

## Highlands Style Blends with Nature

By Brian O'Shea

The general consensus when designing and improving buildings in the Highlands area is to maintain a natural look. Kenny Roweton, manager of the paint department at Ace Hardware on Main Street, said that people tend to choose colors that mimic nature for the exterior of their home or business.

"Most folks try to stay with the natural greens and tans," he said. "Stains seem to be more popular because they are not as shiny and seem to blend with the rural landscape. They kind of have a softer look to them."

Roweton's observation is well known to builder Bill Nellis, owner of Nellis Communities Inc., who is currently building condominiums adjacent to Harris Lake.

"I just wanted the buildings to disappear in their surroundings," he said. "I'll finish the exterior in a way where they'll be the least noticeable."

Some materials he uses are wood indigenous to the area as well as pressurized cedar shingles, which have a higher resistance to moisture. Using wood for the exterior requires more maintenance than vinyl siding but he said it is worth the extra effort to maintain the natural appearance.

"All I have to do is clean vinyl siding, using wood requires more maintenance meaning I have to re-stain it every five-to-seven years as well as be very careful with pest control," he said. "This is the look everybody wants, they don't want vinyl siding."

Nellis added that the site of his condominiums is the former Edwards family estate from which the Old Edwards Inn is named after. He felt the historical aspect of the area was an added bonus for anyone who chooses to live there.

Rick Siegel, chairman of the town Appearance Commission, agrees that the town's history should be incorporated in its architecture.

"Village character reflects the look of the mountains where we live," he said. "Every one building on Main Street does not look the same but they're all consistent with what this area is historically. It all seems to fit together."

The Appearance Commission makes recommendations to other commissions when it comes to matters of approving special use permits. Factors taken into consideration when making these recommendations include examining certain aspects of design, landscaping, lighting and color to see if it would be a good fit for the surrounding area.

“The purpose (of the commission) is to maintain a level of appearance in the town that is consistent with the ambience and beauty of the town,” said Siegel.

Joe Luke, manager of Ace Hardware said that spring is a great time to do some minor maintenance on the exterior of your home to maintain its beauty and increase its longevity.

“Anytime in spring or the beginning of summer, after a wet and fairly warm winter, your deck can get a lot of mold and mildew,” he said. “Get it cleaned off quickly to prevent the mold from growing before the heat and humidity make it grow faster and cause rot. This will extend the life of the structure.”

Roweton’s advice for cleaning mold and mildew is to wash the surface in a mixture of one cup of bleach, one scoop of laundry detergent and one gallon of water. The bleach will kill the bacteria that cause mold and mildew and the detergent will remove the stain. He added that this is also an important step before one paints the exterior walls of their home.

“The cleaning and getting rid of the mold and mildew is probably the biggest challenge for homeowners up here because it’s so warm and moist,” he said. “Those conditions are ideal for mildew growth which will grow under the paint surface causing it to fail prematurely.”

After the solution is applied to the surface he recommends letting it sit for ten-to-15 minutes before rinsing it off. That will give it ample time to kill the bacteria. Then make sure the surface is completely dry before any paint is applied.

## Editorial Excerpt from The Highlander

Highlands is synonymous with its waterfalls. If you don’t believe us, just ask the Visitor’s Center. Daily, people come here in search of the various falls, and the center’s staff has said that “Where are the waterfalls?” is one of the top questions.

For the past three and a half years, we gave directions to Bridal Veil with a qualifier. “You can see Bridal Veil from the road, but you used to be able to drive under it.” When the rock tumbled on Thanksgiving day in 2003, it blocked a passage used by generations of Highlands and visitors.

Highlands developer Bill Nellis spent the time since then looking at the rock and wishing, along with many other Highlands area residents, for a return to the days when the waterfall was an attraction and not something to be pitied.

On Thursday morning, Nellis and his crew blasted the rock and removed it, once again opening Highlands well-known “drive-through” waterfall.

In many ways, Bridal Veil stands as a link for us to a simpler time, when nature was our entertainment. Adults and children alike get a thrill out of driving or standing underneath the falls. We love living in a place where simple pleasures still mean something.

We also love living in a place where neighbors do something nice for each other. Not only did Nellis’ removal of the rock give Highlands back its icon, it also helped the forest service. The agency had previously considered removing the rock, but at a cost of \$20,000, the price tag was just too steep.

We send our thanks to Bill Nellis for his efforts to restore the falls and extend an invitation to our guests: If you’ve never driven under the falls, it’s an experience not to be missed.

# Articles from The Highlander

## Bridal Veil Falls

By D. Linsey Wisdom  
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On December 4, 2003, Highlanders woke up to the headline ‘The day the falls fell,’ telling of 150-ton rock that hit the pavement at the base of Bridal Veil Falls the day before. But it is a new day in Highlands, and Bridal Veil Falls is once again free from debris, with a little hard work from area developer Bill Nellis, and a little dynamite from Mid-South blasting. Nellis got the idea some time ago, but everything finally came together this week – it was time for the rock to go.

“Basically, I just got sick of looking at it,” he said. “I live here. I love this place. It was part of our history and I just want the road back the way it was.”

Nellis was referring to the road that runs under the falls, a road that for the last 3.5 years has been blockaded by the natural stone.

Since 1928, that road that went under the falls was the only road between Highlands and Franklin. But, in 1954, as Ran Shaffner notes in Heart of the Blue Ridge, a tragic death occurred when Harold Hunnicut, a 29-year-old from Seneca drove his car off the road and fell to his death. In 1958, the town board voted to create a by-pass. The old road remained and visitors could still drive under the falls on the old road until 45 years later when the mountain overhang dropped to the road below.

Chad Boniface, recreation manager at the Nantahala Ranger District remembers that day, though he was out of town. He recalls hearing the news, because just one week earlier, he had been on location, placing the winter barricade in that exact spot.

“In the winter time, if it warms up in the day, people didn’t realize there was black ice under there, so we always put up the barricade,” he said, wondering if Nellis and his crew found the remains of the barricade underneath the rock.

“We had wanted to remove that rock for some time, but it was going to cost the forest service something like \$20,000 to remove it. So, we were happy when Bill Nellis said he would take care of it, we were happy to give him permission.”

Nellis also had to check with the Department of Transportation before any blasting could occur, said Boniface.

“I have had everyone look at it, and it is all clear,” said Nellis on Wednesday before the blasting. “I have done a lot of blasting, and I can tell you the only time you have a problem is when the rock backs up to a shelf. This is free standing rock, so there shouldn’t be any problems.”

David Bates with the Jackson Macon County Alliance also did not see any environmental concern.

“I am kind of nostalgic about that area. I remember when you could park and really walk around,” he said, adding that he was excited about the process of the road opening again. The Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center also spoke in favor of the rock removal.

## Piece of History Saved by Builder

By Brian O'Shea  
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The branches of an apple tree at the Old Highlands Park condominium development dates back to before Highlands was founded and are still laden with apples.

"That apple tree is so special to me," said Beth Crisp, granddaughter of Louis Edwards, who bought the property in the 1930's. "I grew up under that tree. I had a rope swing when I was a little itty bitty thing."

The tree stands approximately 100 feet tall just off of Fifth Street. Ran Shaffner, archivist of the Highlands Historical Society, said according to a diary of Samuel Kelsey, co-founder of Highlands, an abandoned apple orchard existed prior to the acquisition of the property, long before the town was founded in 1875.

Shaffner said the orchard would have to have been planted William Dobson, or his caretaker Huey Gibson, because Dobson owned all the land prior to selling it to Kelsey. Dobson's father, Joseph Dobson bought the land as a State Land Grant in 1844.

The tree's life may have ended if not for special effort by Bill Nellis, owner of Nellis Communities and developer of Old Highlands Park, decided to keep it. It cost Nellis approximately \$5,000 to keep the tree standing.

"It's a double trunk, and it was splitting so we had to put bolts in it," said Nellis. "We also put cables tying the branches together so when the branches sway in high winds, they sway together preventing it from splitting further."

Cutting it down would have been cheaper and more convenient, but Nellis did not like that idea. "Well, it's historic," he said. "It's the biggest apple tree I've ever seen, and I'm from apple country in upstate New York. It's three times the size of any apple tree I've ever seen, and it's a great piece of history."

Crisp was thrilled that Nellis spared the special tree.

"I hoped Bill would save it so badly," said Crisp. "I'm so happy he did, kudos to him. That tree has been through ice storms and everything nature could throw at it. It would have devastated me if he cut it down."

Crisp remembers back in the 1980s a limb was removed and that Louis counted more than 100 rings on it.

"Back in the 80s we were trying to fix it," said Crisp. "They cut a limb off and the limb had over 100 rings on it. It's been there forever."

She remembers that her great grandmother, Minnie Zoellner Edwards, who was the original owner of Edward's Inn, suffered from glaucoma. After she lost her sight, she used to love sitting under the tree enjoying the shade. Crisp would hide Easter eggs under the tree, play hide-and-go-seek in the tree and swing on the rope swing.

When the tree blossomed, the pink flowers were absolutely gorgeous, she said.

"The blossoms were a sea of pink," she said. "When you opened the windows the smell was everywhere, and when the blossoms fell it was like snowfall."

Of course, the most important part of the tree were the apples it yielded.

"My grandmother used to make jams and jellies for her shop (The Condiment Shop)," said Crisp. "It makes fabulous apple sauce and apple pies, the apples are so good. I'm so glad he