

## Virginia Department of Historic Resources PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the proposed district for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the district could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

<b>General Property Information</b>	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 080-5689
District Name(s): <u>Coles -Terry Rural Historic District (CTRHD)</u>	
District or Selected Building Date(s): <u>1835 – 1970</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post              Open to the Public?    No	
Main District Streets and/or Routes: <u>Poor Mountain Road, Honeysuckle Road</u> City: <u>Bent Mountain</u> Zip: <u>24059</u>	
County or Ind. City: <u>Roanoke County</u> USGS Quad(s): <u>Bent Mountain</u>	

<b>Physical Character of General Surroundings</b>	
Acreage: <u>2,560</u>	Setting (choose one): <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor
Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features/Streetscapes: <p>This rural, mostly forested district encompasses about 2,500 acres on the eastern slope of Poor Mountain. starting 4/10 mile east of the intersection of Poor Mountain Road and Honeysuckle Road in Bent Mountain, Roanoke County, VA, extending 3.25 miles southwest along the crest of Poor Mountain to the Montgomery County line. It includes the headwaters of Laurel Creek and Bottom Creek where they emerge at the foot of Poor Mountain, and old apple orchards. The district contains a network of Civilian Conservation Corps forest roads and paths connecting to a fire tower at the highest point of Poor Mountain at 3,926 feet elevation. Prehistoric archaeological sites have been found along the creeks.</p>	
Ownership Categories: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	

<b>General District Information</b>	
What were the historical uses of the resources within the proposed district? Examples include: Dwelling, Store, Barn, etc... Dwelling, tobacco growing and curing, timber harvest, sawmill industry, apple orchards, apple sales, horsemanship, and recreation, including horseback riding and hiking along Honeysuckle Road and along the district's many fire roads and fire trails, and automobile excursions to the fire tower	
What are the current uses? (if other than the historical use) <u>Domestic</u>	
Architectural styles or elements of buildings within the proposed district: <u>Vernacular (no discernable style)</u>	

Architects, builders, or original owners of buildings within the proposed district:

All buildings and structures have been or are now owned by members of the Terry family.

Are there any known threats to this district?

The proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline and other natural gas pipelines proposed for construction through rural areas and wildlands of Virginia

#### General Description of District:

The CTRHD includes lands historically and currently owned by the Terry family. The boundary was adjusted to exclude modern resources that would not be contributing to the district's significance. Buildings and structures within the CTRHD are contained within the five properties listed below, four of which are currently owned by the Terry family. Construction dates for dwellings are from the Roanoke County GIS mapping system (<http://gisweb.roanokecountyva.gov>).

#### 1. Aunt Grace Fortesque's house [aka. Terry Moncure Place, DHR 080-5679]

-current owner: Frank H. Terry, Jr. ETAL

-parcel id: 102.00-01-02.00-0000

-contributing resources: house built ca. 1890-1940s; garage built ca. 1900; barn built ca. 1875; stone wall built ca. 1890; Cook's house built ca. 1890.

-un-delineated Archaic and Woodland period archaeological sites (extensive collection of lithics in owner's possession).

#### 2. Coles Terry's house [not surveyed]

-current owner: John Coles Terry III

-parcel id: 102.00-01-0800-0000

-contributing resource: house built 1910; remnant of old orchard

#### 3. Baker House [not surveyed]

-current owner: Frank H. Terry Sr. Estate

-parcel id: 103.00-02-01.00-0000

-contributing resources: house built ca. 1875; 2 Terry Barns built ca. 1875 and ca. 1890

#### 4. Janet Wynot house [DHR 080-0490]

-current owner, Janet Wynot

-parcel id: 103.00-01-01.00-0000

-contributing resources: house believed built in first or second quarter 19<sup>th</sup> century and originally owned by Terry family; Coles and Terry Family Cemetery; stone wall

#### 5. **Fire Tower? Possible communication tower, 1990s.** [not surveyed]

-current owner: Elizabeth Terry Reynolds and PMTS, LLC (Terry family)

-parcel id: 093.00-01-46.00-0000 and 102.00-01-01.00-0000

-contributing resources: ~~fire tower built by Civilian Conservation Corps circa 1933~~; cobbled stone road providing access to tower; metal sign at base of cobbled road; network of jeep roads and foot trails providing access to tower

**Significance Statement:** Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the proposed district. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Please list all sources of information. Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

The Coles-Terry Rural Historic District appears to be eligible under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance begins in 1835 with the purchase of 15,000 acres of land by John Dabney Coles, and ends in 1970, with the cessation of the 100-year boom in apple orchards on Bent Mountain that began during Reconstruction.

### ***Grace Fortescue Terry – chronicler of the Coles/Terry family legacy***

In 1957, Grace Fortescue Terry produced a typewritten history of her family, titled, “BENT MOUNTAIN By Mrs. Philip StLeger Moncure (Grace Fortescue Terry) daughter of John Coles Terry, of Bent Mountain, Va.” Much of the information appearing in the 1957 document was subsequently published in the Winter 1967 edition of the *Journal of the Roanoke Historical Society*, in an article titled, “Recollections of Bent Mountain, Virginia.”

In her 12-page typewritten narrative, Grace Fortescue Terry, whom we will refer to henceforward as “Aunt Grace,” chronicles a sequence whereby the current heirs of the Terry family came to own hundreds of acres of land on Bent Mountain. The story begins with General George Washington giving “some hundred thousands of acres” to the “doughty” General Andrew Lewis. Aunt Grace's narrative does not date this gift. However, we know that Lewis died in 1781, so we can date this gift sometime between 1770 and 1780.

The heirs of Andrew Lewis lost no time in selling their shares of this enormous tract of wilderness land given by General Washington to General Lewis. The Lewis heirs sold:

- 15,000 acres to John Dabney Coles, Aunt Grace's great grandfather, in 1835, and
- 2,000 acres to an individual named William Dabney in the early 1800s, who sold the same land to Capt. Joseph Motley Terry, Aunt Grace's grandfather, around 1850.

It was through these two purchases that the Coles/Terry family obtained ownership of the land that is contained within the CTRHD. Terry and Coles, both of whom lived in Pittsylvania County prior to the Civil War, hired contract labor to grow tobacco on their land during the decades prior to the Civil War. Aunt Grace's narrative states that Terry and Coles moved Caucasian families to Bent Mountain as tenants, “with contracts for clearing, building and crop-raising. This new ground of loose fertile loam was well suited to tobacco growing, it being the cash crop. An overseer managed these settlements of white tenants, in addition to separate clearings by colored families, brought from the lower plantations.”

Coles' daughter, Catherine, married Terry. In 1845, the couple had a son, John Coles Terry, who inherited his mother's share of the Coles estate while a very young child, and also later inherited his father's land. The fact that John Coles Terry inherited thousands of acres of land comprising a significant portion of what is, today, the community of Bent Mountain, and, through his ownership, kept these lands unsubdivided through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has helped to endow the Bent Mountain community with the distinctively rugged appearance of a wild mountain frontier that has persisted to the present time.

John Coles Terry, who was Aunt Grace's father, had a brilliant military career. According to Aunt Grace, a year before the start of the Civil War, he entered VMI as a cadet. At the start of the war, his father organized a company of volunteers and became their captain, but soon suffered a severe wound, moved to Bent Mountain to recover, and never re-entered battle.

Early in 1862, at age 17, John Coles Terry joined the Confederate forces under the command of General Stonewall Jackson. Later, at the death of Stonewall Jackson, Terry joined forces under General Jubal Early and stayed with Early through the valley campaign. Early and Joseph M. Terry had been partners in a law practice in Pittsylvania County prior to the start of war.

Aunt Grace's recounting of her father's gallantry in the Civil War is both excruciatingly touching and written in a brilliant literary style. She says, on page 11 of her typewritten narrative,

He [John Coles Terry] had an active career, on his alternating mounts "Mary" (Stuart) and "Raliegh." First with Jackson in his hound and fox forays against Milroy in and out of West Virginia and Virginia, with weeks of brilliant maneuvering, swiftness and victories. These adventurous years were a delight to a high spirited boy, and he relived it with many an anecdote to his rapt audience (his children) through Maryland, into Pennsylvania to Gettysburg – sometimes a dispatch carrier – or scouting – or in the thick of battle with dismounted cavalry. Those gallant horses "Mary" and "Raliegh" spent their last years on Bent Mt. honored above all four footed friends. "Mary"'s descendants remained in the Terry family for years. She herself was an eighth generation foal in the equestrian branch of the family of thoroughbreds. The last one, Dainty Dixie, was in the fourteenth generation. Alas that motors have banished so many noble creatures to the green pastures of the haven where their great spirits are, we trust, forever young and fleet of foot.

### ***George S. Jacks' History of Roanoke County***

Several other history texts, made available to us at the Virginia Room of the Roanoke City Public Library, offer accounts of the development of the Coles/Terry family legacy. The principal among these is a text that was rescued from obscurity by a reprinting commissioned by Wytheville, VA antiquarian bookseller, Jim Presgraves. This text, titled History of Roanoke County, by George S. Jack, was copyrighted in 1912. It contains two sections pertinent to the CTRHD. The first section, bearing the heading "The Coles Purchase," says that John Coles Terry inherited all of Joseph M. Terry's land, and that this inheritance was 5,000 acres, which is much larger than the 2,000 acres cited in Aunt Grace's text. It also says that John Dabney Coles owned 12,000 to 14,000 acres, which is 1,000 acres fewer than cited by Aunt Grace. The following is an excerpt:

#### The Coles Purchase

As the years passed away, the great Lewis Tract was divided and most of the original boundary passed out of the hands of the first owner or his immediate descendants. A man named Clark became the owner of most of the mountain land and of a large boundary of the plateau land on top of the mountain. This he afterwards sold to John M. Price of Fincastle, who in turn sold to John Coles, a boundary of twelve thousand acres, more or less, which proved to be nearer fourteen thousand acres, for the sum of \$12,000.00. Some six or eight thousand acres of the original Lewis Tract, near the Floyd County line, was purchased many years ago by Tazewell and Warfield Price. In the years to come as this section became more thickly populated, these vast boundaries were subdivided into smaller farms, with the exception of one large tract of nearly five thousand acres which was purchased by the late Captain Joseph Motley Terry, and which at his death reverted to J. Coles Terry, his son, all of which the latter still owns. On this beautiful plateau are now some of the best homes in Roanoke County, and some of the most productive, as well as the largest apple orchards of this section of Virginia.

History of Roanoke County also contains biographical sketches of the most prominent men in the county's history. It contains a sketch and photograph of John Coles which begins, "Perhaps the best known citizen of the Bent Mountain district is John Coles, who was born in Pittsylvania County, in 1836, being the only son of John Coles, Sr., also a native of Pittsylvania County, Virginia." Thus, John Coles Jr. was Captain Joseph M. Terry's brother-in-law, and John Coles Terry's uncle. John Coles Jr. is the grandfather of the family members who are present-day owners of the properties in the CTRHD.

### ***Deedie Dent Kagey's When Past is Prologue: A History of Roanoke County***

Kagey's history of Roanoke County is useful in documenting economic activity of the Coles and Terry family members.

Kagey provides a list of individuals' names listed in the "Productions of Agriculture" census of 1870. Among these are John Coles (i.e., John Coles, Jr., Joseph M. Terry's brother-in-law) and John Coles Terry. John Coles is listed as having 3,950 acres under production in a farm valued at \$8,000. John Coles Terry is listed as having 4,900 acres under production in a farm valued at \$7,000.

Kagey states that the 1884-1885 *Virginia Gazeteer and Business Directory* listed the principal farmers of Roanoke by communities. Under the heading "Bent Mountain" were listed the names John Coles, John C. Terry, and Joseph M. Terry. The same gazeteer listed J. M. Terry as an attorney doing business in Bent Mountain/Air Point. According to Kagey, the *Virginia State Directory 1897* listed persons who provided goods or services in Roanoke County. Included on this list were "J. C. Terry & Co." listed as "general merchant" and "J. Coles Terry" listed as "mills (saw and planing)".

A Gilmer Collection Confederate Army map (1864) of Bent Mountain shows the location of a "Terry saw mill" at a point inside the CTRHD along Bottom Creek. Thus we can surmise that the Terry family sawmill business was active during the 30 year period from 1864 through 1897, if not longer.

Kagey's list from the 1897 directory also includes John Coles and J. C. Terry as having farm operations in "Air Point", which is a location along U.S. 221 in Bent Mountain that was the center of the famous Bent Mountain orchard industry which emerged during Reconstruction. Kagey includes the Terry family among those who were stakeholders in the Bent Mountain orchard industry, stating, "By 1910, J. Coles Terry . . . [was] among those who ran successful orchards on Bent Mountain." Kagey adds, "Everyone [on Bent Mountain] had an orchard. Grace Moncure [i.e., Aunt Grace] had six or eight."

A 1963 topographic map of Airpoint shows the prevalence of orchards, demonstrating the persistence of the Bent Mountain orchard industry well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Fire tower***

The presence of the fire tower at the highest point on Poor Mountain (3,926 feet) is documented in Aunt Grace's manuscript. She associates the location of the tower with a historic site called "Street's Entry," a place that was used to enter the Bent Mountain area by military explorers prior to the construction of roads. A sizeable network of fire roads and fire trails were built to provide access to the fire tower. Many of these roads and trails are extant today and have been used for recreational horseback riding and hiking by the Terry descendants.

Roanoke historian, Lee Pendleton's 1976 manuscript, "Poor Mountain," discusses the fire tower. He describes his first visit to the tower in the mid-1930s:

The Adult CCC men had worked the road and it pulled the hill well. We drove west out the ridge as far as we could go. A fire tower with a telephone had been built. The custodian and wife were glad to see us and some of our party climbed the tower. I went about half way. Men and women had been going up on Sunday for years, in "T" model Fords, carrying an extra supply of water for the radiator.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Terry, Grace Fortescue. "Bent Mountain". 1957. Virginia Room, Roanoke City Public Library, Roanoke, Va.

Jack, George S. History of Roanoke County. 1910. Virginia Room.

Kagey, Deedie Dent. When Past is Prologue: A History of Roanoke County. 1988. Virginia Room.

Confederate Army Map of Bent Mountain, Gilmer Collection, 1864. Virginia Room.

USGS Topographic Maps of Bent Mountain, 1963. Virginia Room.

Pendleton, Lee. "Poor Mountain". 1976. Virginia Room.

Sorrell, Robert. Blue Ridge Fire Towers. The History Press. 2015.

Byrne, John P. "Civilian Conservation Corps in Virginia, 1933-1942." 1982.  
<http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2824&context=etd>

Forest History Society, 701 William Vickers Ave., Durham, NC 27701-3162. [www.foresthistory.org](http://www.foresthistory.org).  
The Society's historian offered valuable technical assistance in our research on the fire tower.

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form)

Ann Rogers  
6347 Back Creek Road  
Boones Mill, VA 24065  
540-312-3104  
Date: 4-20-16

Applicant's Signature: *Ann M. Rogers*

**Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr.  Mrs.  Dr.   
Miss  Ms.  Hon.

Thomas C. Gates  
(Name)

Administrator  
(Position)

Roanoke County  
(Locality)

5204 Bernard Dr.  
(Address)

Roanoke  
(City)

VA  
(State)

24018  
(Zip Code)

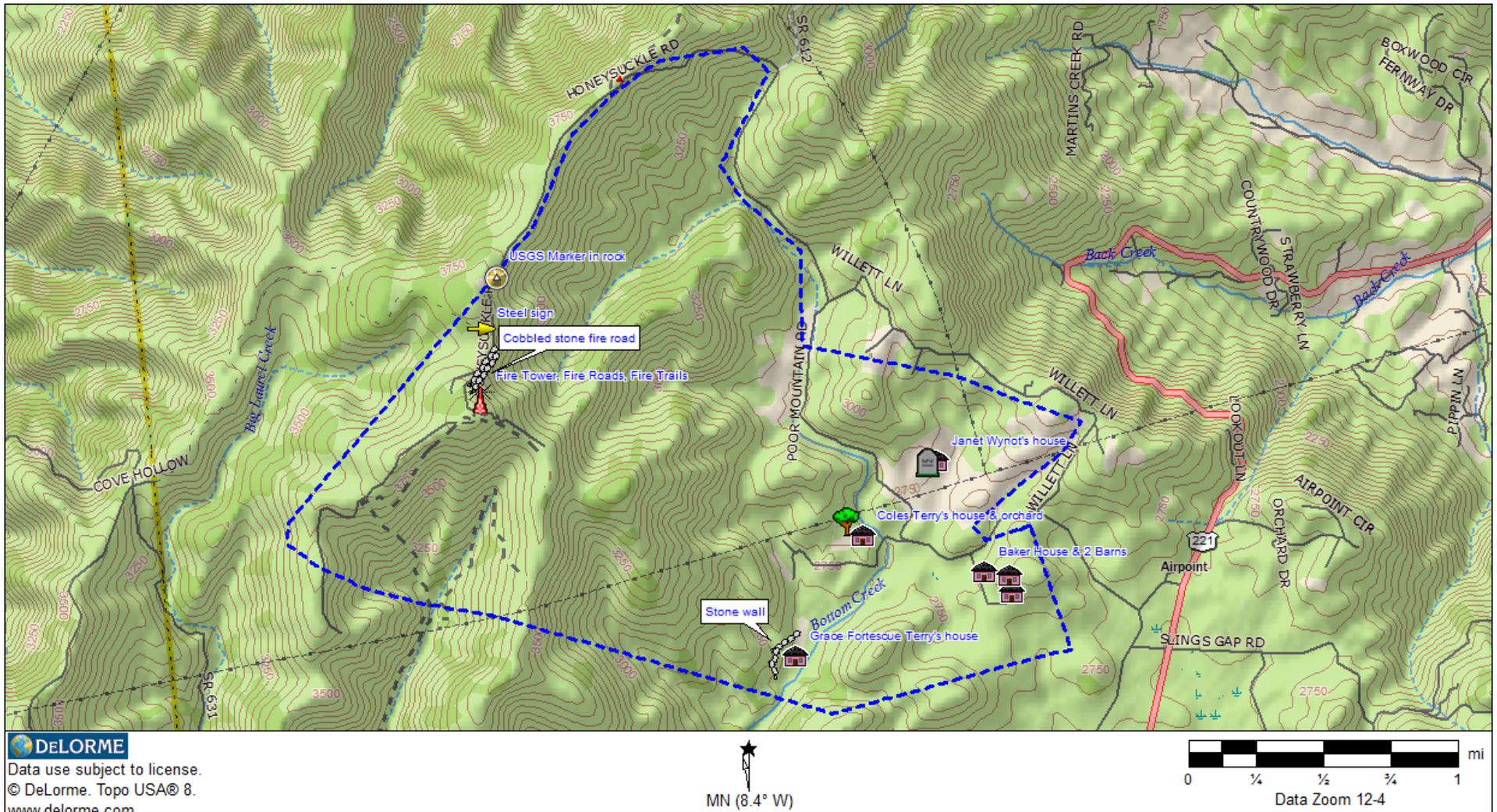
540-772-2004  
(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this district.

To acknowledge, honor, and safekeep the Coles/Terry family heritage, and to protect the breathtakingly beautiful landscapes and cherished historic structures contained within the district from being abused or destroyed by inappropriate industrial development.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes

Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes



### Coles Terry Rural Historic District

Contributing resources include (east to west) → Baker House and two adjacent barns; Janet Wynot (formerly Terry) house; Coles and Terry Family Cemetery; Coles Terry's house and old orchard; Grace Fortescue Terry's house and stone wall; Fire Tower built during Civilian Conservation Corps era, with connecting fire roads and trails; cobbled stone fire road; and, steel sign marking entrance to cobbled road area. Also of interest: USGS Waypoint.