

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR ID# 041-5311

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Along the Banister River from the falls at Meadville to the confluence with the Dan River east of South Boston

City or town: Halifax, Meadville State: VA County: Halifax

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C X D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
--	-------------------------------

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property _____

Halifax County, VA
County and State _____

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
<u>22</u>	<u>6</u>	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>23</u>	<u>6</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/waterworks
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/hydroelectric dam
TRANSPORTATION/water-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/energy facility

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: __

STONE/Limestone

CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District in Halifax County, Virginia, contains a 23-mile segment of the Banister River from the falls at Meadville trending to the southeast, terminating at the confluence with the Dan River east of the Town of South Boston, Virginia. Running through the Piedmont Plateau, the Banister River is characterized by meandering passages with numerous rock outcroppings and rock ledges. The Banister River Navigational Improvements Historic District contains a total of 22 contributing structures, one contributing building, and six non-contributing structures. Of the 29 resources located within the historic district, 22 are contributing, these resources are nine wing dams, three mill dams, one mill, one canal, bridge piers and abutments for five bridges, one hydroelectric dam, one road trace, a jetty, and railroad spur line. These resources are constructed of granite and concrete. All of these resources are closely associated with the trade and navigational history of the Banister River. The six non-contributing resources in the district consist of two modern bridge abutments and four dikes constructed as part of the Pick-Sloan Flood Control Act of 1944. The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District possesses integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, workmanship, and materials.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Narrative Description

The Banister River is a 65-mile-long tributary of the Dan River that begins on Brier Mountain west of Chatham, Virginia and flows east through Pittsylvania and Halifax counties until it meets the Dan River five miles upstream of Staunton River State Park. The Banister River is part of the Roanoke River Watershed that feeds into the Albemarle Sound in coastal North Carolina and is part of the second largest estuary in the United States. The 23-mile segment of the Banister River included in the district begins at the falls of Meadville to the confluence of the Dan River. However, no resources were identified between Meadville and the Halifax-Banister Dam because the dam inundated any potential sites, and they are covered by siltation. The remaining part of the river is free-flowing and meandering with several sand bars and a few downed trees creating obstructions. The land adjacent to the river is owned by private landowners, the Town of Halifax, Halifax County, and the railroad. The property along the river is primarily used for timber resources with some open fields. Most of the river has a forested riparian buffer of 100 feet or more between agricultural fields and the water's edge.

Inventory of Resources

King's Bridge Wing Dam (44HA0251)- Early-19th Century-Contributing Structure-1

The King's Bridge wing dam sits to the southeast of the Halifax -Banister Dam (Sketch Map 3) . The wing dam contains stones that protrude from both shorelines at an angle forming a V shape toward the north side of the river. The arm on the south bank is made up of mainly large to medium stones and extends out approximately 96 feet. The arm on the opposite side extends out approximately 36 feet and consists mainly of small to medium stones. There is a 13-foot opening between the arms towards the north side of the river.

Cowford Wing Dams (44HA0252)-Early-19th Century-Contributing Structure-1

The Cowford wing dam may be found between the Halifax-Banister Dam and the confluence of the Banister and Dan Rivers (Sketch Map 3). It consists of two lines of stones that run almost parallel to the river along with another line of stones that runs perpendicular before turning downstream. This forms a sluice down the south side of the river that leads to two more wing dams. These wing dams use part of the natural outcrop in the area. The first one consists of a line of stones extending at an angle from the south bank before turning to run parallel with the river. Natural outcrops and other stones form a line extending from the north bank which channels water down the south side of the river. The second wing dam consists of a line of stones extending out from the north bank perpendicular to the river with another smaller line of stones extending from the south bank. This also forms a channel down the south side of the river.

Meadville Canal/Millrace (44HA0279)-1790 c-Contributing-Structure-1

The Meadville Canal/Millrace sits at the far western end of the district (Sketch Map 1) and may have been constructed for a mill. Based on the maps of the area, the canal/millrace was built sometime in the 1790s. It was extended in 1832 to accommodate a flourmill downstream and may have been expanded after 1835 when the Upper Banister River Navigation Company was incorporated.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

The Roanoke Navigation Company improved the river for batteau traffic from its confluence with the Dan River up to Meadville. The Upper Banister River Navigation Company was responsible for improving navigation for the section of the Banister River above Meadville to Clark's bridge in Pittsylvania County. One of the improvements might have been extending the canal/millrace for batteaux to bypass the falls at Meadville. The company did not survive and might have gone out of business during the Panic of 1837 (Melton 1993).

The canal is partially submerged but is still visible. LiDAR imagery shows that the exposed part retains its linear shape and measures approximately 1100 feet long and between 54 and 76 feet wide.

Bridge Piers (44HA0306)-1962-Non--Contributing-Structure-1

The bridge piers consist of two cement pillars, a cement pad along the south bank and three wood posts along the north bank, all of which are located downstream from the current Wolf Trap Road bridge at the eastern end of the district (Sketch Map 5). The current bridge was constructed in 2016, replacing an earlier structure built in 1962. The 1962 bridge was a steel beam, timber deck bridge that was 136 feet long and 25 feet wide and supported by wood posts.

Halifax-Banister Dam (041-0156)-1921-Contributing-Structure-1

The Halifax-Banister Dam was constructed in 1921 by Colonel Ira Vaughn, a wealthy leather manufacturer from Philadelphia. The Halifax-Banister Dam (Sketch Map 3) is a concrete gravity dam that is 670 feet long with counterweight floodgates that are 25 feet tall. The brick and concrete powerhouse contain three S.M. Smith turbines that produce 1320 kilowatts of power (Louis Berger & Associates, 1990). The dam is in good condition and still in use today.

Wing Dam (041-5311-0001)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam is located underneath Rt. 360 (Sketch Map 3). It contains stones that protrude from both shorelines at an angle forming a V-shape toward the north side of the river. The arm on the south bank is made up of mainly medium to small stones and extends out approximately 62.6 feet. The arm on the opposite side extends out approximately 31 feet and consists mainly of medium to small stones as well. There is a 10-foot opening between the arms towards the north side of the river.

Mill Ruins (44HA0417)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Building-1

The mill ruins consist of the remains of a stone foundation located off Meadville Road (Route 642) near the Banister River (Sketch Map 1). The foundation measures approximately 30 x 20 feet with the southern wall running alongside Meadville Trail. A brick pier and a pile of stones are located just to the north of the site and could possibly be related to a millrace or other structures. No evidence of a dam was located in the river, likely due to heavy siltation in the area.

An 1801 plat of Meadville shows a "Mill Lot" just to the northeast of the town where the ruins are located. By 1791 McDaniel's Mill was operating in the area and in 1797 Mead Anderson built a mill in this location. By the 1830s there was a gristmill and a sawmill along with a foundry that were water powered (Trout 2016).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Road Trace (44HA0418)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The road trace is a remnant of an older road next to the existing Rt. 501 bridge (Sketch Map 3). The current bridge has a construction date of 1958; however, maps show bridges in this area since 1827. An 1899 map identifies an “Iron Bridge” and LiDAR shows an approximately 300-foot long, 35-foot wide section of the road that extends out into the river.

Mill Dam (44HA0419)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The mill dam is the remnant of a crib dam on Terrible Creek (Sketch Map 3). Stone and wood remains are present in the water and extend up the creek for approximately 58 feet. Mills on Terrible Creek date back to 1749 when a mill site was sold to John Judkins (Halifax Survey Book 11:118). An 1827 map shows two mills located on the creek including this site.

Second Mill Dam below Halifax-Banister Dam (44HA0420)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The remnant mill dam is located approximately 230 feet downstream from the Halifax-Banister Dam and consists of a line of stones that extend across the river (Sketch Map 3). The Second Mill Dam is approximately 190 feet downstream from the First Mill Dam (44HA0421). The Second Mill Dam may be the remnant of one of the several dams constructed in the vicinity beginning in the early nineteenth century. Earlier dams include the Wimbish’s mill in 1809, which reportedly had the only batteau lock on the Banister River. It could also be Easley’s Mill which was known as the upper mill (Trout 2016: 85-86). By 1836 there were two flourmills and two sawmills in Halifax (Martin 1836:184-185). An 1856 map depicts one mill on the Banister River which is labeled “Banister Mills”. In 1887 it is reported that there were three mills in Halifax which is the same number recorded in 1907 (Morrison 1907). By 1917 there is just one mill (Virginia Business Directory & Gazetteer 1917). That one mill was likely the Banister Mills which shows up on a 1902 Sanborn map where it is depicted on the south side of the river. Also depicted is a dam and two turbines inside the mill. The mill is depicted again in 1907 and 1913 where it is referred to as a roller mill. The 1918 Sanborn map states that it was not in operation. In 1915 mill operations were moved away from the river to an area next to the railroad tracks. The mill was powered by electricity and would become known as the Halifax Roller Mill (230-5002).

First Mill Dam Below Halifax-Banister Dam (44HA0421)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The mill dam is the remnant of a mill dam that is located approximately 40 feet downstream from the Halifax-Banister Dam (Sketch Map 3). A line of stones extends from the left bank out into the river for approximately 120 feet, which may be the site of Wimbish’s mill in 1809 which supposedly had the only batteau lock on the Banister River. It could also be Easley’s mill which was known as the upper mill (Trout 2016:85-86).

The only mills depicted in this area on an 1827 map are on Terrible Creek but by 1836 there were two flour mills and two sawmills in Halifax (Martin 1836:184-185). An 1856 map depicts two mills, one of which is labeled “Banister Mills.” In 1887 it is reported that there were three mills in

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Halifax which is the same number recorded in 1907 (Morrison 1907). By 1917 there is just one mill (Virginia Business Directory & Gazetteer 1917). That one mill was likely the Banister Mills which shows up on a 1902 Sanborn map where it is depicted on the south side of the river (Figure 60). Also depicted is a dam and two turbines inside the mill. The mill is depicted again in 1907 and 1913 where it is referred to as a roller mill. The 1918 Sanborn states that it was not in operation. In 1915 mill operations were moved away from the river to an area next to the railroad tracks. The mill was powered by electricity and would become known as the Halifax Roller Mill (230-5002).

King's Bridge (44HA0422)-1787-Contributing-Structure-1

This site consists of two stone abutments along each side of the river and an oval stone pier in the middle of the river (Sketch Map 3). The abutment on the north bank is tall with cement pilings on top while the one on the south bank, further inland, is shorter and contains a cement addition on top. In the river is an oval shaped pier that contains the same cement pilings as the abutments. Also along the south bank at the water's edge is a small stone abutment that is only three courses high and next to it is a section of wood with a rectangular hole in it. The exposed section of the wood is 9.8 feet long, 1 foot wide and .7 feet thick. The rectangular hole measured 1.4 x 0.6 feet. This abutment and wood section might be an attempt to dam off the area between the stone pier and the south bank which is a distance of approximately 20 feet. This would have forced water towards the center of the river and might have been useful for boat traffic.

In addition, there are seven tall cement pilings, three on the ground outside the river and one wall located on the south bank which were likely later additions to accommodate automobile traffic. Remnants of the road are still visible running north away from the river. This road trace shows up in LiDAR and measures approximately .55 miles long.

In 1787 Edmond King was commissioned to build a bridge across the Banister River which was known as King's Bridge. Records indicate that it was repaired numerous times throughout the 19th century, and it was likely used until 1930 when a non-arched concrete and metal-truss bridge was built just downstream (Halifax County 1752-1928). The site is in good condition with some stones being displaced.

Wing Dam (44HA0423)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam is located just downstream from site 44HA0422 (Sketch Map 3). It contains stones that protrude from both shorelines at a slight angle forming a V shape toward the right side of the river. The arm on the south bank is made up of mainly large to medium stones and extends out approximately 66 feet. The arm on the opposite side extends out approximately 33 feet and consists mainly of large to medium stones as well. There is an 8.5-foot opening between the arms towards the north side of the river.

Railroad Bridge Abutments (44HA0424)-1889 c-Contributing-Structure-1

The site consists of two stone abutments and wood posts along the riverbanks and in the river (Sketch Map 3). The stone abutment on the south bank is made of granite blocks that are four courses high. On top of it is a cement abutment which supports the current railroad bridge. Quarry

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

marks are visible on some of the stones. The abutment on the north bank was covered in heavy vegetation but it appears to consist of granite blocks that are three to four courses high. Like the one on the south bank, this one also has a cement abutment on top of it.

Along the south bank, there were two wooden posts with two more located in the river. The remnant of a possible third post was located next to the others in the river. Along the north bank, one wooden post was observed. These posts could possibly be remnants of an earlier bridge over the river. A bridge was located here in 1889 when the Lynchburg and Durham Railroad completed its line to South Boston.

Wing Dam (44HA0425)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam contains stones that protrude from both shorelines at an angle forming a V shape toward the south side of the river (Sketch Map 3). The arm on the south bank is made up of mainly large to medium stones and extends out approximately 26 feet. Most of the stones were located just under the surface with just a few protruding above the waterline. The arm on the opposite side extends out approximately 57 feet and consists mainly of small to medium stones and incorporates some of the natural outcropping in the area. There is a 12-foot opening between the arms towards the south side of the river.

Wing Dam/Fish Weir (44HA0426)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

This is a possible wing dam/fish weir which contains stones that protrude from both banks (Sketch Map 3). The arm along the south bank extends out at an angle, whereas the one on the north bank is almost perpendicular to the river. The area that forms the V-shape is characterized by stones that extend downstream which makes a small opening at the point of the V. The smaller opening suggests that it may have been used to catch fish but it is possible that it was a wing dam and that displaced stones have made the opening narrower over time.

Wing Dam (44HA0427)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam consists of a line of stones that appears to extend the width of the river (Sketch Map 3). Some of the stones are smaller and might have been placed in the river while others might be related to the natural outcropping in the area. Most of the stones are located below the water surface so it is difficult to ascertain if there is an opening between any of the stones.

Wing Dam (44HA0428)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam consists of a line of stones that extend from the north bank perpendicular to the river (Sketch Map 4). The line of stones is approximately 75 feet long and stops before reaching the south bank. This leaves a 20-foot-wide opening in this area. Erosion along the south bank might have erased any evidence of stones in that area if they existed. Also, natural outcropping runs along the north side of the river.

Jetty (44HA0429)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The jetty consists of a line of stones that extends into the river from the north bank (Sketch Map 4). The line of stones is angled upstream and is approximately 43 feet long with a 25-foot section being underwater. This leaves an 18-foot section exposed which incorporates the natural outcrop

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

in the area. The width of the line of stones is between 4 and 6.5 feet. These stones might have been used to divert water towards the south bank since there is a slight turn in the river at this location.

Wing Dam/Sluice (44HA0430)-Early-19th Century-Contributing-Structure-1

The wing dam/sluice consists of a line of stones that extend out from the south bank perpendicular to the river (Sketch Map 4). The line of stones continues for approximately 38 feet before it turns and runs parallel to the river. The section is approximately 43 feet long which creates a channel along the north side of the river that is approximately 40 feet wide. However, a sandbar located in this area has decreased the width of the river and may be covering additional features related to the site. This might have been an attempt to steer bateau traffic down the north side of the river past Terry's Bridge, which was located just downstream.

In the area where the stones abut the south bank, there are three wooden beams partially exposed. Two of them have rectangular holes cut out of them which are identical to the one found at the King's Bridge site (44HA0422). The exposed section of the one closest to the bank measured 4.4 feet long. The one in the middle measured 6 feet long before it disappeared into the riverbank. At the downstream end of the beam was a rectangular notch that measured 1.6 x 0.6 feet. The one closest to the river measured 10.3 feet long and contained a rectangular notch that measured 1.5 x 0.5 feet. All the wood sections were approximately 1 foot wide and 0.7 feet thick.

Bridge Abutment (44HA0431)-1753-Contributing-Structure-1

The stone abutment was built for Terry's Bridge (Sketch Map 4). The abutment is located on the south bank of the river directly underneath the western span of the James D. Hagood Highway bridge (Rt. 360). Three courses of granite blocks are visible, some of which contain quarry marks.

In 1753 Nathaniel Terry built a bridge at his own expense across the Banister River which might have been in the vicinity of the current site. However, the only bridge depicted across the Banister River on 18th century maps is King's Bridge. A bridge is in this area on an 1814 map, and an 1827 map labels it as Terry's Bridge.

Mapping shows that by 1948 the bridge was gone, and another one was located just to the east of it. In 1962 the current western span of the bridge was constructed over site 44HA0431. Any abutments located along the right side of the river were likely destroyed when the current bridge was built since none were found during the current survey.

Diking (44HA0432)- 1947 c-Not Contributing-Structure-1

The earthen diking is located on both sides of the river (Sketch Map 4). LiDAR imagery shows that there are approximately 1.22 miles of diking along the north bank and 1.06 miles along the south bank. Both dikes are approximately 30 feet wide. The dike on the north bank is approximately 5.75 feet tall while the one on the south bank is approximately 8.2 feet tall.

These dikes were constructed by creating mounds of earth which would act as a barrier to rising water. Given the length and size of the dikes, it is likely that they were constructed by the Army

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Corp of Engineers as part of the Flood Control Act of 1944. This act authorized the construction of Kerr Reservoir which at the time was called Buggs Island Reservoir. The reservoir and dam were built between 1947 and 1953 and are located on the Staunton River/Roanoke River. This project resulted in water backing up into the Dan and Banister Rivers.

Diking (44HA0433)-1947 c-Not Contributing-Structure-1

The earthen diking is located on the right side of the river (Sketch Map 5). LiDAR imagery shows that it is approximately 0.2 miles long and 24.5 feet wide. Its height is approximately 5 feet.

These dikes were constructed by creating mounds of earth which would act as a barrier to rising water. Given the length and size of the dikes, it is likely that they were constructed by the Army Corp of Engineers as part of the Flood Control Act of 1944. This act authorized the construction of Kerr Reservoir which at the time was called Buggs Island Reservoir. The reservoir and dam were built between 1947 and 1953 and are located on the Staunton River/Roanoke River. This project resulted in water backing up into the Dan and Banister Rivers.

Diking (44HA0434)-1947 c-Not Contributing-Structure-1

The earthen diking is located on the right side of the river below the Norfolk Southern railroad bridge (Sketch Map 5). This site was identified through LiDAR imagery which shows that it is approximately 0.26 miles long and 26 feet wide. Its height is approximately 5.7 feet.

These dikes were constructed by creating mounds of earth which would act as a barrier to rising water. Given the length and size of the dikes, it is likely that they were constructed by the Army Corp of Engineers as part of the Flood Control Act of 1944. This act authorized the construction of Kerr Reservoir which at the time was called Buggs Island Reservoir. The reservoir and dam were built between 1947 and 1953 and are located on the Staunton River/Roanoke River. This project resulted in water backing up into the Dan and Banister Rivers.

Railroad Bridge Pier (44HA0435)-1856 c-Contributing-Structure-1

This bridge pier consists of a stone pier and wood posts along the south bank of the river (Sketch Map 5). The stone pier is made of granite blocks that are 12 courses high. On top of this abutment is a cement pad which supports the current railroad bridge. Quarry marks are visible on some of the stones. The remains of eight wooden posts are present along the south bank along with one next to the pier that is still partially supporting the railroad tracks. In addition, cement abutments are located on both banks.

The Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&D) was chartered in Virginia on March 9, 1847, and the railroad completed its 140-mile line between Richmond and Danville in 1856. This included a bridge over the Banister River at the current site. Today it is operated by Norfolk Southern.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Bridge #1024 (041-5005)-2011-Not Contributing-Structure-1

The bridge carries Route 350 over the Banister River (Sketch Map 3). The original bridge was built in 1935 c; however, it was demolished and replaced with a modern truss bridge in 2011.

Diking (44HA0437)-1947 c-Not Contributing-Structure-1

The earthen diking is located on the north side of the river below the Wolf Trap Rd. bridge (Sketch Map 5). LiDAR imagery shows that it is approximately 0.6 miles long and 20 feet wide. Its height is approximately 3.6 feet.

These dikes were constructed by creating mounds of earth which would act as a barrier to rising water. Given the length and size of the dikes, it is likely that they were constructed by the Army Corp of Engineers as part of the Flood Control Act of 1944. This act authorized the construction of Kerr Reservoir which at the time was called Buggs Island Reservoir. The reservoir and dam were built between 1947 and 1953 and are located on the Staunton River/Roanoke River. This project resulted in water backing up into the Dan and Banister Rivers.

Railroad Grade (44HA0438)-1889 c-Contributing-Structure-1

The railroad grade is likely for a spur off the Lynchburg & Durham Railroad which was completed in 1889 (Sketch Map 3). This possible spur runs northwest and parallels the Banister River before ending near the Halifax-Banister Dam.

The spur may have been constructed in order to bring in construction material for the Halifax-Banister Dam in 1921. Chip Pottage, who was interviewed by Bill Trout, stated that there was a narrow-gauge railroad to a tanyard near Terrible Creek which is just downstream from the Halifax-Banister Dam (Trout 2016:86). The possible spur would have also gone by a possible brickyard that was identified near the Rt. 360 bridge in Halifax (44HA0276).

Bridge and Road Trace (44HA0439)-1899 c-Contributing-Structure-1

The remnants of a bridge and road trace located just upstream from the current Cowford Road bridge (Sketch Map 3). Two possible mounds and a road trace are visible on LiDAR maps along the south side of the river. The mounds could be related to an earlier bridge and the road trace continues north, disappearing before it connects with Cowford Rd. A 1951 aerial image shows the alignment before it was changed in 1958 when the current bridge was built. The earliest map to show a bridge in this location is an 1899 map where it is labeled Cowford Bridge.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE
TRANSPORTATION
ENGINEERING
ARCHAEOLOGY/HISTORIC-NON-ABORIGINAL

Period of Significance

1787-1921

Significant Dates

1787
1791
1798
1815
1835
1856
1889
1921

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District, in Halifax County, Virginia, is eligible on the local level under Criteria A, C, and D. The district is eligible under Criterion A for broad patterns of history concerning commerce and transportation in the antebellum South. The navigational improvements to the Banister River facilitated the movement of people and goods at a time when other efficient modes of transportation did not yet exist. The district is also eligible under Criterion C for engineering as an example of a 19th century river navigation system. The collection of extant wing dams, dams, and bridges assisted in navigation of the Banister River. Finally, the district is eligible under Criterion D because of its potential to yield information pertaining to the history and prehistory of the area. Archaeology led to the discovery of many of the resources included within the district. Additional fieldwork may lead to new discoveries related to how the Banister River was used precontact. The period of significance for the Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District begins in 1787 with the initial construction of the King's Bridge across the Banister River. The bridge was repaired many times during the 19th century before it was replaced with a non-arched concrete and metal-truss bridge in 1930. However, it was the initial construction of the King's Bridge in 1787 that began the push to control the Banister River for improved navigation. The construction of McDaniel's Mill in 1791 and the founding of Meadville in 1798 demonstrate how the improved navigation along the Banister River led to the development of the area. Navigation improvements continued with the incorporation of the Roanoke Navigation Company in 1815 and the Upper Banister River Navigation Company in 1835. The end date for the district's period of significance is 1921, with construction of the extant Halifax-Banister Dam. The hydroelectric dam eliminated the navigability of the Banister River and resulted in the siltation of the river between the dam and Meadville.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Transportation and Commerce

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District is eligible at the local level under Criterion A for broad patterns of history concerning trade and transportation in the antebellum South. Prior to navigation improvements, the Banister River was essential to trade between tribes, and between the tribes and the white settlers. As settlers moved into the area, the Banister River was essential to development. Tobacco cultivation needed reliable transportation to ports with ocean-going vessels, and the construction of new mills required the power the river generated. The navigational improvements to the Banister River allowed batteaux to carry products downstream to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. Between 1789 and 1830, numerous towns were established in Halifax County, including South Boston, Meadville, and Banister. In the decades following American independence, bright leaf tobacco production boomed in the western counties. Meadville, in central Halifax County, became a major port along the Banister River which led to the development and prosperity of the town. Early improvements to the Banister River facilitated the construction of several mills including McDaniel's Mill in 1791 and the Banister Mill in 1856.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

The improvements led by the Roanoke Navigation Company further expanded the utility of the Banister River by allowing for easier transport of goods via batteau boats. In 1856, the Richmond and Danville Railroad began service in Halifax County. This began the transition away from river navigation, and the railroad being the primary mode of transportation in the area.

Criterion C: Engineering

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District is eligible at the local level under Criterion C for engineering as an example of a 19th century river navigation system. Settlement of Halifax County required the construction of bridges across the Banister River. Beginning with the construction of Terry's Bridge in 1753 followed by King's Bridge in 1787, bridge construction was integral to the settlement of the area. Initial improvements along the Banister River began with the construction of mills and mill dams. However, it became apparent that the construction of these mills and mill dams inhibited the navigation and fish passage along the river. The Roanoke Navigation Company was chartered to address the conflict between those that used the river for navigation and those that used it for industry and fishing. The result was the creation of a three-part system of canals and dams that allowed for river traffic and industry. The system consists of dams and wing dams constructed of stone with canals alongside the Banister River. Dams and wing dams differ in the design and function. Dams span the width of the river to block water for storage or to raise the water level. Wing dams partially extend into the river creating a narrow channel that can accelerate the flow of water. The district contains numerous extant examples of the wing dams and dams constructed by the Roanoke Navigation Company, as well as stone bridge piers and the remnants of canals.

Criterion D: Archaeology

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District is eligible at the local level under Criterion D for the potential to yield information pertaining to the history and the pre-history along the Banister River. Currently, there are no contributing prehistoric sites in the Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District. However, it is not uncommon for Native American tribes to construct fish dams in rivers. No such sites exist in Halifax County, but several have been identified in neighboring Pittsylvania County. Additional study along the Banister River may result in the identification of sites, as well as information of pre and post contact use of the area by Native Americans.

Early History and Exploration

Exploration into what is now southwestern Virginia by Europeans was a slow process. The lack of navigable rivers that connected to the Chesapeake Bay was a hindrance to settlement. However, in 1653, Major Abram Wood and Edward Bland began exploring the area southwest of Fort Henry on the Appomattox River. Native Americans in this area told them of the Staunton River, which now forms the northern boundary of Halifax County and Occaneechi Island (Aaron 2009:24-25).

Virginia's governor Sir William Berkeley was interested in opening up this region for trade and settlement. He commissioned a German explorer named Dr. John Lederer to explore the region. On his second expedition, he went south along the mountains to North Carolina and then back

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

north. He visited the Sappony tribes in what would be a part of northern Pittsylvania County. Lederer noted that “the parts inhabited here are pleasant and fruitful, because cleared of Wood, and laid open to the Sun. The Valleys feed numerous herds of Deer and Elks larger than Oxen: these Valleys they call Savanae, being Marish grounds at the foot of the Apalataei, and yearly laid under water in the beginning of Summer by flouds of melted Snow falling down from the Mountains” (Talbot 1672:2).

In 1720 Brunswick County was established, which at the time included what would become Halifax County. This was done to encourage settlement, as well as to create a buffer between Europeans in the east and Native Americans in the west. While settlement grew in other counties, Brunswick remained sparsely populated. This was likely due to the rivers in the area that emptied into Albemarle Sound in North Carolina which did not have a major port. In an attempt to draw settlers to the region, inhabitants of Brunswick County would be exempt from paying quit rents and purchasing land rights for seven years (Clement 1981:33).

In 1728, William Byrd II led a group of surveyors who surveyed the Virginia and North Carolina border. He was helped by a Sappony guide named Ned Bearskin. The Sappony, who still occupy lands along the North Carolina-Virginia border, were allies of the English after signing the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677. They were first mentioned by John Smith in 1607 when he asked the Powhatans about tribes living to the west. The Powhatans told him there were five villages along the western James River. One of those villages was Monassukapanough where the inhabitants who would later become known as the Sappony lived. Some of the Sappony would eventually move to Occaneechi Island at the junction of the Staunton and Dan rivers, near present day Clarksville, Virginia. This location allowed them to trade between English settlers and other tribes to the west (Stewart et al., 2011).

With Bearskin’s assistance, Byrd and his party were able to survey the area from Currituck Sound on the North Carolina shore to the Dan River. During their travels, they crossed the Dan River multiple times. In September 1733 his group headed north and “...rode thro charming Low-Grounds, for six miles together, to a larger Stream, which we agreed to call Banifter River” (Byrd 1928:10). The river was no doubt named after John Banister who was a member of the party. Byrd was so taken with the area that in 1735 he petitioned the Virginia Council for 100,000 acres of land along the Dan River (Aaron 2009:33). Three years later in 1738, William Wynne, a Brunswick County justice, acquired 200 acres on the south side of the Dan River (Clement 1981:38). By 1738, Brunswick’s western lands remained largely unsettled. Settlement was again encouraged by exempting settlers from paying levies for a period of ten years and permitting the naturalization of Quakers, Germans and Scotch-Irish who were moving south along the Shenandoah from Pennsylvania (Clement 1981:34, 37). Beginning in the 1740s Europeans slowly began settling along major rivers and tributaries. Harmon Cook, who had land on Tomahawk Creek and the Pigg River, helped colonize the county by bringing in settlers from Pennsylvania (Aaron 2009:75).

A major draw to southern Virginia was the availability of fertile land for the cultivation of tobacco. In 1612 John Rolfe was able to cultivate a strain of tobacco that sold well in England. The

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

introduction of this “cash crop” was the impetus for European expansion throughout the colony and tobacco quickly became the dominant crop in Virginia. As the popularity of tobacco increased in Europe, so too did the population of Virginia and planters began relying more on slave labor instead of indentured servants (Salmon 1983:11- 12, 15, 20). In 1640, Virginia produced 1.3 million pounds of tobacco and by 1755 the colony exported 42 million pounds (Aaron 2009:81). Tobacco was valued at nearly three times more than the next most popular crop, which was wheat and corn (Luchsinger et al. 2006).

As land in the eastern part of the state became depleted, people began to migrate west in order to find affordable, fertile lands. Tobacco plantations began springing up along the rivers in what would become Halifax County, and they became centers of trade because of the lack of towns (Aaron 2009:85). In addition to tobacco, mining was also an early industry in the county. Colonel Donelson, a surveyor of Halifax and Pittsylvania counties and member of the House of Burgesses, had knowledge of the region’s resources and developed an iron mine, known as Bloomery, on the Pigg River, now in Franklin County (Clement 1981:156).

By 1746, the population of the region increased enough that Lunenburg County was formed from Brunswick County. This new county included what would become Halifax County. Within six years, people who lived in what would become Halifax County complained about how far they had to travel to get to the nearest court and were interested in forming a new county. In 1752 the western section of Lunenburg County became Halifax County and originally extended as far west as the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was named for George Montagu Dunk, 2nd Earl of Halifax, who was president of the Board of Trade from 1748-1761. The county had an area of 805.7 square miles and the first county seat was Peytonsburg. In 1766, Pittsylvania County was created from Halifax County and that included the town of Peytonsbug. The new county seat of Halifax County moved close to the geographic center of the County, south of the Banister River, and the site of the present-day town of Halifax (Cook: 9). The town of Halifax, sitting on the Banister River, has served as its county seat since 1792. Previously known as Banister, Houston, and Halifax Courthouse, the town also served as the commercial, social and institutional center for the surrounding rural region.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



Banister River depicted on "A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia." Thos. Jefferys 1755. (Library of Congress).

Crossing the Banister River at this time was accomplished through ferries and by fording the river, which was not always possible, especially when the river was high. To create a way to safely cross the river, a bridge was constructed in 1753 by Nathaniel Terry, which was known as Terry's Bridge by 1827 (Carrington 1924).

At the end of the French and Indian War (1756-1763), the British government had accrued an immense amount of debt defending the American colonies. To pay down the debt, Parliament imposed heavy taxes on its subjects and tightened the administration of trade through navigation acts. Additionally, King George forbade settlement of lands west of the mountains and trade with the Native Americans. All this was done without a representative from the colonies in Parliament and prompted many colonists to adopt the phrase "no taxation without representation" (Salmon 1983:22).

The actions by the king sparked a strong response from the colonies. In 1774, the Virginia Convention adopted resolves against the importation of British goods and the importation of slaves. It also required each county to form a volunteer company of cavalry or infantry to prepare for an armed conflict. Despite its sparse population, Halifax County supplied soldiers for the militia and the 7th and the 14th Virginia Regiments. The 7th Regiment was formed in the spring of 1776 at Gloucester County Courthouse and included men from 11 counties, including Halifax. The 14th Regiment was formed in February 1777 and recruited men from Halifax County and 11 other counties as well (American Revolutionary War Continental Regiments n.d.).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

In 1781 a pivotal battle took place at Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina. After the battle, General Nathanael Greene, who commanded the Continental Army at the battle, headed north to the Dan River. To cross the river, Colonel Edward Carrington, a Halifax native, acquired and organized boats at two ferry crossings. The British caught up to the Continental Army just as the last boats crossed the river. Once across the river, no boats were left to ferry the British across, and the Americans were able to rest and resupply while the British retreated into North Carolina. Some of General Greene's troops stayed north of the Dan River while the main army continued north crossing the Banister River at Cowford and then proceeded on the Halifax Courthouse (Halifax County Historical Society n.d.).

Following the American Revolution, the population of southwestern Virginia began to expand. The first federal census taken in 1790 recorded a population of 14,722 in Halifax County. By 1830 that had grown to 28,034 residents (US Federal Census). During the period between 1789 and 1830, numerous towns were established in Halifax County, including South Boston, Meadville, Banister, Mayton, Marsailles, Hairstonville, Madison, and Bentleysville. Towns developed slowly in Halifax County due to the dominance of plantation settlements along the rivers, which became commercial centers providing the services typically offered by towns. In the decades following American independence, bright leaf tobacco production boomed in the western counties.

Residents of the area had been requesting that the courthouse be moved to the south side of the Banister River primarily because of the difficulty in crossing the river. Once the courthouse was completed on the south side of the river, a town began to grow around it. In 1787 Edmond King was given the commission for building a bridge across the Banister River, north of the courthouse. King's Bridge was rebuilt by Josiah Dabbs in 1852 and again in 1867 and repaired in 1892 (Edmunds 1978:65). Although it was rebuilt multiple times, the bridge maintained the name King's Bridge throughout the 19th century. The foundations of the bridge are in the Banister River just to the west of the present bridge.

Throughout Virginia, mills became more numerous along the rivers. The Banister River and its tributaries were good waterways for mill construction. Several mills were known to have operated along the river. By 1791, McDaniel's Mill was located at the Great Falls next to what would become the town of Meadville. The town was founded in 1798 in response to a petition that a town be built on Meades Anderson's property. The petitioners, which included Anderson, stated that *they have been at a Considerable expence in Improveing the navigation of Dan and Banister Rivers and have so far completed the same as to Carry from Ten to fifteen Hogsheads of Tobacco at one Load in A Batteau with Great Safty to Edenton, in North Carolina* (Halifax County Legislative Petition 1797),

Once the river was cleared Meadville became a major port where batteaux carried products down the Banister River to meet ocean-going ships in Albemarle Sound. After the town was established, Anderson built a saw and grist mill there. Besides the mills, the town also had several stores, a tobacco factory, a warehouse, a wheelwright shop, a post office, a tavern, a tanyard, a school, a

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

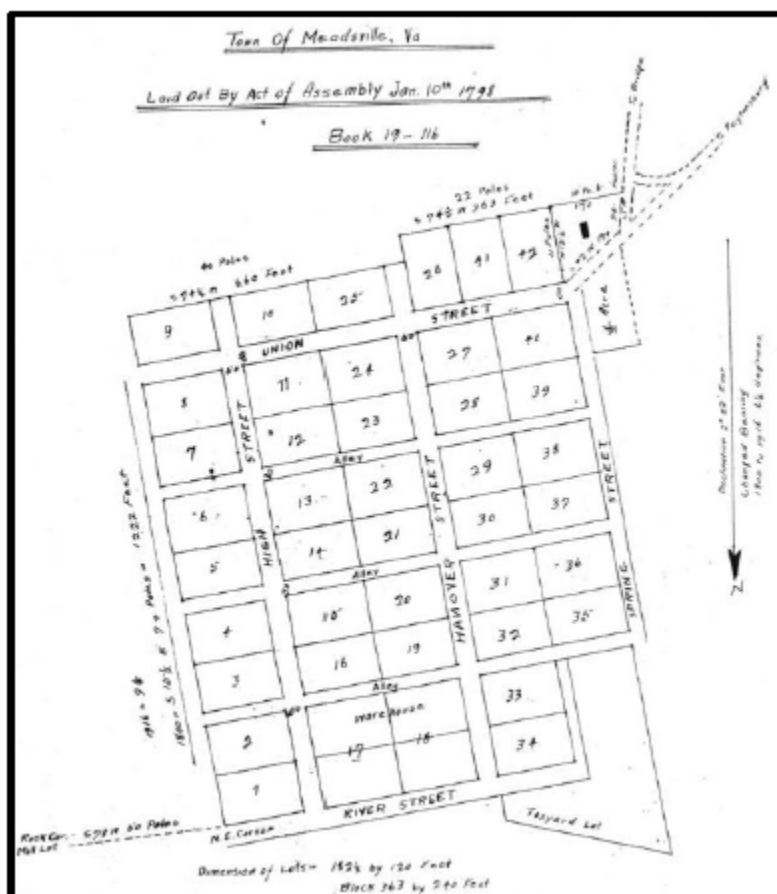
church, and a blacksmith shop along with doctors and lawyers. In 1832 the mill race was extended further downstream where a mill was built (Gilliam 1998).



King's Bridge depicted on "The marches of Lord Cornwallis in the Southern Provinces." Faden and Cornwallis 1787 (Library of Congress).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



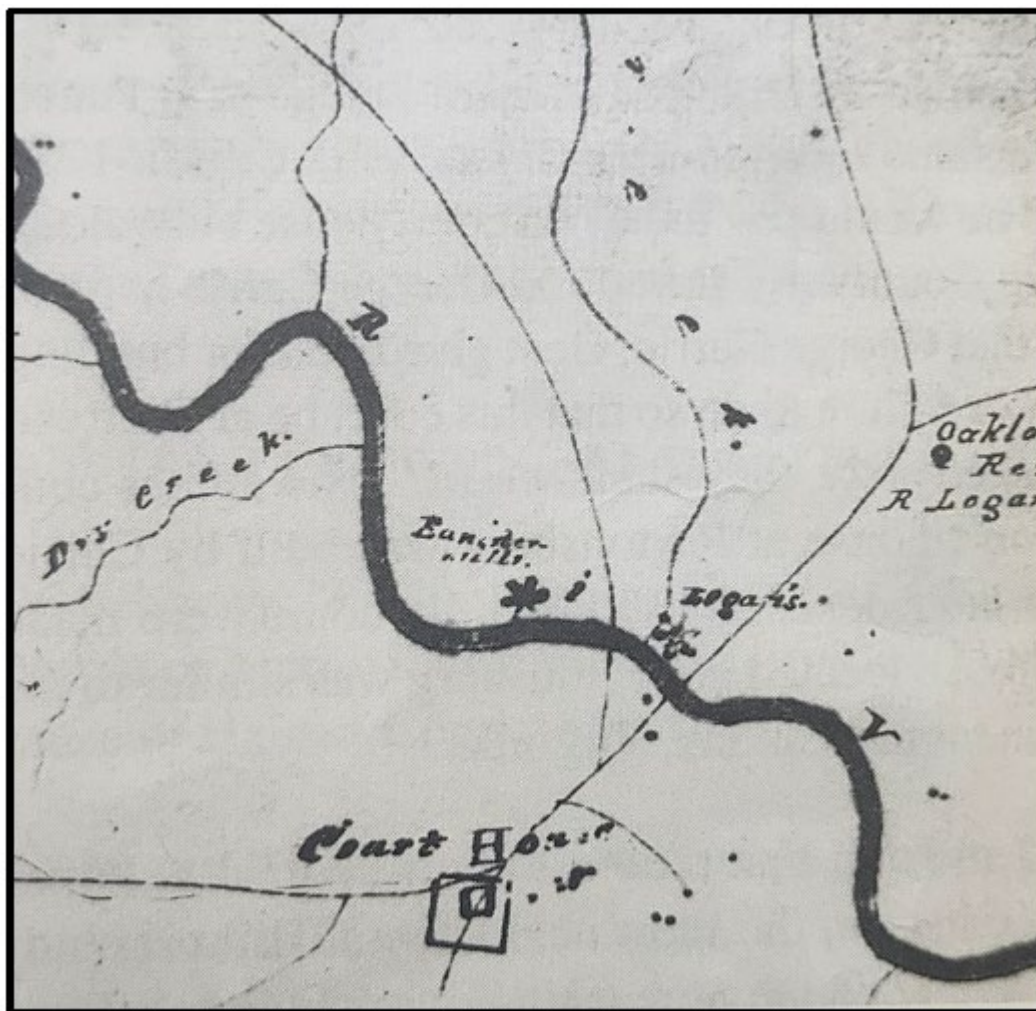
Plat drawn in 1927 showing layout of historic town of Meadville in 1798 (Halifax County Records 1927 [Plat Book 2:81]).

In December 1807, John Wimbish asked the legislature for permission to build a mill dam across the river near Halifax Court House. Since this would block navigation, he offered to erect a lock for boats. The following year he was given permission as long as he provided a lock for boats. In 1809 a flood destroyed the mill but it was in operation by 1815 when it was mentioned in a petition to clear rivers in the area (Halifax County Legislative Petition 1809, Pittsylvania County Legislative Petition 1815). No mills are shown in this area except for one on Terrible Creek on an 1827 map but by 1856 there was a mill on the Banister River which is labeled “Banister Mills.”

The mills and their associated dams which diverted water from the river to power them, were seen by some as obstructions that prevented the passage of boats and fish and as an economic necessity by others. Adding to the obstructions were fish dams erected earlier by Native Americans that were also used by the colonists. By the late 18th century, the river apparently had so many of these obstructions that a petition to the state legislature was filed in 1791 stating that the Banister River needed to be cleared to allow for the passage of fish and boats. The area to be cleared was in Halifax County and included a section of the river starting from its confluence with the Dan River up to McDaniel’s Mill which was located in Meadville (Henning 1823:278/79).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



Sketch of 1856 Map of Halifax County drawn by William Green showing Banister Mills (Library of Virginia).

It was not until the early 19th century, however, that large river improvement projects began. In 1815 the Roanoke Navigation Company was chartered jointly by North Carolina and Virginia. The company was to construct and maintain a three-part system of dams and canals that would enable river traffic. The first two sections were on the Roanoke River. The third section encompassed about 300 miles and included the upper Roanoke, Staunton, Dan and their tributaries (Jacobe 2007).

The Roanoke Navigation Company was successful in their improvements. In 1835, over 6,000 hogsheads of tobacco and 10,000 barrels of flour were transported and \$7,000 in tolls were collected along the routes improved by the Roanoke Navigation Company in Southside Virginia. (Jacobe 2007). These goods were typically carried to market in a boat called a batteau. Batteaux

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

were shallow, flat-bottomed wooden boats designed to carry goods not passengers. They were typically operated by enslaved men and sometimes by those who had been freed.

In addition to bateaux, canoes were used on the Banister River. In 1795, court records refer to a “bridge built across the Banister River at the canoe landing below Richard Anderson’s Mill” (Court Record 1795). This suggests that canoes were being used and that the bridge mentioned, which was in Pittsylvania County, was where they entered and exited the river.

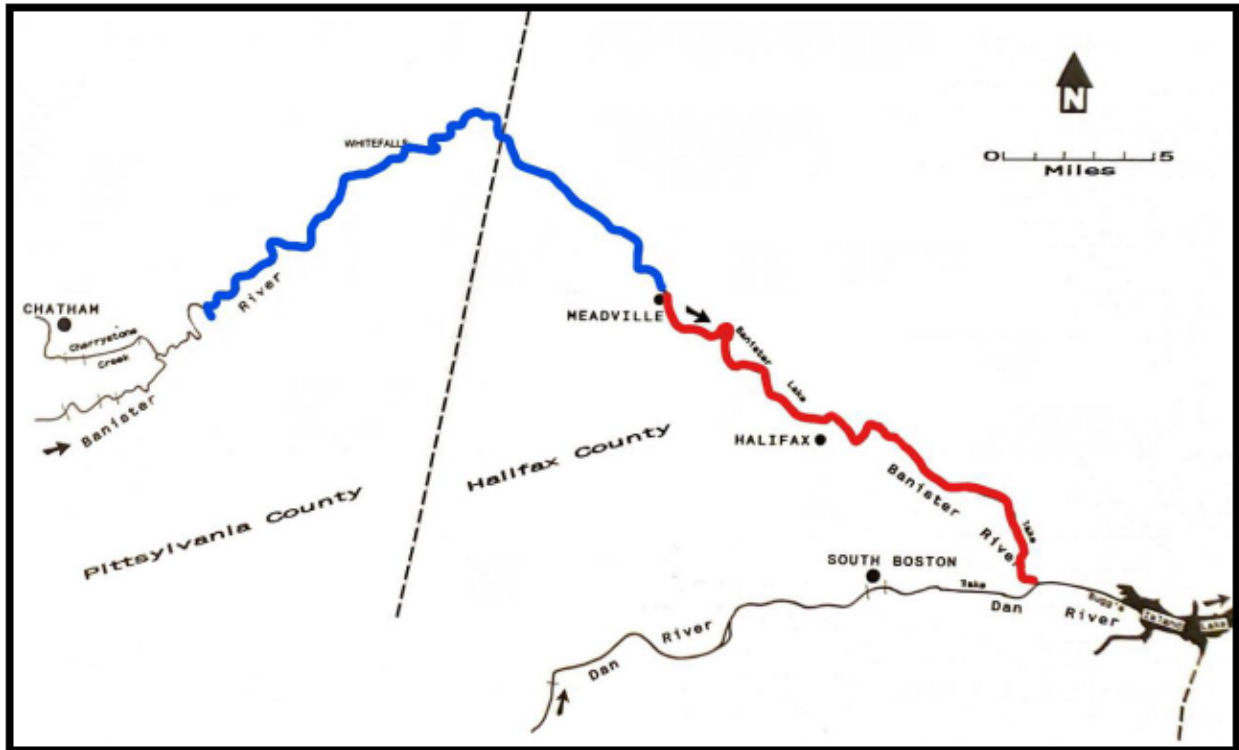
With the success of the Roanoke Navigation Company, the General Assembly passed into law an act incorporating the Upper Banister River Navigation Company in 1835. The one stipulation was that the Roanoke Navigation Company approve the plans of the new company. This new company was to improve navigation for the section of the Banister River above Meadville, which is where the 1791 legislation had left off, to Clark’s bridge in Pittsylvania County (Melton 1993). The company apparently did not survive and a survey of the Banister River in Pittsylvania County identified three possible wing dams suggesting that some improvements might have been undertaken (Pickett 2021).



Steering a Bateau, Watercolor by Benjamin Henry Latrobe 1798 (Library of Virginia).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



Map showing sections of the Banister River that were to be improved for navigation. Red line 1791 legislation and blue line Upper Banister Navigation Company 1835 (Trout 2016).

In addition to mills, the Banister River was home to the Cosby family brickyard. A substantial enterprise located along the Banister River, Dabney Cosby moved to Halifax County in 1835 and was renowned for the quality of his bricks and constructed buildings. Cosby was contracted as a brickmaker and bricklayer for buildings at the University of Virginia under the supervision of Thomas Jefferson. Cosby had a lucrative career in Virginia that included brick courthouses, college buildings, churches, and plantation houses (North Carolina Architects and Builders, 2009).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



PICTURE FROM THE PAST - The above picture is of the Cosby Brickyard at Houston, now Halifax, and was believed to have been taken between 1905 and 1910. The brickyard was located on Banister River in the

area where the town dump is now located and where a park is planned after the dump is closed next year. Howard Cosby, owner of the yard, is the man with the beard at left above. 5-11-72

Gazette Virginian, May 1972.

Not only were the waterways important for delivering goods to market but so were roads. An 1827 map depicts four roads crossing the Banister River within the project area. In Meadville, there was a bridge that crossed the Banister that led to the town of Peytonsborg. Near present-day Halifax, the King's Highway Bridge crossed the river along with another smaller bridge just to the west of it. Further downstream was Terry's Bridge which connected South Boston and Bentleyville.

While having property along the river and bridges over it was convenient, it also came with risks. Flooding along rivers has always been a problem. In 1843 it was reported "...that the crops, bridges, mill dams, &c., on the Banister River in this county, have been swept off by the floods, caused by the very heavy rains with which we have been repeatedly visited during the last fortnight" (Edgefield Advertiser 1843). In the same article, it mentioned that:

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

The Tobacco crop, which at best, is very unpromising in this region, must be seriously injured even on the ridges. The greatest sufferers by the high water that we have heard of in our country, are Col. George Townes and Maj. David Clark, the latter of whom, besides the destruction of some 10 or 12 hogsheads of Tobacco, lost two valuable negro women, who were unfortunately drowned, while attempting to cross the Banister. We have heard no further loss of life from the flood in this country (Edgefield Advertiser 1843).



Detail of "A map of the state of Virginia," by Boye 1827, depicting bridges across the Banister River (Library of Congress).

Even as roads were created and improved, a new form of transportation was coming to this part of Virginia. In 1838 and again in 1845, Whitmell P. Tunstall argued for the establishment of a rail line from Danville to Richmond which would be known as the Richmond and Danville Railroad. Tunstall argued that the only way products in this part of the state could quickly reach Richmond was through railroads. The Virginia Legislature finally granted the charter in 1847 and the line was completed in 1856 which included a bridge over the Banister River within the project area (Aaron 2009:78). With the advent of railroads, the use of rivers for transporting goods declined and so did the town of Meadville.

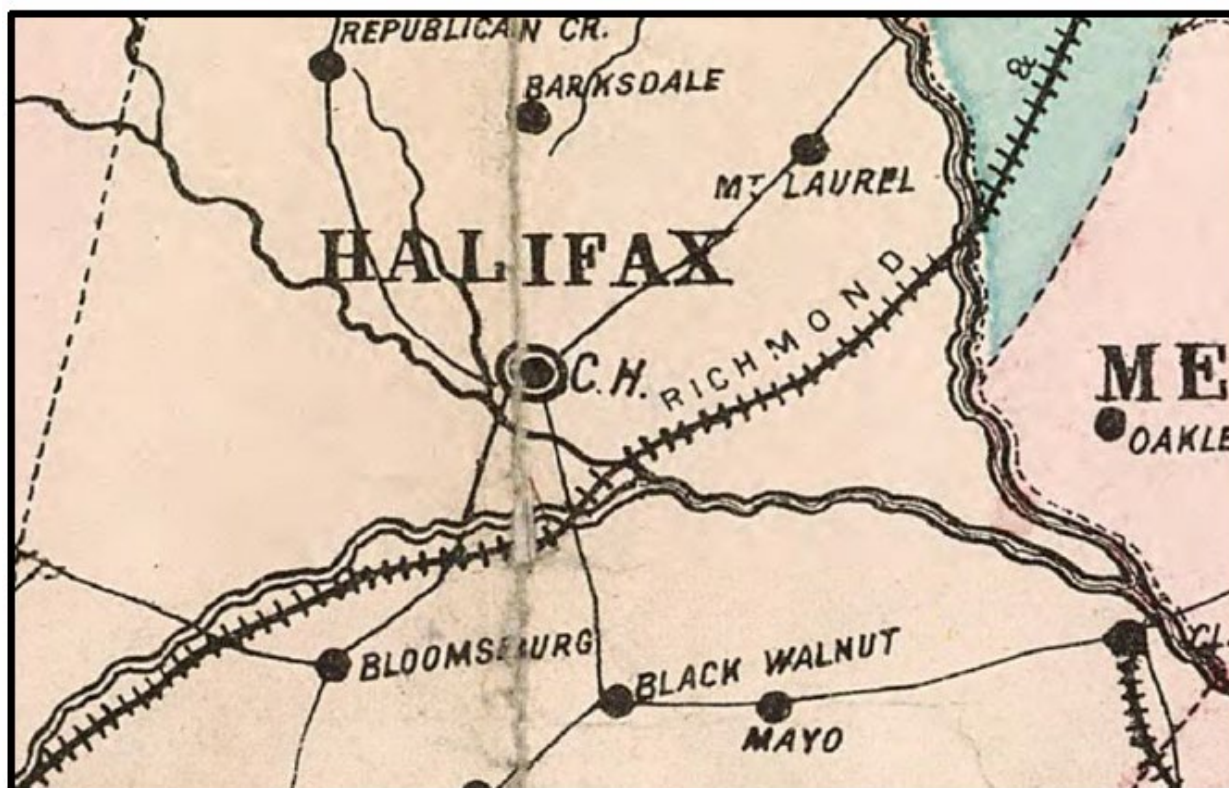
During the first few years of the Civil War, the county saw little in the way of military action, but its farms and mills were vital to the war effort. Many farmers shifted production from cash crops

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

like tobacco to large-scale food production at the urging of the Confederate government. Although farmers were able to supply varying amounts of food and supplies, the loss of farm labor and family heads who departed to fight in the war left thousands of acres of land unproductive and abandoned (Aaron 2009:78).

Nearby Danville became a strategically important center for the Confederacy, as it was a center of tobacco production and located on the Richmond and Danville Railroad. A depot was established at the rail center, which was critical for supplying Confederate forces. A hospital station was established for Confederate wounded, and a prison camp was set up in converted tobacco warehouses, which at one time held more than 5,000 captured Union soldiers. In April 1865 it was briefly the final capital of the Confederacy.



Richmond and Danville Railroad depicted on "New county map of Virginia." O.N. Snow and Co, 1861 (Library of Congress).

During the Civil War Halifax County men volunteered and were conscripted into companies that fought under the 1st Virginia Artillery, the 3rd and 6th Virginia Cavalry, and six Infantry regiments: the 14th the 20th the 23rd, the 34th, the 38th and the 53rd. Civil War battles between 1861 and June of 1864 were fought primarily north of the James River, but the Southside became a theater of war between June 1864 and April 1865.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

The Battle of Staunton River Bridge took place in June 1864 when two Union cavalry regiments tried to destroy a bridge to sever the Richmond and Danville Railroad. A small Confederate regiment and 600 home guard soldiers fought back, eventually repulsing the Union soldiers. The defense of the Staunton River Bridge safeguarded the supply line of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, supplying the Confederate forces in Petersburg.

When the Civil War ended, Halifax County, like many other areas in the South, was economically devastated. It would be tobacco that would revive the economy. After the war people's preference leaned more towards smoking tobacco and with its milder taste and smell, the Bright Leaf tobacco was the preferred source and demand and prices jumped. Danville became the world's largest Bright Leaf tobacco market and in 1899 sales were valued at over 54 million pounds (Aaron 2009:123). Tobacco remained an important crop in Halifax County with only corn surpassing it in acreage (Vernon and Ezekiel 1925:7). With the devastated economy, many veterans of the war and newly freed slaves took part in sharecropping or tenant farming (McClurken 2009:58). This would continue into the 20th century. In 1920, 50 percent of the county's farms were operated by tenant farmers (Taylor and Vernon 1926:6).

As for those who worked on the river, their work decreased significantly. By the 1890s there were three different railroads that ran through Halifax County. The Richmond and Danville Railroad, which began operation by 1856, the Atlantic and Danville Railway which began service in the southern part of the county in the 1880s and the Lynchburg & Durham Railroad which began operations in 1889 when it completed its line to South Boston which included a bridge across the Banister River within the project area. With three railroads in place, the need for goods to be transported by boat ceased. Boatmen did find some employment taking groups out on the rivers but by the turn of the century, they were no longer needed.

The coming of the railroads to the town of Houston, which was changed to Halifax in 1920, caused it to grow and in 1907 the town had a population of 800 people. At that time, it contained an electric plant, two banks, a brickyard, a flour mill, two corn mills, two hotels, two hardware stores, two drug stores, three dry goods stores, four groceries, six churches and a high school (Morrison 1907).

By 1917 the town continued to grow and had 19 general stores, nine attorneys, three druggists, three doctors, three dry goods, three blacksmiths, two banks, two hardware stores, two hotels, an automobile dealer, a brick manufacturer, a confectioner, a foundry, a garage, an electric company, a telephone company, a mill, a printing company and a watchmaker/jeweler (Virginia Business Directory & Gazetteer 1917).

The mill was the Banister Mills and a 1918 Sanborn map depicts this mill in the project area and states that it is "not in operation." In 1915 mill operations were moved away from the river to an area next to the railroad tracks. The mill was powered by electricity and would become known as the Halifax Roller Mill (230-5002).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

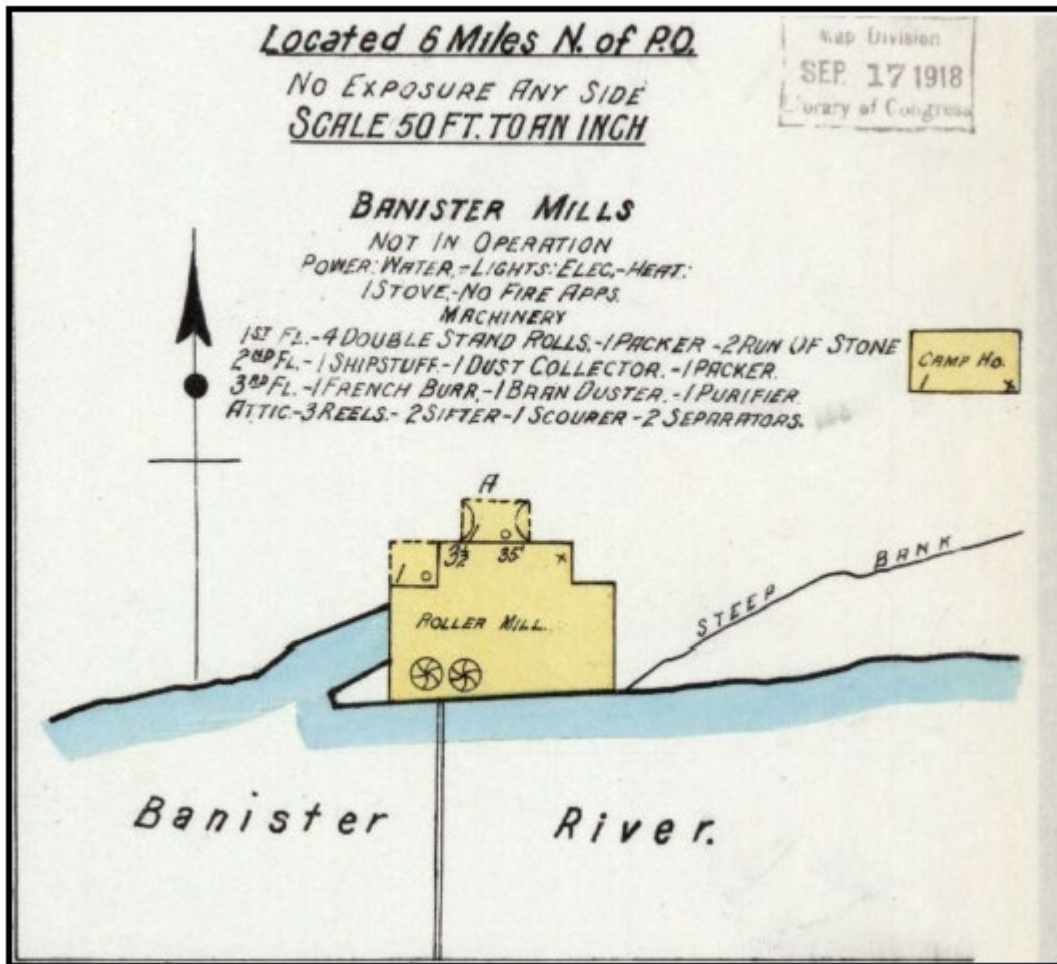
In 1921 the Halifax-Banister Dam was constructed. This hydroelectric dam was constructed by the Halifax Power Company, which was incorporated by Colonel Ira Vaughn, who was a wealthy leather manufacturer in Philadelphia. The dam is a concrete gravity dam that is 670 feet long with counterweighted floodgates that are 25 feet high. In 1927 the brick and concrete powerhouse contained three S.M. Smith turbines that produced 1320 kilowatts (Louis Berger & Associates 1990). A 1923 Sanborn map depicts the concrete dam along with a concrete walk and platform. Also depicted is the powerhouse with three turbines.



Railroads across the Banister River depicted on "Post route map of the states of Virginia and West Virginia" by C. Wilson, W.L. & Von Haake, A. 1896 (Library of Congress).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

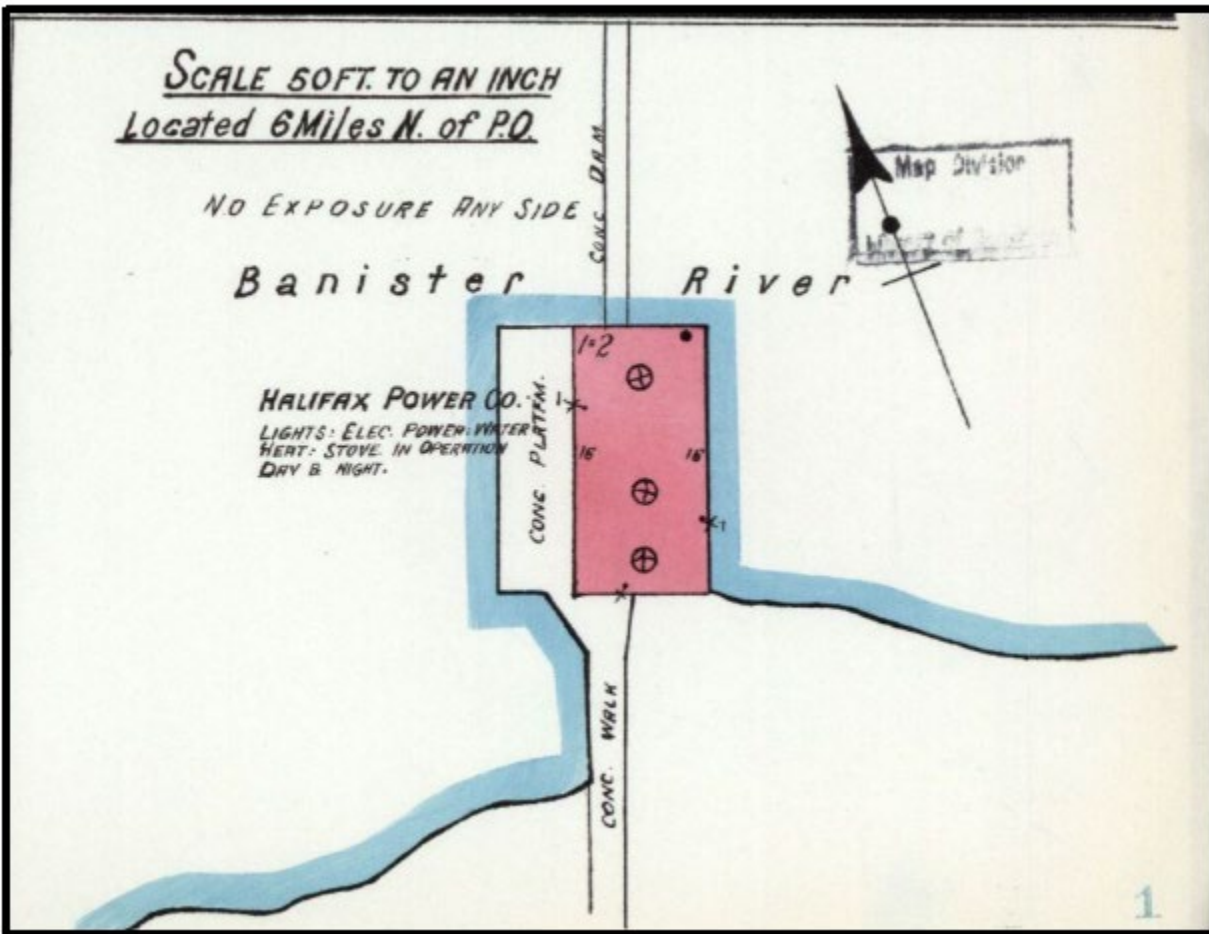
Halifax County, VA
County and State



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from South Boston, Halifax County, Virginia showing Banister Mills. May 1918 (Library of Congress).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from South Boston, Halifax County, Virginia showing Halifax-Banister Dam, 1923 (Library of Congress).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Aaron, Larry G.

2009 *Pittsylvania County Virginia: A Brief History*. The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina.

American Revolutionary War Continental Regiments

n.d. Virginia Regiments in the Continental Army.
<https://revolutionarywar.us/continental-army/virginia/>. Accessed September 4, 2024.

Byrd, William

1928 *A Journey to the Land of Eden and Other Papers by William Byrd*. Macy-Masius, The Vanguard Press, New York.

Carrington, Wirt Johnson

1924 *A History of Halifax County (Virginia)*. Regional Publishing Company, Baltimore, Maryland.

Clement, Maud Carter

1981 *The History of Pittsylvania County Virginia*. Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, Maryland. Originally published 1929.

Edgefield Advertiser

1843 Edgefield Advertiser. Edgefield Courthouse S.C. August 30, 1843. Vol VIII No. 31.

Edmunds, Pocahontas Wight

1978 *History of Halifax County*. Published by Pocahontas Wight Edmunds.

Halifax County Historical Society

n.d. The Crossing of the Dan in Halifax County: One of the most Important Events of the Revolutionary War. <https://www.halifaxcountyhistoricalsociety.org/aboutthecrossing/>, Accessed September 4, 2024.

Halifax County Legislative Petition

1797 Dec. 6, 1797 (LVA).

1809 Dec. 5, 1809 (LVA).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Henning, William Waller

1823 *The Statutes at Large Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*. Published for the editor by Thomas Desilver No 253 Market St Philadelphia.

Jacobe, Stephanie A.T.

2007 Banister River Wing Dam Assessment: Route 360 Banister River Replacement Project, Halifax County. The Louis Berger Group, Inc. On file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Luchsinger, Heidi, Loretta Lautzenheiser, RPA, and Bill Hall

2006 Tri-County Parkway Location Study VDOT Project R000-96A-102, PE-101, PPMS No. 52405 VDHR File No. 2003-0042. Manuscript on file at Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Melton, Herman

1993 *Picks, tracks and bateaux: Industry in Pittsylvania County, 1750-1950*. H.E. Howard; 1st edition (January 1, 1993).

McClurken, Jeffrey W.

2009 *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia*. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Morrison, Alfred J.

1907 *Halifax County, Virginia: a handbook prepared under the direction of the Board of supervisors*. Richmond, Va., Everett Wadley co.

National Park Service

1997 *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form, Bulletin 16A*. U.S. Department of Interior. Washington D.C.

North Carolina State University Library

2009 *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Available online at www.lib.ncsu.edu/databases/north-carolina-architects-builders. Accessed May 2025.

Pickett, Dwayne

2021 Archaeological Survey of the Banister River Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Hurt & Proffitt, Inc. Submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Pittsylvania County Legislative Petition

1815 Dec. 15, 1815 (LVA).

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

Salmon, Emily J.,

1983 *A Hornbook of Virginia History*. 3rd edition. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

Sylvester, Caitlin

2020 Preliminary Information Form for the Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District. On file at the Department of Historic Resources. Richmond, VA.

Stewart, Kara, Dante Desiderio and Sherry Epps Munford

2011 Sappony Indians. North Carolina Humanities Council and UNC American Indian Center. <https://www.ncpedia.org/sappony-indians>. Accessed September 15, 2024.

Talbot, Sir William

1672 *The Discoveries of John Lederer In three several Marches from Virginia, To the West of Carolina, And other parts of the Continent*. Printed by J.C. for Samuel Heyrick at Grays Inn Gate in Holborn.

Taylor, Clifford C. and J.J. Vernon

1926 Renting Farms in Virginia. Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. Bulletin 249, May 1926.

United States Census Bureau (USCB)

Various Years Federal Census.

Vernon, J.J. and M.J.B. Ezekiel

1925 Causes of Profit or Loss on Virginia Tobacco Farms. Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. Bulletin 241, November 1925.

Virginia Business Directory & Gazetteer

1917 *Virginia Business Directory & Gazetteer*. Richmond, Va. : Hill Directory Co.

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 041-5311

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 200

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: -78.77031 Longitude: 36.72322
2. Latitude: -78.80156 Longitude: 36.69459
3. Latitude: -79.05321 Longitude: 36.83761
4. Latitude: -79.02060 Longitude: 36.84942

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District contains a 23-mile segment of the Banister River from the falls at Meadville trending to the southeast, terminating at the confluence with the Dan River east of South Boston, Virginia. The boundary includes the Banister River and riverbanks.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries for the Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District include the areas where navigational improvements were made in the Banister River during the district's period of significance (1787–1921); therefore the boundaries do not extend beyond the riverbed and riverbanks.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sarah Clarke and Dwayne Pickett

organization: Hurt and Proffitt, Inc.

street & number: 2524 Langhorne Road

city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24501

e-mail: clarke1201@gmail.com

telephone: 804-347-5825

date: October 21, 2025

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Additional Documentation

Banister River depicted on “A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia.” Thos. Jefferys 1755.(Library of Congress).

King’s Bridge depicted on “The marches of Lord Cornwallis in the Southern Provinces.” Faden and Cornwallis 1787 (Library of Congress).

Plat drawn in 1927 showing layout of historic town of Meadville in 1798 (Halifax County Records 1927 [Plat Book 2:81]).

Sketch of 1856 Map of Halifax County drawn by William Green showing Banister Mills (Library of Virginia).

Steering a Bateau, Watercolor by Benjamin Henry Latrobe 1798 (Library of Virginia).

Map showing sections of the Banister River that were to be improved for navigation. Red line 1791 legislation and blue line Upper Banister Navigation Company 1835 (Trout 2016).

Cosby Brickyard. Gazette Virginian May 11, 1972.

Detail of “A map of the state of Virginia,” by Boye 1827, depicting bridges across the Banister River (Library of Congress).

Richmond and Danville Railroad depicted on “New county map of Virginia.” O.N. Snow and Co, 1861 (Library of Congress).

Railroads across the Banister River depicted on “Post route map of the states of Virginia and West Virginia” by C. Wilson, W.L. & Von Haake, A. 1896 (Library of Congress).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from South Boston, Halifax County, Virginia showing Banister Mills. May 1918 (Library of Congress).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from South Boston, Halifax County, Virginia showing Halifax-Banister Dam, 1923 (Library of Congress).

Banister River Navigation Improvements
Historic District
Name of Property

Halifax County, VA
County and State

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Banister River Navigation Improvement Historic District

City or Vicinity: South Boston

County: Halifax

State: VA

Photographer: Dwayne Pickett

Date Photographed: July 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Bansiter River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0251_King's Bridge Wing Dam_view looking south.

2 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0252_Cowford Wing Dams_view looking south.

Banister River Navigation Improvements

Historic District

Name of Property

Halifax County, VA

County and State

- 3 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0279_Meadville Canal_view looking southeast.
- 4 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
041-0156_Halifax-Banister Dam_view looking northwest.
- 5 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
041-5311-0001_Wing Dam_view looking southwest.
- 6 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0419_Mill Dam_view looking north.
- 7 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0420_Mill Dam_view looking north.
- 8 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0422_King's Bridge_view looking south.
- 9 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0423_Wing Dam_view looking east.
- 10 of 10. VA_Halifax County_Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District_
44HA0424_Railroad Bridge Abutments_view looking northeast.

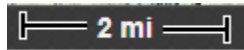
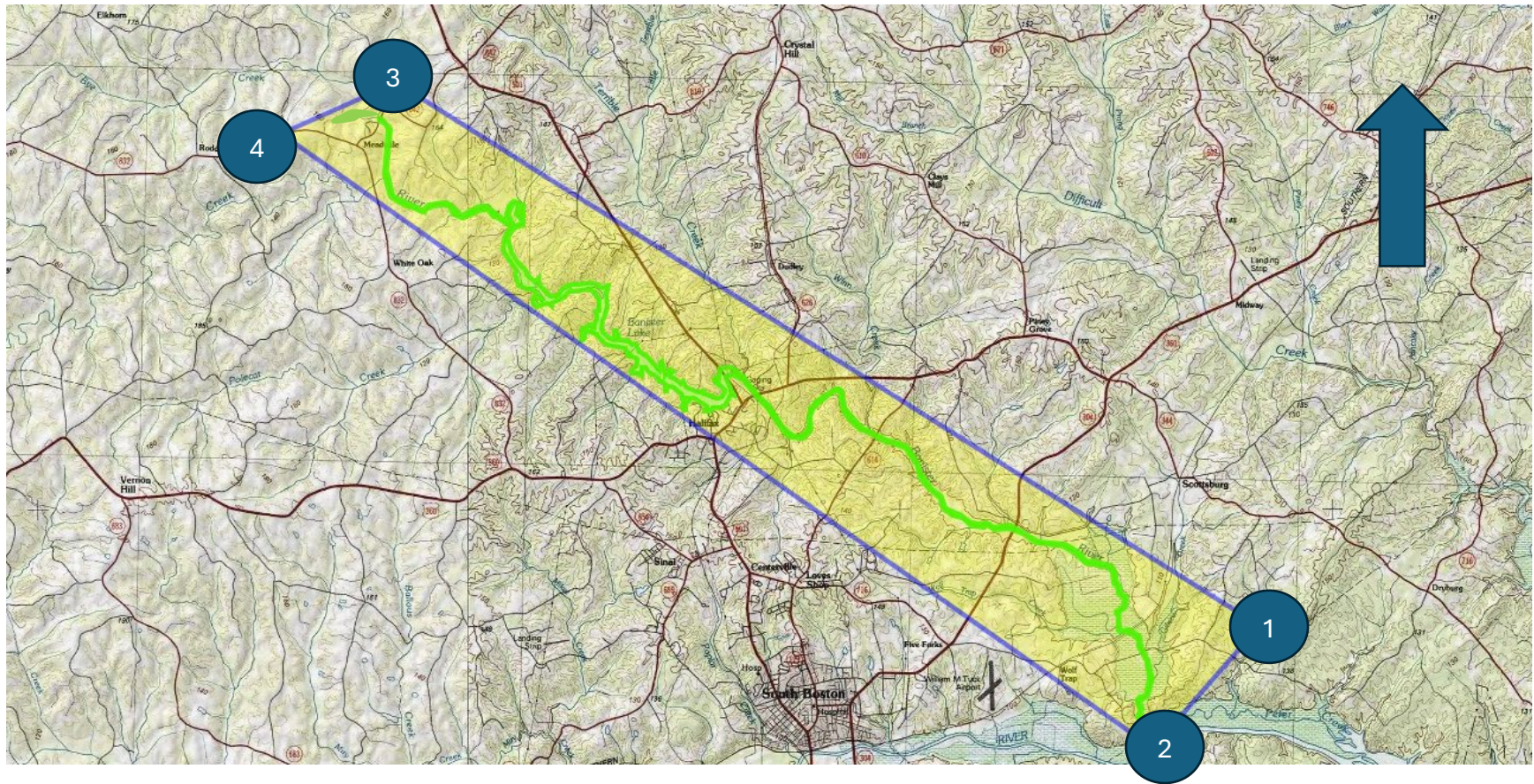
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

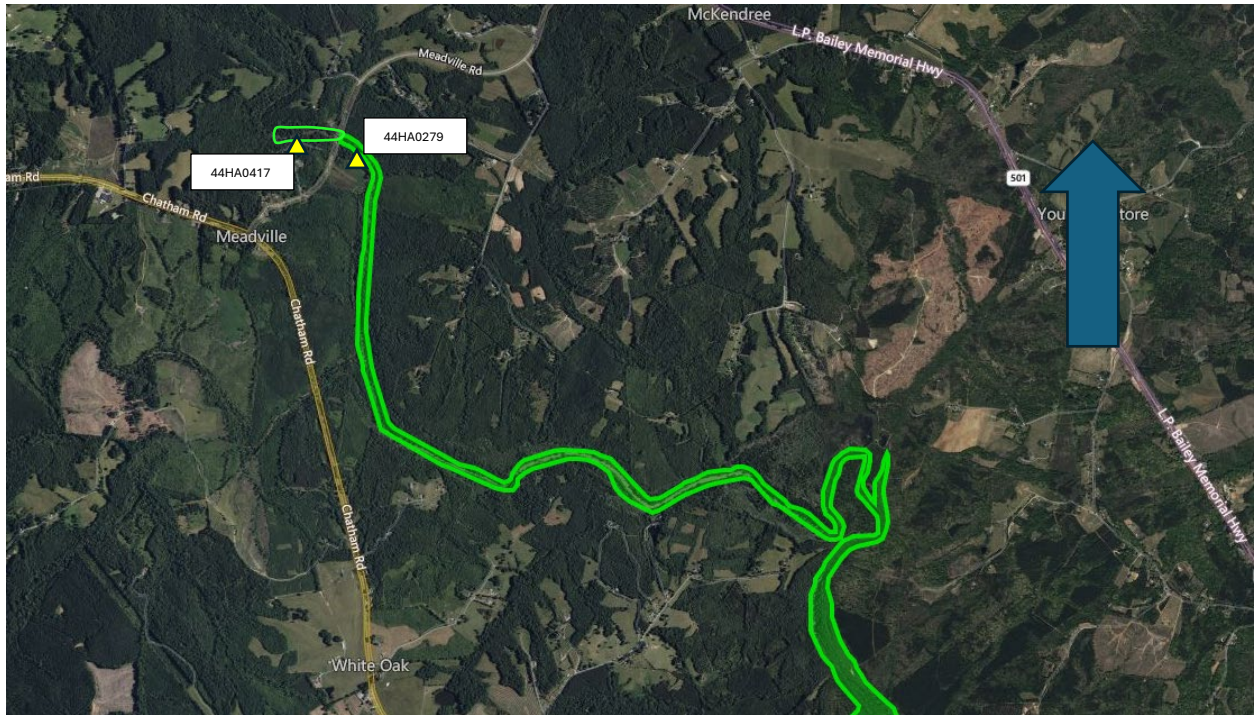
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Location Map
 Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
 Halifax County, VA
 DHR No.: 041-5311



	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>		<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
1.	-78.77031	36.72322	4.	-79.02060	36.84942
2.	-78.80156	36.69459			
3.	-79.05321	36.83761			

Sketch Map 1
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



2500 ft



Contributing



Non-Contributing

Sketch Map 2
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



2500 ft

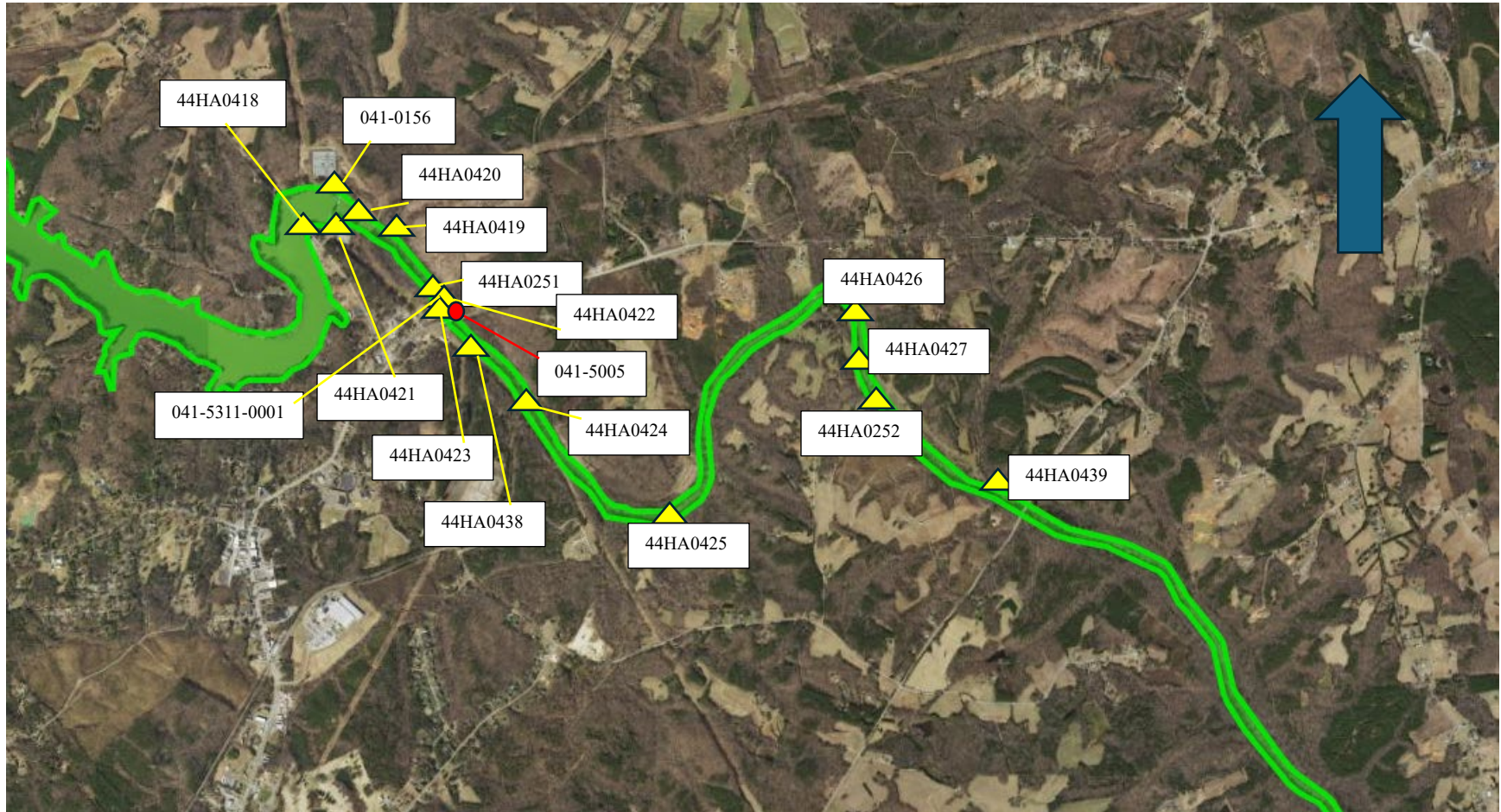


Contributing



Non-Contributing

Sketch Map 3
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



- 2500 ft
- ▲ Contributing
 - Non-Contributing

Sketch Map 4
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



2500 ft



Contributing



Non-Contributing

Sketch Map 5
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



2500 ft



Contributing



Non-Contributing

Photo Key 1
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA

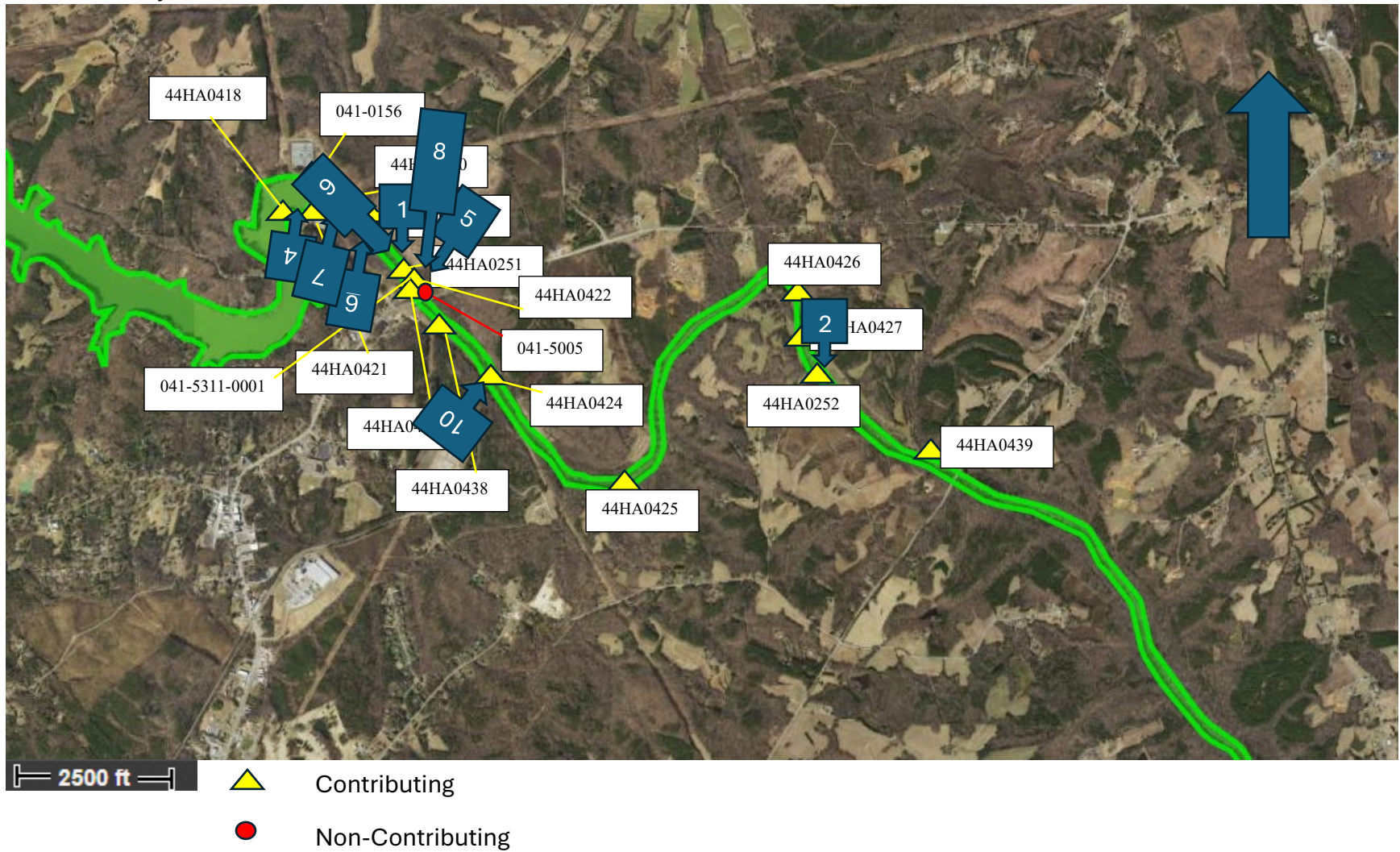
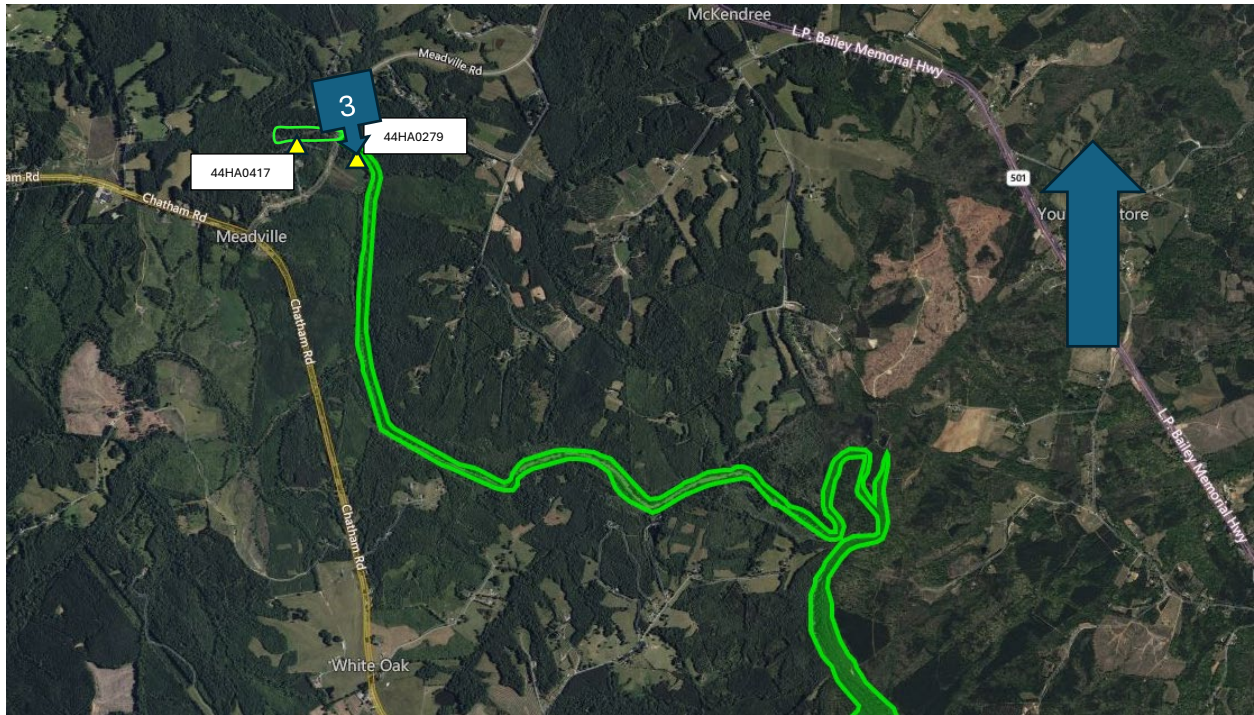


Photo Key 2
Banister River Navigation Improvements Historic District
VDHR No. 041-5311
Halifax County, VA



2500 ft



Contributing



Non-Contributing



















