

Department of Historic Resources

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SIX NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

—New markers cover topics in the counties of Accomack, Bath, and Sussex, and the cities of Harrisonburg and Lynchburg (2)—

—Updated texts also approved for replacement markers in Russell County and the City of Suffolk—

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

RICHMOND – Among six new historical highway markers recently approved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources are ones highlighting African-American history in Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, and Sussex County, as well as a sign to commemorate a girls’ summer camp in Bath County, and another to honor a Civil Air Patrol base in Accomack County that briefly contributed to shoreline defenses during World War II.

The “Newtown Cemetery” marker, which will rise in Harrisonburg, recalls the historic African-American cemetery was founded in 1869, when “five trustees purchased land here for a cemetery open to ‘all persons of color,’” in the words of the approved text. The cemetery, still in use today, expanded three times by 1920 “to accommodate the city’s growing African American population” according to the future sign, which is sponsored by a local nonprofit, Northeast Neighborhood Association.

Notable burials in the Newtown Cemetery include Civil War-era U.S. Colored Troops and veterans of both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, and the city’s first African American city council member, as well as influential educators including Lucy Simms. Newtown Cemetery was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2014 and the National Register of Historic Places earlier this year.

A marker to honor Lynchburg’s now-vanished Paul Laurence Dunbar High School will recall that the school opened to African-American high school students in 1923 during segregation. Its dedicated staff included Clarence W. Seay, principal from 1938 to 1968, and counselor Pauline Weeden Maloney. During much of the 20th century, “The school’s cultural, literary, and athletic programs made it a focal point for the African American community,” the sign’s approved text states. The original Dunbar high school building was demolished in 1979. The marker is sponsored by the Dunbar High School Memorial Wall Committee.

The “Hunting Quarter Baptist Church” sign for Sussex County will recall the church originated around 1863, according to local oral history, when African Americans began holding worship services under a brush arbor before relocating to a two-room sanctuary white neighbors donated but which burned in 1865. The congregation built a new sanctuary in 1879 and during “the segregation era the church supported Hunting Quarter School for African American children,” according to the text of the approved sign, which is sponsored by the church.

Women’s history in the 20th century is touched on in a marker titled “Camp Mont Shenandoah.” The camp served girls from elite Virginia families and was founded in 1927 by Nannie Crump West, “a Christian missionary and youth advocate,” according to the marker text. At Camp Mont Shenandoah, “girls were taught to develop self-reliance, strong character, and appreciation of nature’s beauty through outdoor adventure,” the Bath County sign will read. The residential camp was part of a national trend that sought to counteract “the perceived physical and moral decline associated with urban living,” according to the text. The sign is sponsored by Camp Mont Shenandoah, which still operates today.

The marker “Civil Air Patrol Coastal Base Four” picks up the local narrative thread of this national organization’s work during World War II in Accomack County, on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. To establish Coastal Base Four, the approved text states, “Volunteers constructed runways and hangars, converted a farmhouse and chicken coop into headquarters and barracks, and donated private aircraft for patrol duty.” The base was active from May 1942 to August 1943, during which, “Pairs of pilots and observers flew dawn-to-dusk patrols up to 60 nautical miles from shore along the entire Virginia coastline looking for German submarines and escorting merchantmen,” according to the future marker, sponsored by Virginia Wing, Civil Air Patrol.

In Lynchburg, another sign approved for installation will honor Samuel Miller (1792-1869). Born in poverty in Albemarle County, Miller “became a successful Lynchburg tobacco merchant as a young adult” and wound up one of the wealthiest men in antebellum Virginia through his investments in land, bonds, banks, and railroads. His most notable legacy today derives from his philanthropy. “Among his beneficiaries,” according to the approved text, “were the University of Virginia, the City of Lynchburg, the Miller Home of Lynchburg for Girls, and the Miller School of Albemarle.”

In addition to these six new historical markers, the Virginia Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting in September also approved updated texts for two historical markers that were damaged in automobile accidents. The “Elk Garden Fort” marker will replace one of the same name in Russell County. And in the City of Suffolk an expanded and updated text will replace a former “Chuckatuck” historical sign.

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.)

Newtown Cemetery

African Americans established the community of Newtown in this area after the Civil War. In 1869 five trustees purchased land here for a cemetery open to "all persons of color." By 1920 the cemetery had expanded three times to accommodate Harrisonburg's growing African American population. Among the nearly 1,000 burials, some unmarked, are Civil War-era United States Colored Troops and veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Also interred here are Harrisonburg's first African American city council member and several noted educators, including Lucy F. Simms. The cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sponsor: Northeast Neighborhood Association, Inc.

Locality: Harrisonburg

Proposed Location: Intersection of Hill and Kelley Streets

Hunting Quarter Baptist Church

Hunting Quarter Baptist Church originated ca. 1863 when local African Americans began holding worship services under a nearby brush arbor, according to oral history. White neighbors donated a two-room sanctuary that stood 200 feet northeast of here and burned in 1865. The congregation built a frame sanctuary here in 1879 and later overlaid it with brick. During the segregation era, the church supported Hunting Quarter School for African American children. Buried in the cemetery is longtime pastor Frank L. Mason, Republican candidate for U.S. Congress from Virginia's 4th district in 1920. Also interred here are veterans of World Wars I and II.

Sponsor: Hunting Quarter Baptist Church

Locality: Sussex County

Proposed Location: 16166 Hunting Quarter Church Road, Stony Creek

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School

African American community leaders petitioned Lynchburg's school board for a new high school to serve black students early in the 1920s. Named for poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, the school opened here in 1923. Shop, home economics, and administration buildings were later constructed. Clarence W. Seay, principal from 1938 to 1968, recruited a dedicated faculty and expanded the curriculum. Counselor Pauline Weeden Maloney guided

many graduates to major universities. The school's cultural, literary, and athletic programs made it a focal point for the African American community. Dunbar became a junior high school in 1970-71, and the original building was demolished in 1979.

Sponsor: Dunbar High School Memorial Wall Committee

Locality: Lynchburg

Proposed Location: 1200 Polk Street

Camp Mont Shenandoah

Nannie Crump West, Christian missionary and youth advocate, founded Camp Mont Shenandoah in 1927 for girls from Virginia's elite families. This residential summer camp, like others established along the Cowpasture River early in the 20th century, embodied the ideals of America's camp movement, a reaction to the perceived physical and moral decline associated with urban living. Here girls were taught to develop self-reliance, strong character, and appreciation of nature's beauty through outdoor adventure. The camp's Rustic-style buildings, most dating to the 1920s, were designed to blend with the surrounding landscape. Camp Mont Shenandoah is among Virginia's oldest independent residential girls' camps.

Sponsor: Camp Mont Shenandoah

Locality: Bath County

Proposed Location: 218 Mont Shenandoah Lane

Samuel Miller (1792-1869)

Samuel Miller, born in poverty in Albemarle County, became a successful Lynchburg tobacco merchant as a young adult. Investments in land, bonds, banks, and railroads later made him one of antebellum Virginia's wealthiest men. Though reclusive and frugal in his personal life, he was a generous philanthropist. Among his beneficiaries were the University of Virginia, the City of Lynchburg, the Miller Home of Lynchburg for Girls, and the Miller School of Albemarle. In June 1864 Union forces ransacked his nearby home looking for valuables. That residence is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Sponsor: Barry A. Rudacille

Locality: Lynchburg

Proposed Location: Richland Drive at intersection with Brookville Lane

Civil Air Patrol Coastal Base Four

The Civil Air Patrol, a civilian organization established during World War II, operated Coastal Patrol Base Four one mile west of here at the Parksley airport. Volunteers constructed runways and hangars, converted a farmhouse and chicken coop into headquarters and barracks, and donated private aircraft for patrol duty. The base, commanded by Maj. Isaac W. Burnham II, was active from May 1942 to Aug. 1943. Pairs of pilots and observers flew dawn-to-dusk patrols up to 60 nautical miles from shore along the entire Virginia coastline looking for German submarines and escorting merchantmen.

Sponsor: Virginia Wing, Civil Air Patrol

Locality: Accomack County

Proposed Location: SR 316 near intersection with SR 673, in Parksley

Replacement Markers (Sponsor-funded; originals were destroyed in accidents)

Original marker:

Elk Garden Fort X-9

Just south of here stood Elk Garden Fort, one of a string of defensive posts and protective forts that served the community of Elk Garden and isolated homes in the Clinch Valley in the 18th century. There is no known date of construction, but it is believed to have been a large and well-stocked fort. An important outpost during the Indian wars of the frontier period, it was garrisoned by 1774 under the command of Captain John Kinkead. The site was later the homestead of Governor Henry Carter Stuart (1914-1918).

New text:

Elk Garden Fort X-9

South of here stood Elk Garden Fort, built in 1774 to protect settlers of European descent along the upper Clinch River. Conflict between Indians and settlers intensified early in the 1770s as Shawnee and Mingo resisted white occupation. In June 1774, Lord Dunmore, royal governor of Virginia, recommended the construction of a new string of fortifications. By Sept., members of Capt. Daniel Smith's company of Fincastle County militia under the immediate command of Sgt. John Kinkead had garrisoned Elk Garden. The site, an important outpost until the 1790s, was later part of the homestead of Gov. Henry Carter Stuart (1914-1918).

Sponsor: The Ratcliffe Foundation

Locality: Russell County

Proposed Location: Intersection of U.S. 19 and S.R. 80

Original marker:

Chuckatuck

A colonial church is here. In July, 1781, the British cavalryman Tarleton was at Chuckatuck. On May 3, 1863, a skirmish took place here between Union and Confederate forces as Longstreet withdrew from the siege of Suffolk.

New text:

Chuckatuck

Nansemond Indians lived in this area when English colonists began patenting land here in the 1630s. An Anglican parish, a Quaker meeting, and a gristmill were established during the 17th century, and Chuckatuck emerged as a center of commerce at a busy colonial crossroads. In July 1781 British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton passed through after an extended raid in Southside Virginia. Union and Confederate forces skirmished here on 22 April and 3 May 1863. Two-term Virginia Governor Mills E. Godwin (1966-1970 and 1974-1978) was raised here. The Chuckatuck Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sponsor: Greater Chuckatuck Historical Foundation

Locality: City of Suffolk

Proposed Location: near intersection of Godwin Blvd. and King's Highway

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