



L-R long-time WVLT member Betty Byrne Ware of Richmond, David Maxson, Roger Holnback, Rupert Cutler, State Senator Patricia S. Ticer (D) of Alexandria, Skip Brandemuehl, Lee Hartman. Credit: Trevor Wrayton.

Thanks to a partnership between Hollins University, the Western Virginia Water Authority and landowners Lee Hartman and Skip Brandenmuehl, 235 acres spanning the western face of Tinker Mountain have been preserved from development. Executive Director Roger Holnback and several members of the WVLT board of directors and advisory council, both past and present, played key roles in the preservation effort.

Tinker Mountain rises 1000 feet above the Roanoke Valley and attains a maximum height of 2300 feet as it curves north and west around Carvin's Cove Reservoir. The mountain is located on the southernmost edge of Botetourt County and defines the eastern end of the Roanoke Valley as one of its most visible landmarks. It received its name from the metal workers, or "tinkers", who mended metal household and kitchen instruments and who were said to have lived there around the time of the Revolutionary War.

When the estate of George Lawson put the property, which was divided into four tracts, up for sale via absolute auction, Hollins University took the lead to pull together a group of conservation donors who wanted to preserve the mountain. The late Dr. George Lawson of Roanoke bought the property and it was later owned by his son in Salem and a grandson in South Carolina, who wanted to sell. Hollins was especially concerned about the potential sale because the University literally grew up in

the shadow of Tinker Mountain and because its annual “Tinker Day” hike up to the top has been an important student tradition since the Civil War.

WVLT board member David Maxson led the effort for Hollins and he was soon joined by Lee Hartman and Skip Brandenmuehl, who own property on top of Tinker Mountain.

Thanks to the efforts of board member Bill Hackworth, Roanoke city attorney, former Executive Director Rupert Cutler and Advisory Board member John Williamson, the Western Virginia Water Authority joined the conservation group by committing to purchase that portion of the property draining into Carvin’s Cove. Holnback also played a key role as advisor to the group.

The sale closed on August 30 with Hollins purchasing most of the western upper face of the mountain, the Water Authority purchasing the northwestern toe area that drains Carvin’s Cove and Hartman/Brandenmuehl purchasing the southeastern tract abutting their property. Hollins and Hartman/Brandenmuehl have agreed to put easements on their properties in favor of the WVLT.