

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Time Sensitive -- Immediate Release

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Dedication Ceremony Scheduled for "Early Quakers in Richmond" Historical Highway Marker

--Richmond marker commemorates Society of Friends' first meetinghouse in city--

RICHMOND – A new historical highway marker issued by the Department of Historic Resources that commemorates Richmond's earliest Quakers and the meetinghouse they built, circa 1797, will be dedicated Friday, April 24.

The public ceremony to unveil the marker will begin at 11:30 a.m., at the corner of 20th and Main streets in Richmond's downtown, the marker's location. The intersection is in the vicinity of the site of the first Quaker meetinghouse, which no longer exists.

Speakers during the dedication ceremony will be Jay Worrall, author of *The Friendly Virginians: America's First Quakers*, and Arnold Ricks, Bennington College history faculty emeritus. Mr. Rick's family has longtime roots in the Richmond Meeting of the Society of Friends.

Francine Archer, manager of the historical marker program for the Department of Historic Resources, will also speak. Dr. Betsy Brinson, a historian for the Richmond Friends Meeting, which sponsored and funded the historical marker, will emcee the event.

The earliest members of the Religious Society of Friends, known as Quakers, settled in Virginia in 1655. The meetinghouse the Quakers constructed in Richmond was the city's second house of worship after St. John's Church. "Richmond Quakers advocated religious freedom, worked to make the prison system more humane and, as pacifists, usually refused to bear arms," the marker reads. Because of their opposition to slavery, many Quakers moved west in the early 19th century.

Virginia's historical marker program is one of the oldest in the nation. The first signs were erected in 1927 along U.S. Rte. 1. Today, there are more than 2,000 official state markers. More information about the Historical Highway Marker Program is available on the Department of Historic Resources' Website at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.

Text of the marker:

Early Quakers in Richmond

Near this site a meetinghouse was built in 1797 to 1798 by members of the Religious Society of Friends. Called Quakers, the earliest had arrived in Virginia from England in 1655. The building was the second house of worship in Richmond after St. John's Church. Richmond Quakers advocated religious freedom, worked to make the prison system more humane and, as pacifists, usually refused to bear arms. They also joined with the Virginia Society of Friends to pressure the General Assembly for passage of the Manumission Act of 1782. Because they opposed slavery, many Quakers migrated west early in the 19th century.