



TWENTY NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS

Governor Ralph Northam announced the following 20 newly approved state historical highway markers that address topics of national, state, and regional significance in Virginia's African American history. The Virginia Board of Historic Resources took action on the markers at its public quarterly meeting Thursday, June 18, 2020 convened online by the Department of Historic Resources, which manages the marker program.

The following markers have been approved and will be processed for forging:

Charlotte Harris Lynched, 6 March 1878

SPONSOR: Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA)

LOCALITY: Harrisonburg

PROPOSED LOCATION: Court Square

CHARLOTTE HARRIS LYNCHED, 6 MARCH 1878, CITY OF HARRISONBURG

About a dozen disguised people took Charlotte Harris from the custody of jailers in eastern Rockingham County on the night of 6 March 1878 and hanged her from a tree approximately 13 miles southeast of here. This is the only documented lynching of an African American woman in Virginia, and it received nationwide attention. A grand jury that met here failed to identify any of the lynchers. Harris had been accused of inciting a young African American man to burn the barn of a white farmer. This man was later acquitted on all charges. More than 4,000 lynchings took place in the United States between 1877 and 1950; more than 100 people, primarily African American men, were lynched in Virginia.

Bristow

SPONSOR: Jim Caldwell

LOCALITY: Clarke County

PROPOSED LOCATION: Near intersection of Shepherds Mill and Castleman Roads

BRISTOW, CLARKE COUNTY

The African American community of Bristow originated in 1869 when Brister (or Bristol) Holmes purchased land near here. A public school (ca. 1883) and Bethel Baptist Church (ca. 1928) became centers of community life. Emancipated African Americans, exercising their newfound autonomy, established or settled in nearly 20 villages across Clarke County after the Civil War. Almost half of Clarke's population had been enslaved in 1860, a much higher percentage than in other Shenandoah Valley counties, reflecting this area's Tidewater-style plantation economy. Freedom for African Americans therefore led to a substantial reconfiguration of the county's settlement patterns and built environment.

Burrell Memorial Hospital

SPONSOR: Nelson Harris

LOCALITY: City of Roanoke

PROPOSED LOCATION: 611 McDowell Avenue

BURRELL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, CITY OF ROANOKE

Five African American physicians opened Burrell Memorial Hospital in a house at 311 Henry St. in March 1915. They named it in honor of their colleague Dr. Isaac D. Burrell, who had died in 1914 after traveling by train to undergo surgery in Washington, D.C., as local hospitals treated only whites. Burrell Memorial, which became the region's largest medical facility for black patients, moved into a former school on this site in 1921 and occupied a new building here in 1955. The hospital's nursing school prepared African Americans for careers as registered nurses before closing in the 1930s. A school for practical nurses opened here in the 1950s. Burrell Memorial Hospital closed in 1978.

John Chilembwe (ca. 1871-1915)

SPONSOR: University of Lynchburg

LOCALITY: Lynchburg

Proposed Location: Virginia University of Lynchburg campus

JOHN CHILEMBWE (CA. 1871-1915), CITY OF LYNCHBURG

John Chilembwe was the leader, in 1915, of the first major African uprising against colonial authorities in the British Protectorate of Nyasaland (Malawi). Chilembwe had come to Lynchburg in 1897 to study at Virginia Seminary under its president, Gregory Hayes. He returned to Africa by 1900 and set up Providence Industrial Mission before launching the revolt of 1915. A military patrol shot and killed Chilembwe on 3 Feb. 1915. The British Official Commission asserted that a main cause of the revolt had been Chilembwe's education in the United States. Malawi, where Chilembwe remains a symbol of liberation, became independent in 1964. John Chilembwe Day is celebrated annually on 15 Jan.

Spy Hill African American Cemetery

SPONSOR: Blanche M. Simmons

LOCALITY: King George County

PROPOSED LOCATION: Rte. 218

SPY HILL AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY, KING GEORGE COUNTY

John Washington, great-grandfather of George Washington, acquired the plantation later known as Spy Hill by 1675 and left it to his son Lawrence, grandfather of the president. The property passed from the Washington family to Col. Thomas B. B. Baber in 1828. Enslaved African Americans who labored at Spy Hill were buried in a cemetery established here by the mid-19th century. After emancipation, the black community continued to use the cemetery until the mid-20th century. Although more than a hundred people are interred here, including members of the Gray, Jackson, Lucas, Peyton, Thompson, and Washington families, few grave markers survive.

Sunset Hill School

SPONSOR: Queen Street-Sunset Hill Alumni

LOCALITY: Town of Strasburg

PROPOSED LOCATION: 348 Sunset Street, Strasburg

SUNSET HILL SCHOOL, TOWN OF STRASBURG

The Queen Street School, one of the first schools in Shenandoah County for African Americans, had opened in Strasburg by 1875. After a fire in 1929, a new school known as Sunset Hill was built here ca. 1930 to serve grades 1-7. Because the county had no high school for African American students, graduates had to go elsewhere to attend higher grades. African American residents petitioned for better facilities, and the school board considered building a new segregated elementary school as late as 1962, eight years after the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that public school segregation was unconstitutional. Sunset Hill closed in 1964 when Shenandoah County schools were fully desegregated.

Campbell County Training School

SPONSOR: The Campbell County Training School Complex Committee

LOCALITY: Campbell County

PROPOSED LOCATION: 1470 Village Highway, Rustburg

CAMPBELL COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL, CAMPBELL COUNTY

Campbell County Training School (CCTS) opened here ca. 1923 after African American citizens campaigned for better schools. The black community, the county, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund paid for its construction. Rosenwald, inspired by the work of Booker T. Washington, helped build more than 5,000 schools for black students. The Rev. Thomas Tweedy and Gabe Hunt are recognized as major local contributors to CCTS, which provided the county's first two-year high school program for African Americans and later included a teacher cottage, cafeteria, shop, and auditorium. In 1951 a new CCTS opened nearby. Named Campbell County High School in 1952, it closed in 1969 when desegregation was completed.

Prospect Public School

SPONSOR: Prospect School Alumni

LOCALITY: Scott County

PROPOSED LOCATION: U.S. Hwy 23, west of intersection with 432/23/58, Gate City

PROSPECT PUBLIC SCHOOL, SCOTT COUNTY

Prospect School, for six decades Scott County's only public school for African Americans, moved into a new building 1.5 miles northwest of here ca. 1919. Contributions for the two-room school came from the black community (\$1,200), the county (\$600), and the Julius Rosenwald Fund (\$500). This fund, created by the president of Sears, Roebuck, and Co. and inspired by the work of Booker T. Washington, helped build more than 5,000 schools for black children in the South and supported two additions to Prospect in the 1920s. The school offered grades 1-7; black students who sought further education had to leave the county. Prospect School closed in 1965 with desegregation and was later demolished.

Calvin Coolidge Green (1931-2011)

SPONSOR: Green v. New Kent Committee

LOCALITY: New Kent County

PROPOSED LOCATION: 11825 New Kent Highway (Route 249)

CALVIN COOLIDGE GREEN (1931-2011), NEW KENT COUNTY

Calvin C. Green, civil rights activist, helped lead the movement for school integration in New Kent County. An educator, pastor, Korean War veteran, and later an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve, Green chartered the New Kent branch of the NAACP in 1960 and was its president for 16 years. After the county school board denied his petition to desegregate schools, Green worked with other county residents and the state NAACP to file a federal lawsuit in 1965 in the name of Charles C. Green, his youngest son. On 27 May 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Green v. New Kent Co.* that localities must swiftly integrate public schools, leading to a decline in school segregation across the U.S.

Central Lunatic Asylum

SPONSOR: Central State Hospital

LOCALITY: City of Richmond

PROPOSED LOCATION: Corner of Fairmount and 20th Street

CENTRAL LUNATIC ASYLUM, CITY OF RICHMOND

Howard's Grove was a 19th-century recreational retreat near Richmond before becoming a Confederate hospital in 1862. After the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau operated a hospital here for African Americans suffering from mental disorders, ill health, or homelessness. In Dec. 1869 the federal government transferred the facility to the state as an asylum exclusively for the "colored insane," making it the nation's first stand-alone mental hospital for black patients. Organized as a state institution in 1870, the Central Lunatic Asylum moved to Dinwiddie County in 1885, was renamed Central State Hospital in 1894, and was desegregated in 1967.

Central State Hospital Cemetery

SPONSOR: Central State Hospital

LOCALITY: Dinwiddie County

PROPOSED LOCATION: Seventh Avenue, on the campus of Central State Hospital

CENTRAL STATE HOSPITAL CEMETERY, DINWIDDIE COUNTY

This cemetery is the final resting place for thousands of patients treated at the nation's first stand-alone psychiatric hospital for African Americans, originally known as the Central Lunatic Asylum and later renamed Central State Hospital. The asylum, which became a state institution in 1870, moved here from a location near Richmond in 1885. Deceased patients were interred in this burial ground from the mid-1880s until a new cemetery opened a short distance southeast of here in 1939. In some years during this period, more than 10 percent of the hospital's patients died. Graves were originally marked with small stones that deteriorated over time.

Little Zion Baptist Church

SPONSOR: Little Zion Baptist Church

LOCALITY: Orange County

PROPOSED LOCATION: 15116 Tomahawk Creek Road

LITTLE ZION BAPTIST CHURCH, ORANGE COUNTY

At the end of the Civil War, African Americans constituted a majority of the congregation at the white-led Zion Baptist Church, organized nearby in 1813. Exercising newfound autonomy after emancipation, black members withdrew and established Little Zion Baptist Church ca. 1870. The congregation first met in members' houses and then worshiped under a brush arbor before building a frame sanctuary on land donated by the Rev. Allen Banks, the church's second pastor. Many of the early members resided in Goffney Town, Little Egypt, and Little Zion, communities of freedpeople in this vicinity. The congregation moved into a new sanctuary here, 0.3 mile north of the old church, in 2001.

Stingray Point Contraband

SPONSOR: Middle Peninsula African-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Virginia

LOCALITY: Middlesex County

PROPOSED LOCATION: Route 33, 1.8 miles west of the original Stingray Point Lighthouse

STINGRAY POINT CONTRABAND, MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Six enslaved men (Alexander Franklin, David Harris, John Hunter, Miles Hunter, Peter Hunter, and Samuel Hunter), fearing impressment into Confederate service, sought refuge in the Stingray Point Lighthouse near here on 15 July 1861 and hailed the USS Mount Vernon. Similar escapes followed. The U.S. Secretary of the Navy, following the contraband theory established at Fort Monroe, authorized the employment of self-emancipated men and, in Sept. 1861, approved their enlistment in the U.S. Navy, nearly a year before black men could enlist in the U.S. Army. After serving in the Navy, Harris is the only one of the six men known to have returned to this community, where he had been enslaved.

The African Preacher (ca. 1746-1843)

SPONSOR: James Larry Williamson

LOCALITY: Nottoway County

PROPOSED LOCATION: Route 630, just south of intersection with Route 615, Crewe

THE AFRICAN PREACHER (CA. 1746-1843), NOTTAWAY COUNTY

Nearby lived John Stewart, also known as Jack, the African Preacher, who won renown as a minister and biblical scholar. Kidnapped from Africa as a child, he was brought to Nottoway County as a slave in the mid-18th century. The preaching of Presbyterian clergymen drew him to Christianity. Taught to read by his owner's children, he immersed himself in the Bible and became a licensed Baptist preacher. His wisdom and oratory made him a leader of the black community and so impressed his white neighbors that they contributed toward the purchase of his freedom. Prominent religious journals published stories about Stewart, and he was the subject of a biography titled *The African Preacher* (1849).

Westwood Baptist Church

SPONSOR: Westwood Baptist Church

LOCALITY: City of Richmond

PROPOSED LOCATION: Patterson Avenue at intersection with Glenburnie Road

WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, CITY OF RICHMOND

This church traces its origins to 1872, when a group of formerly enslaved African Americans began meeting for Bible study at the home of Robert Pemberton. In 1876, the congregation's trustees purchased a half-acre lot here for \$25 for the Westwood Colored Baptist Church. The Rev. George Daggett, first pastor, served for two decades. Early baptisms took place in nearby Jordan's Branch. A vibrant African American community, originally in Henrico County and later annexed by the City of Richmond, developed around the church. Many 20th-century pastors graduated from the Virginia Union University seminary. Their oratorical skills and political leadership fostered a thriving church.

Barbara Rose Johns (1935-1991)

SPONSOR: Governor

LOCALITY: Prince Edward County

PROPOSED LOCATION: TBD

BARBARA ROSE JOHNS (1935-1991), PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

Barbara Johns, civil rights pioneer, was born in New York and moved to her parents' native Prince Edward County as a child. In April 1951, at age 16, she led a student walkout to protest conditions at the segregated Robert Russa Moton High School, where facilities were vastly inferior to those at the county's white high school. The students, demanding a new school, sought aid from the Virginia NAACP, which instead offered to represent them in a lawsuit seeking an end to segregation. *Davis v. Prince Edward* was the only student-initiated case consolidated into *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public school segregation was unconstitutional.

Camilla Ella Williams (1919-2012)

SPONSOR: Governor

LOCALITY: City of Danville

PROPOSED LOCATION: TBD

CAMILLA ELLA WILLIAMS (1919-2012), CITY OF DANVILLE

Camilla Williams, operatic soprano, grew up in Danville. In 1946 she became the first African American woman to secure a contract with a major U.S. opera company, making her debut in *Madama Butterfly* with the New York City Center Opera. Williams starred in Columbia Records' recording of *Porgy and Bess* (1951), performed with the Vienna State Opera and other prominent companies, toured internationally as a soloist, and served as a cultural ambassador for the U.S. State Department. In 1963 she performed in Danville to raise funds for civil rights demonstrators, and she sang the national anthem at the March on Washington before Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Ona Judge (ca. 1773-1848)

SPONSOR: Governor

LOCALITY: Fairfax

PROPOSED LOCATION: TBD

ONA JUDGE (CA. 1773-1848), FAIRFAX COUNTY

Ona (or Oney) Judge, born into slavery at Mount Vernon, became Martha Washington's personal attendant as a child. After George Washington was elected president in 1789, Judge was brought to New York City and later to Philadelphia to serve his household. Washington periodically sent her back to Virginia to skirt a Pennsylvania law that might have granted her freedom based on long-term residency. In 1796, after learning that she was to become a gift for Martha Washington's granddaughter, Judge escaped from Philadelphia to New Hampshire. There she married, had three children, taught herself to read and write, and lived for more than 50 years, having resisted Washington's attempts to recover her.

Wyatt Tee Walker (1928-2018)

SPONSOR: Governor

LOCALITY: City of Petersburg

PROPOSED LOCATION: TBD

WYATT TEE WALKER (1928-2018), CITY OF PETERSBURG

Wyatt Tee Walker, pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church from 1953 to 1960, served as president of the Petersburg branch of the NAACP and as Virginia director of the Congress of Racial Equality. He worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and for several years was his chief of staff. In 1960 Walker became the first full-time executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He helped organize major civil rights protests including the Birmingham (Alabama) Movement and the March on Washington. For 37 years Walker was pastor of Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem, NY. In 1978 he organized the International Freedom Mobilization to combat apartheid in South Africa.

Sgt. William H. Carney (1840-1908)

SPONSOR: GOVERNOR

LOCALITY: City of Norfolk

PROPOSED LOCATION: TBD

SGT. WILLIAM H. CARNEY (1840-1908)

William Carney, born into slavery in Norfolk, gained his freedom and settled in New Bedford, MA, ca. 1856. He enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Vol. Infantry Regt. in Feb. 1863, shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation authorized African American men to serve in combat in the U.S. Army, and was soon promoted to sergeant. On 18 July 1863, as the 54th led an attack on Fort Wagner near Charleston, SC, Carney retrieved the American flag from the regiment's wounded color guard. Under heavy fire, he carried the flag to the fort's parapet and then, despite serious wounds, withdrew it when his unit was pushed back. For this action Carney received the Medal of Honor on 23 May 1900.

GOVERNOR NORTHAM'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH HISTORICAL MARKER CONTEST TOP TEN MARKERS

TOP TEN MARKERS

1. Maggie Lena Walker (Richmond)
2. Katherine Johnson (Hampton)
3. Ona Judge (Mount Vernon)
4. Barbara Johns (Farmville)
5. William H. Carney (Norfolk)
6. Angela (Jamestown)
7. Camilla Ella Williams (Danville)
8. Wyatt Tee Walker (Chester/Petersburg)
9. Gowan Pamphlet (Williamsburg)
10. Evelyn Butts (Norfolk)

Submissions for Governor Northam's Inaugural Historical Marker Contest were due March 6, 2020. The Governor's Office received 285 entries from students across the Commonwealth. A team of historians at the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) completed its review and selected 10 entries based on the Historical Highway Marker criteria. Winning entry submitters will be notified in the coming months.

Virginia's historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with installation of the first markers along U.S. 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,600 official state markers, most of which are maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, except in those localities outside of VDOT's authority.

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

