

Department of Historic Resources

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NINE NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

—New markers cover topics in the counties of Northumberland, Rockbridge, Smyth, Surry (2), and the cities of Alexandria, Lynchburg, Norfolk, and Suffolk—

—Updated text also approved for replacement marker for “The Battle of Williamsburg”—

[The full text for each marker is reproduced at the end of this release.]

RICHMOND – Among nine new historical highway markers recently approved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources are signs to highlight the history of industry in Surry County, the oldest “active” Quaker meeting in Virginia, frontier-era conflicts between Native Americans and white settlers in Rockbridge County, and topics in African American history in Lynchburg, Alexandria, and Northumberland County.

Two markers slated for installation in Surry County will recall the Surry Lumber Company and the Surry, Sussex & Southampton Railway. Surry Lumber Company was chartered in 1885 and became “among the largest producers of yellow pine lumber on the East Coast,” according to the marker’s recently-approved text. The lumber company “constructed sawmills, box mills, dry kilns, employee housing, and a commissary” that gave rise to the town of Dendron. The company’s mills closed in 1927 when its timber supply was depleted.

A related marker for the Surry, Sussex & Southampton Railway will note that the railroad was built by Surry Lumber Co. The line eventually extended 28 miles, running from Scotland Wharf on the James River, and passing through Dendron and Wakefield before terminating at Dory, “a logging camp in Southampton County,” in the words of the marker text. A carrier of mail, passengers and lumber, the railway ceased operations in July 1930.

In the City of Suffolk a marker will rise to commemorate the Somerton Friends Meeting, “the oldest active Quaker meeting in Virginia.” The Somerton marker recalls that George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), “visited the area in 1672 during a missionary journey to Virginia and North Carolina.” His visit encouraged the founding of the Somerton Friends Meeting. Eventually, the Somerton Quakers established

a meetinghouse and a school for African Americans, both of which burned in 1866. In 1869 the congregation constructed a new meetinghouse, which still stands.

The marker “Kerr’s Creek,” to be erected in Rockbridge County, highlights an October 1759 Shawnee Indian attack on settlers at Kerr’s Creek during the Seven Years’ War. A second surprise attack by the Shawnee also occurred at Kerr’s Creek in July 1763 during Pontiac’s War (1763-1766). Both attacks were part of “a series of armed conflicts between Native Americans and settlers of European descent” that “occurred along the western frontier of the British colonies during the 1750s and 1760s,” according to the marker text.

A historical marker titled “Lucile Barrow Turner (1895-1979)” will be erected in Lynchburg to honor Turner, who “championed African American folk music during her 50-year career as a composer, folklorist, and performer,” in the words of the sign. A white, affluent woman, Turner “transcended social norms as she traveled throughout the South to perform and learn work songs, dance tunes, lullabies, and spirituals,” according to the approved marker. Turner, who gained national recognition in 1930 through radio broadcasts, “later promoted African American folk music through studio recordings and television appearances,” according to the marker text.

In Alexandria a marker will recall the Beulah Baptist Church, founded in 1863 as the first African American church established in Alexandria after Union forces occupied the city during the Civil War. The congregation constructed a brick sanctuary on the edge of a black neighborhood known as The Bottoms. The Beulah Normal and Theological Institute was housed at the church, and education remained central to Beulah Baptist Church’s mission.

The Rev. Paymus Nutt will be honored with a historical marker for Northumberland County. Nutt, born enslaved around 1817, “helped organize four African American churches in Northumberland County after the Civil War”—First Baptist, Shiloh Baptist, Zion Baptist, and Lively Hope Baptist. “In 1867 Nutt also became the first pastor of Zion Baptist, Lottsburg, where he served for 25 years,” according to the marker text.

In Norfolk, a marker will rise to honor Col. Samuel LeRoy Slover, who became a co-owner in 1905 of the *Public Ledger*, a local newspaper. Slover eventually “controlled six of Virginia’s most influential newspapers, including the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, Petersburg *Progress-Index*, and Richmond *Times-Dispatch*,” according to the forthcoming sign. He also served as an aide-de-camp to Virginia Gov. Westmoreland Davis (1918 to 1922), “with the rank of colonel” and as mayor of Norfolk, beginning in 1933 during the Great Depression.

The Konnarock Training School in Smyth County also will be recognized with a state historical marker. The sign will recall that the Women’s Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America established the school in 1924 to educate “children from isolated mountain communities,” according to the marker text. “Built on land donated by the Hassinger Lumber Company, Konnarock was a regional boarding school for girls but also provided day classes for local children,” the marker text states. A medical clinic added to the school in 1936 also served the local community. The school closed in 1959.

In addition to these nine new historical markers, during a December 2015 quarterly meeting the Board of Historic Resources of the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) also approved a revised marker for the now-retired sign titled “The Battle of Williamsburg.” The replacement marker expands the original text of the earlier marker, which discusses the May 5, 1862 battle, the first major engagement of the Peninsula Campaign of Union General George B. McClellan. The Battle of Williamsburg engaged nearly 41,000 Union soldiers and 32,000 Confederates and resulted in 4,000 combined casualties.

The Virginia highway marker program, which began in 1927 with installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Rte. 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,500 official state markers, most of which are maintained by Virginia Department of Transportation, except in those localities outside of VDOT’s authority.

The manufacturing cost of each new highway marker is covered by its sponsor.

More information about the Historical Highway Marker Program is available on the website of the Department of Historic Resources at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.

Full Text of Markers:

(Please note that some texts may be slightly modified before the manufacture and installation of the signs.)

Beulah Baptist Church

African Americans escaping slavery found refuge in Alexandria after Union troops occupied the city in 1861. The Rev. Clement “Clem” Robinson established the First Select Colored School in 1862. Hundreds of students registered for day and evening classes and for courses at the associated Beulah Normal and Theological Institute. In Oct. 1863, Robinson organized Beulah Baptist Church, the first African American church founded in Alexandria after Union occupation. The congregation constructed its brick sanctuary here on the edge of the African American neighborhood known as The Bottoms. The school then moved to this site, and education remained central to Beulah’s mission.

Sponsor: Beulah Baptist Church

Locality: Alexandria

Proposed Location: 320 South Washington St.

Konnarock Training School (1924-1959)

Konnarock Training School, established in 1924 by the Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America, educated children from isolated mountain communities. Lutheran missionary Kenneth Killinger and lay leader Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver had advocated the school's founding as a crucial step toward meeting the spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs of the people of Appalachia. Built on land donated by the Hassinger Lumber Company, Konnarock was a regional boarding school for girls but also provided day classes for local children. In 1936 a medical clinic was added to serve the surrounding community. Konnarock Training School closed in 1959.

Sponsor: Konnarock Retreat House

Locality: Smyth County

Proposed Location: approx. 300 feet from intersection of VA highway 600 (Whitetop Road) and Route 603

Kerr's Creek

A series of armed conflicts between Native Americans and settlers of European descent occurred along the western frontier of the British colonies during the 1750s and 1760s. In Oct. 1759, during the Seven Years' War, Shawnee Indians from the Ohio Country attacked settlers here at Kerr's Creek. Pontiac's War (1763-1766), during which a confederation of Indian tribes sought to expel the British from the Great Lakes region, also reverberated here. On 17 July 1763, Shawnee, possibly led by Cornstalk, conducted another surprise attack on Kerr's Creek. A number of inhabitants were killed, while others were captured and taken to Ohio.

Sponsor: Blue Ridge Committee of the National Society of The Colonial Dames in Virginia and Fair Hills Garden Club

Locality: Rockbridge County

Proposed Location: Intersection of SR 623, SR 850, and US 60

The Rev. Paymus Nutt (ca. 1817-ca. 1899)

The Rev. Paymus (Pyramus) Nutt, born into slavery, helped organize four African American churches in Northumberland County after the Civil War. In 1866 he co-founded First Baptist. Shiloh Baptist, established in 1867, called him to be its first (interim) pastor. He was ordained there and served about 10 years. In 1867 Nutt also became the first pastor of Zion Baptist, Lottsburg, where he served for 25 years. He helped establish Lively Hope Baptist Church in 1880 and was the Northern Neck Baptist Association's first moderator. The Freedmen's Bureau identified Nutt as one of seven local African Americans qualified for officeholding under military Reconstruction.

Sponsor: Commemorative Committee for Rev. Paymus Nutt

Locality: Northumberland County

Proposed Location: Route 360 near Callao at eastern entrance to Owltown Road

Somerton Friends Meeting

George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), visited this area in 1672 during a missionary journey to Virginia and North Carolina. His visit encouraged Friends who had settled nearby and led

to the organization of Somerton Friends Meeting. Members conducted worship in private homes and later built a meetinghouse three miles southwest of here. The Somerton meetinghouse, along with a nearby school for African Americans, was burned in 1866. The congregation constructed its current building on the same site in 1869. Somerton is the oldest active Quaker meeting in Virginia.

Sponsor: Somerton Meeting

Locality: Suffolk

Proposed Location: 3801 Holland Road

Col. Samuel LeRoy Slover (1873-1959)

Tennessee native Samuel L. Slover established himself in Norfolk in 1905 as co-owner of the *Public Ledger*, a local newspaper. He later controlled six of Virginia's most influential newspapers, including the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, *Petersburg Progress-Index*, and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Slover built his media company by revitalizing ailing newspapers through consolidation and judicious management. He served as an aide-de-camp on the staff of Virginia Gov. Westmoreland Davis (1918-1922) with the rank of colonel. As mayor of Norfolk in 1933, during the Great Depression, Slover helped stabilize the city's finances.

Sponsor: Norfolk Historical Society

Locality: City of Norfolk

Proposed Location: 236 E. Plume Street

Surry Lumber Company

The Surry Lumber Company, chartered in 1885, was among the largest producers of yellow pine lumber on the East Coast. Here at Mussel Fork Plantation, the company constructed sawmills, box mills, dry kilns, employee housing, and a commissary. The town of Dendron, named after the Greek word for tree, developed around these facilities and by 1920 had more than 2,000 residents. Surry Lumber acquired land and timber in five counties, operated a narrow-gauge railroad, and established logging camps that grew into small towns. The company's timber supply was depleted during the 1920s, and its mills closed in 1927.

Sponsor: Dendron Historical Society

Locality: Surry County

Proposed Location: SR 31, Dendron

Surry, Sussex & Southampton Railway

The Surry Lumber Company began constructing the main line of its narrow-gauge Surry, Sussex & Southampton Railway in 1886. Eventually extending 28 miles, the line began at Scotland Wharf on the James River, continued to the sawmill complex here at Dendron, ran southwest to Wakefield (where it crossed the Norfolk & Western Railroad), and terminated at Dory, a logging camp in Southampton County. At its peak, the SS&S operated at least 100 miles of track, including branches in Isle of Wight and Prince George Counties. The railway, which carried mail and passengers as well as lumber, ceased operations in July 1930.

Sponsor: Dendron Historical Society

Locality: Surry County

Proposed Location: SR 31, Dendron

Lucile Barrow Turner (1895 – 1979)

'Cile Turner, a Southside Virginia native who resided near Lynchburg, championed African American folk music during her 50-year career as a composer, folklorist, and performer. A white, affluent, married woman, she transcended social norms as she traveled throughout the South to perform and learn work songs, dance tunes, lullabies, and spirituals. In 1930 she gained national recognition as star of the Craddock-Terry Shoe Company's weekly radio program on NBC. She later promoted African American folk music through studio recordings and television appearances. Her casual, engaging manner and her respectful treatment of the music won praise from both black and white audiences.

Sponsor: Jane Baber White

Locality: Lynchburg

Proposed Location: 1312 Commerce St.

Replacement Marker (Sponsor-funded)

Original marker:

The Battle of Williamsburg

To the east of the road here, centering at Fort Magruder, was fought the battle of Williamsburg on May 5, 1862. The Union General McClellan was pursuing General Johnston's retiring army, the rearguard of which was commanded by General Longstreet. Johnston ordered Longstreet to hold off McClellan's attacking forces until the Confederate wagon trains, bogged down in mud, were out of danger. This mission was accomplished and Johnston continued his retirement.

New marker:

The Battle of Williamsburg

The Battle of Williamsburg, fought on 5 May 1862, was the first major engagement of the Peninsula Campaign. Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, slowly advancing from Hampton Roads toward Richmond, encountered the rear guard of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's westward-moving army near here. Confederates under Maj. Gen. James Longstreet delayed the Union advance in a fierce, daylong battle in a driving rain. Nearly 41,000 Federals and 32,000 Confederates were engaged, with about 4,000 casualties. The result was a draw, although both sides claimed victory. The next day, the Confederates continued marching toward Richmond and Union troops occupied Williamsburg.

Sponsor: Williamsburg Battlefield Association

Locality: James City County

Proposed Location: 6945 Pocahontas Trail

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