2015, accessed Nov. 8, 2017, <http://www.heartofappalachia.com/trail/spearhead-trails-mountain-view-atvohv-trail-system/>.

²⁵⁹ Stephen Igo, "St. Paul Hotel Project Nails State Tourism Funds," *Kingsport Times News*, Feb. 25, 2016, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.timesnews.net/News/2016/02/25/St-Paul-hotel-project-nails-state-tourism-funds-1>.

Superintendent Gary Barker had seen, but he says people of all ages in town have stopped by during construction to share memories of the building. Barker shared an interesting perspective on the “place” the building has in the community. “The soul of a building is developed over time by all the occupants of the building, as each of them leaves their mark. This includes the people that built it and renovated it over time,” Barker said. “To demolish it is to wipe away all those years of interaction. Sometimes, there is no other choice, but one must consider the ties that the building has to the community before such a decision is made.” As for the Western Front Hotel, everyone in the community has a story and the “building is an embedded member of the community and worthy of renovation.”²⁶⁰ Another dilapidated building downtown dear to the community’s heart is receiving renovation.

In 2017, the old Lyric theatre in St. Paul was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to restore the 650-seat building into a 350-seat multi-use theatre; featuring plays, performances, and movies. The Lyric Theatre will be the largest theatre in Southwest Virginia.²⁶¹ In Fall 2016, Sugar Hill Brewery opened in St. Paul. The brewery was named after has been entrenched in controversy since its conception. The brewery has added an economic stimulus to the town and has added a much-needed restaurant, but the serving of alcohol has also caused an outrage among many of the small town Christian residents; feeling it goes against the “morals” of the community in order to cater to the growing number of

²⁶⁰ David McGee, “Work Progressing on Western Front Hotel in downtown St. Paul, Virginia,” *Bristol Herald Courier*, Mar. 18, 2017, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.heraldcourier.com/news/work-progressing-on-western-front-hotel-in-downtown-st-paul/article_71ccbec4-5273-52aa-961d-780266326360.html.

²⁶¹ Stephen Igo, “St. Paul’s Lyric Theater among regional projects recommended for ARC funding,” *Kingsport Times News*, June 13, 2017, accessed Nov. 2, 2017, <http://www.timesnews.net/Government/2017/06/13/St-Paul-s-Lyric-on-ARC-fund-request-list-1>.

tourists. However, the business has even exceeded expectations and has paid dividends for the town's economic and commercial growth.²⁶²

The St. Paul Redevelopment Project of the 1970s and 1980s, like most projects of its variety, holds mixed results. Complex power structures assembled by St. Paul's "local elite" made St. Paul's "impossible dream" a reality. The town's larger goals to transform itself into an economic or industrial hotspot after the redevelopment project did not materialize, however. The town's ultimate vision is beginning to come to fruition in the new millennium, with the increasing rise of tourism to the town. Using primarily abandoned coal land, ATV trails is now at the heart of St. Paul's economy. Over the past decade it has become one of the few small towns in the region to show an opportunistic future, becoming a model for other struggling Appalachian communities.²⁶³

An estimated 25 million to 30 million dollars was spent on the St. Paul Redevelopment Project, an incredible amount to spend on the small town of under 1,000 residents.²⁶⁴ The project helped pave the way for other small-town flood prevention projects in the region, such as Grundy. St. Paul could have suffered far more damage from floods if not for the redevelopment project in the 1970s; which would have likely put the town in a similar uncertain future Grundy recently dealt with. St. Paul currently has the brightest outlook its seen in decades, but not without some forced casualties to fulfill the towns "impossible dream."

The St. Paul Redevelopment Project is another example of government intervention in Appalachia, serving as a comparative case study on the roles and dynamics that power structures have when carrying out developmental projects. John Gaventa argued for an understanding of

²⁶² "Editorial: St. Paul offers tourism lessons," *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 2, 2016, accessed Nov. 2, 2017, http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-st-paul-offers-tourism-lessons/article_efa94a84-4b83-5b34-bbb5-8cbd24b65b1e.html.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Crow, *Do, Die, or Get Along*, 108.

power that saw the use of power as an imposition and as something that once accepted or adopted by a populous had to be overcome. The example of St. Paul reveals that, while many residents chose not to resist change, thereby tacitly accepting it or even seeing benefit in it, Dule Couch stood both in and out of the commodifying system at work.

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