

# Department of Historic Resources

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## 12 HISTORIC SITES ADDED TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

*—New listings cover historic sites in the counties of Amherst, Halifax (3), Henry, Lancaster, Loudoun (Middleburg), Mecklenburg (South Hill), Surry (Town of Surry); and the cities of Harrisonburg, Richmond, and Virginia Beach—*

*—Boundary Increases were approved for sites previously listed in Bath County, Clifton Forge, and Virginia Beach—*

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

RICHMOND – Among the dozen new listings from around the commonwealth recently added to the Virginia Landmarks Register by the Department of Historic Resources, aspects of Southside Virginia’s history are relayed through five of the sites.

In **Halifax County**, two sites highlight Southside’s settlement and plantation history:



- Dewberry Hill began as a one-story-with-garret house, built in the 18th or early 19th century. In the late 1860s, Dr. Thomas Herndon Miles and his wife, Lucie L. Palmer Miles, added a two-story, sophisticated Italianate house to the front of the original dwelling and developed the property into a prosperous tobacco farm. Dr. Miles studied at New York University in the 1840s and became a respiratory specialist. Advertising his services in regional

newspapers, he received patients in an office erected on the front yard.

The Miles’ builder is unknown, although local African American carpenter Leander Cunningham may have been involved. An elaborately scrolled stair newel was likely acquired from the workshop of African American cabinetmaker and finish carpenter Thomas Day in nearby Milton, North Carolina. Later owners included Dr. William M. Palmer and the Wilson, Dewberry, and Adams families.



- Near to the Dan River, Riverside evolved during building campaigns through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, likely beginning with a story-and-a-half frame dwelling, possibly from the late-18<sup>th</sup> century. Acquired by planter Nathaniel Ragsdale and his wife, Ann Ragsdale, in 1809, Riverside expanded as the Ragsdales made Federal and Greek Revival additions to the house. These include on the inside a side wing with wainscots and baseboards and vibrant decorative painting,

and a mantel inspired by William Pain's pattern book *The Practical House Carpenter*. The property also includes a 19<sup>th</sup>-century smokehouse.

Southside's economic prosperity in bright leaf tobacco production and furniture manufacturing during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is evoked by two notable houses:



- In Halifax County's **South Boston**, the Walters-Moshier House is a prominent example of the up-scale in-town residences built for the town's bright leaf tobacco barons. The circa 1915 Classical Revival residence is distinguished by a monumental portico, bow windows, a stair hall colonnade, and mantels in a variety of classically-inspired forms. A residence for many years of Charles W. Walters, founder of an eponymously named tobacco company, the house was likely

constructed by the African American contracting firm of John H. Hamilton. Contributing to the South Boston Historic District (listed 1986/updated 2009), the Walters-Moshier House is individually eligible for listing in the VLR and the National Register of Historic Places as a first-rate example of the Classical Revival style in South Boston.



- The Highlands, in **Henry County**, is a Tudor Revival manorial residence built during 1936-37 for furniture executive W. Burton Dillon and his wife, Alma McManaway Dillon. The two-story brick house, designed by the Roanoke architectural firm of Eubank and Caldwell, features an imposing front chimney, a roof with a variety of gables and dormers, and casement windows, some with heraldic painted panes. The interior boasts a paneled entry hall, plaster wall

ornaments in over a dozen designs including a Tudor-style iron gate and rose, and a living room fireplace with carved stonework and wood panels. Roanoke landscape architect Albert Ayrton Farnham designed The Highland's grounds during the late 1940s, creating boxwood rows and tree-lined walkways, ornamental

gardens, and an octagonal Tudor Revival gazebo. W. Burton Dillon was related to the Vaughan family that formed the Vaughan-Bassett Furniture Company, a leading Virginia furniture manufacturer. In 1924, he co-founded Hooker-Bassett Furniture.

A **Mecklenburg County** school building tells part of Southside's Civil Rights history during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century:



- The John Groom Elementary School in **South Hill** served as the area's only public elementary school for African American students from 1950 until 1969, when the county desegregated its schools. The school honors John Groom, whose \$10,000 bequest subsidized a portion of the construction of the building's combined auditorium-cafeteria. After desegregation, the building became South Hill

Primary School, housing grades one through three. The product of a statewide mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century campaign to improve school buildings, when completed in 1950 the Colonial Revival-style brick school allowed space for many more students. The building exemplifies the Virginia Department of Education's initiative to supply students with spacious, well-ventilated, and amply lit instructional areas. A Modernist-style classroom wing, added in 1960, features a flat-roof and tall multi-pane windows in aluminum frames. In addition to its primary function, the facility served as a community meeting place.

Elsewhere in the commonwealth, three historic districts—in **Virginia Beach**, the **Town of Surry** in Surry County, and **Harrisonburg**—were added to the VLR during the September quarterly meeting of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources and the State Review Board.

- The earliest extant building in the Virginia Beach Courthouse Village and Municipal Center Historic District dates to around 1793 when the area was part of Princess Anne County. Other historic assets include late-18<sup>th</sup> century domestic and archaeological resources, the early-19<sup>th</sup> century Princess Anne County courthouse, clerk's office, and green, several 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century dwellings and commercial buildings, and the large, municipal center and courthouse complex completed in 1969 that resulted from the merger of Princess Anne County and the City of Virginia Beach.

The district reveals the important role of the central courthouse and historic green in local governance during the early 1800s when court house served Prince Anne County. The courthouse village also exhibits a variety of early American building types. The district contains as well later domestic and commercial buildings and a collection of architect-designed Colonial Revival buildings that comprise the 1960s municipal center.

The historic district represents the local responses of Princess Anne County and the City of Virginia Beach to the rapidly evolving demographics in their respective jurisdictions, as well as changing expectations for, and demands upon local government services during the decades of economic expansion and social changes that followed World War II.



- The Town of Surry Historic District encloses a small crossroads community that was first settled in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and became the **Surry County** seat in 1797. Surrounded by agricultural and forested lands, the community served as a trade and municipal center for area residents. Slow to develop, most of Surry’s early growth expanded from the Surry County Courthouse Complex, which was

individually listed in 1986.

During the Civil War, Confederate and Union forces occupied Surry at various times. After the war, an African American community known as Davis Town arose on the edge of town. During the decades before and after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Surry and the surrounding area experienced a small boom due to a growing regional lumber industry and construction of a railroad through the town. Another small boom occurred after World War II, following the growth of agricultural processing plants in town, and establishment of a nuclear plant nearby.

In addition to the courthouse complex, other historic buildings in the Surry district include many early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial buildings and several churches. During the previous century, residential construction occurred mostly on the main streets leading into and out of town. The historic architecture of Surry reflects its growth between 1820 and 1965, the period of significance for the historic district.



- In **Harrisonburg**, the Bethel AME Church and Dallard-Newman House Historic District lies at the heart of the historic African American Newtown neighborhood that was settled soon after the Civil War. The church—originally, Bethel United Brethren in Christ Church—was built in 1893 on land provided by community residents Ambrose and Harriet Dallard. A carpenter-builder in the community, Ambrose Dallard served as construction foreman for the church and

also constructed houses for his daughters, including the Dallard-Newman House when his daughter Lucy wed in 1894. Later, George A. Newman, a teacher, businessman, and community leader, acquired the two-story house in 1907 and lived there until his death in 1944.

Next door to the house is the frame church, which became an African Methodist Episcopal church in 1919. It features a corner entry tower, a large lancet window in the front gable, and beaded tongue-and-

groove finishes in the sanctuary. Ample historic records documenting the church's construction provide a rare glimpse into the community effort that erecting a church entailed during the late-19th century, when Jim Crow segregation erased the gains in civil rights African Americans experienced during the Reconstruction Era.

The contributions of Dallard and Newman to the Newtown community are documented through their biographies. A memoir of Newman's chronicles his experiences growing up as a free African American in antebellum Virginia and during the Civil War years, as well as the gradual erosion of African Americans' civil rights after Reconstruction ended.

Other sites approved for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register last month include the following:



- In **Amherst County** the St. Luke's Episcopal Church is one of six remaining churches built before 1850, as well as one of the few remaining historic buildings associated with the Pedlar Mills village. The modest brick Greek Revival-style church was constructed around 1837. In 1926 an imposing portico with a simple, pedimented gable supported by columns was added to the church. St. Luke's Episcopal Church is one of two Greek Revival-style churches in the county. The interior exhibits a combination of Greek Revival and Gothic Revival ornamentation, revealing the building's evolution from construction through an 1871 renovation.



- Greenfield in **Lancaster County** is important as an evolved antebellum house that always figured as the domestic core of a surrounding Tidewater farm. The earliest portion of the house dates to the 1820s. It was constructed with ready-made materials—including nails, shutters, locks, hinges, window glass, siding, and flooring ready-finished for transport—from vendors in

Baltimore and Norfolk. The accounts of the transactions for these items provide a remarkable record of the house's early construction. During the Civil War, Greenfield also witnessed a naval skirmish after a group of sailors under Confederate Captain Thaddeus Fitzhugh captured a steamer and steered it as far as they could up Dymar Creek, which flows along the southwest side of the property, before running it aground. A small fleet of Union boats pursued Fitzhugh and shelled both sides of Dymar Creek to flush Confederates from their hiding places in the woods and elsewhere. Today, Greenfield is likely the last surviving building on Dymar Creek to have been damaged by Union gunboats.



- Constructed in 1913, Shiloh Baptist Church in Middleburg (**Loudoun Co.**) is historically important for its associations with the African American community who built the church and supported its congregation. The church offered African Americans a place of refuge and opportunities in education, personal growth, and social engagement during the long era of segregation in Virginia and through the struggle for Civil Rights during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Architecturally representing a vernacular adaptation of the Late Gothic Revival style, Shiloh Baptist Church was envisioned by Master Stonemason, Nathan Nathaniel Hall, a church member. Prior to its individual listing in the VLR, the church was recognized as a contributing building to the Middleburg Historic District (listed, 1982).



- Constructed in 1961, the Tower Building in **Richmond** is a medium-scale International Style office building designed by local architect David Warren Hardwick. The building's geometrical form, exposed ground-floor structure, flat roof, windows set flush to the outer walls, use of concrete and glass, and lack of traditional ornamentation are all design elements

common to the International Style. A character-defining feature of the Tower Building is a plain but decorative, perforated brick exterior that encircles the building's upper stories. Technically called a *brise-soleil*, it functions like a baffle to break up sunlight striking the building's exterior. The combined effect of the Tower Building's elevated massing and textured *brise-soleil* creates a distinctive visual pattern, making it a unique modernist landmark in Richmond from the post-World War II era.

In addition to those new VLR sites, the DHR boards approved boundary increases for the previously listed Warm Springs Bath Houses in **Bath County**, the Thoroughgood House in **Virginia Beach**, and the **Clifton Forge** Historic District.



- The updated nomination and boundary increase for the Warm Springs Bath Houses expands the site's areas of historical importance, adds five structures to the historic complex, and extends its period of significance to 1925, marking the end of its most active era as a thermal water resort. The earliest feature of the site is an original octagonal stone basin constructed for use as a bathing pool likely in the 1760s. In the 1820s,

the basin was covered with an octagonal bathhouse frame building.

The historic complex also includes the Ladies' Bath House (ca. 1875), a Drinking Spring pavilion (ca.

1875), and a frame building known as the Reception House, built ca. 1890. The latter building was subsequently converted to a residence for the keeper of the bath, serving as such for nearly a century. On high ground west of the baths are five historic buildings captured by the expanded boundary: a brick double cottage dating to the 1820s; three four-room, frame cottages of similar design and erected in a row to face the baths (ca. 1880s); and a frame two-room cottage constructed around 1880.

Historically, one of the most popular spring resorts in Virginia, the Warm Springs Bath Houses are significant for their contributions at the national and statewide levels for their role in history of health and medicine, commerce, recreation, and architecture.

- The circa-1719 Adam Thoroughgood House has increased its previously-listed VLR boundary to capture significant archaeological resources relating to a Native American Middle and Late Woodland village site on the property as well as to archaeology from its colonial-era settlement. The Thoroughgood House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960, and listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places in 1966. In 2008, the nomination form for the property was substantially updated to incorporate new scholarship and research about the house's history. The updated boundary now extends the site's period of significance from 500 B.C., reflecting the date of the earliest diagnostic artifacts, to 1957, when the property became a public historic site.



- A boundary increase for the previously listed **Clifton Forge Commercial Historic District** adds to the district the Harvey Building, built in 1936. Also referred to as the Masonic Lodge Office Building, the Harvey Building signifies the growth of Clifton Forge's downtown commercial district prior to World War II. The building embodies the Commercial Style of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and its character-defining features include its placement immediately adjacent to the sidewalk and street, its parapet wall, and its pedestrian-oriented storefront with an entry and flanking windows. By 1941, the building housed a Department of Public Welfare, and offices for doctors, attorneys and a dentist.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources will forward the documentation for the 12 newly-listed VLR sites to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Updated nominations and boundary increases will also be forwarded to the NPS.

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>. These newly-listed VLRs will be forwarded to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Listing a property in the state or national registers is honorary 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 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 Virginia's heritage and the preservation of the Commonwealth's historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in many towns and communities.

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