



Hollins Spearheads Partnership to Preserve Tinker Mountain

Roanoke, Va. – A local consortium led by Hollins University has purchased property to help protect one of the Roanoke Valley’s most visible landmarks.

Thanks to the financial support of three anonymous donors, Hollins has acquired acreage on Tinker Mountain in southern Botetourt County. At the same time, the Western Virginia Water Authority and Tinker Mountain residents Lee Hartman and John Brandemuehl have also bought adjoining property on the mountain. In all, approximately 235 acres were purchased from the George B. Lawson family for \$351,959, the largest tract of land to be sold on the mountain in nearly 60 years. The land includes much of the southern face of the mountain and the top one-third of the western side facing Hollins, the area most visible from the Roanoke Valley.

“Our intent is to preserve Tinker Mountain as an undeveloped natural resource for the benefit of the Hollins community and the Roanoke Valley,” said Hollins President Nancy Gray. “As it stood, no land use or zoning restrictions were in place to prevent a buyer from building homes or doing extensive logging there.

“Hollins is fortunate to have worked in concert with an organization and two local residents who share our commitment to protect this treasure.”

Gray added that the Water Authority’s land will become part of the watershed for Carvins Cove, while Hollins, Hartman and Brandemuehl are working with the Western Virginia Land Trust to put a conservation easement on their portion of the property, thus preserving it in perpetuity for the public good.

Located only a couple of miles from campus, Tinker Mountain has been an intimate part of Hollins' cultural life since the school's founding nearly 165 years ago and is the basis for one of its most enduring traditions. "Tinker Day" began just after the Civil War and continues to be held every fall at Hollins; classes are cancelled for the day and students hike to the top of the mountain, where they serenade one another with special songs and skits and enjoy a picnic lunch.

"Hollins has always been characterized by a unique sense of place," said Gray, "and that sense of place – nestled at the foot of Tinker Mountain and surrounded on all sides by the vista of other mountains – has in turn helped to shape the educational experience of the women who have attended here."

Part of the northern Blue Ridge Mountain chain, Tinker Mountain rises 1,000 feet above the Roanoke Valley and attains a maximum height of 2,300 feet as it curves north and west around Carvins Cove Reservoir, which the City of Roanoke sought to protect when it purchased property on the mountain between 1928 and 1948. The mountain received its name from the metal workers, or "tinkers," who mended household and kitchen instruments and were said to have lived there around the time of the Revolutionary War.

To date, the only development on the mountain consists of two houses in the bowl at the top of the southern end, which are not visible from below; an access road to those houses; a 765-kilowatt power line near the southern end of Carvins Cove; and several communications towers on the Interstate 81 edge. The mountain accommodates the Appalachian National Scenic Trail along the entire length of its eastern ridge.

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