

Fincastle has been the county seat of Botetourt County since it was established. In 1770, Botetourt's boundaries went out to the Mississippi River and residents who had needed "to record their deeds and settle their disputes" needed to travel to Fincastle to do so. This meant accommodations were needed. The accommodations included taverns, ordinaries, and residents' homes. One of the early taverns from at least 1820 was run by "Wm. Craft on land owned by his father- in-law Jacob Nace, in the corner of Roanoke Street and Back Street". This property was later run by James McDowell, Sr. and James McDowell, Jr. who later conveyed it to W. B. Hayth who ran it until his son E.B. Hayth inherited it and ran it "until a few years before his death in 1937". The location across the street from the courthouse and in the center of Fincastle made it a convent location for lawyers and summer visitors to stay. In the 1880's and 1890's "Fincastle flourished briefly" "as a gay summer resort". Visitors came from cities such as New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Opelousas, Vicksburg, Macon, Florence, Mobile, St. Louis, Galveston, and Houston. They came for the climate, scenery and hospitality made it "one of the most desirable 'retreats' in the mountains of Virginia" and also the "discovery of mineral waters" brought the "refined and intelligent society" and "summer boarders". At the time, Fincastle had the "only ferromagnesian springs yet discovered on the continent" and samples were put on display at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. In 1894, Hayth's hotel was "filled to full capacity since the opening of the season" with "nearly if not quite 100 boarders" according to the social notes in the newspaper". In 1895, a larger addition added to the eastern section by Gratton T. Firebaugh, contractor included a third story and a first floor music hall. William B. Hayth was a stage coach agent in Fincastle and his office was at the hotel. Mrs. S. E. Hayth's millinery shop was in the hotel as well. During it's time Hayth's hotel was seen as the "center of the social scene". Botetourt County Historical Society has a small collection of Hayth hotel registers, with the 1897 book being one of the most damaged. These registers are a record of all the visitors that passed through the area and shed light on the Hayth's role as the town hub. The registers provide a rich look into the daily life in the County as only a very small portion of the hotel stills stands today; its use being converted to apartments. (quotes used above are from "Seedbed of the Republic" by R.D. Stoner and "The Town of Fincastle", by Frances Niederer).