

**APPENDIX H – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
**Series of Meetings – Dickenson County**  
**McClure Meeting**



**APPENDIX H – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – SERIES OF MEETINGS**

Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Corridor Management Plan Meeting  
 At the Binns-Count Community Center in McClure Virginia (Dickenson County)  
 October 23rd 2010 at 1:00 pm

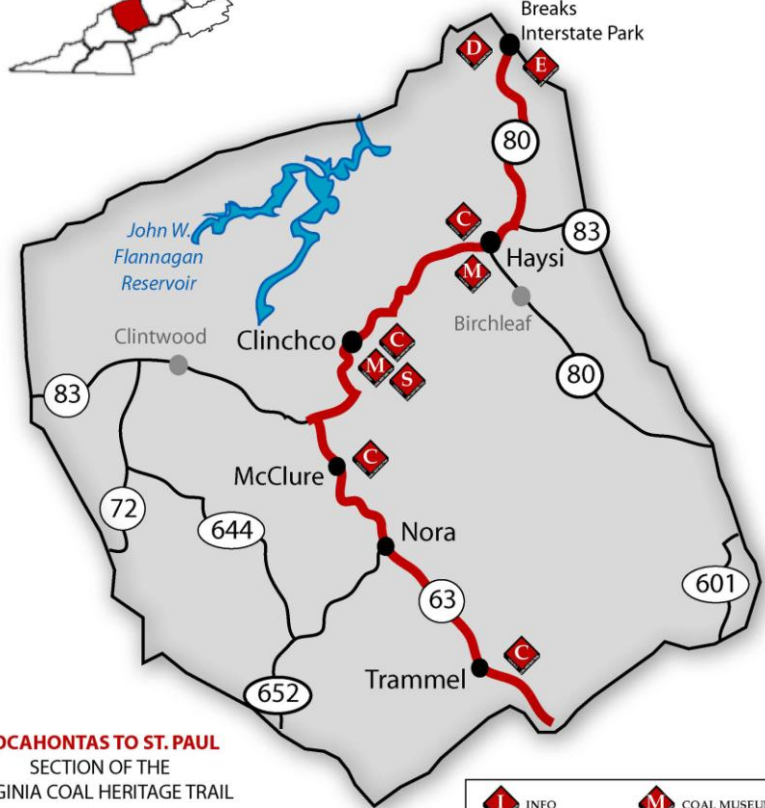
Those attending the meeting included:

- Lelia Bowman
- Marlenia Owens
- Ocie Hammons
- Sarah O'Quinn
- Tina White
- Eddie Bowman
- Mary White
- Gay Smith
- Mason Shearl
- And Wade Rose



*with Dickenson Star*

DICKENSON COUNTY  
 VIRGINIA



To the right is the section of the Byway discussed in the McClure community meeting. Primary coal sites are noted on the map.

**POCAHONTAS TO ST. PAUL**  
 SECTION OF THE  
 VIRGINIA COAL HERITAGE TRAIL



— VA Coal Heritage Trail  
 Map created by WMTH Corp  
 trailsrus.com

<b>I</b> INFO	<b>M</b> COAL MUSEUMS
<b>C</b> COAL CAMP/ MINE	<b>S</b> COAL STATUES/ MEMORIALS
<b>IC</b> INTERPRETED COAL CAMP	<b>VC</b> VISITOR CENTER
<b>D</b> COAL DISPLAYS	<b>A</b> ACTIVE COAL SITE
<b>E</b> COAL EQUIPMENT	<b>O</b> OTHER NOTABLE SITES



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Deaconess Binns

The McClure River Valley Community Development Center has a wonderful history in providing assistance to the community since 1974. In fact, its mission actually began nearly 100 years ago with the start of the St. Stephen's Mission in Nora Virginia led by Deaconess Margaret Binns from 1915 to 1968 to assist those in the Appalachian region of Southwest Virginia. *"1974 marked the beginning of new and different ministry aimed at linking concerns of the church with social, economic, and political issues"*.

Programs over the years have included Vacation Bible School, Community Thanksgiving Celebration, used clothing sales, special youth activities, and a food co-op. In 1978, Medical Missionaries of Mary (based out of Dublin Ireland) moved into the valley and addressed health concerns for the region and in 1985, a health van was purchased to further the outreach.



Programs continued to expand and now include housing rehabilitation, education classes, computer training, and more as well as their original missions. And each year, they host a Christmas Party, providing food and toys for as many as 600 families.



June 21<sup>st</sup> 1983, an explosion occurred at McClure No. 1 Mine of the Clinchfield Coal Company located not too far from the center. Seven miners died in the blast including Mary Kathleen "Kat" Counts, the first woman miner to die in the mines.

*"Kat" Counts 1st woman miner killed in mines*

The building in which the center is located is called Binns-Counts Community Development Center, dedicated in 1987 to both Deaconess Margaret Binns and Kathleen "Kat" Counts.



From 1989 to 1990, during the United Mine Workers (UMWA) strike against Pittston Corporation (Clinchfield Coal Company), the Binns-Counts Center was considered a neutral zone and become a major UMWA operational and support location. Over 400 to 500 strikers from everywhere would filter in and out of the facility. For over nine months, volunteers cooked meals for those miners as well as those at the Tipple. Thousands of meals were served daily with food donated by UMWA families and supporters.

At this time, many miners and volunteers were cited and sent to jail including Sister Bernie who drove the health van. During the strike, she slowed down in front of the Center to drop off medicine. The police cited here for "impeding traffic" and took her off to jail. The Center was even threatened with closure by Virginia State Police as a "threat to public order".



Sister Bernie

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There are many photos and videos taken during the strikes by those living within the community at the time. Appalshop also collected oral histories.

Recommendation:

- David Buchanan and Tena Willemsma ([twill5141@aol.com](mailto:twill5141@aol.com)) would both be two excellent people to interview about the strikes. Another person to interview is Reverend Don Prange ([coramej@aol.com](mailto:coramej@aol.com))
- An excellent resource document about the strikes is Labor In America – “We Won’t Go Back”, UMWA/Pittston Strike 1989-90, The Dickenson Star, Clinchco, VA, 1990.
- Interpretive wayside exhibits need to be developed depicting the following:
  - The impact Deaconess Margaret Binns and her mission had on this region and how it led to the development and continued ministry of the McClure River Valley Community Development Center.
  - Remembrance of the McClure Mine #1 explosion and the seven miners who died including the first woman miner.
  - Information about the United Miners Worker’s (UMWA) strikes in the late 1980’s and how the Center served as a “neutral zone” during the UMWA strike against Pittston Corporation (Clinchfield Coal Company) in 1989-1990.



*Note: Ample space for both parking and interpretive signs on the north side parking area for the Center*

- Will also need Coal Site sign at this location to direct travelers to stop.

