

Department of Historic Resources

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13 NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

—New markers cover topics in the counties of Accomack, Augusta (2), Henrico, Louisa, Lunenburg, Powhatan, Southampton, Sussex; and the cities of Alexandria, Petersburg (2), and Richmond—

—Replacement markers were also approved for signs in Hampton, Jamestown, and Loudoun County—

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

RICHMOND – Thirteen new historical highway markers approved for manufacture by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources will highlight Presbyterian church history in the Shenandoah Valley, a Tangier Island preacher who became known as “The Parson of the Islands,” 20th century African American schools, and a 1929 roadside diner, among other topics.

Two markers to rise in **Augusta County** will tell about the founding of Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church, built in 1749 and the oldest Presbyterian church in continuous use west of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia.

The “Augusta Stone Church” marker will recall the building “replaced a log meetinghouse built shortly after the congregation’s founding in 1740.” During the Seven Years’ War, church members “fortified the stone structure with log palisades and watchtowers to defend against Indian attack,” the marker will read. The church’s “defensive position inspired the name Fort Defiance adopted by the community that grew around the church,” according to the approved marker text.

A second marker, “The Rev. John Craig (1709-1774),” honors “Virginia’s first settled Presbyterian minister west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.” Craig “led the construction of the Augusta Stone Church and its defensive reinforcement” and “traveled the backcountry to preach, baptize settlers, and organize congregations,” according to the marker text.

Methodist church history in Virginia will be remembered with a sign for **Accomack County’s Tangier Island**. “The Parson of the Islands” will relay that “Joshua Thomas (1776-1853) became a skilled waterman in his youth and ferried clergymen from the mainland to the islands of the Chesapeake Bay.” A convert to Methodism about 1807, Thomas “served the Chesapeake region for more than four decades,” traveling in a canoe he dubbed “The Methodist.”

African American educational history during the early 20th century will be highlighted with four markers, including three for Rosenwald-funded schools in **Louisa, Lunenburg** and **Southampton** counties. More than 370 “Rosenwalds,” as they are commonly known, were built in Virginia between 1917 and 1932 with matching funds and building plans from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which supported educational opportunities for youth living in segregated communities throughout the South.

The “Richardson and Morton Schools” marker will relay that the Rosenwald-funded Louisa Training School, built in 1926, was later replaced by Archie Gibbs Richardson High School, in an effort by **Louisa County** to provide “separate but equal” facilities for blacks during public school segregation. A later 1960-built Zelda Carter Morton Elementary School also once stood on the same site.

The “Lunenburg High School” sign will recall the Lunenburg Training School was founded in 1920 with support from the Jeanes Fund. Beginning in 1924, Rosenwald funds aided in the construction of a larger school and later a shop building. In 1949 **Lunenburg County** built a new brick building that became Lunenburg High School. After the county desegregated its schools in 1969, it became a junior high school.

In **Southampton County**, Courtland School will be remembered with a marker that will note the building was constructed between 1928 and 1929 at a cost of \$4,000, with the local black community contributing \$1,000, the county \$2,500 and the Rosenwald Fund \$500 along with its “two teacher architectural plan” for the building, which later became Courtland Community Center.

A marker for “Pocahontas High School” in **Powhatan County** will recall this school constructed in 1937 for African American students at a cost of about \$40,000, with funds provided by a New Deal agency and the Virginia Board of Education’s Literary Fund and the Southern Education Foundation, which aided African American schools across the South. When the county desegregated its schools in 1969, the school served junior high students.

Two other new markers also will focus on African American history:

- Shiloh Baptist Church in **Alexandria** highlights the church’s beginnings in 1865 when “about 50 former slaves founded the Shiloh Society, later known as Shiloh Baptist Church.” In 1893, the congregation completed a brick Gothic Revival sanctuary that stands today. “Prominent visitors,” the marker will read, “have included Rep. John Mercer Langston, Dr. Dorothy Height, and Pres. George W. Bush.”
- The “Pocahontas Island” marker for installation in **Petersburg** will recognize a neighborhood that dates back to 1752 and which gave rise by 1860 to Petersburg’s largest free black community. “After the Civil War,” the sign will read, “Pocahontas attracted many emancipated African Americans.” In 1993 a tornado left widespread damage in the area.

Petersburg also will have a new marker to honor city native Joseph Cotten, who starred in Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane* and became one of Hollywood’s most popular leading men during the 1940s. Cotten died in 1994 and is buried in the city’s Blandford Cemetery.

Early auto history in Virginia will be recollected in **Sussex County** with the marker “Roadside Commerce.” It summarizes the development of State Route 52 and U.S. 460 in the 1930s. The roads linked Roanoke and Tidewater and gave rise to roadside businesses including gas stations, motels, cafes and the Virginia Diner, established in 1929 in a refurbished Surry, Sussex and Southampton Railroad car.

In **Richmond**, Wilfred Emory Cutshaw will be remembered for his legacy as a city engineer who transformed the cityscape during the latter 19th century. He oversaw the construction of numerous buildings, established a program of urban forestry and designed Byrd Park among others in the city.

A marker to rise in **Henrico County** will commemorate the Second Battle of Fair Oaks, which took place on October 27 and 28 1864 between the forces of Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler and Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet. The battle resulted in about 1,600 Union and about 100 Confederate casualties.

All 13 new markers were approved during the March quarterly meeting of the governor-appointed Board of Historic Resources of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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.

In addition to the new historical markers, the Board of Historic Resources also approved updated and revised texts for the following signs:

- “First Africans in Virginia”: This sign in **Hampton** relays the “first documented Africans in Virginia arrived here in Aug. 1619” on an English privateer. The Africans had been “captured from a Portuguese slave ship.” “Among present-day Hampton’s earliest African residents were Antony and Isabella. Their son, William, was the first child of African ancestry known to have been born in Virginia (ca. 1624).”
- “First Africans in Jamestown”: This sign relays that some of the first Africans in Virginia, who arrived at Point Comfort (in present-day Hampton) “were transported to **Jamestown** shortly thereafter. By 1625 at least nine African men and women lived here [in Jamestown]. Many of the colony’s earliest Africans were held as slaves, but some individuals became free.”
- “Battle of Ball’s Bluff”: This **Loudoun County** marker recounts this October 1861 battle between around 1,700 Union and 1,700 Confederate troops. Among the Union casualties was Senator Edward D. Baker, “the only sitting U.S. senator ever killed in combat.”

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.)

Richardson and Morton Schools

Louisa Training School, the county’s first high school for African American students, was built three miles northwest in 1926 with aid from the Rosenwald Fund. In 1953, Archie Gibbs Richardson High School replaced it here as part of an effort to provide “separate but equal” facilities for African Americans. The school was named for the only black official then employed by Virginia’s Education Department. Also on this site stood Zelda Carter Morton Elementary School, built in 1960 and named for the county’s Jeanes Fund supervisor of education for blacks from 1926 to 1945. Louisa County schools were desegregated in 1969.

Sponsor: A.G. Richardson Alumni Association

Locality: Louisa County

Shiloh Baptist Church

Alexandria, occupied by Union troops during the Civil War, became a refuge for African Americans escaping slavery. Before the war ended, about 50 former slaves founded the Shiloh Society, later known as Shiloh Baptist Church. Members held services in U.S. government buildings until Sept. 1865, when their new frame church on West Street was dedicated. The congregation flourished under the leadership of the Rev. Leland Warring, pastor for more than 20 years. The brick Gothic Revival sanctuary here was completed in 1893. Prominent visitors have included Rep. John Mercer Langston, Dr. Dorothy Height, and Pres. George W. Bush.

Sponsor: Shiloh Baptist Church

Locality: Alexandria

Lunenburg High School

African American patrons, lacking facilities for secondary education, established Lunenburg Training School here about 1920. The school benefited from the support of the Jeanes Fund, which sponsored African American supervisors of education in rural southern communities. In 1924-25, the Julius Rosenwald Fund contributed \$900 for a larger school building. Rosenwald's program, which helped build schools for African Americans across the South, later donated \$400 for a shop. The county constructed a brick building here in 1949, and the school was renamed Lunenburg High School in 1951. When county schools were desegregated in 1969, the building became Lunenburg Junior High School.

Sponsor: Lunenburg High School Alumni Association

Locality: Lunenburg County

Courtland School -- Rosenwald Funded

Courtland School, which served African American students during the segregation era, was erected here in 1928-29 at a cost of \$4,000. The local African American community raised \$1,000, while the county contributed \$2,500. The Julius Rosenwald Fund, established by the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, contributed \$500. Rosenwald's program, which helped pay for the construction of more than 5,000 schools for African Americans across the rural South between 1917 and 1932, was inspired by the work of Booker T. Washington, who died in 1915. Courtland School, built on a standard two-teacher architectural plan, later became Courtland Community Center.

Sponsor: Maxine Nowlin

Locality: Southampton County

Pocahontas High School

Powhatan County established Powhatan Training School one mile southeast in 1931 to offer upper-level courses to African American students. In 1937 on this site the county built a brick high school for African Americans at a cost of about \$40,000. The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, a New Deal agency, granted \$18,000 for the project. Additional support came from the Virginia Board of Education's Literary Fund and the Southern Education Foundation, which aided African American schools across the South. The building was named Pocahontas High School in 1941 and Pocahontas Middle School in 1969, when county schools were desegregated.

Sponsor: Pocahontas Middle School Student Council Association

Locality: Powhatan County

Pocahontas Island

The town of Pocahontas, established in 1752, became part of Petersburg in 1784. By 1860, more members of the city's large free African American community lived here than in any other neighborhood. Their work in tobacco factories and on wharves fueled the bustling Appomattox River trade. Residents likely used their access to the river to help enslaved blacks escape via the Underground Railroad. After the Civil War, Pocahontas attracted many emancipated African Americans. A tornado left widespread damage in 1993. The Jarratt House, ca. 1819, at 808-810 Logan Street, is the oldest standing structure. Archaeological evidence indicates Native American occupation of this area as early as 6500 BC.

Sponsor: City of Petersburg

Locality: Petersburg

Roadside Commerce

Virginia's highway system took shape during the 1920s as automobile ownership expanded rapidly. State Route 52 was established in 1928 to connect Suffolk with Prince George County. In 1933, this road became part of the new U.S. 460 from Roanoke to the Chesapeake Bay. The highway was later extended to St. Louis, Missouri, but its western terminus was eventually fixed at Frankfort, Kentucky. To accommodate travelers' needs, entrepreneurs opened gas stations, motels, and cafes along the roadside. Among these was the Virginia Diner, which D'Earcy and Laura Davis established here in 1929 inside a refurbished Surry, Sussex and Southampton Railroad car.

Sponsor: Virginia Diner, Inc.

Locality: Sussex County

Augusta Stone Church

The Augusta Stone Church, Virginia's oldest Presbyterian church in continuous use west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, opened on 22 Jan. 1749. It replaced a log meetinghouse built shortly after the congregation's founding in 1740. At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, Pastor John Craig and members of the church fortified the structure with log palisades and watchtowers to defend against Indian attack. This defensive position inspired the name Fort Defiance adopted by the community that grew around the church. The building was enlarged and remodeled in 1921-22, and a new wing was added in 1956.

Sponsor: Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church

Locality: Augusta County

The Rev. John Craig (1709-1774)

John Craig, born in County Antrim, Ireland, and educated in Edinburgh, Scotland, immigrated to America in 1734. Ordained pastor in 1740 of the two churches later known as Augusta Stone and Tinkling Spring, Craig was Virginia's first settled Presbyterian minister west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He led the construction of Augusta Stone Church and its defensive reinforcement. Craig, an Old Side minister who resisted the Great Awakening, traveled the backcountry to preach, baptize settlers, and organize congregations. With his wife, Isabella, he established a farm and raised six children. The Craigs are buried in the cemetery to the east.

Sponsor: Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church

Locality: Augusta County

The Second Battle of Fair Oaks

Lt. Gen. Ulysses Grant ordered an assault here on 27 Oct. 1864 to divert Confederate attention from a Union attack near Petersburg. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler, Union commander outside Richmond, aspired to outflank the Confederates and capture their capital. The Federal X Corps initiated the attack along Darbytown Road, while the XVIII Corps, delayed by miscommunication, joined in later along Williamsburg Road. Union troops also advanced along Nine Mile Road. Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet strengthened his left flank, forcing the Federals to withdraw on 28 Oct. The Union army suffered about 1,600 casualties and the Confederates about 100.

Sponsor: Marcia J. Cunningham

Locality: Henrico County

Joseph Cotten (1905-1994)

Joseph Cotten, actor, was born in Petersburg. At school he excelled in football and on the stage. He appeared in several Broadway productions during the 1930s and joined Orson Welles's Mercury Theater company. Cotten made his film debut in 1941 alongside Welles in *Citizen Kane*. He later starred in *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Gaslight* (1944), and *The Third Man* (1949), becoming one of Hollywood's most popular leading men. Cotten won the Best Actor award at the 1949 Venice International Film Festival. He appeared in more than 80 films

over four decades and hosted *The Joseph Cotten Show* on television. He died in 1994 and is buried at Blandford Cemetery in Petersburg.

Sponsor: Whitworth W. Cotten Jr.

Locality: Petersburg

Wilfred Emory Cutshaw (1838-1907)

Wilfred Cutshaw graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1858 and served as a lieutenant colonel of artillery in the Confederate army. As Richmond's city engineer (1873-1907), he instituted an innovative system of civic planning that transformed the cityscape. Cutshaw oversaw the construction of numerous schools, armories, markets, and a new city hall. He established a program of urban forestry, reflected in modern Richmond's tree-lined streets. In William Byrd Park, one of several city parks he designed, Cutshaw combined the practicality of a new municipal water works and reservoir with scenic promenades, roadways, and lakes.

Sponsor: Selden Richardson

Locality: Richmond

The Parson of the Islands

Joshua Thomas (1776-1853) became a skilled waterman in his youth and ferried clergymen from the mainland to the islands of the Chesapeake Bay. He converted to Methodism about 1807, was licensed as an exhorter (or lay preacher), and was later ordained an elder. He served the Chesapeake region for more than four decades. Known as "The Parson of the Islands," he traveled in a canoe called *The Methodist*. Thomas raised his family on Tangier Island and led many camp meetings here. According to tradition, he conducted services for British forces stationed at Fort Albion during the War of 1812 and foretold their defeat at Baltimore in 1814.

Sponsor: United Methodist Church, Virginia Conference Historical Society

Locality: Tangier Island, Accomack County

Replacement Markers:

First Africans in Virginia

The first documented Africans in Virginia arrived here in Aug. 1619 on the *White Lion*, an English privateer based in the Netherlands. Colonial officials traded food for these "20 and odd" Africans, who had been captured from a Portuguese slave ship. Among present-day Hampton's earliest African residents were Antony and Isabella. Their son, William, was the first child of African ancestry known to have been born in Virginia (ca. 1624). Many of the earliest Africans were held as slaves, but some individuals became free. A legal framework for hereditary, lifelong slavery in Virginia evolved during the 1600s. The United States abolished slavery in 1865.

First Africans in Jamestown

The first documented Africans in mainland English America arrived at Point Comfort (in present-day Hampton) late in Aug. 1619. Colonial officials traded food for these "20 and odd" Africans, who had been seized from a Portuguese slave ship en route to Spanish America. Some of the Africans were transported to Jamestown shortly thereafter. By 1625 at least nine African men and women lived here. Many of the colony's earliest Africans were held as slaves, but some individuals became free. A legal framework for hereditary, lifelong slavery evolved in Virginia during the 17th century. The United States abolished slavery in 1865.

Battle of Ball's Bluff

Just to the east, 1,700 Union troops crossed the Potomac River and clashed with 1,700 Confederates on 21 Oct. 1861. The previous evening, a Union reconnaissance patrol had mistaken a row of trees for Confederate tents.

Brig. Gen. Charles Stone ordered an early-morning raid on this “camp.” Confederates under Col. Nathan Evans confronted the Federals, who were then reinforced. Col. and Sen. Edward D. Baker took command and became the only sitting U.S. senator ever killed in combat. The Federals retreated across the river in disarray. Congress created the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War to investigate the defeat.