



Destination: Bath County

by
Jim Brewer

Everybody wants a piece of Bath County these days. And why not? This western Virginia treasure presents 520 square miles of natural beauty. Hallowed mountain streams such as the Jackson, Bullpasture and Cowpasture tumble through the gorges while man-made lakes like Douthat and Moomaw draw rave reviews from all who visit. Bath County is the home of the eternal springs, thermal flows of hot water that both refresh and heal. From George Washington

to Jefferson to Lee to Edison to Roosevelt, American dignitaries and travelers have flocked to Bath County to *take the waters*, to relax and become refreshed.

Bath County speaks for the trees. Approximately 92% of the surface of this county is forestland. Over 50% of the county is within the George Washington National Forest. Bath County is also the home of The Homestead resort with all its marvelous amenities and attractions. The

Garth Newel Music Center and many festivals and concerts entertain residents and tourists alike.

The climate in Bath is another attraction. The springs are *springier* and the summers more refreshing. The average temperature in spring is a 51 degrees while in summer, Bath County residents are treated to an average temperature of 69 degrees. The average annual snowfall is 30 inches, plenty to satisfy skiers and those



The beach at Lake Moomaw



Ryan Hodges (left) and Dutch von Schilling (right) of Clarkson & Wallace

curled up in front of an open hearth with a steaming mug of coffee and a good book. Yes, Bath is a desirable place to be. And lucky are the few allowed to live here.

Bath County Real Estate

Clarkson & Wallace was established in 1947. Founded by Tom Wallace and Jim Clarkson, both Bath County natives, Clarkson & Wallace was the first, and for many years the only real estate

company in the county. Tom Wallace, a Hampden-Sydney grad, was a fourth generation Wallace family member, the Wallace farm located near Coursey Spring on the Jackson River.

Today, Ryan Hodges serves as President and Associate Broker of the Warm Springs real estate firm with Dutch von Schilling the Managing Broker. Both men have been astounded by the recent

and overwhelming demand for property in Bath County. “Property values in Bath have always enjoyed a slow, steady increase,” Dutch remarked. “There have never been any drastic ups and downs, that is, until recently.”

Around 1999 began the first big jump in real estate value. “Prices have certainly exploded in the past 12 months,” noted Ryan. “The supply is low and the demand is soaring.”

Everybody wants a piece of Bath County! A 127-acre farm on Little Back Creek that sold for about \$200,000 in 1999 went for \$547,000 in the fall of 2004. The Old Chestnut Farm that sold for \$275,000 in the late 90’s brought over \$600,000 in 2004 for the 125-acre spread. Dutch sold Maple Oak Farm, a 100-acre tract, for \$320,000 in 1984. The same farm brought \$2.7 million this January.

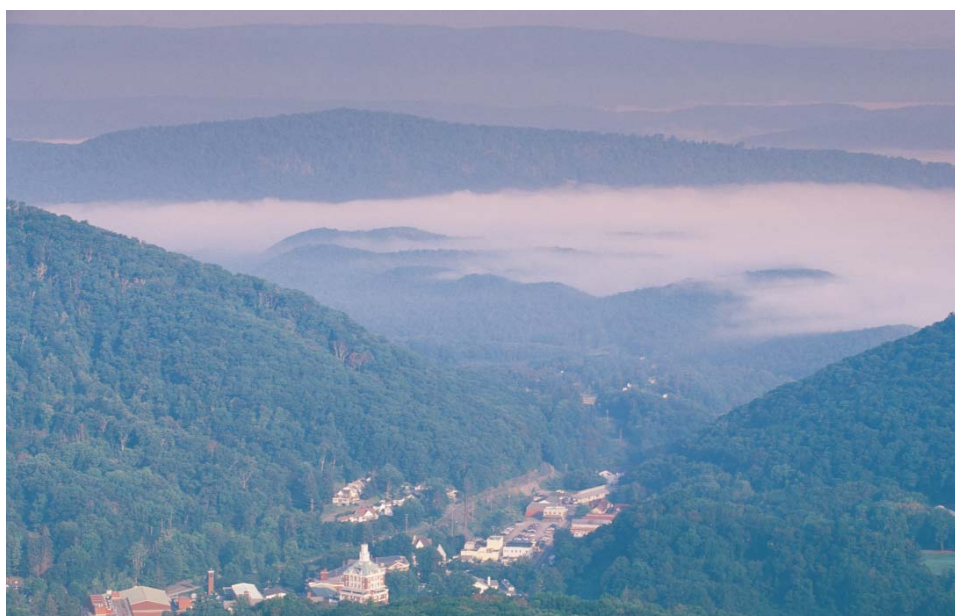
Dutch and Ryan offer many reasons for the sudden demand, most notably the sheer natural beauty and attraction of Bath County. Between the National Forest and the Game Department lands, about 60% of Bath County is owned by government agencies. Then, there's another 15% considered to be mountaintop land that simply cannot be developed. Another 10% is tied up in Nature Conservancy trusts or Homestead land, leaving precious little acreage available to the public.

Land is so scarce in Bath County that there are few listings for buyers to even consider. "The market is such that we have to make things happen for our clients," Ryan remarked. Ryan and Dutch often find out what their clients are looking for, then knock on doors to try to find product. "It helps that we know the land and the people of the area," Ryan added. "We have a good feel of what's going on with a family and their personal situations. Our knowledge can help us find property that may become available."

New Development

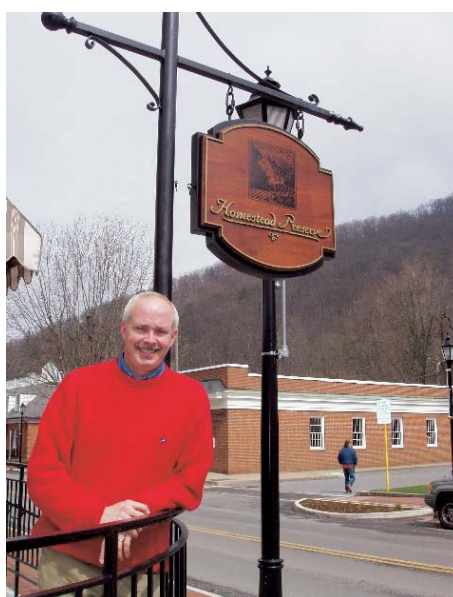
There is an excitement hanging heavy in the air in Bath County these days. New development is coming, but a special type of development that clings to the historic significance and natural beauty of Bath County. The Homestead Preserve was recently able to acquire about 11,500 acres between Warm Springs and Hot Springs in the Allegheny Mountain region of Bath County. The land that once served as a private buffer for the Homestead was split into two parts – 9,250 acres in an outright sale to the Nature Conservancy with approximately 2,300 acres to be developed by The Homestead Preserve.

While The Homestead Preserve could have built 2,700 homes, they chose to limit development to a maximum of 450 homes in the most beautiful setting imaginable. Steve Schneider is Director of Sales



Hot Springs village

Steve Schneider of The Homestead Preserve



for the conservation-oriented development. "The lots will be priced from about \$250,000 to \$1 million," Steve noted. "We anticipate that most homes will be used as second homes or as retirement homes. Plans will be strictly limited and regulated, and to date, there are five approved builders."

The first offering resulted in 35 sales, those to the founders of The Homestead Club. The second offering produced 44 sales. The homesites at The

Pat Haynes of Bacova Properties



Homestead Club will now be available to the general public on an "as available" basis.

"The Homestead Preserve is setting new standards for an environmentally sensitive development," Steve remarked. "There is a true long-term commitment to preservation of the environment, to the restoration of historic places and as a true commitment to Bath County's cultural heritage."



The Homestead Preserve will have a close working arrangement with The Homestead and has reserved a full golf and tennis membership to The Homestead for each home site purchaser. Plus there is access to all that is offered at The Homestead, including a world-class sporting clays range and clubhouse, three championship golf courses, the spa and all hotel amenities.

Steve, a native of Pennsylvania, came to Bath County five years ago and was dumbfounded to find such natural beauty. “I couldn’t believe there was still a place like this left,” he recalls. “Bath County is the best place I could possibly imagine to raise my family with both a rural environment and a profound sense of community.”

The Homestead Preserve has opened a beautiful office on Main Street in

Hot Springs where potential buyers can find out more about owning “a piece of Bath County.” Call the Sales Office at 800-933-2899 for more details.

Bath County People

Pat Haynes came to Bath County 30 years ago as a tennis pro for The Homestead. Then in 1980, the real estate bug bit, and Pat joined a limited field in this western county. Pat now serves as Owner/Broker for Bacova Properties on Main Street in Hot Springs. “We knew that Bath County would eventually be discovered, but not on a such a scale as it has, and practically overnight,” Pat stated. “The timing of the Homestead Club development could not have been better.”

Pat was one of the founders of the Homestead Club and has been most impressed with the new development. “We are fortunate that we haven’t had substan-

tial development in Bath County,” Pat observed. “But the attention to detail and the planning procedure that is developing at the Homestead Club convinces me that they’ll do it right.” Pat feels that some development is needed in Bath County so that the current businesses will not just survive, but thrive. Having the Homestead Club will open other business opportunities for local families and residents with positions as landscapers, construction workers, surveyors, interior designers, draftsmen, land planners and other professions. “We’ve raised five kids here,” he said. “It’s been a great place to raise a family. The natural amenities and sporting opportunities have kept us here. You can ride, golf, fish – you name it.”

Bacova Properties is a full service real estate brokerage firm. They sell farms, estates, land and residences, plus the company leases business properties in

Hot Springs. Pat also has two choice lots available for sale at The Homestead Preserve priced at \$525,000 and \$575,000. New home construction can be arranged on these lots through Southern Heritage Homes out of Rocky Mount, Virginia. "Properties are getting harder and harder to find," Pat confirmed. "Our listings seem to last about one week." Everybody wants a piece of Bath County.

"Families have purchased The Owners Club at The Homestead for the same reasons they have been coming to this valley for generations - for the natural splendor of the land and waters and the elegance of The Homestead Resort. This combined with the unbeatable variety of outdoor sports gives everyone in the family a way to play year after year." So says Bath County native Nell Carpenter, Sales Director and Real Estate Agent for Homestead Realty, specializing in the sale of fractional real estate holdings at The Owners Club at The Homestead. The Owners Club was developed by ClubCorp as a high-end Private Residence Club.

Meadow Lane Lodge

Not everyone will be able to buy property in Bath County; in fact, very few will be that fortunate. But everyone can take home a little piece of Bath that will be forever etched in his or her memory with a visit to Meadow Lane Lodge. Meadow Lane Lodge, located about five miles from Warm Springs, is a microcosm of Bath County with over a thousand acres of natural beauty and two miles on the "best of the best" water on the Jackson River. Meadow Lane Lodge represents country living in the finest Bath County tradition.

Recent changes have converted the old main lodge into a private home, but new cottages have been added to help satisfy the demand for those beautiful private getaway places. The Granary, the Car Barn, Craig's Cottage Room and Craig's

Cottage Suite, the New River House (a two-bedroom log cabin on the river), the Walnut House (a new 3-bedroom cottage on the river) and the Jackson River Cottage (a new 2-bedroom cottage on the bend of the Jackson River) combine to offer guests a quality and memorable experience.

All of the accommodations except Craig's Cottage Room have a full kitchen. Carter Ancona, the Innkeeper, now offers a discount for stays of three nights or more. There are horse stalls available with bedding and mucking for the equestrian guests.

The fishing at Meadow Lane Lodge is fabulous with wild trout, holdover fish and stocked trout providing the entertainment. On occasion, guests at Meadow Lane will tangle with big migratory rainbows out of Lake Moomaw. It is a quality experience, for sure. To find out more about Meadow Lane Lodge, go to www.meadowlanecottages.com.

Come to Bath

For Virginia sportsmen, there remains a place unspoiled, a place where brook trout sip mayflies in gentle currents and where turkeys strut their stuff on mountain bluffs. There is a place where wing shooters can track clay pigeons across deep ravines in a stunning setting of mountain laurel. There is still a place in Virginia that is mostly wooded, where there are no stoplights, and strangers are just friends waiting to be introduced. There remains a place where water gurgles from the core of the earth to warm and massage aching bodies. There is this place called Bath County, where nature is king and hospitality a way of life. It is little wonder that everybody wants a piece of this splendid county.

For more information on Bath County visit www.bathcounty.org.

Fine Town & Country Places

Serving Lexington, Rockbridge & Augusta Counties

LaKata



Spottswood, Virginia

An extraordinary and secluded property! Over 3500 sq. ft. stone, brick and clap-board home, up to 5 bedrooms, 5 1/2 baths, stunning views of beautiful meadows, hayfields and woods from every window. Newly remodeled guest house, new barn/garage and run-in shed. 45 minutes to Charlottesville, less than 3 hours to Washington D.C.

\$985,000



Lucy Madison Turner



(540) 463-7168

www.meadproperties.com

21 N. Main Street
Lexington, Virginia



The quintessential small historic college town