

Department of Historic Resources

For Immediate Release

March 17, 2016

Contact: **Randy Jones**

Department of Historic Resources

(540) 578-3031 / Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov

FIVE HISTORIC SITES ADDED TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

*—New listings cover historic sites in the counties of Bath, Hanover, and Roanoke,
and the cities of Charlottesville and Roanoke—*

—Also approved: An expanded Court House historic district in downtown Lynchburg—

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

RICHMOND – Virginia’s Department of Historic Resources added five sites today to the Virginia Landmarks Register and approved forwarding the same to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The places include an archaeological site on the campus of the University of Virginia associated with a free African-American antebellum household, an early 19th-century crossroads tavern complex in Hanover County, and two consolidated schools and a public healthcare facility in western Virginia built during the 20th century.

The nearly three-quarter acre Foster Site, located on the **University of Virginia** campus, contains archaeological features and artifacts associated with the family of a free African-American seamstress, Catherine “Kitty” Foster, who purchased the residential property in 1833. As part of a free African-American community called “Canada,” the Foster family occupied the site until the land was sold in 1906. Prominent archaeological features of the site include a domestic basement, a brick fire box and chimney base, and remnant masonry piers. The site also contains the remains of a brick-lined well, a likely smokehouse, and a small cemetery.

The Foster Site is significant as the one-time residence of an antebellum free-black household and for its research potential pertaining to the service-based commercial relationship between free African Americans and the University of Virginia community during the pre- and post-Civil War eras. The university has installed a memorial park dedicated to informing the public about the Foster family, the cemetery, and the adjacent Canada neighborhood.

Hanover County's The Tavern at Old Church is an important example of a Federal-style tavern complex, an increasingly rare but once-common building type in rural Virginia. The property formed the nucleus of the crossroads community of "Old Church." A number of historic houses and churches remain within sight of the tavern, giving it a pleasing context and intact historic setting.

The Tavern at Old Church operated from around 1820 to 1890. Its owners also often served as postmasters and, around 1870, a purpose-built, frame post office building was constructed on the property. The property's period of significance extends from circa 1820 to 1893, when the tavern building was divided into two private dwellings. The tavern shows outstanding vernacular character with one half of the building constructed in brick and the other half in heavy frame, all dating to before 1860.

Two consolidated schools, one in Bath County and the other in Roanoke County, reflect changes in public school education during the early 20th century. Constructed for white students during the era of racial segregation in Virginia's public schools, the two newly-listed schools arose during a period when jurisdictions consolidated schools in response to Progressive Era concerns about the quality of life and education in rural areas. Reformers envisioned a consolidated school as a center of community life, replacing dispersed one-room schoolhouses. With their multiple classrooms, consolidated schools enabled teachers to separate and instruct students by class level and age.

Bath County's two-story Ashwood School was built around 1909. In 1965, the county desegregated the school, marking a significant shift in local public education practices. In addition to the brick school building, the property features a stone wall with pillars that the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed in 1935, when the CCC improved landscaping at Ashwood School.

In Roanoke County's Town of Vinton, the Roland E. Cook Elementary School was built in 1915 and expanded in 1924. The school's two-story design is consistent with other consolidated schools built in Virginia's western counties between 1910 and 1920. In 1965, Roanoke County desegregated the school and in 1966 the building underwent a modernization to bring it in line with the newer and larger consolidated schools of the post-WW II era.

Built in 1951, the **Roanoke City Health Center**'s design reflects a nationwide shift in public healthcare after World War II. With federal funding under the Hill-Burton Act, public health centers were constructed to

provide adequate and accessible healthcare to the public, particularly in underserved rural areas. These new centers contained assembly areas, immunization and dental clinics, examination and treatment rooms, and laboratories that corresponded to a new healthcare approach that emphasized education, diagnostic and preventative intervention, and progressive treatment.

The functional and unadorned design of the Roanoke City Health Center exemplifies the impact of government-prescribed design standards and the dominance of the International Style in creating clean, efficient new public medical facilities in the mid-20th century. Its original design also conformed to Virginia's segregation era, which required separate accommodations for whites and African Americans. Although later integrated, the building's high level of integrity and relatively few alterations serves to illustrate the design practices of the segregation era.

In **Lynchburg**, the previously listed (2001) and expanded (2002) Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District, which dates to the town's founding in 1786, has expanded again to incorporate 20 additional buildings and structures. The expansion areas extend the story of Lynchburg's downtown commercial and financial history through the first-half of the 20th century. The expansion area features a range of traditional and modern commercial building styles popular in Lynchburg from the mid-19th century through the mid-20th century and includes the First National Trust & Savings Bank built in 1961, the last major office building erected in downtown prior to the 1970s.

Complete nomination forms and photographs for each of these sites can be accessed on the DHR website at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/boardPage.html>.

Listing a property in the state or national registers is honorific and sets no restrictions on what a property owner may do with his or her property. The designation is, first and foremost, an invitation to learn about and experience authentic and significant places in Virginia's history.

Designating a property to the state or national registers—either individually or as a contributing building in a historic district—provides an owner the opportunity to pursue historic rehabilitation tax credit improvements to the building. Tax credit projects must comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The tax credit program is voluntary, however, and not a requirement when owners work on their listed properties.

Virginia is a national leader among states in listing historic sites and districts in the National Register of Historic Places. 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 play significant roles in promoting the preservation of the Commonwealth's historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in many towns and communities.

###