

Department of Historic Resources

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STATE ADDS NINE HISTORIC SITES TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

—New listings cover sites in the counties of Loudoun, Nelson, Page, Smyth (Town of Marion), and Warren; and the cities of Bristol, Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Waynesboro—

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—Updates and Boundary Increases also approved for two previously-listed sites in Gloucester County and the City of Winchester—

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

RICHMOND – A 10,000-acre rural historic district in **Warren County** rooted in colonial history, an estate in **Nelson County** associated with an international medical pioneer, a 1960s-era hospital in **Smyth County** noted for its then-innovative design, and a former plantation in **Loudoun County** affiliated with a Depression-era cut-flower enterprise are among the nine sites added to the Virginia Landmarks Register by Virginia’s Department of Historic Resources.

Located in northern **Warren County**, the Rockland Rural Historic District abuts and encompasses portions of the Shenandoah River. The district was part of the extensive colonial-era land holdings of Thomas Lord Fairfax, and lands subsequently owned through several early land grants to prominent Tidewater families including Robert “King” Carter, his heirs, and the Marshall family. Featuring today a number of historic farmsteads, a community cemetery, ten family burial grounds, a largely unaltered road system dating back to the early 19th century, and several very small crossroads communities with three schoolhouses and three small churches, the Rockland Rural Historic District’s conveys the story of its growth and development from the late 18th century to modern times. Many large land holdings associated with 18th- and early-19th-century families retain much of their original configuration as defined by the Shenandoah River and Manassas Run, creek beds, and early roads.

Today’s district also includes the remnants of mills and mill races and a well-documented and locally important Shenandoah River crossing at Morgan’s Ford, spanned today by a 1925 low-water concrete bridge. Located near Morgan’s Ford is the site of an early African-American settlement known as Smoke Town. Although its exact location is yet to be confirmed through archaeology, Smoke Town was founded by free people after Robert Carter III, one of the area’s wealthiest landholders, gradually manumitted more than 500 enslaved persons beginning in 1791.

Along with a sizable collection of well-preserved farmhouses and affiliated agricultural structures, the Rockland Rural Historic District is characterized by well-delineated fields and tree lines hemmed by historic road traces and corridors, a number of fine architectural residential complexes, as well as more modest dwellings and structures.

The Rock Cliff estate in **Nelson County** is noteworthy in part for its history pertaining to the medical profession. Built circa 1840 and 1882, Rock Cliff's current 692-acre property dates back to a much larger 1738 land patent by Dr. William Cabell (b. 1699), the first Englishman to permanently settle the mountainous region along the James River west of the mouth of the Rockfish River. At his death in 1774, Cabell owned 60,000 acres. One of Cabell's direct descendants, Dr. William Andrew Horsley, built Rock Cliff, and today this is the only dwelling continuously owned and occupied by Cabell descendants on the historic patent. Additionally, Horsley's small office building where he examined patients still stands on the property.

Rock Cliff is also significant for its association with Horsley's grandson, Dr. William Andrew Horsley Gantt, born there in 1892. Dr. Gantt worked with physiologist Dr. Ivan Pavlov from 1925 to 1929 in Leningrad, and later established a Pavlovian laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. In 1946 he received the prestigious science and medical field's international Lasker Award, and was nominated for, but did not receive, the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1970.

During the Civil War, Rock Cliff also witnessed, in March 1865, Gen. Philip Sheridan's Union forces entering the area and raiding the property, as described by Dr. Horsley's daughter in a diary.

Constructed between 1965 and 1967 in **Marion**, the Smyth County Community Hospital was the first hospital built by the community to provide acute care to people in the region without racial discrimination. The building, constructed in a simple architectural form, embodied the latest innovations in hospital design and technology for improved efficiency, cleanliness, and patient experience. Its most notable design feature was a circular corridor plan, which marked a significant change beginning in the early 1960s regarding patient care and hospital design. Also boasting an advanced communication system, the hospital was built by the area's most prominent architectural and engineering firm, Echols-Sparger & Associates, as one of the few International-style buildings constructed in Marion or Smyth County.

Representing the evolution of a one-time Virginia plantation, Stoke, in western **Loudoun County**, stands as testimony to the economic regeneration that occurred after the Civil War in the northern part of the state as wealth from outside of the South was invested into old plantations. The manor house dates to around the 1840s,

a period when many Tidewater Virginia families had migrated to the area to settle inheritance claims. Today's property also features many early- to mid-19th century historic resources including road traces, fieldstone walls, and a two-story, one-time inn, Landmark Ordinary

It was during the late 1920s and 1930s that Stoke gained notoriety in the cut-flower industry. In the early 20th century new owners Colonel Floyd and Eleanor Truax Harris had architect Nathan Wyeth transform Stoke's manor house and property into a Renaissance Revival-style estate that included formal gardens, and a dairy, a milk house, and workhorse barn. Despite enormous wealth, Eleanor Harris understood the financial plight of her neighbors and turned to her gardens for inspiration. During the Great Depression she led the ladies of the Aldie Horticultural Society to sell cut narcissus and over 30 varieties of bulbs to support their families. Harris, internationally recognized for her horticultural pursuits, supported the local endeavor by initially investing in the importation of Dutch bulbs in advance of an embargo, thereby securing a place for the village of Aldie in the cut-flower industry.

The remaining five other sites added to the Virginia Landmarks Register last week—during a joint quarterly meeting of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources and the State Review Board—are:

- First Baptist Church in **Bristol**: Originally known as Goodson Baptist Church, First Baptist was organized in 1859. Constructed in 1912 on a site occupied successively by two previous church buildings, the current First Baptist Church is significant for its architecture. Designed by prolific local architect Clarence Baker Kearfott in 1911, the church is among the most sophisticated examples of the Classical Revival style in southwestern Virginia. Through its use of symmetry, classical decorative motifs, and durable masonry materials, the design pays homage to the building traditions of ancient Greece and Rome as well as later interpretations by proponents such as Thomas Jefferson. One of several large churches built along State Street in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, First Baptist is now the only remaining church building on either side of the street. Urban renewal in the 1960s and early 1970s culminated in the destruction of most of the others, nearly all of which were Gothic Revival designs. An educational wing was added to the building in 1964.
- Locust Grove in **Page County**: Nestled between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Massanutten Range, Locust Grove was built around 1830. The brick, two-story Federal-style house, reveals the tendency of builders to adapt designs depicted in the era's popular pattern books and integrate them into a house's interior and exterior details. In 1875 Locust Grove saw the addition of a service wing, and on the property the addition of two domestic outbuildings. Despite a few changes since that time, Locust Grove today maintains its historic integrity of construction and setting.

- Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in **Fredericksburg**: With a congregation dating back to the early 19th century, the 1890-built church has served Fredericksburg's African American community for 125 years, most forcefully in education and civil rights. In 1906, some church pastors and members influenced the founding of the Fredericksburg Normal and Industrial Institute, the city's first school to provide secondary education to African Americans. In the 1920s, through the strong leadership of The Rev. B.H. Hester, who was pastor there from 1921 through 1961, the church conducted night literacy classes and published a weekly newspaper, offering local news and distinct perspectives on current events and social justice issues impacting the black community. During the first half of the 20th century, the church hosted many national African American leaders, among them Richmond lawyer Thomas Calhoun Walker, who promoted education and land ownership for African Americans; the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., founder of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church; W. E. B. DuBois, outspoken sociologist, historian, and educator; and educators and civil rights activists Mary McLeod Bethune and Nannie Burroughs. With the advent of a national Civil Rights movement after World War II, members of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) were active locally, as the church became a primary hub for planning and training participants who led peaceful demonstrations including a 1950 commencement protest at the all-black Walter-Grant High School and 1960 lunch counter sit-ins in Fredericksburg. The church also hosted statewide organizations that promoted civil rights including the Virginia Voters League and the Virginia Conference of the NCAAP. A local landmark since its construction, the church's original brick façade and its interior have changed over the years, most notably with additions to the front and rear in the late 1920s and early 1940s, and a Postmodern-style extension in 1976.
- Virginia Metalcrafters in **Waynesboro**: Founded in 1895, the Virginia Metalcrafters enterprise moved in 1941 from its initial location in Waynesboro to a 1925 complex it expanded and occupied until its closing in 2006. Within the tradition of American decorative arts, the company built a reputation for high-quality historic reproductions of authentic designs and products that it hand cast in bronze, iron, aluminum, brass, and pewter using sandcasting, a method similar to what colonial-era craftsmen practiced. Nationwide many museums and historic sites—including Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Monticello, Smithsonian Institute, Old Salem, Old Sturbridge Village, among others--relied on Virginia Metalcrafters for product lines that provided retail income. Before the company went out of business, it had artistically crafted a wide selection of gift products, decorative accessories, lamps and chandeliers, garden accessories, sculptures, kitchen accessories, and more.

- Wicker Apartments in Richmond: Built in two phases between 1945 and 1947, Wicker Apartments—known today as Bellevue Apartments—is a well-preserved example in Richmond of a mid-20th century garden apartment complex. Richmond architect W. Harrison Pringle designed the complex, and Earl H. Wicker, a prolific local contractor and developer whose career spanned more than 50 years, owned and built it under Federal Housing Administration guidelines. Only one of three World War II-era garden-apartment complexes remaining in Richmond that FHA funded, it exemplifies the middle-class urban apartment type that FHA encouraged from the 1930s into the immediate post-World War II years to alleviate the nation’s chronic housing shortage. The complex embodies the essential principles the FHA espoused, as characterized by tasteful landscaping and open park-like settings, brick construction, generous interior light and ventilation, and low-rise, harmonious buildings without lobbies or elevators.

In addition to listing the sites above, the two boards of Virginia’s Department of Historic Resources approved the following updated nominations and boundary increases for sites previously listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places,:

- Walter Reed Birthplace, Gloucester County: This site, where Reed lived the first six months of his life, is the only known surviving residence associated Reed, dubbed the “conqueror of yellow fever.” The update and boundary increase to the original 1973 nomination form reflects recent documentary and archaeological research confirming a 19th-century archaeological site that includes stratified cultural deposits associated with the Walter Reed Birthplace, as well as the commercial development of the property and the historic intersection of Stubbs Tavern and Belroi roads. The updated nomination also notes the importance of the site as one of the earliest historic preservation initiatives in Gloucester County, a result of the Medical Society of Virginia restoring the Reed Birthplace and opening it as a historic site in 1927. The property features an early 19th-century common house form, increasingly rare due to its unassuming style and size, and general association with small property owners and tenant farmers. The site’s boundary increase now covers the full extent of this historic property, reflecting both the period of Reed’s birth (1851) and the development of the Stubbs Tavern and Belroi intersection (ca. 1810 through the post-Civil War period).
- Winchester Historic District: This boundary increase adds approximately 170 acres to the roughly 240-acre Winchester Historic District, first listed in the state and national registers in 1979-80 and encompassing the historic core of the city. The district’s extension adds historic neighborhoods associated with the development of Winchester, principally the Amherst and Stewart street corridors, and adjacent residential blocks and areas of the colonial town at the south end of the historic district.

The expanded district also includes Glen Burnie and the Hawthorne and Old Town Spring site, both of which are listed individually in the state and national registers.

All of these listings in the Virginia Landmarks Register will be forwarded to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Complete nomination forms and photographs for each of these sites can be accessed on the DHR Website at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/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 have played significant roles in promoting the preservation of the Commonwealth's historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in many towns and communities.

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