

Department of Historic Resources

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For Immediate Release

December 29, 2011

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13 NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

—Markers cover topics in the counties of James City (2), Louisa, Middlesex (2), Smyth, and Spotsylvania, and the cities of Lynchburg, Petersburg and Richmond (3)—

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

RICHMOND – A new historical highway marker commemorating a man who mailed himself to Philadelphia to escape slavery and six other signs focusing on topics in African American history are among the 13 new markers approved recently by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Other new signs recall events during early English settlement at Jamestown, the Revolutionary War and Civil War, and important educators in Virginia.

Henry “Box” Brown will be remembered with a historical marker in **Louisa County** where Brown was born into slavery in about 1815. In 1849, while he was working in Richmond, Brown had himself mailed to Philadelphia in three-foot-long box. He gained notoriety through his daring feat and a subsequent publication, the *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*. Brown, however, was “forced to leave the country in Oct. 1850 after the Fugitive Slave Act because of the threat of re-enslavement,” according to the new marker.

Three newly approved markers are slated for installation in Richmond.

One will recall black “clergyman, lecturer, and author” Daniel Webster Davis, who attended public school in **Richmond** after the Civil War. Later Davis taught school in the city for 33 years and published three books including a collection of poems, “which voiced the struggles of his generation,” as the marker text states.

Another state marker for **Richmond** will commemorate the life of Samuel L. Gravely Jr., who “became the first African American naval officer to serve under combat conditions, command a fighting vessel, and command a fleet,” in the marker’s words. “He was the first African American to attain the rank of commander, captain, rear admiral, and vice admiral.” Gravely, who retired from the navy in 1980, is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church in **Richmond** also will be honored. The church traces back to 1857 when it was founded by “free blacks and slaves.” Making “education one of its chief goals,” according to the marker, Ebenezer Baptist Church “opened the first public school for black children in Richmond in 1866.” It also “organized Hartshorn Memorial College for black women in 1883, and helped found the Richmond Colored Young Men’s Christian Association in 1887.”

In **Middlesex County**, the marker “Morgan v. Virginia” will highlight a law suit that originated when Irene Morgan “refused to give up her seat on a Greyhound bus to a white passenger.” Her actions resulted in a conviction in court by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Morgan appealed and wound up in the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 1946 “that it was unconstitutional to enforce segregation laws on interstate carriers,” according to the marker. The decision “set a precedent for later battles the NAACP waged against segregation.”

Another marker to be erected **Middlesex County** will recall “Naval Actions on Wilton Creek and the Rappahannock River” during the Civil War. In two separate actions, Confederate Navy Lt. John Taylor Wood attacked Union gunboats, first on August 17, then August 22 in 1863, when he captured two gunboats. Wood was a grandson of President Zachary Taylor.

In **James City County**, a marker will commemorate the “Community of Grove.” Originally settled by refugees and freed blacks on land confiscated by the Freedman’s Bureau after the Civil War, the Grove community was short lived, since the land was restored to its owners in 1867. In 1918, however, it was resettled when “many descendants of the first refugees returned to Grove after the U.S. government forced their removal to make way for the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station and Cheatham Annex.”

Also in **James City County**, the marker “Blockhouses Near Jamestown” will recount when the Paspahegh Indians attacked a blockhouse on the perimeter of Jamestown and killed soldiers stationed there. “The attack was in retaliation for the Feb. killing of their leader Wowinchapuncke,” according to the marker.

Three educators of the latter 19th and early 20th centuries are also to be honored with markers.

Black educator Frank Trigg will be remembered with a sign in **Lynchburg**. Born into slavery, Trigg attended Hampton Institute after the Civil War and began his teaching career in Abingdon before moving to Lynchburg. Serving as a teacher and principal for 22 years there, he “became the first black supervisor of Lynchburg’s black public schools” and “later was president of colleges in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina.”

A marker for Cornelia Storrs Adair will recall her service of 25 years in the Virginia Education Association. “In 1927, she became the first classroom teacher elected president of the National Education Association,” and “in 1934, her alma mater, the College of

William & Mary, awarded her the first Alumni Medallion given to a woman,” according to the marker.

In **Petersburg**, a marker will honor the “Weddell-McCabe-Chisholm House,” where Confederate veteran and noted educator and civic leader Capt. W. Gordon McCabe resided from 1865 to 1895. McCabe was “headmaster to the prestigious University School preparatory academy.”

In the Town of Marion in **Smyth County**, a marker for Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver will recall this “author, Lutheran lay leader, mother-in-law of Sherwood Anderson, and businesswoman.” Copenhaver was educated at the Marion Female College and also taught there. She worked to better the lives of the people of Appalachia and advocated “cooperative strategies to improve the region’s agricultural economy,” according to the sign.

The marker “Lafayette at Corbin’s Bridge” is slated for **Spotsylvania County**. It recalls where the Marquis de Lafayette and his army of more than 3,000 Continental soldiers and militia camped while being pursued by British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton in 1781, only months prior to the end of the Revolutionary War.

All 13 markers were approved by DHR’s Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting in Richmond on December 15.

The Virginia highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the 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 2,200 official state markers, most of which are maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, a key partner with the Department of Historic Resources in the historical marker program.

The manufacturing cost of each new highway marker is covered by its respective sponsor, except for those markers developed by the Department of Historic Resources as part of a nearly decade-long program to create new markers that focus on the history of women, African Americans, and Virginia Indians. Markers created by DHR are funded by a federal transportation grant.

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 locations are only proposed; they have yet to be confirmed with VDOT or other officials.)

Blockhouses Near Jamestown

In the first few years of the English settlement at Jamestown, colonists built small, isolated, fortified structures—called blockhouses—around the perimeter of the main settlement to provide refuges, observation posts, and rallying points in the case of attack. On 29 Mar. 1610, Paspahugh Indians, who consistently resisted the English incursion into their territory, attacked the blockhouse near here, killing the soldiers stationed there. The attack was in retaliation for the Feb. killing of their leader Wowinchapuncke. On 20 May 1611, Sir Thomas Dale directed the raising of another blockhouse “on the north side of our back river to prevent the Indians from killing our cattle.”

Sponsor: James City County Historical Commission

Locality: James City County

Proposed Location: Jamestown Road, .35 miles from Jamestown Ferry Landing

Community of Grove

After the Civil War, the Freedman’s Bureau confiscated land for refugees and free African Americans in the area that became the community of Grove. In 1867, the seized land was restored to the previous owners. Some of the African Americans settled on lands to the west. In 1918, many descendants of the first refugees returned to Grove after the U.S. government forced their removal to make way for the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station and Cheatham Annex. These immigrants formed the nucleus of Grove, which was enlarged when further removals during World War II displaced friends and family from the nearby community of Magruder.

Sponsor: James City County Historical Commission

Locality: James City County

Proposed Location: 8660 Pocahontas Trail

Ebenezer Baptist Church

Free blacks and slaves living west of Second St. and north of Broad St. founded the Third African Baptist Church in 1857. In 1858, it was dedicated on this site as Ebenezer Baptist Church, with a white minister, the Rev. William T. Lindsay, as pastor, as required by law. On 21 May 1865, the Rev. Peter Randolph became the congregation’s first black pastor. The church made education one of its chief goals. It opened the first public school for black children in Richmond in 1866, organized Hartshorn Memorial College for black women in 1883, and helped found the Richmond Colored Young Men’s Christian Association in 1887.

Sponsor: Mr. Willie Carr, Chairman of the Trustee Board, Ebenezer Baptist Church

Locality: City of Richmond

Proposed Location: 216 West Leigh Street

Lafayette at Corbin's Bridge

Pursued by British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, the Marquis de Lafayette camped just west of here near Corbin's Bridge on 2 June during the campaign of 1781. Commanding more than 3,000 Continental soldiers and militia, Lafayette sought to move northward and link up with Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne's approximately 1,000 Continentals who were heading south from Pennsylvania. On 3 June, Gen. Charles Cornwallis ordered Tarleton to Charlottesville on a raid. Tarleton broke off his pursuit of Lafayette and nearly captured Gov. Thomas Jefferson in Charlottesville the following day.

Sponsor: Elizabeth Couture/Mine Run DAR Chapter

Locality: Spotsylvania County

Proposed Location: Pull-off on NW side of intersection of Catharpin Road (Rte. 612) and Brock Road (Rte. 613)

Weddell-McCabe-Chisholm House

Scottish emigrant James Weddell (1807-1865) built this Greek Revival house about 1845 and lived there until his death. In 1865, Capt. W. Gordon McCabe (1841-1920) bought the house. Over the second half of the 19th century, he published many works on the classics, poetry, and his service in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. A noted educator and civic leader, he was also headmaster of the prestigious University School preparatory academy. McCabe lived in the house until he moved his school to Richmond in 1895. Dr. Julian J. Chisholm (1830-1903), a noted surgeon, lived in the house from 1900 until 1903.

Sponsor: The Cameron Foundation

Locality: City of Petersburg

Proposed Location: 228 South Sycamore Street

Naval Actions on Wilton Creek and the Rappahannock River

In Aug. 1863, Confederate Navy Lt. John Taylor Wood, moving overland with boarding cutters carried on modified wagons and a contingent of 82 men, embarked on an expedition to attack Union ships. At Wilton Creek, Wood and his men repulsed forces from the Union gunboat *General Putnam* in a skirmish on 17 Aug. Shifting operations north to the Rappahannock River, his boarding parties surprised and captured Union gunboats, *Reliance* and *Satellite*, anchored off Windmill Point in a daring early morning raid on 22 Aug. The third raid of its kind by Wood, a grandson of Pres. Zachary Taylor, it was also the most successful.

Sponsor: Deltaville Maritime Museum

Locality: Middlesex County

Proposed Location: Intersection of Rte.33 and Woodport Lane

Henry “Box” Brown

Born into slavery about 1815 at The Hermitage Plantation near here, Henry Brown was working in Richmond by 1830. Brown mailed himself to Philadelphia, and freedom, on 23 March 1849 inside a three-foot-long box. Brown briefly became a spokesperson for the abolitionist movement, publishing with Charles Stearns the *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*. He also exhibited a moving panorama, “The Mirror of Slavery.” Forced to leave the country in Oct. 1850 after the Fugitive Slave Act because of the threat of re-enslavement, Brown moved to Great Britain where he toured as an entertainer. He returned to the United States in 1875 and died sometime after 1889.

Sponsor: Louisa County Historical Society

Locality: Louisa County

Proposed Location: Rte. 33 near Hermitage Plantation

Cornelia Storrs Adair

Cornelia Storrs Adair was a noted education pioneer. She began teaching in Richmond City public schools in 1904. She went on to serve for more than twenty-five years in the Virginia Education Association. In 1927 she became the first classroom teacher elected president of the National Education Association. Adair advocated universal education and took an active role as a volunteer in many community causes. During the Great Depression, she directed the Works Progress Administration’s Emergency Education Program in Richmond. In 1934, her alma mater, the College of William & Mary, awarded her the first Alumni Medallion given to a woman.

Sponsor: DHR

Locality: TBD

Proposed Location: TBD

Daniel Webster Davis

D. Webster Davis was an African American clergyman, lecturer, and author. Born into slavery in either Caroline or Hanover County, after the Civil War he attended public school in Richmond. Beginning in 1880, he taught there for 33 years, first at Navy Hill school and then the Baker school, and was active in the Richmond Colored Young Men’s Christian Association. In 1895 he published a volume entitled *Idle Moments, Containing Emancipation and Other Poems*, which voiced the struggles of his generation. He also later wrote two other books on the accomplishments of African Americans, including one about the Negro Exhibition at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition.

Sponsor: DHR

Locality: City of Richmond

Proposed Location: Near 910 N. 7th Street

Frank Trigg

Frank Trigg was a leading black educator in Virginia, 1880-1920. He was born into slavery in Richmond while his parents were personal servants of Virginia Governor John B. Floyd. After the Civil War he attended Hampton Institute, and began teaching in Abingdon before moving to Lynchburg in 1880. He was a teacher and principal here for 22 years and became the first black supervisor of Lynchburg's black public schools. He was co-founder of the Virginia Teachers' Association, and later was president of colleges in Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina. In 1926 he retired to Lynchburg and resided here. He is buried in Old City Cemetery.

Sponsor: DHR (proposed by Lynchburg resident Jane White)

Locality: City of Lynchburg

Proposed Location: 1422 Pierce Street

Morgan v. Virginia

Irene Morgan's resistance to segregation led to an important court case. On 16 July 1944, Morgan refused to give up her seat on a Greyhound bus to a white passenger. After a struggle with Middlesex County sheriffs she was arrested. Convicted by the State, she appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court with the help of Spottswood W. Robinson III and Thurgood Marshall, among others. In a landmark decision in 1946, the Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to enforce segregation laws on interstate carriers. This decision helped set precedent for the later battles the NAACP waged against segregation.

Sponsor: DHR

Locality: Middlesex County

Proposed Location: Near Saluda

Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver

Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver, an author, Lutheran lay leader, mother-in-law of Sherwood Anderson, and businesswoman, taught here for many years. From a young age, she wrote poetry, fiction, and pageants for the Lutheran Church. Educated at the Marion Female College, she later taught there. Interested in missionary work, she helped organize efforts to minister to the needs of the people of Appalachia. Copenhaver advocated cooperative strategies to improve the region's agricultural economy. She began textile production in her home, Rosemont, putting many local women to work making rugs, fringes, and other items. Rosemont Industries became internationally known for its products.

Sponsor: DHR

Locality: Marion

Proposed Location: 245 W. Main, Marion

Samuel L. Gravely Jr.

A pioneering naval officer, Samuel L. Gravely Jr. spent his early years here at 819 Nicholson Street. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1942 and became one of the first commissioned African American officers in the United States Navy. He subsequently became the first African American naval officer to serve under combat conditions, command a fighting vessel, and command a fleet. He was the first African American to attain the rank of commander, captain, rear admiral, and vice admiral. He retired from the navy in 1980. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Sponsor: DHR

Locality: City of Richmond

Proposed Location: near his childhood home in Fulton

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