

Department of Historic Resources

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**STATE ADDS SEVEN HISTORIC SITES
TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER**

—New listings cover sites in the counties of Botetourt, Franklin, and Wythe, and the cities of Lynchburg, Norfolk (2), and Staunton; and a boundary increase for a district in Montgomery Co.—

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—VLR listings will be forwarded for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places—

RICHMOND – A 19th-century railroad depot in Wythe County, a 1930s-era Art Deco-style school that served the black community in Staunton and a historic district in Franklin County dating back to the 1780s and the founding of Boones Mill are among seven places recently approved for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The circa-1870 Rural Retreat Depot in **Wythe County** is one of the oldest surviving railroad-related buildings in the Commonwealth and one of only three surviving railroad buildings in southwestern Virginia erected during the Reconstruction era following the Civil War. It is designed in a variant of the Italianate style sometimes called Railroad style.

A locally well known and esteemed landmark, the depot evokes the history and economic importance of rail transport to the area, which began in 1856 with the arrival of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. Passenger service at Rural Retreat Depot reportedly continued until the early 1970s, although freight service to the depot ended around 1965.

Staunton's Booker T. Washington High School opened in 1936 as the only high school for African Americans in the city until it closed in 1966, when Staunton integrated its public schools. Beyond strictly educational functions, the building served as a public space for the black community, which had few if any other such options during segregation. The community used the school for social events and adult education classes, its gymnasium and recreational facilities for athletic teams, and its library as a public facility.

Situated on a sloping 2.3-acre parcel overlooking Staunton's historic downtown and retaining much of its original construction material, the building also is notable as the only local school of its era designed in the

then-popular Art Deco style and as one of the very few buildings in the region exhibiting that architectural style. It was designed by Richmond architect Raymond V. Long.

Dating back to 1782 when tradition holds that Jacob Boon founded the community, the Boones Mill Historic District emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries as a commercial center in **Franklin County**, serving agricultural and industrial producers. In 1892 the arrival of the Norfolk & Western Railway boosted economic activity and in 1927 Boones Mill was incorporated as a town.

Today, the Boones Mill Historic District contains a collection of distinct and varied commercial and residential buildings, spanning the eras from its early settlement through the mid 20th century. The district exhibits a range of architectural styles: bungalows, Foursquares, and cottages with Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Folk Victorian detailing; a stylish Tudor Revival dwelling as well as Italianate buildings, including a church and railroad depot; farm buildings; and commercial architecture that displays detailed early-20th century masonry as well as modern mid-20th century buildings. Two notable early landmarks are the late 18th-century Boon-Angell-Ferguson House and the early 19th-century Boon-Abshire House.

The four remaining sites added to the Virginia Landmarks Register, the state's official list of sites and districts important to understanding the history of Virginia, are —

- The George Washington Rader House in **Botetourt County**. The house reflects changing construction methods and materials, and architectural trends found in rural western Virginia during the 19th and early-20th centuries. Its earliest portion, a two-story log dwelling, was built before 1820. Around 1830, a brick addition nearly tripled the size of the original residence. In the early-20th century a one-story rear addition provided space for a kitchen and bathroom. These three parts of the house—of log, brick, and frame—reveal the evolution of a prominent family's residence. The property also contains a collection of agricultural buildings representing more than a century of family farming.
- The Pierce Street Historic District, a historically black residential neighborhood south of **Lynchburg**'s central business district, covers about five acres. Following use as a military camp and hospital during the Civil War and Reconstruction, by 1870 the district began developing as a neighborhood when African Americans purchased property to establish homes, businesses, and churches in a small, two-block cloister surrounded mostly by white neighbors. The district gave rise during many generations to notable men and women who earned distinction locally, statewide or nationally in education, literature, aviation, sports, and medicine. The Pierce Street Historic District consists of 26 character-defining contributing resources, mostly

houses, and two properties within it -- the Anne Spencer House and the Dr. Walter Johnson House and Tennis Court -- are individually listed in the state and national registers.

- Norfolk Auto Row Historic District, which in addition to structures associated with the sales and service of automobiles, includes buildings affiliated with Norfolk's major newspaper, television, and radio enterprises, as well as a district office of the Texaco oil company, and today's Harrison Opera House (formerly the Centre Theater), constructed in 1944 as an Army and Navy USO theater. With its buildings retaining much of their original character and the earliest one dating to 1907, the area offers a good example in Norfolk of an early-to-mid 20th century commercial district. It also includes notable examples of several important 20th century architectural styles including Moderne, Stripped Classical, International, and Art Deco, as well as eclectic versions of purpose-built Commercial-style buildings.
- The Williamston-Woodland Historic District, also located in **Norfolk**, represents a good example of early commercial and light manufacturing and industrial growth in the city. The district reveals the movement of these types of enterprises out of the historic downtown during the latter 19th century and first half of the 20th century. That movement was sparked by the construction in 1884 of the Lambert's Point spur of the Norfolk & Western rail line. The new line enabled developers to transform the Williamston and Woodland district into a dense commercial and light industrial area. The Williamston tract was originally planned as housing lots for downtown employees. When that development plan went bankrupt in 1906, six parcel lots were sold off, opening the way for commercial and industrial development. At the district's core is a concentration of several types of early-to-mid 20th century commercial building styles and types. The area is also closely associated with Benjamin and David L. Margolius, brothers who operated a large bagging facility as well as owned interest in several other businesses in the district. Members of one of the most prominent Jewish and business families in the city, the brothers also served on bank and corporation boards.

In addition to these seven new listings, the Prices Fork Historic District, near Blacksburg in **Montgomery County**, listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1991, has been increased to encompass Prices Fork Elementary School, built in 1950, and two neighboring houses built in 1940 and 1953. All three properties are associated with the district's historic development, which extends through the mid 20th century.

All of these new state register listings, including the expanded boundary for the Prices Fork Historic District, will be forwarded to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The listings and forwarding of the nominations to the NPS are the result of decisions made by the Virginia

Department of Historic Resources' two boards, the Board of Historic Resources and the State Review Board which convened for a joint quarterly meeting on June 19.

Listing a property in the state or national registers places no restrictions on what a property owner may do with his or her property.

A property listed in the state or national registers—either individually or as a contributing building in a historic district—offers its owner the opportunity to pursue improvements to the building through historic rehabilitation tax credits, when qualifying conditions are met. Tax credit projects must comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Virginia is a national leader among states in listing historic sites and districts in the National Register of Historic Places. During the federal fiscal year 2013, Virginia ranked #3 nationally for listing historic districts and individual sites in the National Register. The state is also a national leader for the number of federal tax credit rehabilitation projects proposed and completed each year.

Together the register and tax credit rehabilitation programs have played significant roles in promoting the conservation of the commonwealth's historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in towns and communities around Virginia.

Photographs and the nomination form for each of these properties can be accessed on the DHR website: <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/boardPage.html>.

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