



Local officials are joined by state representatives to officially open the Clinchfield Heritage Wayside along Highway 23 near Speers Ferry. Armed with scissors are Ron Flanary, Larry O'Bryant, Jim Bowie, Robert Barker, Terry Kilgore and William Wampler.

## *Heritage Wayside Opens in Speers Ferry*

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Publisher

It's the perfect place to view a train crossing the 100-plus-year-old train trestle that spans Copper Creek. It's the same place that train spotters have stopped at and known about for years.

And now it's officially open to railroad enthusiasts and tourists traveling along Highway 23 on the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail route in Scott

County.

Last Wednesday local officials dedicated the Clinchfield Heritage Wayside in Speers Ferry with a host of railroad fans, elected leaders and tourism people on hand.

Although the project isn't entirely completed, it did entice several travelers to get off the busy road to stop and see what was happening.

The wayside overlooks an important feature along the railroad, the Copper Creek Via-

duct. Built in the early 1900s, thousands of rail fans travel from over all the country each year to photograph the viaduct and perhaps capture on film a train spanning the duct.

According to John Kilgore Jr., executive director of the Scott County Economic Development Authority, the new wayside will also be a listening post on the Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Musical

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Trail. A kiosk will be added at the site that will feature a brief history of the Carter Family's influence on country music.

"Railroad photography is a popular hobby and this viaduct is one of the better-known photographic locations in the eastern portion of the country," Kilgore said. "The Scott County Chamber of Commerce saw the development of this overlook as a great opportunity to capitalize on this segment of the tourism industry."

With a total cost of only \$92,000, officials partnered a \$20,000 Virginia Tobacco Commission grant with a Virginia Department of Transportation enhancement grant of \$72,000 to construct and pave the entrance and exit lanes into the location. Flowers, landscaping and additional paving will be done on the site beginning in the spring.

Jim Bowie, who represents the Bristol District on the Commonwealth Transportation Board, complemented officials for having the "foresight and vision" to plan the overlook.

"I believe this will be a place where people can stop by and safely enjoy the natural setting and history of this area. It's like a field of dreams - you have built it and I believe they'll come."

The site is a legacy project of the county's Preserve America designation. Preserve America Communities is a na-

tional initiative that recognizes and designates communities that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.

"The Virginia Tobacco Commission's goal is to revitalize the economy and one way to do this is through enhancing local tourism efforts," said Del. Terry Kilgore (R-Gate City), vice-chairman of the Virginia Tobacco Commission. "The commission is pleased to team up with Scott County as they continue their heritage tourism efforts. We anticipate that visitors traveling along US Highway 23 will be more likely to stop in Scott County and boost the local economy as a result of this project.

State Sen. William Wampler (R-Bristol) added that government involvement in many projects isn't necessarily a good thing but in this case, we can be proud of what was accomplished with a bit of governmental assistance.

"The Virginia Tobacco Commission is pleased to partner with the Virginia Department of Transportation through the Enhancement Grant Program to jointly fund this project," he said. "We feel this project provides a boost to Scott County's tourism development efforts and also creates a safe viewing experience for railroad enthusiasts and photographers. The Clinchfield Heritage Wayside is a great example of the diversity in tourism opportunities we have sought for Southwest Virginia."