The Selu
Living History Museum:

Recommendations for An Appalachian Heritage Education Center

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Radford, Virginia
2001
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the many people who supported and helped with this project. Foremost, our appreciation goes to Ricky Cox, director of the Selu Museum, for participating as co-director of this class project. Ricky helped set the project scope and provided good ideas and guidance throughout the semester. He also accompanied us on our field trips to living history museums. We would also like to give special thanks to Jeff Armistead, director of the Selu Conservancy, for giving ideas and guidance to the team as they developed the museum recommendations.

Mr. Ray Dickerson deserves special mention for helping our team understand what the Selu farmstead looked like in the 1930s. He visited our class and worked with team members, providing vibrant oral history descriptions of Selu.

We would like to express our special appreciation to the Geology Department team that helped translate the planning ideas into the maps in this book. The principal cartographer was Julie Gilfus, with guidance from Dr. Kimbell Knight. Ron Matney also participated in the process of preparing the maps.

Our appreciation also goes to the people who served as “resource people” for our team during the semester: Meghan Dorsett, Planner for Montgomery County; and Dr. Cliff Boyd, archaeologist at Radford University. Other people from Radford University who lent advice and helped in multiple ways include Dr. Grace Edwards, Dr. Stevan Jackson, Dr. Sally Dennis, and Ms. Debbie Brown.

Some of the people from the community people who provided ideas to the team about possibilities for the Selu museum and/or participated in the survey include: Maurice Atkinson, Monica Mangani, and the Radford Chapter of the American Legion. Faline Uber, retired Norfolk school principal, helped brainstorm ideas for educational programs for the Selu museum. Michael Smith provided guidance about fire and rescue safety. Matt Snyder provided help using Auto Cad to prepare the figure showing the layout of the orientation center.

Our class made two field trips to living history museums in southwest Virginia as part of the learning and planning process. We would like to thank Mr. Ross Weeks, director of the Crab Orchard and Pioneer Museum in Tazewell, Virginia, for a wonderful guided tour of the full museum’s facilities and for his interest and advice. We would also like to thank Ms. Karen Becker of the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia for a memorable tour of that museum. In addition, one of our team members visited the Settlers Museum of Southwest Virginia and received helpful advice from its director.

We also want to thank Bethany Blackwell for her input. Bethany started the semester as a team member, but had to drop the class and project midway through the semester.

Funding for this project was provided by a grant from the Radford University Foundation. The support of the Foundation was invaluable for funding the research activities, as well as demonstrating to the research team that Radford University recognizes the value of its work.
Finally, our appreciation goes to Dr. Cheryl Tieman, Chair of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, for supporting Applied Anthropology experiential projects such as this one, and to Ms. Pat Rupe, secretary in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, for the secretarial assistance she provided our student team.

Mary B. La Lone
Radford University, 2001
Chapter 1

The Selu Living History Museum Project: Development, Methodology, and Planning Considerations

By Mary B. La Lone

A piece of regional heritage lies just within the gates of the Selu Conservancy. The site and remains of a tenant farming homestead provides a representative piece of southwest Virginia’s Appalachian farming heritage. This provides Selu with an excellent opportunity to follow and expand upon its mission goals – conservation and education. Conservation of the natural environment would be joined with conservation of the cultural heritage through a heritage museum. These are logical connections since the farming lifestyle required intimate understanding and use of the natural landscape and environment at Selu. The museum would demonstrate how humans were a part of the ecosystem, using the land and shaping a life around it. The development of a farming living history museum as an educational facility provides Radford University with innumerable opportunities:

• for leading an effort to conserve and interpret the region’s cultural heritage;
• for offering educational opportunities to students of all ages (including elementary and high school classes, university classes and internships, and adult and senior learners);
• and for solidifying community ties through outreach and community involvement in the conservation effort.

The university is already taking steps in this direction by appointing Ricky Cox, of the university’s Appalachian Regional Studies Center, to direct the effort to develop a Selu living history museum. Ricky’s vision and efforts laid a substantial groundwork which enabled our applied anthropology research team to then expand upon the planning and put forth the recommendations presented in this report.

Development of the Applied Anthropology Project

While the popular image of anthropology is that it focuses solely on the past, in reality the actual scope of anthropology ranges from the past to the present and even applies anthropological knowledge toward developing projects of value for communities and regions of the present and future. This last focus, on putting anthropological knowledge and skills to work to develop projects of value to people today, is what is known as “applied anthropology.” Applied anthropologists apply their studies and understanding of human behavior and heritage toward organizing and advising on projects of value to the public. This project focused on Selu has provided students with a training opportunity that combines two areas of importance in applied anthropology: 1) anthro-planning, which involves planning spaces/places for people and communities; and 2) cultural heritage education/interpretation, which is an area of expertise and clear employment opportunities for applied anthropologists.
Figure 1.1  The Selu farmhouse as it stood during the first part of the twentieth century. Photo courtesy of Ray Dickerson.

Figure 1.2  Remains of the farmhouse today. The cistern is under the slab to the left of the photograph.

Figure 1.3  Remains of the farmhouse chimney before it was knocked down in spring 2001.
When planning the Spring 2001 Applied Anthropology class, it seemed logical that the experiential learning project should focus on developing a museum plan of potential value to Radford University and the Selu Conservancy. During the previous year, anthropology research teams had applied their efforts toward developing a very successful heritage plan to create a regional Coal Mining Heritage Park (LaLone et al. 2000), and developing a set of recommendations for renovating Wildwood Park based on combined nature and heritage themes (LaLone et al. 2000). The previous projects demonstrated the abilities of undergraduate students to apply their training in heritage projects of regional value, and they provided models for the Spring 2001 class as it carried out its work focused on Selu.

In Fall 2000, Ricky Cox and I discussed the possibilities of having the next Applied Anthropology class project focus on investigating potentials for developing the Selu museum, and we began establishing the framework and scope for the project. The idea behind the applied anthropology project was to provide an actual, hands-on opportunity for the students to enhance their studies of applied anthropology from textbooks by also becoming involved in a real applied project of value to their education and of value to the university. The class experience was structured to simulate the type of experience the participants might actually encounter if they were employed as applied anthropologists working for a consulting firm. Ricky Cox and I served as class project co-directors, organizing the learning activities, guiding the research process, and organizing the pace of activities during the semester. The students were asked to take on the role of a collaborative research team to carry out the assigned project under our guidance and direction.

When the students came on board for the Spring 2001 semester they were given the following charge in the class syllabus:

“Our class will assume the role of an applied anthropology consulting firm that has been commissioned to investigate the possibilities for developing a living history museum at Selu and proposing a set of potential planning ideas for the museum… The class members will be the Applied Anthropologists working as a collaborative “consulting team” to tackle this project. For our class project, we have been commissioned to research/examine the possibilities for developing a living history museum at the site of an old farmstead on the Selu Conservancy; to write-up our findings in the form of a consulting report to be given to RU’s Appalachian Regional Studies Center and Selu Conservancy; and to also present our findings to the university community in a variety of public presentations at the end of the semester… In essence, our class is being commissioned to carry out a professional consulting project…and to produce two tangible products: a written consulting report and a public presentation(s) of our findings. Our class will donate our services for the benefit of the academic learning experience and hands-on training -- this is an excellent example of what is known as ‘service learning’.”

**Project Methodology**

The class project was organized to carry the students through the full process of an Applied Anthropology consulting project within the 15-week semester.
The project started with an orientation stage designed to give the student participants a “sense of problem,” orienting them to the place, the history, the needs, and the planning considerations. As orientation activities, the class research team toured the Selu farmstead site with Ricky Cox, joined by Jeff Armistead, director of the Selu Conservancy. In addition, both Ricky and Jeff made class visits to orient students to Selu history, Appalachian farming lifestyles, and the Selu Conservancy’s planning concerns and considerations. Additionally, Montgomery County Planner Meghan Dorsett made a class visit to orient the research team to the wide range of planning considerations involved in developing heritage parks.

The orientation period also involved reading written materials on the Selu property and on museum studies/planning. The Selu literature survey included Chrisi Leftwich’s volumes of Selu oral history (1990, 1992), Cliff Boyd’s archaeological research at Selu (Boyd and Bowen 1996), and the Selu Conservancy Management Plan (McWhorter and Donnelly 1995). The museum studies literature orientation included the books Museum Basics (Ambrose 2000), Manual of Museum Planning (Lord and Lord 1998), and The Accessible Museum (American Association of Museums 1992). In addition, the class was reading about the history, directions, and scope of applied anthropology from their textbook, Applied Anthropology (Ervin 2000).

The orientation was followed by the research stage in which the team engaged in more in-depth “fact-finding.” The team broke into four groups to delve into research on four topics:

1. The layout and plan for the museum site as a whole; principal researchers: J. Adam Sowder and Samuel Deel.
2. Museum facilities (i.e. restrooms, collection facilities) and site maintenance; principal researchers: Anna Marie Meador and Allison Smith.
3. Exhibition in the Farmhouse Museum; principal researcher: Billy Howard.
4. The museum audience and educational activities; principal researchers: James Bielo and Malinda Flanigan.

Our fact-finding involved searching out multiple types of information sources including literature sources, visual models, and knowledgeable resource people from the university and community.

As part of the research, the team made field visits to view some of the living history museums in southwest Virginia. Through the visits they were able to gain visual examples of the many components involved in living history museum design. The research team first examined the operations of the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia. The Frontier Culture Museum was chosen because it interprets the daily life of four nineteenth-century farmsteads, including an American Appalachian farmstead. Although the Selu museum will interpret a much later time period, focusing on the 1930s, the Staunton museum provided an extremely instructive model for seeing all the elements involved in designing a farming-based living history museum. We were treated to a half-day guided tour by Ms. Karen Becker, who explained the design and operations of the museum from a museum studies point of view. She explained in great detail everything from exhibit design to interpretive activities.

Next, the research team traveled to Tazewell, Virginia, to view the layout and design of the Historic Crab Orchard and Pioneer Park. The Crab Orchard museum was chosen because it represents a smaller heritage museum, one which operates on a scale
more comparable to the one envisioned for Selu. Museum director Ross Weeks guided us on a half-day tour of the museum facilities. The tour included the exhibit hall and outdoor structures, and also enabled us to see the behind-the-scenes operations of the museum work areas and collection storage facility. Mr. Weeks provided detailed discussion of the Crab Orchard museum and also lent his expertise to answer questions that the research team posed about potential recommendations for the Selu museum.

In addition, one of our team members, Billy Howard, visited the Settlers Museum of Southwest Virginia, and received similar informative treatment and advice.

These site visits helped the research team see the overall, holistic design of heritage museum sites and the planned flow patterns that guide visitors through the museum experience. It enabled them to see the details and strategies of living history exhibit, gallery, and site design, as well as the role of signage, benches, self-guided tour pamphlets, and rest facilities. It also heightened their knowledge that museums are more than what the visitor sees – museum design includes important considerations involving the design of collection storage facilities and staff work areas. The field visits enabled the research team to visualize actual working museums, and to formulate ideas for applying similar museum design features for heritage interpretation at Selu.

![Figure 1.4](image)

Figure 1.4 The student research team.

From left to right: Anna Marie Meador, J. Adam Sowder, Malinda Flanigan, Billy Howard, Samuel Deel, Allison Smith, and James Bielo.

Another major component of the research stage was to incorporate oral history memories of the Selu farmstead into the design process. Mr. Ray Dickerson, a former resident of the farmhouse, described the farmstead in detail during a class visit.
(2/28/2001). He also drew us a map of the farmstead layout based on his memories (see Chapter 5 for his map). Billy Howard followed up with an interview with Mr. Dickerson at his home. During the interview, he learned about the interior layout of the farmhouse, as well as daily life activities regularly carried out by Mr. Dickerson’s family while living in the house. Mr. Dickerson also volunteered to meet us at the Selu site and help the research team identify and mark the locations of the actual farmstead structures. This oral history component helped the team flesh out the specifics of Selu farm structures, which they then incorporated into the interpretive aspects of their museum recommendations.

An applied anthropology approach to planning strongly advocates involving the community in the planning process. For this reason, our team members were encouraged to seek out “resource people” from inside and outside the university who could share their ideas and areas of expertise with the team. Ricky Cox played a dual role, as project co-director and valuable resource person, especially sharing his knowledge on the topic of Appalachian farming technology. He also joined enthusiastically in brainstorming ideas for a multipurpose orientation center: a first stop where visitors would become oriented to Selu and the museum, a staging area for school groups to begin their visit, and a rest stop providing seating and cover from rain as well as restroom facilities. Jeff Armistead served as a primary resource person, answering student inquiries about the Selu Conservancy and brainstorming ideas with team members during the semester. He especially helped on the topics of possible rerouting of the road, placement of drainage fields, insurance issues, and he shared his excellent idea for planting a corn maze as a fun and educational feature. Further discussion of the road, orientation center, and other features mentioned here will appear in Chapters 3 and 4. Cliff Boyd, Grace Edwards, and Sally Dennis also assisted the students with informative discussion on a variety of topics.

Similarly, resource people from outside the university lent their knowledge and suggestions to the research team. One team member, James Bielo, conducted a number of interviews with people from the Radford community about what they might like to see and do as visitors and/or volunteers at the Selu museum. James also designed a survey asking people to indicate the types of facilities and activities they would recommend for the museum. The survey was administered to 180 people. The sample included university students in multiple Anthropology classes, and also community members associated with the Radford Chapter of the American Legion. Analysis of the survey results appears in Chapter 2 of this report. Team members also sought out information on fire and safety issues from Michael Smith, a person experienced in rescue safety, and ideas for educational activities from Faline Uber, a retired elementary school principal.

Around the ninth week of the semester, the research team shifted into the analysis and presentation stages of the project. We held a series of in-class brainstorming sessions in which team members shared their research ideas and jointly contributed toward the development of a recommended plan for the museum site and recommendations for heritage interpretation exhibits and educational activities. The final step for our class consulting team involved preparing the written recommendations presented in this report. Team members were responsible for writing the chapters corresponding to their principle areas of research, but the chapters in this report also reflect the collaborative ideas developed by the team as a whole.

We especially want to credit the valuable collaborative assistance we received from Radford University’s Geology Department during this project. In order to represent
the anthropology team’s design plans in a visual format, we turned to a Geology team for their expertise in cartography. Julie Gilfus, a graduate student in Geology, worked in collaboration with Dr. Kimbell Knight to prepare a set of maps for our report and presentations. Julie assisted us in translating the design ideas into visual form by preparing two maps, one showing an overview of the museum site and a second map showing the proposed museum facilities. These two maps appear in Chapters 2 and 4. The maps have been especially valuable accompaniments for this report and our presentations on the project results. These maps represent one part of a wider data base that Dr. Knight is developing for the Selu property.

In addition to this written report, the team shared its work with the Radford University community by presenting an Undergraduate Student Forum session on the Selu Living History Museum Project. The final presentation of the team’s work will take place at a meeting of the Selu Steering Committee on April 27, 2001.

Planning Themes and Considerations

Four important themes run through the recommendations presented in this report. The first theme is the potential of the Selu living history museum as a center for regional and Appalachian heritage education. As Grace Edwards noted in the Radford University video on Selu, the 1930s time period is a good time period for heritage interpretation because it still represents “recoverable history.” The university has the opportunity to document the Selu heritage through oral history and folklore research from some of the former residents such as Mr. Ray Dickerson. We discovered through our research that the Selu museum has chosen a unique interpretive niche. While other farming-based museums exist, none have chosen to interpret the 1930s. As Ricky Cox has emphasized, the 1930s is an extremely important time period in regional and American history since it represents the Depression era and the era when farming lifestyles were undergoing technological change.

The second theme running throughout this report is the complementary of blending heritage and nature conservation at Selu. As mentioned earlier, the focus on interpreting farming life at the farmstead represents the cultural use of the natural environment at Selu. Many academic departments at Radford University may want to participate in development and interpretive activities at the farmstead. Anthropology and Appalachian Studies are clearly interested in the possibilities for student education and museum internships, as would be History, Biology, and many other departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. The possibilities of faculty and student involvement in different aspects of museum organization, interpretation, and management are wide.

In addition, our recommendations include making use of the beautiful landscape by providing plenty of benches and rest areas along the museum walking tour so that patrons can appreciate nature as well as history. We also felt that some of the signage along the walking tour should focus on nature in addition to history. For example, signage at the kitchen garden could describe the plants under cultivation and their cultural uses. In addition, the juxtaposition of the heritage museum with the grasslands trail and natural area offers a smooth transition from cultural to natural interpretation and signage, as well as offering a linked trail system between the two areas.
It should be pointed out that preserving natural “sight lines” was a foremost consideration when planning the museum site layout. The team walked the museum site and purposely chose the location for the parking lot on the basis that the surrounding trees and hills would block it from view from either the Retreat Center or the historic interpretive area. We chose the site because we did not want cars to intrude on these other locations. Sight lines also were an important consideration when choosing the location for the orientation center, in addition to the need to place the orientation center close to the parking. As the research team stood on the chosen knoll, we recognized that the view from the orientation center provided a stunningly beautiful view onto the historic area, a perfectly enticing first view of the farmstead. Similarly, sight lines to the beautiful surroundings were a primarily consideration when recommending locations for placing benches along the museum trail loop.

In line with conservancy guidelines, we approached the museum as a heritage center that provides educational opportunities for the university and community while having a relatively “low impact” on the environment. Ricky Cox set the scope by indicating that the Selu museum would differ from most privately-run museums by limiting itself to being open at specified times, probably on a by-appointment basis. We anticipate that the audience will primarily come to the museum as individuals, as school groups, or as small community groups (such as church or civic groups). The museum would draw up a set of guidelines for group visits, such as encouraging the groups to carpool to the museum. We do feel that the museum will need to reach out to the Radford community, and maintain ongoing interest, by holding a few small festival and educational events each year, and we provide some suggestions in Chapter 6, but these can be controlled and spaced out. Consultation with the Frontier Culture Museum, Historic Crab Orchard, and Explore Park should provide additional information on how to structure small heritage events so as to minimize their impact.

A third theme, and an important feature that we especially wove into the planning, is the multipurpose uses of many of the facilities recommended for the museum. For example, the orientation center that we recommend would service both the museum and other nearby areas within the Selu Conservancy. It is designed and located so that it can serve as a first orientation stop and staging area for museum visitors. Located next to the parking lot, it would serve as a museum orientation focal point, a place for visitors to get a general understanding of the museum layout and history through exhibits, and where they could pick up a self-guided tour pamphlet and other information. Since some school groups may come to Selu on a bus, the orientation center would provide a staging area where they could receive an orientation and be broken into smaller manageable groups before going out into the historic area. It would provide a rest and comfort area for museum patrons, a place where they can sit under shelter, get a drink of water, have a picnic, and use restroom facilities. But the beauty of the orientation center is that it would serve more than just museum patrons. It might also be used as a general welcome center for the Selu Conservancy as a whole. Additionally, it would provide a place for groups working and studying in the grasslands to get out of the sun or rain, sit down and rest, and extend their stay because of the availability of restroom facilities. The ideas for the orientation center are developed in much further detail in Chapter 4 of this report. The parking area also provides the possibility of multiple uses since it is located in close proximity to the grasslands natural area and not far from the rope course. It could also
provide overflow parking for the Retreat Center and Science Barn for visitors willing to take a short hike while enjoying the natural beauty of Selu.

Additionally, the self-guided tour and trail loop at the museum site will not only serve visitors coming for the museum, it will also offer recreational and education enhancements for visitors to the Selu Retreat Center and Science Barn. Although their main purpose for coming to Selu might not involve the museum directly, the trail system will provide an enjoyable recreational break during the free time between conference or study activities.

A fourth important theme is providing accessibility to a wide range of visitors, including the old, young, and handicapped whenever feasible. This is especially evident in the recommendations presented for facilities in Chapter 4.

**Organization of the Report**

The research team addresses a wide range of topics in this report. Identifying the potential user groups is an important starting point in museum planning. James Bielo addresses this topic in Chapter 2. Through interviews and survey techniques, he identified potential university and community patrons and the types of activities/facilities that those patrons would like to see at the Selu museum. Identification of potential patrons and volunteers is important so that museum planning can be effectively guided to meet the needs and desires of those groups. These groups can also serve as important volunteer resources, such as personnel to participate as heritage interpreters and docents.

Chapter 3 presents a holistic view of the entire museum site. J. Adam Sowder and Samuel Deel discuss the team’s recommendations for the layout of the site. The design is intended to present the museum visitor with a smooth flow pattern from the parking lot, to the orientation center, then around the farmstead on a looped trail. A self-guided tour can be taken along the loop trail, guiding the visitor around the site through interpretive discussion on signs and a tour pamphlet. From the orientation center, the tour starts at the marked foundations of the old barn, then loops around the farmhouse passing numerous outbuildings and the kitchen garden, down to the pond and corn maze, then back up to the more recent structure currently housing hay (designated the hayshed rather than corncrib in our descriptions in order to distinguish it from the 1930s era granary), and then returning back to the orientation center and parking area. This chapter also presents our recommendation for rerouting the road so that traffic is directed around the museum site rather than directly through the middle of the museum. Preservation of an historic ambiance and safety issues are among the primary reasons for this recommendation.

Chapter 4 focuses on recommendations for facilities at the museum. The chapter covers facilities deemed important for visitor comfort as well as recommendations for museum site and collection maintenance. Anna Marie Meador and Allison Smith researched the abundant museum studies literature covering museum facilities, then applied that research specifically to the design of the Selu museum. Their discussion covers a wide range of topics including recommendations for visitor comfort facilities such as restrooms, drinking fountains, and benches, recommendations for collection storage and staff work areas, and recommendations for a multiple-purpose orientation center.
Chapter 5 focuses on exhibition within the Farmhouse building. Billy Howard interviewed Mr. Ray Dickerson to gain a good picture of the interior design of the farmhouse and the layout of the exterior farmstead buildings during the 1930s. He also conducted research on typical farmhouse furnishings of the 1930s time period. He then applied the oral history and research data toward developing recommendations for exhibits within the Selu Farmhouse museum. The recommendations include mixing different exhibition styles (hands-on as well as more static displays) and using a mixture of old and reconstructed furniture rather than solely using antiques.

Chapter 6 concludes our report with an examination of some potential heritage education activities that might take place at the Selu museum. Malinda Flanigan describes a number of activities ranging from fun things that school children might enjoy, such as a hands-on experience pumping water or playing with 1930s period toys, to the educational performances by costumed interpreters that adults often associate with living history museums. The list is not intended as all-inclusive, but is intended to demonstrate the wide range of possible interpretive activities that would be both engaging and educational. One of the team’s strong recommendations is the development of museum pamphlets to guide the visitor around the farm site and through the Farmhouse museum. Since visitors like to walk away with tangible products, and pamphlets also serve to spread the word about the museum’s activities, we recommend that the museum develop a number of different pamphlets and educational materials geared to different age groups and interests.

This Selu Living History Museum Project, conducted as a collaborative effort by the Spring 2001 Applied Anthropology class, has provided the student participants with experiential training modeled on professional-level work. It has also provided a memorable learning experience. As James Bielo told the audience at the conclusion of the team’s Undergraduate Student Forum presentation, he has enjoyed being a participant in the museum planning, and now he hopes to be able to return to Radford University in a few years in a different role, to enjoy the Selu living history museum as an alumni patron. He expressed the sentiments of the entire research team.
In Appalachian culture today, there is an overwhelming shift taking place from the family-oriented, small town, land-attached ambiance to a more mainstream, industrialized, urbanized society. The region is inching closer to no longer existing as a cultural enclave, but instead, being permeated by an America hungry for profit and focused on development. Efforts are being made to preserve the rich, cultural heritage of the Appalachian region that range from igniting coal mining memories to the revival of bluegrass music. However, for Appalachia’s history to reach full representation, there needs to be more attention paid to the fundamental, day-to-day, farming lifestyle that dominated most of the area’s population for more than a century. Such an opportunity has arisen just outside of Radford, Virginia, at what is now the Selu Nature Conservancy, on a site that use to be an authentic Appalachian farmstead.

From cooperating efforts between Selu and the Radford University Foundation it has been proposed that there be a reconstruction of the farmhouse and its surrounding features to mirror how the family that lived there existed during the 1930s. This task is being undertaken so that the farmstead can function as a living history museum for scheduled groups to experience Appalachian farm life as it once was. The purpose of this chapter is to bring to light how important, and absolutely necessary, it is to give this special gift to those who wish to keep the cultural torch of Appalachia alive. In addition, the carriers of this torch will be identified and why the potential opportunity that waits at Selu is promising for them.

Living History at Selu: Importance and Promise

The significance of a living history museum at Selu begins and ends with the word education. However, this educational opportunity is not limited to, although it does include, those still a part of local learning institutions. This opportunity reaches out to all who wish to recapture or discover a culture that has now all but vanished. The knowledge of how an Appalachian farming family lived in the 1930s is something that should be available to everyone from elementary history students to retired community members who still cherish the culture of their childhood.

Museum patrons would be exposed to the household duties of men and women, adults and children. They would be able to take part in making the various products that were made on the farmstead, things that in modern times are just another item on the grocery list. Groups coming to the museum would get to see how a 1930s farmstead was organized, both inside and surrounding the main house. Farm tools, crops, recreational activities for the kids, and occasionally the animals that were hunted, all are a part of Selu’s plan to illustrate Appalachian farm living. Other features like how the garden was
set up and what was grown, how the cistern worked, where they kept animals and which ones were likely to be found are all things that Selu will be able to offer.

When talking with local residents who were young boys and girls living in Appalachia during the 30s about the possibility of a museum, warm nostalgia, fond memories, and the anticipation of revisiting that chapter of their lives permeates their voices. Conversations with those who are boys and girls living in Appalachia today suggest that the chance to see life in the area as it once was and to understand the stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents is an exciting idea, one they want very much to come to fruition.

This last sentiment of local youths is of paramount importance to family life, and something that Selu has the prospect of rendering. The generation gap that currently exists between the youth, their parents, and their grandparents is quite possibly the largest of any in Appalachia’s history. By recreating the culture of many grandparents’ youth, Selu will be helping to narrow the distance that changes in the social fabric have created. Allowing this culture to be viewed and experienced by the grandchildren of today, Selu’s living history museum would be nurturing a connection between generations that is long overdue.

Apart from Selu’s potential as an educational tool and its capability of bringing generations together, the living history museum would offer an experience unlike any other that can be found in this part of southwest Virginia. Some may pose the question, “Well, what about that farm museum they have at Ferrum College?” The answer to that is quite simple. Although the Blue Ridge Farm Museum does depict an Appalachian farmstead, the time period portrayed is the early 19th century, over 100 years before that which would be at Selu. Here, then, it is easy to see that there will be a totally different educational experience at Selu and, again, the rare opportunity for younger generations to gain a better understanding of their elders. In short, because of the cultural change that occurred from 1800 to 1930, due to things like the Civil War, new technology, the abolition of slavery, new farming techniques, evolved social roles for women and children, Selu will be bringing forth an entirely unique experience.

Selu’s living history museum, in addition to all that has been discussed thus far, will be a shining demonstration of the outreach that Radford University is known for. By providing an outlet for student learning and for community members to join in the knowledge of an ancestral culture, the university wears its commitment to reaching beyond campus walls to help teach on its sleeve. Aside from furthering the central theme of education, the resulting outreach of a museum at Selu would make community involvement a factor in Radford’s effort to strengthen bonds between itself and the surrounding population. This benefit to having the living history museum at Selu is one that embodies one of the key elements to Radford University’s success, integrating the community in the learning process and not placing boundaries on how or where something has to be taught.

To those who have not had the opportunity to experience or study one of America’s most treasured and resourceful cultures, a living history museum based on a 1930s farmstead would be a totally eye-opening encounter. And, to those who have been exposed to Appalachia in its current state, the chance to see a historical snapshot of an era that helped to mold modern Appalachian culture is one that will not be passed up. The living history museum at Selu holds the promise of a unique education that is not
available to the region at present. The promise of a farm museum also holds an opportunity for young and old to gain a better appreciation for their relationship and for the university to show its unwavering commitment to take learning to new levels.

If You Build It, They Will Come

After answering why having a living history museum at Selu is important, who exactly is going to come to the museum? At first glance, it may appear as though the pool of museum patrons is very shallow, when in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Below, there is a group-by-group identification of who the primary users for this museum are going to be and what to expect from each one. The listing is by no means a comprehensive one; however it does represent the locus of who is most likely to visit a living history museum at Selu. Perhaps the most important thing to remember when going through this listing is that all these groups share a common bond: museum aspirations of getting a hands-on, up close immersion into the culture of Appalachian farm life in the 1930s.

School Groups: Educating the youth of Appalachia on their heritage is the utmost objective for the museum. There is a wide range grade levels that the museum would be beneficial for, ranging from second graders all the way to seniors in high school. A trip to the museum by a local school would be in conjunction with history classes that they are taking, and would provide a practical example of what they are reading about in a textbook. Or, as is the case with many, being exposed to knowledge that is totally lacking from textbooks.

Nearby county schools would be the primary target of the museum, although no restrictions should be placed on what schools are able to make an appointment at Selu. Included in this list would be Montgomery County, Radford, Pulaski County, Floyd County, Wythe County, Giles County, Christiansburg, and Blacksburg school systems. The most practical way to handle bringing the groups would be by individual history classes for the larger grades and by entire grade level for the smaller size grades. However, even the grade levels with the fewest number of students are going to exceed the current guidelines of the conservancy of 50 people per day. For this reason, the recommendation is made that that number be adjusted when dealing with school children, as well as other groups that will be discussed shortly.

School buses would transport the children in (the best way to handle parking these buses will be discussed in chapter 3). In terms of how to lead the students through the museum, it will work best if one grade goes at a time. If there is enough staffing available, grades should be split into equal groups, with their tours beginning from several different locations so they are not all at the same place at the same time. And finally, schools should be required to have enough teachers and chaperones along on the museum tour to accommodate the splitting up of students into groups. The second major group, summer camps, is very much related to this first one in terms of age range, size, and purpose of visiting.

Camp Groups: Summer camps have long been a place where children, usually aged five to fourteen, can gather as an organized group from June until September when they cannot be in school together. Organizations that run these camps have games and
activities for the kids to participate in, as well as trips to pools and recreational facilities. However, another item on their itinerary is to take field trips to various places. And, in the midst of the normal, everyday summer activities, Selu would provide an excellent opportunity for these camps to incorporate an educational factor into their schedules. Seeing how the farmstead operated for both children and adults during the summer months would provide an excellent comparison to the lifestyle of today’s kids.

Locally, the Christiansburg Recreation Department, Montgomery County Parks and Recreation, and the YMCA are the primary localities for summer camp programs. All three organizations, according to individuals who are in charge of running each camp, are enthused at the possibility of having this resource open to them. A legitimate worry here would be that children who come to Selu with their school might not want to come again with their camp. However, the changing exhibits, which are discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5, and seasonal differences of the museum would ensure an avoidance of duplication for these children. Consequently, using that very same argument poses a great asset to bringing the Selu experience to summer camp groups. Those children who were not able to go with their class or their grade in school, and who were disappointed from missing out, would be able to see Selu for the first time with their fellow camp members. For these reasons, summer camps are viable and valuable potential users of a living history museum at Selu.

**College Students:** Having identified two groups from the younger age bracket, it is important to begin pointing out the diversity of available museum patrons. With the proximity of both Radford University and Virginia Polytechnic and State University (as well as other schools who would likely be interested in coming to Selu from relatively nearby, for example Roanoke College or Ferrum College), college students make up a serious percentage of potential museum goers.

To use Radford as an example, the educational opportunities that Selu could offer would coincide very well with the curriculum in various history and Appalachian-oriented classes. Among these different classes would be United States History Since 1877, Appalachian History, Virginia History, Appalachian Cultures, and Appalachian Geography. Also, classes such as Economic Anthropology which focuses part of its class material on how Appalachians “made ends meet” during the first part of the 20th century would find Selu as a complimentary tool to their course of study. Other universities in the area, like Virginia Tech, who offer similar and other related courses could use Selu as a pragmatic example for what they are teaching inside the classroom.

These college groups would range in size from 10 to 30 or 40, depending upon how many students were in a given class. Radford University, in particular, would benefit greatly from having such an excellent example of Appalachian farm life in the 1930s so close at their disposal. One way that this benefit can be realized, which would also help the museum, is to allow students to help out at the museum. Younger students who are just beginning their exposure to Appalachian culture are willing volunteers to help in arranging exhibits and other, fundamental aspects of museum life. More experienced students, especially those wanting to pursue a career in museums, could be offered class credit or an internship as an interpreter or guide at the museum. This heightened involvement of students with the museum would further enhance Radford’s reputation as
a university dedicated to letting its students learn through practice, not just from reading a text or taking notes.

**Church Groups:** Shifting the focus from students to community members, a living history museum at Selu would be a perfect spot for local churches to take groups from their congregations. Church fellowship is an extremely important aspect of Appalachian religion, and one way in which many churches approach this is by going, as a group, to different attractions. Selu, because of both its proximity and its content, would serve as a unique resource for church groups.

Not only would these groups be interested in the lifestyle of the period, they would also want to visit Selu to see how Appalachians in the 1930s incorporated Christianity into their culture. Undoubtedly, 21st century Christians have a desire to understand where their religious roots came from and how they developed. Selu would offer them the chance to see a segment of this development and how rural Christianity was a part of Appalachian culture between the two World Wars.

To notify churches of this opportunity, announcements could be placed in church bulletins, which are read every Sunday during service. This would allow Selu to present itself to any number of churches with minimal effort expended, and would allow the initial presentation to the entire congregation to come from someone within, not a representative from the museum. The size of church groups would of course vary with the size of the church that is coming, but from talking with local pastors, sizes would range from 10 people anywhere to 40 or 50. Also, church groups would come both as adult groups, youth groups, and combinations of the two. For this reason there would need to be a variety of activities available, to satisfy the needs of all ages included. Options for these activities are found in chapter 6. Also found in chapter 6 are details on a Sunday dinner that would be of particular interest for church groups that would make their visit to Selu following Sunday service.

**Community Groups:** Along the same line of community thought, there are a number of local organizations that would be interested in a living history museum at Selu. The following are four examples of this type of museum patron, and would most likely come in groups varying in size from 10 to 20 individuals:

- The American Legion
- The VFW
- Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution
- Lions’ Club

As these groups gather together for both their monthly meetings and regional chapter meetings, they could include a trip to Selu into their agenda. This initial thought was fortified after speaking with members from some of these organizations. Members of both the American Legion and the Lions Club were very excited about the idea of having
a living history museum as a place for their organizations to go to break up the monotony of area and chapter meetings.

These groups are of special interest to Selu because they represent a number of those individuals in the community who were children during this time, many who spent this time of their life in Appalachia. This rare occasion that Selu has to give the cherished culture and childhood memories back to these men and women should not be passed up. In addition, many members of these organizations can offer priceless resources such as their time, knowledge, experience, and material culture (e.g. farm tools from the time) to the museum.

Alumni/Retreat Center Visitors: The final primary user group that will be explored here consists of Radford University alumni and other visitors to the Selu Retreat Center. As they gather at the Retreat Center, alumni and other visitors would have yet another option open to them – in addition to Big John’s Laughing Place, Richard’s Riverfront, the Grasslands Trail, and other current Selu features – in the living history museum.

Radford alumni would have the opportunity to see what their alma mater is doing in the 21st century to educate their students and the surrounding community. Alumni are also a prime source for donations to the Radford University Foundation, and, by enjoying what Selu has to offer, they can direct their monies toward helping the museum. This assistance would definitely ease the financial burden of the museum and allow it to grow and add new features to what would already be a rich illustration of culture. Other visiting groups to the Retreat Center would also gain great benefit from enjoying the cultural history and experience of the Selu museum. From the porch of the Retreat Center, the site is in plain view, which will serve as an open invitation for alumni and others to step out of the present and into 1930s Appalachia.

What the People Have to Say

We now know who most, but not all, of the users of Selu’s living history museum are going to be. But, the question now is what do these people want to see at the proposed museum? The complete answer to this question is contained in several chapters of this report; however the beginnings of that answer will be put forth here. An opening to what patrons want out of their museum experience comes in the form of survey data that was collected among community groups and college students. The survey was given to 180 people, the majority going to college students in introductory and upper level anthropology courses, with the rest going to members of the Lions’ Club and American Legion. The results from this survey are given in Figure 2.1 on the next page.
From this preliminary data, it is easy to see what is most important to potential museum users and what is least important. Restrooms (Chapter 4), water fountains (Chapter 4), and trails (Chapter 3) were the three most requested features of the ones offered. Conversely, vending machines were the least popular of all possibilities offered on the survey. In addition to these choices given on the survey, there was also a section requesting what each person particularly wanted to see and experience at a farm living history museum. Common responses in these sections were farm animals, information on what crops were grown, cultivation techniques, opportunities for hands-on activities, and information on household responsibilities of women and children.

The information from this survey is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what users want to see in a living history museum at Selu. As stated before, there is more detailed information about the activities and opportunities that will be open to museum patrons in later chapters. The important notion to take away from this opening data is that for Selu to form a successful living history museum, it needs to understand what the people who are going to be coming to the museum want to experience when they come. The emphasis needs to be on what the community and the users want, not what designers of the museum think they should be exposed to.

**Conclusion**

The very idea of bringing a unique educational resource to students of all ages and community members should be enough to ensure the fulfillment of Selu’s living history vision. However, if it is not, there are numerous other reasons for this project to be
initiated. For starters, it will help to bridge the generation gap that currently divides many families in the area, with youths not being able to relate to or understand the lifestyle that their grandparents experienced. Also, these same grandparents can paint only so much of a picture in their grandchildren’s minds; Selu’s living history museum would help them to carry that explanation to the next step by showing how they grew up.

Secondly, there is no other museum that offers this particular experience anywhere else in the region. The 1930s are a time period that is in danger of losing its surviving members, as well as the knowledge and culture that they carry with them. Selu can help to preserve that. If those are still not enough for convincing, one could look to the outreach opportunity that Selu presents. Intertwining student learning with community involvement is a special chance that Selu has in front of it.

Beyond the basic necessity for a living history museum at Selu, there also exists a desire by members of the local population for it to be realized. Potential users of the museum who have been exhilarated at the idea of having this resource available range from school teachers wanting to show their students history not just tell them about it, to college students with an earnest desire to preserve a dying culture. Also community organizations wanting to revisit a time in their life that has long since passed have been enthused by the opportunity to do so. Many of these groups also constitute resources for the museum to tap into for volunteer help, donation of relevant items, and financial assistance.

More important than the fact that there are people out there who want to see a living history museum at Selu happen, are the wants of these people to have certain things at this museum. While this chapter gave an introduction into what some of those things are, the remainder of this report will partly be aimed at completing that aspect of museum planning. Hopefully this chapter has prepared you for that journey into what Selu’s living history vision can and should encompass. All of this comes together to exhibit the necessity, promise, and potential of what is perhaps the most unrivaled, inspiring educational tool that Radford University has been presented with in recent history.
This chapter will take you on a self-guided tour of the amazing landscape and historical landmarks that make up the farmstead. This will include suggestions on such things as interpretive signs, well-designed, natural flowing trails, and resting areas that facilitate enjoyment of the surroundings. The self-guiding tour will encompass the farmstead and provide a natural and flowing route.

In this chapter we will also provide suggestions how to incorporate needed improvements and alterations to the landscape while maintaining the historical integrity of the farmstead, with the keystone goal of preserving the conservancy. We fully understand the conservancy’s guidelines and hope that our suggestions lead to preserving this piece of Americana while allowing the target audience (see Chapter 2) to experience the beauty of the farmstead firsthand.

Our class team developed a recommended plan for the Selu museum site on the basis of our research and team discussion and planning during the Spring 2001 Applied Anthropology class. The map (Figure 3.1) that has been developed shows an overview of our recommended design for the Selu Museum site.

To accomplish these ambitious goals our suggestions are offered with the safety of the patrons and the land having first priority. One feature for primary consideration is the routing of the main road by which cars travel up and down between the conservancy entrance and the Retreat Center is the existing road that intersects the farmstead site. We recommend an alternate route with the concern being for the users and for the preservation and security of the museum.

Currently the Selu property is entered on an existing gravel road, which runs through the farmstead and continues to the retreat center. The existing road may pose a safety hazard to groups of school children, the elderly, and potentially every museum patron because it will be an extensively used footpath as well as the only way for school buses and other vehicles to travel into the conservancy. The road will also distract from the historic context and integrity of the museum. The goal of a living history museum is to transport museum patrons back in time. The existing road will hinder the sight lines, taking away from the feel of the 1930’s. Another potential problem with the existing road is that great quantities of dust from the road will accumulate in the summer months covering museum patrons and the museum buildings themselves with dust.

For these reasons, we recommend re-routing the main road to follow the route of the current firebreak, and to convert the existing road into a walking path for the Selu museum site. The proposed road could easily be constructed from a road that was
Selu Living History Museum Overview Map

KEY
- Benches
- Property Boundary
- Proposed New Road
- Museum Trail
- Grassland Trail

Designed by: the Spring 2001
Applied Anthropology Class
Created by: Julie Gitkus, Graduate student Engineering Geosciences

Access with easements to public road

Scale in feet: 200' 100' 0' 200' 400' 600'
previously located on the property. The proposed road would loop around the farmstead by following the firebreak that separates the grassland fields. The grade of this area is at an acceptable level allowing for easy construction of the road. Supplies for this road would also be easily attainable. There is a supply of rock already located at the Selu property that would be ideal for the bottom layer of the road. A gravel top layer would then be constructed which is relatively inexpensive in building. Maintenance of the proposed gravel road would also be of little effort. It would be the answer to the problems faced with the existing road. The proposed road would be out of the sight lines, preserve the 1930’s historic context of the farm site, keep dust out of the museum area, and perhaps most importantly it would keep the museum patrons safe.

The existing road would still serve a great purpose to the museum site. It would be gated off on both ends allowing for its use as a footpath. It would also have other functions including as service route for the maintenance and upkeep of the farmstead and as an emergency route for quicker and easier maneuverability to the site. The elderly and handicapped could also be driven directly to the farmhouse museum making it more accessible. Gating this road off would add to the security of the museum site by being a physical deterrence to people and their vehicles. Keys to these gates should be easily available for emergency situations.

![Figure 3.2](image.jpg)

This photo shows the proposed parking lot location.

Parking for the museum would be located at the intersection of the proposed road and the second gate of the existing road. This will keep parking hidden from view of both the museum site and the retreat center because of the location of a tree line, which works as a natural barrier. Suggested parking for school buses would be located by the tree line and the handicap parking would be closer to the orientation center. The parking lot would be constructed of gravel making it inexpensive and easy to maintain. A gravel lot would allow for lower ecological impact, which is important when development occurs at a nature conservancy. The parking lot would have clearly marked entrance and
exit signs so that buses and vehicles can easily turn around and exit Selu preventing obstruction of the flow of traffic and accidents.

The multipurpose orientation center would be located near the parking lot by the handicap parking side. The orientation center would be the main staging, picnic, and information area. It should have a natural design in order to blend in with the surrounding area and historic buildings. The orientation center should be the first stop by the museum patron. Its design and care is of utmost importance because it will be the first thing anyone sees leaving them with their first impression of the museum. The patron will be directed to its location through the use of signs and it nearness to the parking lot. This multiuse facility is covered in great depth in the facilities chapter.

Fig 3.3
First impression. This is the view of the farmstead that the visitor will see when first leaving the orientation enter.

Directing the flow of the museum traffic is a very important issue to be considered in the museum design. Flow of the museum should promote a natural feeling to the patron in order to deter from possible confusion in the movement patterns of patrons from one location to another. Flow of the museum traffic should also exhibit smooth patterns of direction as opposed to harsh lines of movement. One easy way to direct museum flow would be through the use of signs.

Figure 3.4
Example of the type of interpretive sign that could be used at Selu (from the Frontier Culture Museum).
Upon arrival to the Selu Conservancy the museum patron will drive down the proposed, clearly marked road and then into the parking lot. After the patron exits the vehicle they will be directed to the orientation center through the use of signs. The orientation center will be a good staging area and a place for the patron to meet a museum guide. At this location the museum patron would be able to view a map of the museum farmstead and pick up a self-guided tour map.

The patron will then travel through a grassland trail taking notice of the natural beauty of the landscape giving the patron a sense of traveling back in time to the 1930’s. The first stop of the trail will be at the barn site. Here there could be a sign with a picture of the barn. School children and other patrons can use their imagination to picture what the barn could have once looked like adding their experiences and memories to the tour.

The grassland trail will then continue to the hay shed. There should be a bench located by the tall grasses facing the front of the hay shed. The hay shed would be an excellent location for demonstrations and large gatherings of people. The patron will then cross the existing road to the actual farmhouse museum.

From the farm house the patron flow will be directed to the granary and then to the meat house. A bench with a scenic view can be placed in-between these two buildings, as it would be a beautiful place for a rest and to observe the goings on around the museum.

The patron will be directed to the working kitchen garden where hands-on activities will be taking place. This would be another ideal spot for a bench. One of the last locations of the tour will be the refurbished pond. A filled pond would add to the scenic beauty of the farmstead. It would also attract animal life and open the doors to future exhibits and livestock including ducks. Benches placed at the pond would overlook the entire museum area.

The lower field area of the museum site could be used for seasonal events. The upper area by the pond could be a festival area where vendors could set up tents on special event days. This would allow for public use of the museum site while keeping foot traffic around the farmstead to a minimum. A seasonal corn maze could be planted at the lower part of the field near the entrance into the Selu Conservancy (see Figure 3.5). The museum patrons, especially school children could explore the maze and learn about its construction while having a great deal of fun. When the festival area and maze are not in operation the patron will just see a large scenic field. Finally the patron will walk along the service road to the hay shed and back to orientation center for departure.

Figure 3.5 Possible design style for a seasonal corn maze.
Signs will be the main form of communication between the museum and conservancy staff and the public. On the self-guided tour signs should be clearly readable and constructed of a natural material as to not distract from the historic feel of the museum. Signs should be used to clearly label all major features. The signs should also contain historic information from the site. There should be signs located near natural features as well as signs, which explain the rules of the area and public use policies. Finally signs will be the greatest conveyer of knowledge for people on the self-guided tour. Types of signs should include interpretive, labeling, biological, and educational.

The trail through the grassland from the orientation center to the hay shed should be made of gravel. This will mirror the other trails from the grasslands. The other reason that the trail should be made of gravel is that with repeated use a dirt path will turn into mud after rain. The mud will then be tracked all over the museum site and inside the farmhouse museum not to mention messing up the patron’s footwear. The flow around the farmhouse should be directed with signs and follow the natural movements patterns of the patrons.

Benches should be double sided to take advantage of space. They should also be of a natural material mirroring those, which would have existed during the 1930’s. There should be numerous benches around the farmstead to give aid to museum fatigue. Benches will also aid older museum patrons and facilitate larger groups like school children.

Throughout this chapter we have provided suggestions on how to make the farmstead at Selu an attractive and multi-educational location. These suggestions are provided to further the museum experience, while keeping the ecosystem intact. Alterations are suggested as a necessity for the safety and preservation of this historic place. This chapter presents ideas that will ease the patrons’ access to and from the museum with the new proposed road. It will also aid in the overall museum experience with well-designed trails, resting places, and interpretive signs. The self-guiding tour will be an effective means of reducing the operational costs with many other benefits. Overall these landscape design changes are recommended, with the regard that they are vital to the completion and success of this museum.
Chapter 4

Facilities at the Selu Museum

By Anna Marie Meador and Allison B. Smith

This chapter will discuss the handicapped regulations, security, maintenance, and facilities offered at the orientation center and farmhouse museum. Facilities are meant to serve the visitors of the museum. They protect the park from damage and create an image for the park. The better the facilities offered, the happier visitors will be and the greater the likelihood they will return.

Before beginning this chapter, it is important to emphasize that all facilities should be handicapped accessible. The Americans with Disabilities Act has set guidelines that should be applied during the design and construction of any public facility. These guidelines can be found in the Pocket Guide to the ADA (Evan Terry Associate, PC 1997). We understand that cost plays an important role in designing the facilities therefore; it is possible that not all of the ADA guidelines will be met. However, we strongly recommend that facilities such as restrooms, entranceways, and parking spaces should be handicapped accessible. As you read through this chapter, handicapped facilities such as the ones mentioned above will be described.

Multipurpose Orientation Center

We recommend that an orientation center be developed to provide multiple uses for the entire Selu Conservancy. Instead of having numerous structures providing only one use, the center will combine many uses under one roof. According to the survey our team conducted, 71% of those surveyed wished to have an information center, 71% wanted picnic shelters, 63% picnic tables, 84% water fountains and 92% restrooms (see chapter 2). All of these would be included in this multiuse orientation center and thus meeting the needs of many patrons. The orientation center will be beneficial to the Selu Conservancy because of its endless possibilities such as:

1) a focal point for the entryway of the museum area;
2) a welcome center, where visitors can orient themselves (maps and pamphlets) before heading out to the Farmhouse Museum;
3) a rest area, where visitors can seek shelter from the sun, have a place to picnic, and to use facilities (water fountains and restrooms);
4) club meetings, community events, or special activities can be held there.

The orientation center will be located adjacent to the parking lot and behind the existing barn structure at the museum site. These features are shown on Figure 4.1, a map of the museum facilities. It is important to briefly point out that handicapped parking spaces should be of a hard surface such as concrete or blacktop. The amount of
parking spaces also affects ADA regulations. For example, 26-50 parking spaces require two handicapped spaces (Evan Terry Associate, PC 1997). More information on parking is discussed in chapter 3.

The center will be an open-air structure similar to the shelter at Bissett Park (see Figures 4.2). The shelter at Bissett Park is being used in terms of size and facilities only. Unlike the shelter at Bissett, the center will mimic the style of a 1930’s barn.

Figure 4.2 Proposed model for the orientation center (from Bissett Park in Radford); full view of the shelter.

We recommend that cinderblocks be used for the interior walls because of their texture that is easy to repaint (Shattuck 1987). The roof will be constructed of a coated metal, where the rafters will be left exposed for future storage. The rafters are also ideal place to attach lighting. The lighting will be provided by an existing electrical line that will be ran underground to the orientation center (see Fig 4.1). The floor will be of textured concrete to prevent visitors and the staff from accidents. We also suggest that the side of the center facing the museum area be covered with a vertical board to hide that area from visitors and provide a windbreak. Doors will be placed on this side to allow visitors to access the museum site. Because the museum will be hidden from view until the doors are opened, visitors will feel as if they have entered another world. However, if it is decided this wall be covered, this will decrease the amount of total space within the center. Dimensions will have to be increased to accommodate the wall covered. In Figure 4.3, on the following page, we have attempted to design what the orientation center may look like including restrooms, water fountains, picnic tables, and the side that will be blocked off.

We plan on accommodating 100 people at one time. In order to make our visitors comfortable, we suggest the center have restrooms, water fountains, and possibly a vending machine. As mentioned earlier, restrooms were among the most popular with 92% of people requesting them. Water fountains were also a desire of 84% of people surveyed. However, only 47% of those surveyed wished to have vending machines (see chapter 2 for survey results). Restrooms will be located on one side of the center and
Figure 4.3
Diagram of the Orientation Center
opening to the outside. We suggest that there be one restroom for males and another for females and both should be handicapped accessible. Flush toilets will be a likely choice but require a reliable water supply. We plan on using a septic tank system instead of having water carry waste to a sewage treatment plant. In order for a septic tank to be put in, the soil must perc (Sharpe 1994). Currently, there is a high capacity water system that will be coming from the Retreat Center. These pipes will have to be able to withstand cold temperatures and easily drained. A drain field will also have to be created. The likely area for the drain field is down hill from the orientation center, which is outlined on the facilities map (Fig 4.1). Unlike the restrooms at the Bissett Park shelter we do not want to use metal grids during off seasonal activity (Fig 4.4). We feel that metal grids will not be necessary due the lack of vandalism the conservancy has experienced. However, we do feel that the restrooms should be locked during the off-season.

![Image of a septic tank system]

**Fig 4.4 View of metal grids used to protect restrooms at Bissett Park Radford.**

Between the restrooms there will be a small space that could be used for storage. Items such as toilet tissue, cleaning supplies, garbage cans, and maintenance tools could be kept in this area. For the safety of our visitors, we feel that it is important that a first-aid kit, telephone, and fire extinguisher be kept in this area.

Another important convenience to our visitors is water fountains. Water fountains should be located near the restrooms. We suggest that a “hi-lo” fountain be used, where one fountain is accessible for handicapped and the other is a standard fountain (Evan Terry Associate, PC 1997). If vending machines are to be put in, it may be more cost efficient, for us and visitors, to use a less popular soda company that would install a vending machine. However, installing vending machines in a conservancy area may not be ideal solution to accommodate visitors. The survey results reveal that only 47% would like to see vending machines at Selu.

In addition to restroom facilities, picnic tables could also be used under the shelter and possibly outside of the shelter. We recommend that six to eight people be able to sit at one table. If more spaces are needed, loose chairs can be kept on hand and brought out by the facilities management staff. Picnic tables should be sturdy, rust resistant, and able
to withstand weather conditions. Places where skin or food comes in contact should be smooth and wood toxic preservations should not be used (Shattuck 1987). Maintenance will be important in determining the life of the tables. For example, if wood is used, planks will have to be replaced. We suggest that the tables not be permanently bolted down to the floor in case the need arises to move the tables for functions. Instead, the tables could hook to the floor. Considering picnic tables are heavy themselves it is unlikely they will be stolen. Like many facilities picnic tables should also be handicapped accessible. We recommend that one table be set aside for the handicapped. The table should be without benches and at the right level so wheelchairs can fit underneath it (Evan Terry Associates, PC 1990). If this guideline cannot be met, additional handicapped accessible tables should be available by a prior arrangement for groups with special needs.

Also, within the center, we recommend that a map of the entire conservancy be displayed. The back wall of the restrooms or the walls of the side blocking off the museum site can be used to display the map and other exhibits (see chapter 5). The map should be protected with an unbreakable plastic, which should be locked to prevent visitors from damaging the map. Pamphlets could also be kept in this area (see chapter 6). The pamphlets should be secure so they will not be blown away and scatter throughout the area. A sign outlining the conservancy guidelines should also be considered in this area. Signs will be used throughout the site as well. They will be used to help guide a self-tour (see chapter 3), identify buildings, and trails. Signs should be of a similar theme to the style of the site, long lasting, and easily maintained. The signs wording would also need to be kept short and simple, and easily read by using a large font. We suggest photographs or drawings to reduce wording.

It is important to keep this area as well as the entire conservancy trash free. Trash receptacles should be placed in and around the shelter. We suggest using heavy trash receptacles with a concrete case finished in a pebble conglomerate. Heavy trash receptacles will reduce vandalism and are not easily turned over. If the receptacles need to be disguised to fit the 1930’s theme, a wooden frame could incase them. Figure 4.5 shows how trash receptacles and even benches (see Chapter 3) can be disguised in a different time period.

![Figure 4.5 A trash receptacle and bench disguised in another time period at the Frontier Culture Museum in Stanton, Virgina.](image)
Farmhouse Facilities

A handicapped accessible entrance should be provided into the Farmhouse. We suggest that a ramp be constructed off the side of the front porch. Figure 4.6 shows an example of such a ramp and also shows how it can be disguised to suit the style of an era. The ramp could be constructed out of a similar wood as the porch of the farmhouse museum to tie into the 1930’s theme. If necessary another ramp could be provided off of the kitchen. As with all ramps it should not exceed a 5% grade and should be of a hard surface. It is important to realize that the upstairs of the Farmhouse will be inaccessible to handicapped visitors therefore; upstairs displays should be kept to a minimum or be used for storage. The main displays should be downstairs and accessible to all. The downstairs should also have enough clearing space for the handicapped to maneuver properly (Evan Terry Associate, PC).

Figure 4.6 A Handicap entrance at Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park.

The basement of the farmhouse will be the most likely place for a work area. We recommend that a multi-user half restroom be located in the basement for the staff. Only visitors, in emergencies, will be allowed to use this restroom since restrooms are located at the orientation center. The staff restroom will also use the same waterline and drain field for the restrooms at the orientation center as depicted in Figure 4.1.

This work area for the staff would include a desk, chair and plenty of counter space. Space will be very important for working on exhibits and helping to preserve artifacts. Along with workspace, adequate collection space for these artifacts will be needed. Some of this space could be used for the cataloguing, organization, and work on the objects (Burcaw 1983). Some examples of a work area and collection space can be seen in Figures 4.7 and 4.8. The work area shown in Figure 4.7 represents about one-fourth of the work area in one room at the Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park. We would recommend a similar size for the staff at the farmhouse museum, in order for them to have plenty of space to work on exhibits and take breaks. Also from the same museum, Figure 4.8 also shows a good example of shelves, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The final design of the work and collection areas must take into account applicable building codes.
There are many precautions that must be taken into consideration in order to preserve the artifacts obtained. Temperature and humidity are the two most important factors. Since the house is being reconstructed it will have heat and air conditioning; this will help keep humidity down and filter some of the larger particles from the air. Dehumidifiers can also assist in controlling the air. Covering the walls in the basement with plasterboard can also help in controlling some of the humidity. Temperatures
should be kept around 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit. Fans and heaters can assist in the temperature control, however, they should only be used under staff supervision.

Light can also be damaging for the stored objects. Keeping them out of excessive light is very important. This is another reason the work area would be best kept separate. While fluorescent lights are not recommended, they can be used as long as UV filtering covers are over them.

Cabinets, drawers, bins, and shelves used for collections should be lined with cotton or synthetic felt. If the shelves are made of wood, they should be sealed so the acidity from the wood doesn’t affect the objects and they should also be lined with these same materials. Oak should not be used because of its very high acidity and if plywood is used it should be of a high grade.

If boxes are used for garments, nonacid boxes and tissue paper would be used. Figure 4.9 shows an example of collection using boxes from Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park. All cabinets, boxes and doors should be well sealed to keep out dust, insects and mold. Artifacts would also be periodically checked for deterioration (Bachmann 1992).

![Figure 4.9](image.png)

**Figure 4.9 The Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park collections area uses nonacid boxes for garments.**

If building codes do not allow a basement for a staff work area and a collection area there are possible alternatives. As mentioned previously, one of the upstairs rooms could be used for both of these. It would be best if collections could be separate from the work area in the room because of the ways mentioned earlier in this section to preserve artifacts. The science barn at the retreat center is another possibility for the collections area if an upstairs room did not allow for both work and collection areas. If there is space that can be freed in the science barn it too would work well for collections because of it being temperature controlled. If these options are not feasible collections can be stored on campus if necessary.
Security

Potential vandalism problems have been briefly addressed in the above sections. At this time, we would like to address other potential areas of vandal interest. At the present, Selu is not having serious vandalism problems. However, it is important to consider potential vandal problems. Selu will become more known throughout the area therefore; vandalism can occur. If the facilities are protected now, it will lessen the likelihood of having to replace them in the future. Structures made out of wood are the most likely targets of vandalism such as, signs, benches, and tables. If this does happen, we suggest that the vandalism be monitored.

In order to protect the orientation center from vandalism, we recommend that the orientation center have motion sensed lights. Motion sensed lights will detect any unwanted activity and can be used to warn off vandals and thieves. The Farmhouse Museum will require more security therefore; we recommend installing an alarm system. This alarm system could be linked to the caretaker of the retreat center or the local police. Since there is already an alarm system in the retreat it may be cost efficient and easy to extend that system. We feel it is important to consider using shatter resistance glass windows in the Farmhouse to prevent future break ins. Artifacts within the museum should be catalogued when they are being moved so their location is always known, they are not lost and disturbances due to theft could be quickly noticed.

The staff should be trained for emergencies. Phones and first aid kits will be provided in the work area, and as discussed before we recommend them at the orientation center also, in case of an emergency. Fire extinguishers and detectors will also be needed at the museum. Dry chemical extinguishers capable of putting out class A, B, and C fires should be used. The use of the dry chemical will cause minimal damage to artifacts. Ionization sensors are one type of fire detector that would work well for the museum. They are cost efficient and can detect flaming fires that produce less smoke than smoldering ones. Again staff would be trained to use these (Internet 2001).

Insurance on buildings and people will be needed. Students of and those employed by Radford University are already insured on the Selu property but it will have to be extended to visitors. This is currently being looked into and discussed with the commonwealth attorney.

Maintenance

Preventative Maintenance will save money and effort; so future problems should be anticipated. Keeping the site well maintained and clean will deter vandalism and theft, which was discussed earlier. High traffic areas will have to be watched for increasing damage, such as trails (see chapter 3). Trails should be designed in such a way people won’t stray from them causing erosion on the property (Design Standards for Recreation Facilities 1997).

With ongoing maintenance, cost will be a factor. Trash receptacles would be strategically placed to minimize the number of areas it is collected. We suggest several at the orientation center and the museum site and possibly along the trails to minimize littering. The trash would be collected by Radford University maintenance along with the trash at the retreat center. Mowing is already being done at the museum site so it will
only need to be extended to the orientation center and possibly some areas along the trails. Radford University maintenance will also be doing this.

We have recommend facilities including security and maintenance options that will be beneficial to visitors and the Selu Conservancy. However, we want to stress that these are only our recommendations. If the Conservancy feels that some facilities are not the in the best interest of the visitors, then those facilities should be reconsidered. We feel that an orientation center will be an excellent addition to the Conservancy because it combines the needs of all users under one roof (restrooms, water fountains, setting areas, shelter from the weather, signs, and maps).

The importance of facilities cannot be stressed enough. Maintaining the area will give a good park image, deter vandalism and theft, and keep people coming back over time. The security of the park will control future maintenance costs. Offering accessibility to all types of people and awareness in all areas will also create a good park image. The key to survival of such a project is to design and maintain facilities in a way that visitors remain interested and pleased. With the purpose of facilities being able to best serve the needs of visitors the need is obvious.
Chapter 5

The Farmhouse Exhibits

By Billy D. Howard

The Farmhouse is the main building in our representation of an early twentieth century tenant farmstead between, approximately 1935 and 1940. See Figure 5.1 for an illustration of the technical drawing of the proposed farmhouse to be built at Selu. It is a two story, “I House”, with two rooms upstairs, and two rooms downstairs, plus an add-on kitchen. The farmhouse’s associated outbuildings are also included. See Figure 5.2 for the floor plans.

The recommendations for the farmstead exhibits are the result of interviews with informants who occupied the house during those years. Our group researched the history of the time, and held discussions with Selu Museum Director, Ricky Cox, and Selu Conservancy Director, Jeff Armistead. In addition, we received assistance from allied professionals and consulted the community at large.

We are fortunate that both the historical period and the specific cultural context of our representation contain almost unlimited potential for exhibits and displays. Our challenge is to do so in such a manner as to include the participation of the community as the final step in presenting a balanced, aesthetic form. Whether we are interacting with students, community groups, or individual exhibitors, we are interested in their feeling of belonging as an integral part of the museum experience. This is not only sound policy, but also embraces the guidelines set by the Steering Committee for the Selu Conservancy (McWhorter and Donnelly 1995, Guideline #6).

Although the time period of the late thirties is our focus, the eclectic nature of the early twentieth century grants us freedom to include various elements of previous times and therefore, accurately portray the environment and typical daily life on an Appalachian tenant farm. This project also provides an opportunity to utilize the results of previous studies, such as Phyllis Lyle’s study of heirloom plants from that period, the work of Christi Leftwich, “Acres of Diamonds”, reports prepared by Appalachian History 310 (Lyle 1999, Leftwich 1990, 1992), and resources offered by the Appalachian Regional Studies Center, the Anthropology Program, and other departments of the University.

The Interior of the Farmhouse

As we enter the building by the front door, we are presented with a view of the hallway. According to Ray Dickerson, a resident of the farm at the time, “there wasn’t much in the hallway”(Dickerson Interview 3/13/2001). This was, no doubt, due to the necessity of the movement of eight children, two adults and any accompanying guests, farmhands, etc. This condition may serve us well in facilitating the visits of larger groups. The walls of the hallway would provide a central location for the exhibition of paintings, photographs, and other “flat work”, by local artists and crafters. Keeping the
Figure 5.1  Kitchen side of Farmhouse.  
Design by C. Dwayne Grubb, contractor.
Upstairs

Figure 5.2  Floor plans.  
Design by C. Dwayne Grubb, contractor.

Downstairs
hallway open would also facilitate free movement for the handicapped. There is a large closet located under the stairs.

On our left we enter the living room, which was the primary area of activity in the house. The fireplace has been altered to allow the use of a medium sized wood burning tin heater. The adults slept in the living room. There are two beds, one to the left, behind the door, and one to the visitor’s immediate right. Beyond the window to the left, there is a small pine table upon which the family’s battery powered radio is kept (Figure 5.3), along with a stoneware crock.

![Figure 5.3 An old Philco radio](source: http://utenti.tripod)

There are six oak-split bottom, ladder-back chairs in the room for family and guests. The window treatments are made of cotton feed-sack cloth (Figure 5.4).

![Figure 5.4 Typical feed-sack cloth](source: http://www.angelfire.com)
The parlor is immediately across the hall from the living room. This is the most formal room in the house and is used for social occasions, sewing and, we assume, courting. A large couch is located immediately to our left as we enter the room and more of the same oak-split bottom chairs. The room has an open fireplace with a walnut mantle and, at a safe distance, a console type wind-up Victor Victrola record player (Figure 5.5). Because of the availability of, relatively inexpensive, print cotton cloth during the time period, the window treatments deviate, here, from the otherwise consistent, sackcloth curtains. In addition, the windows have pull-down shades of blue fabric or paper. During the time that the Dickerson family occupied the house, the parlor was also the sewing and quilting room. A treadle type Singer sewing machine may be employed for that purpose in addition to a large quilting frame.

![Figure 5.5 An upright hand-cranked phonograph](source: http://www.victor-victrola.com)

At the top of the stairs, we see an L shaped landing that extends in front of the children’s room, and along the back of the house the width of the hallway. The family used this space to store large quantities of canned fruit in large glass jars. The location at the top of the stairs acts as a heat trap. This, in addition to straw, feather ticks and quilts used as insulation, serve to keep the canned fruit safe from freezing.

To our left, as we climb the stairs, is the children’s room. There are two beds in the room with straw tick mattresses. We are safe to assume, since there were six to seven children in residence in that room throughout the Dickerson’s occupation, the kids doubled up on cold winter nights. The fireplace contains no fire screen and is open to the room. Mr. Dickerson reports the presence of a large hump-backed trunk in which their clothing was kept. Because of the paucity of furniture in the kid’s room (it was full of kids!) we are granted an excellent opportunity for embellishment with children’s toys, and the themes of the popular culture of the time, for example, George Trendle’s character, The Lone Ranger. This room will be particularly useful for interpretive activities involving children.
During the Dickerson’s residency the room across the hall was occupied by the eldest daughter, Frankie. Frankie was the oldest child, and a young woman at the time. Mr. Dickerson confirmed our idea that the younger children “had no business in there” (Dickerson Interview 3/13/2001). The only thing he remembered about that room was the presence of a rocking chair. Happily, this gives us a great deal of latitude in interpretation and display.

As we descend the stairs and walk toward the back of the house we approach the kitchen. Here we find a wood-burning cook stove with attached warmer and water boiler at the far end of the room. To our immediate left is a cabinet with shelves and one wooden door. Although it is not built as a corner cabinet, it has been placed in the corner. The wooden kitchen table is a harvest table made of poplar. The table is eight feet long, four feet wide, and is composed of four planks and square, tapered legs joined with wooden pegs. There is a drawer in the middle of the table in which cooking implements are kept. There is also an old-style icebox in the kitchen. This room will be set up for demonstrations of cooking and food preservation. These demonstrations may be conjoined with related activities outside the house, for example, soap making or canning fruit and vegetables. The kitchen and its associated activities will be a particularly valuable space in the autumn and winter, and in inclement weather.

The Porches and Outbuildings

Porches and outbuildings are included in the museum plan. Ray Dickerson drew a ground plan of the farm based on his memories from the 1930s. Figure 5.6, on the next page, shows the ground plan.

The covered porch, immediately outside the kitchen, has a bench just beyond the door where people may clean the mud from their boots or remove them. Our informant was emphatic regarding the consequences of failing to do so. Other than the single bench, this area was sparsely furnished. Additional benches will facilitate the use of the porch for presentation of interpretive activities when it rains. This porch will also serve to segue to the yard, outbuildings and outside exhibits.

At the corner of the porch a large rock known as “Ned’s Rock” was used as a solitary stair. Local legend has it that Ned, a former slave who lived on the property prior to the Dickerson’s occupation, carried the rock to the house. It is estimated that its weight was over four hundred pounds. We recommend that this dynamic oral tradition be portrayed with strength and dignity.

Immediately to our right, as we step off the porch, we see the smokehouse. Although, the meat was salted rather than smoked, “smokehouse” is the accepted name of the area used to store it. This restored log building will provide an excellent space for exhibiting farm tools and as a venue for interpretive activities.

Directly toward the road is another restored log building similar in size and form. This building is the corn-crib/granary. In the Dickerson’s time there was a lean-to shed built on to the structure that was used to store additional grain and corn. Mr. Dickerson explained that his father grew more corn than anyone had previously grown on the farm. This seemed to be a source of pride for him, and considering the labor-intensive nature of the work his pride is justified. This will be an excellent place for exhibitions of corn
Figure 5.6 Ground plan.
Drawn by Ray Dickerson.
husking, and processing, and for the explication of corn agriculture. The root cellar, or
dry dairy, was located between the back of the house and the garden area. Although this
dugout structure no longer stands, its previous function will provide interesting
commentary for our interpreters. Dr. Cliff Boyd’s archaeology class excavated this area
in 1991. The recovered artifacts could be exhibited along with other archaeological yield
from the farm. We may want to consider replicating this structure at some point in the
future.

The garden area is a keystone of activity on the farm in spring, summer and fall,
and is an excellent means by which we may highlight the family’s dependence upon, and
harmony with the land. Sweet corn, beans, squash, peas and many more vegetables will
be grown in the garden, including heirloom varieties of vegetables, ornamentals and open
pollinated varieties of corn.

Toward the road, in front of the farmhouse, is the cistern that supplied water for
the family. Many children today have no idea what it was like to have to draw water and,
when the water was low in the heat of summer, to conserve it. The addition of a windlass
and a well curb, or a pump would provide safety, and allow kids to share in this
experience.

The cellar in the original house was located under the living room and was used
as a pantry for canned goods. There was, originally, no access to the cellar from inside
the house. The angular, outside cellar door could be reproduced to be consistent with the
original style of the house.

Exhibit Recommendations

With respect to access for the aged and infirm, we recommend that the main focus
of our exhibits be located in the downstairs portion of the house, particularly the parlor.
This will not detract from the usefulness of the upstairs, but our emphasis there can be on
children’s activities. This is pragmatic from the standpoint of museum operations and
social awareness, and is consistent with our model of period occupation.

The display of changing exhibits by visiting community artists and crafters may
be achieved by judicious use of available floor and wall space in order to integrate these
exhibits into the context of the farm. In the event of a necessity to display in showcases,
there is plenty of room in the parlor and living room to facilitate them. In instances
where we have a need to exhibit groupings of items that are clearly out of their original
functional context, we recommend that these be dealt with on an exhibit-by-exhibit basis.

We recommend that the extent to which we become curators of valuable and
precious antique properties be limited. As mentioned in the facilities section, ownership
and display of properties of this nature require that we also have the facilities to preserve,
protect and, in some cases, restore them. The fragility, and value of such objects would
also limit the participation of the public in their use. While, we are not opposed to using
“the genuine articles”, we recommend that we be discriminating in our selection of them.
Reproductions and replications, on the other hand, provide opportunities for participation.
Scuffs, scratches and so forth would not represent serious loss on a reproduction, and
would be consistent with our theme of a working farm. The use of reproductions, and the
addition of closets upstairs would also free us from the cumbersome necessity of
maintaining a storage area.
Conclusion

Our recommendations for representation of an early twentieth century farmstead at Selu, with a focus on the years 1935-1940, are designed to be consistent with the Virginia Constitution, and Selu Conservancy Guidelines. They are intended to provide educational opportunities, and preservation of our cultural and historical resources through interpretation, and participation with our community.

The house and farm provide many opportunities for community participation. Previous work, on the part of Radford University students and faculty, combined with the cooperation of various university departments, offer abundant resources to accomplish this task. Exhibitions by community artists and crafters are essential to the success of this endeavor, and will guarantee continued community support.

The farmhouse, which will house the exhibits, is slated for construction in early summer 2001. It will set the stage for the initiation of a working farm complex. The reproduction of other farm buildings, for example, the barn and root cellar, may be considered in the future.

We recommend that our staff of students and interns be especially aware of the comfort and safety of visitors to the farmhouse, particularly with regard to the aged, physically challenged and, of course, the children. We look forward to a good beginning this summer and fall, and we hope to see you all down on the farm!
This chapter will show how important hands on activities, heritage interpretation, festivals and special events, and educational pamphlets are to this museum. All of these aspects make a museum visit educational and entertaining at the same time. I will give many ideas on how you can incorporate these factors into the Selu Conservancy Living History Museum.

Hands on activities have always been a great way to promote the involvement of visitors with the museum they are visiting. When these activities are offered it makes the visit more memorable and exciting. The hands on activities could change about 2 times a year to promote more than one visit from patrons. Chores, everyday life, and toys are three categories in which to base activities on but not limited to, because they offer a variety of ideas to show what life was like on a 1930’s Appalachian farm.

A cistern was used on many farms to collect and store water. It is placed in the ground and made out of concrete. Usually it collects runoff from the roof of the house. One of these still exists on the future museum site. If we can get it cleaned up and working again it could be an excellent opportunity for a hands on activity. This particular farm used a bucket to retrieve the water, but other farms in the 1930’s also used a hand pump (see Figure 6.1). Students and adults could be able to use this pump to retrieve water and find that it is not an easy task. They will appreciate the running water and faucets offered today. I do recommend that if the cistern is used and hand pump be placed over the opening for safety reasons also.

Figure 6.1 This picture shows the type of hand pump suggested for the farm.
Children and adults enjoy an activity more when they can make something or receive something that they can take home with them to remember their museum experience. For this reason I suggest making cornhusk dolls or clothe dolls. As the children make these dolls they could learn about other toys of the 1930’s and appreciate what life was like without electronic games and toys.

Checkers and horseshoes were two games Ray Dickerson recalled playing when he lived on this farm with his family. We could offer these games and teach visitors how to play them. Ray Dickerson said that they used real horseshoes, and I suggest that we do also. This will provide a more authentic experience. While offering horseshoes other visitors could be learning how to play checkers on an old style handmade checkerboard. Kits could be given to the visitors telling them how to make their own horseshoe and checker games. This they could take home and share with their family.

![Figure 6.2 An example of hands on activities. Here the child, with the help of an adult, grinds corn.](image)

Farmers living in Appalachia in the 1930’s were very self-sufficient. We can use this to our advantage for more hands on activities. One way they were self-sufficient is by making their own mattresses. They stuffed cotton lining that they sewed themselves with leaves, hay and straw. There could be a hands on demonstration on how to make and stuff the mattress and afterwards visitors could lie on it. This could be important to show how self-sufficient the family was and what a night on a mattress like this would be like.

Growing enough food for the family is another way a family in Appalachia were self-sufficient. Visitors can learn how to plant and care for crops in the garden behind the house by participating in demonstrations. While they are learning how to care for the crops they can also learn about planting by the moon. This is a method of planting used in the past and still used today but very little. Instead of using current tools in the garden, visitors could experience using old tools of the 1930’s.

Later after the museum becomes more established and we are able to bring in animals in, we can use them for many activities. One such activity could be milking a cow (see Figure 6.3). Not many people get a chance to do this in their lifetime, and I
believe it would be a great experience for all ages. Although they cannot try the milk because of current regulations, they can feel how life was when you had to go fetch your own milk instead of buying a carton of it in the store. We can also relay how important not only cows were but other animals were to the farm.

**Figure 6.3 Children could have a lot of fun with this activity.**

In Chapter 3 a corn maze is mentioned. This is a great opportunity to attract more visitors, old and new. The maze would be cut out of a field of corn. In this maze signs could be placed throughout it with information about the farm on them. They could also incorporate the importance corn is for Indians.

Not only do visitors need to use hands on activities to experience the life of a 1930’s farm, but heritage interpreters may also help. Heritage interpreters help visitors visualize what the farm would have looked like. They could wear the traditional dress of the 1930 time period. The interpreters would be the ones helping with hands on activities and would give many demonstrations of the culture and lifestyle. The interpreters could consist of a wide variety of ages to directly connect with the different ages of the visitors. Figure 6.4 shows an example of a costumed heritage interpreter.

**Figure 6.4 Costumed heritage interpreter at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia.**
Festivals and special events are important to attract new visitors and to rekindle the interest of past visitors. They also give more for the public to enjoy than just the normal activities provided on a daily basis. Some of the Selu guidelines may need to be altered for these occasions such as the capacity of people allowed on the property.

Special events and festivals could include but are not limited to sheep shearing, storytelling, “Appalachia Day”, and a harvesting festival. A local shepherder could bring in a few of his sheep and shear them for an audience (see Figure 6.5). We could show past and present methods of sheep shearing. In the past manual shears were used, and they looked like big scissors. In the present sheep shearing is done by electric clippers. We could allow a few visitors to try the two different ways of sheep shearing.

![Before and After Sheep Shearing Images]

**Figure 6.5 This is yet another fun and educational event.**

Storytelling is an excellent event for children, but adults could enjoy it too. We could bring in John Bowles to tell stories that he knows about the farm, and the history of it. He could also tell stories or facts about Indians, because the land has Native American ties. Ray Dickerson could also come and tell stories about his life on the farm. He could tell stories of the family and what life what like for the different sexes and ages living on this farm.

“Appalachia Day” is an idea for an all day festival that includes crafts, music, local history and food commonly found in Appalachia. Crafts could be sold by local residents. This is a good way to help locals promote and preserve the traditional way of life in Appalachia. Demonstrations could be given by local musicians to show instruments that are frequently found in Appalachia. Some such instruments are the banjo, dulcimer, flute and fiddle (see Figure 6.6). The local musicians can explain the history of these instruments and demonstrate how to play them. Local history would be bountiful with the community involved. During this festival recipes found in Appalachia could be used to prepare food either to sell or to serve to the public.
When it is time for the crops in the garden to be harvested a “Harvest Festival” would be appropriate. During this festival they garden would be harvested and prepared for the public. The visitors would be involved in every aspect, from harvesting the crops to the cooking process. Historic recipes and methods of cooking could be used and taught to visitors.

Educational pamphlets are a good idea to accompany visitors on their tour of the museum. The pamphlet could contain the history of the land and how Radford University obtained it. The pamphlet could also provide a map of the museum and the different trails we offer. By putting important phone numbers and contact information on the pamphlet more groups would be able to learn of our museum and eventually be able to visit it their selves. I suggest rules such as, one adult per ten students, be included in the pamphlet.

Children may not be interested in the pamphlet offered so I suggest once specialized for the younger visitors. It could include questions for them to answer on their tour. It could also include games and puzzles relating to what they learn on their visit to the museum, such games are crossword puzzles and a matching game.

If all of the suggestions made in this chapter are considered for this museum, it would be very successful and entertaining. Keeping the visitors interest and making it fun for them will draw them back to the museum in the future. Not only will visitors return, but it will also spark interest in new visitors. Hands on activities, heritage interpretations, special events and festivals, and educational pamphlets are important factors in making a museum successful.
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