

## Jefferson County: This Place Matters by Rob Aitcheson

May is National Historic Preservation Month. Residents of Jefferson County are fortunate to have hundreds of examples of historic sites, structures, and landscapes that deserve and are being preserved. The Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission (JCHLC) has worked for over



40 years to preserve and promote the County's historic homes, structures and sites and educate residents about their heritage. We as a community witness change all around us as developments, new construction and normal wear and tear endanger some of our most valued resources. Because of this we are forced to choose what can be saved, acknowledge what has been lost and consider what can be done to preserve as much as

possible moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond. As a result, we must think about why certain places matter and are those reasons enough to take up the challenge to protect those resources. Most often it is a group of private citizens who will take on these projects, which can last years and even lifetimes.

It's not just the buildings, homes and built structures that make our County such a culturally rich area. Jefferson County was historically and is an agricultural community that saw some of the first settlements in modern day West Virginia dating back to the early 1700's. Even today, one can drive down many of the historic roads in the County and see the landscape much as it would have appeared in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. This is especially true of the farms that prospered because of the area's rich soil but also the small villages that sprang up to support an agricultural economy. That same landscape and open space was also turned into battlefields during the Civil War. Both the historic buildings and landscape should be preserved.



Many people believe preservation groups oppose all development and often ask "are we to encapsulate our County so that nothing changes for the benefit of historic preservation?" The answer is no, but we can be sensitive to preserving our historic sites that, if lost, can never be replaced. There are ways to develop land, find alternative or adaptive reuse of historic structures, and build capacity for more people to move here without destroying or removing the very characteristics of what makes Jefferson County unique.



Join JCHLC as we celebrate Historic Preservation Month. Take a picture of the historic sites that matter to you and post them on our Facebook page

using **#ThisPlaceMatters** or you can email them to us at [HLCinfo@JeffersonCountyWV.org](mailto:HLCinfo@JeffersonCountyWV.org)

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