



## *Foundation For Appalachian Advancement*

Foundation For Appalachian Advancement

P.O. Box 397

Richlands, VA 24641

[www.supportappalachia.org](http://www.supportappalachia.org)

\*FAA is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible.

### **Promise Zone for the Coal Counties?**

In January 2014 eight counties in Eastern Kentucky were declared as a “Promise Zone” by federal and state officials with the vision of helping these counties build more diversified economies, promote job growth, and overall wellbeing. The vision of the council behind the Promise Zone is to develop a competitively trained workforce, a healthy environment, a more active civic life, and a continued growth in culture through the arts and rich histories of the region. Given our organization’s mission, the idea of a Promise Zone is certainly right in our wheelhouse.

Just to be clear, the Foundation For Appalachian Advancement is not a political organization. In fact, far from it! However, the mission of the Promise Zone is very similar to ours as we work to operate in all of Appalachia. The concept itself is a great idea. It’s very likely that there are, and have been, political disagreements on the “how” part of achieving the vision and goals of the Promise Zone.

The “how” is a political argument that our Foundation will not engage in. That is for the citizens and elected officials in each region to decide for themselves. It is important that we encourage the debate about extending the Promise Zone to include other counties in Appalachia that have seen terrible job loss in the coal industry.

Consider the coal counties of Southwest Virginia, or West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania that also lack economic diversification. Should this vision and mission of the Promise Zone be extended to them, as well? If not, then why not?

If it is important, perhaps the citizens of those regions would be best served by contacting their local leaders

and encouraging them to work with their Governor to bring this to fruition.

Economic diversification in these parts of Appalachia is just as vital to us as it is for other states outside of our region that have strong and resilient economies and growing job opportunities. Nothing in Appalachia seems to come easy. It is a duty that we all must undertake from the grass roots to ensure that our region moves forward in the areas of job growth, educational opportunity, and cultural advancement.

As far as our part with the Foundation For Appalachian Advancement, we hope we can spark a debate and discussion that leads to positive change.

J.C. Schweingrouber, President/Director

### **Coalfield Assistance Program**

Over the past month we have heard a lot of great feedback about our Coalfield Assistance Program designed to provide grant money to out of work coal miners in the region to pursue vocational education and training. This will allow for the addition of more skilled labor into our regional economies to help with economic diversification. We have been featured on WCYB News Channel 5 of Bristol, VA/TN and on SuperTalk Radio, WFHG, in the tri-cities (Bristol, VA/TN, Johnson City, TN, and Kingsport, TN) on the Barbara McFaddin Show.

However, we are still a long way off from reaching our fundraising goal for this Spring. If only 5,000 people in our region donated only \$20 we would hit our goal. Keep this in mind as every donation and dollar counts! Can we count on your to support this program with a donation today? Donations are tax deductible and can be made payable to: Foundation For Appalachian Advancement. Mail donations to P.O. Box 397, Richlands, VA 24641. If

you wish to make an online donation using your credit card please visit our website at [www.supportappalachia.org](http://www.supportappalachia.org). There is a link on the home page directing you to our crowd funding account at GoFundMe.com.

Your donation and support is greatly appreciated!

## Appalachia Streaming—A Bold New Vision

Last month we announced the development of a massive new program to develop an online “Smithsonian of Appalachia,” if you will, that will allow the Foundation For Appalachian Advancement to pursue documentary filmmaking and use digital media to highlight all corners of Appalachia including artists, towns and counties, and businesses to promote economic development, tourism, and to preserve and promote our rich history, culture, and heritage.

We are currently seeking grant money to develop this project and are proud to announce that we have received letters of support from both U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (VA) and Congressman Morgan Griffith (VA). We sincerely appreciate their efforts in helping us toward making this program a reality. Details of the program and employment opportunities associated with it will be made available upon receiving needed grants.

## F.Y.I. – Pound Gap Massacre

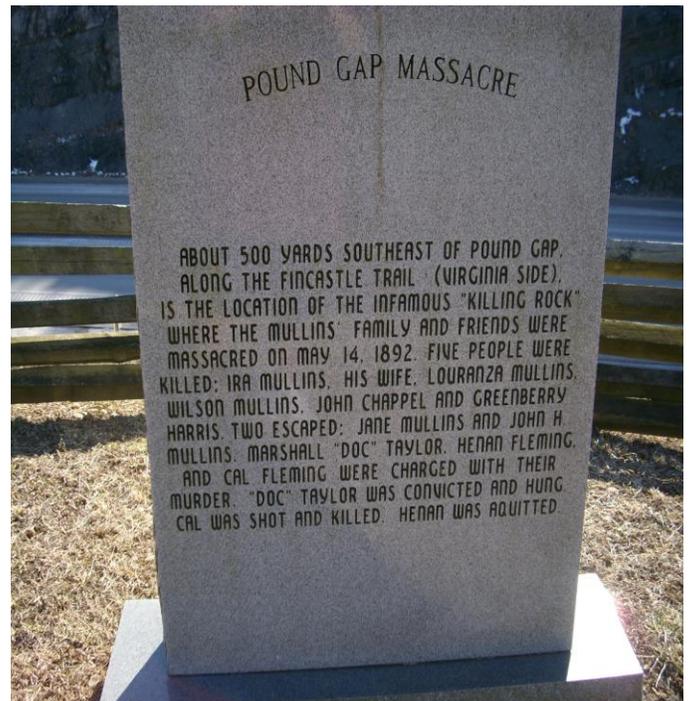


There are countless small towns throughout Appalachia, and each can boast of a unique history all their own. One such place is Pound, Virginia and what came to be

known as the Pound Gap Massacre. The Pound Gap, as it is called, is located on the border of Virginia and Kentucky, currently between Jenkins, KY and Pound, VA. Today we call it U.S. Route 23. Many pioneers and hunters used the gap to settle into eastern Kentucky. Daniel Boone often traveled the gap, referring to it as “Sounding Gap.”

In 1834 the Kentucky General Assembly passed an act to improve the road, which made driving livestock to Virginia and other southern markets much easier. It also made the gap vitally important during the Civil War. However, it wasn't until 1892, long after the Civil War, when the gap became known for the Pound Gap Massacre. Ira Mullins, a local moonshiner, was ambushed. Dr. M.B. Taylor (also known as The Red Fox) and two confederates slaughtered Mullins and members of his family by a rock near the gap. Five of seven were killed at what is now called Killing Rock at Pound Gap. If you are an avid hiker you'll find a trail named after the massacre. The Red Fox Trail & Killing Rock runs through Jefferson National Forest. Dr. Taylor was later hanged at the Wise County Courthouse for the murders.

A memorial to the event is located along U.S. Route 23 at the Wise County, Virginia and Letcher County, Kentucky border. It's worth stopping by to pay a visit.



## Artist's Corner

### *Storytellers---A Great Appalachian Tradition*

The art of storytelling goes back to the beginning of spoken language and is rich in every culture. Many of us can remember storytellers at local fairs or during school programs that not only enriched our lives by making our history seen alive. Although it seems that professional storytellers are hard to find in our schools and communities in years past, there is a revival of sorts in the art of storytelling that we hope spreads throughout all of Appalachia to pass along the history, tall tales and legends that make up our culture.

Meet Octavia Sexton, our February Artist of the Month. Octavia left the corporate world years ago to pursue her passion for storytelling and has made a career of specializing in the oral traditions of Appalachia. Her mission statement explains her passion. "With flesh and bone, heart and soul-a single thread-I weave my cultural traditions and wisdom into the fabric of the human experience."



In fact, the old tradition of storytelling has become so popular in recent years that Octavia performs over two hundred shows per year! "The best part of being a storyteller is knowing I am sharing a part of my culture while at the same time engaging listeners in a shared human experience," she says. "I can feel the energy from my audience and that energy fuels the story to become

something beyond me. I am merely the vessel from which the life of the story springs."

When asked what made her decide to follow her heart and pursue the art of storytelling on a full time basis, she proudly admits to being born a storyteller. "I was born into the oral tradition, therefore it was always a part of me.

"In the native tradition, one must BE who they are and then they will HAVE what they need to DO what the Creator intended. In today's culture, we are told we must DO something in order to BE somebody so we can HAVE what we need to make ourselves happy. We have become totally materialistic and disconnected from one another. Through storytelling, I hope I can contribute in some way to reconnect the human experience to the circle of life. Past, Present, Future."

You can find video of Octavia performing on her web page at [www.octaviasexton.com](http://www.octaviasexton.com), along with contact information on booking her for an event in your community. Thank you, Octavia, for being our February Artist of the Month!

### Coming Events

Last month's Artist of the Month, K.T. Vandyke and Driftin' Westward, will be performing several live shows in Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee including Preservation Pub in Knoxville, TN on February 19<sup>th</sup>, the Bonfire Smokehouse in Abingdon, VA on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, and Floyd Country Store in Floyd, VA on March 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information visit them online at [www.driftinwestward.com](http://www.driftinwestward.com).

**Field of Lost Shoes**, a film with our December Artist of the Month, actor Jake Lawson, is now available on DVD and can be found on Amazon. Synopsis: *Based on a true story of the American Civil War, culminating at the Battle of New Market, May 1864. A group of teenage cadets sheltered from war at the Virginia Military Institute must confront the horrors of an adult world when they are called upon to defend the Shenandoah Valley. Leaving behind their youth, these cadets must decide what they are fighting for.*

Thank you to all our regional artists for your efforts in adding to our rich culture. We encourage everyone to support our Appalachian artists. They are a vital part of our communities that help define who we are.