

## Department of Historic Resources

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**For Immediate Release**

March 25, 2010

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## EIGHT NEW STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS APPROVED

*—Markers cover topics in the counties of Arlington, Halifax, and Loudoun, and the cities of Danville, Petersburg and Richmond—*

**[Note: The full text for each marker is reproduced at the end of this release.]**

RICHMOND – Representing the rich spectrum of Virginia history, eight new historical highway markers recently approved by the Department of Historic Resources include signs to commemorate rockabilly musician Janis Martin; the state’s only Union cavalry unit during the Civil War; and one of the oldest remaining segments of colonial highway in the United States.

The marker titled “Rockabilly Pioneer Janis Martin” honors one of the few women to successfully make her way in the male-dominated world of early rock-and-roll music. Dubbed the “Female Elvis,” Martin, a **Halifax County** native, “performed on radio for **Danville**’s WDVA Barn Dance and **Richmond**’s Old Dominion Barn Dance,” according to the marker’s text. She was best known for her hit song “Will You, Willyum.”

A marker for the “Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers” recalls this Union cavalry unit “created under authorization of the U.S. Secretary of War” and formed by “local Quakers, the German settlement in Lovettsville and other Unionists beginning in June 1862.” Soon after mustering that summer the Rangers suffered in a clash “with Confederate Col. Elijah V. White’s Cavalry (35th VA Battalion) at Waterford Baptist Church,” as the marker states. Nonetheless, the Rangers “continued to serve as scouts and protectors of local Unionists throughout the Civil War.”

Vestal Gap Road in **Loudoun County** served as a colonial roadway, and prior to that as an Indian trail. The road was “an important route for commerce from Alexandria to Leesburg and Winchester, westward migration, and troop movements,” according to the recently approved marker’s text. “The Declaration of Independence and Constitution were secretly carried to Leesburg over this road when the British burned Washington, D.C. in 1814. The Leesburg Turnpike supplanted the road in 1825,” the marker concludes.

Three of the new markers deal with African-American contributions to the history of Virginia and the nation.

The “Freedman’s Village” marker, slated for installation in **Arlington County**, highlights this village that was organized “in 1863 to alleviate overcrowded Contraband camps in Washington, D.C.” The village provided “the first experience of life out of bondage for thousands of African Americans,” according to the marker. It survived until 1900, when development, “the expansion of Mount Vernon Avenue, and a bridge over the Potomac” led to its closure.

Two other markers focusing on African American contributions will be erected in **Petersburg** and focus on the work of Undine Smith Moore and the Virginia Voters League.

The “Undine Smith Moore” marker highlights the work of this “composer, pianist, arranger, and educator,” who “drew on African American sources such as Negro spirituals for compositions.” Moore taught music at Virginia State University from 1927 to 1972 and is “best known for her choral works,” the marker reads. Among the honors bestowed upon her, she received a Virginia Governor’s Award in the Arts.

The marker “Virginia Voters League” recalls this organization that was founded in 1941 to bring “together Virginia’s local Negro voting leagues into one group.” According to the marker, “The group led a drive to register African Americans,” and “investigated voter registration violations,” efforts that “resulted in an easing of voter registration obstacles for all of Virginia’s voters.”

In addition to the marker for Janis Martin, two other markers recognize contributions of women to Virginia history.

A marker titled “Margaret Elizabeth Pfohl Campbell” honors this woman's career as an educator. In 1947, she “became the first woman elected to a Virginia school board,” when she won an election in **Arlington County**, where this marker will be erected. In 1961, Campbell also founded “the Washington area’s first public television station” (WETA), the sign’s text states.

A marker to be installed in Richmond near Virginia Commonwealth University’s Pollak Building will commemorate Theresa Pollak, who “is credited with introducing modern art to Richmond and influencing generations of Virginia artists.” In 1928, Pollak established “what is now the VCU School of the Arts, where she taught for 41 years.” Pollak also founded the art program at the University of Richmond. Her work was exhibited throughout the country,” during her lifetime, according to the marker.

These eight markers were approved by Board of Historic Resources of the Department of Historic Resources during the board’s quarterly meeting March 18.

The Virginia highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Rte. 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,100 official state markers, mostly installed and maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The manufacturing cost of each new highway marker is covered by its respective sponsor, except for those markers developed by the Department of Historic Resources as part of a nearly decade-long program to create new markers that focus on the history of women, African Americans, and Virginia Indians. Markers created by DHR are funded by a federal Transportation Enhancement grant.

More information about the Historical Highway Marker Program is available on the website of the Department of Historic Resources at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>.

### **Full Text of Markers:**

#### **Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers**

Created under authorization of the U.S. Secretary of War, the Independent Loudoun Rangers were the only organized Union cavalry unit in Confederate Virginia. Their first captain, local miller Samuel C. Means, mustered two companies from local Quakers, the German settlement in Lovettsville and other Unionists beginning June 1862. Although the Rangers suffered that summer in a clash with Confederate Col. Elijah V. White's Cavalry (35th VA Battalion) at Waterford Baptist Church, they continued to serve as scouts and protectors of local Unionists throughout the Civil War. In 1864, after Means refused to transfer his command to West Virginia, Capt. Daniel Keys replaced him.

Sponsor: Waterford Foundation, Inc.

Proposed Location: Loudoun County, 40125 Bond Street at a tip parcel triangle formed by Liggett and Main Streets.

#### **Vestal Gap Road**

Vestal's Gap Road is among the oldest remaining segments of colonial highway in America. Initially an Indian trail, it became an important route for commerce from Alexandria to Leesburg and Winchester, westward migration, and troop movements. Lt. Col. George Washington and Gen. Edward Braddock's forces traveled the road in 1755 to defeat at Fort Duquesne in the first phase of the Seven Years' War between the British and the French. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution were secretly carried to Leesburg over this road when the British burned Washington, D.C. in 1814. The Leesburg Turnpike supplanted the road in 1825.

Sponsor: Loudoun County

Proposed Location: Sterling, along Route 637, northbound Cascades Parkway

## **Margaret Elizabeth Pfohl Campbell**

Margaret Elizabeth Pfohl Campbell was born to a Moravian family in North Carolina, where her upbringing and education led her to devote her life to seeking educational opportunities for others. She served as dean of Staunton's Mary Baldwin College and of Moravian College in Pennsylvania during the 1930s. In Arlington, Campbell in 1947 became the first woman elected to a Virginia school board, serving three terms and intermittently as board chairman until 1963. As president of the Greater Washington Educational Television Association, in 1961 Campbell founded WETA, the Washington area's first public television station, where she served until her death.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed Location: Arlington, outside the WETA studios at 3620 S. 27th Street, Arlington, or on Campbell Avenue near Arlington County markers to Edward and Elizabeth Campbell.

## **Theresa Pollack**

1899-2002

Born in Richmond, Theresa Pollak became a nationally recognized artist. After graduating from Richmond's Westhampton College in 1921, she began her formal art career at the Art Students' League of New York. Pollak, whose work was exhibited throughout the country, is credited with introducing modern art to Richmond and influencing generations of Virginia artists. In 1928, she established what is now the VCU School of the Arts, where she taught for 41 years. During the 1930s, she founded the art program at the University of Richmond. The Pollak Building, home of the VCU School of the Arts, was dedicated in 1971.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed Location: Richmond, outside the Pollak Building at 325 N. Harrison Street.

## **Freedman's Village**

Freedman's Village, the first experience of life out of bondage for thousands of African Americans, was organized near this site in 1863 to alleviate overcrowded Contraband camps in Washington, D.C. The Village contained a hospital, kitchen/mess hall, school house, "old people's home," and laundry among other structures. Intended to be a temporary refuge, the Village developed into a semi-permanent settlement. It was a place where former slaves were able to attain legal rights, freedom, and self determination. Development, the expansion of Mount Vernon Avenue, and a bridge over the Potomac caused the Village to be closed permanently in 1900.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed Location: Arlington County, near site of the site of Arlington House Plantation

### **Undine Smith Moore**

1904-1989

Undine Smith Moore was born in Jarrett and reared in Petersburg. She is best known for her choral works but was also a composer, pianist, arranger, and educator. Moore drew on African American sources such as Negro spirituals for compositions. She taught music at Virginia State University from 1927 to 1972 where she was awarded an honorary doctorate of music award for being an exceptional educator. Other awards include the National Association of Negro Musicians Distinguished Achievement Award and the Virginia Governor's Award in the Arts. In 1968, she co-founded the Black Music Center at Virginia State.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed Location: Petersburg, Second Street

### **Virginia Voters League**

Founded in 1941, the Virginia Voters League brought together Virginia's local Negro voting leagues into one group. Dr. Luther Porter Jackson together with Civil Rights attorneys Raymond J. Valentine and Robert H. Cooley Jr. organized the local groups. The League affiliated itself with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other like bodies. The group led a drive to register African Americans. It also investigated voter registration violations, poor handwriting charges, and misleading questions. These efforts resulted in an easing of voter registration obstacles for all of Virginia's voters.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed location: Petersburg, at the site of the league headquarters

### **Rockabilly Pioneer Janis Martin**

1940-2007

Born in Sutherlin, Rockabilly pioneer Janis Martin combined country influences with rhythm-and-blues singing, crossing musical boundaries and helping launch Rock and Roll. Singing and playing guitar, she won numerous talent contests before she was ten. Martin performed on radio for Danville's WDVA Barn Dance and Richmond's Old Dominion Barn Dance. She recorded for RCA Victor, 1956-1958, and cut the classic "Drugstore Rock and Roll" and Top-40 hit "Will You, Willyum." Dubbed the "Female

Elvis,” she performed on American Bandstand, the Tonight Show, the Grand Ole Opry, and then throughout Europe and the United States after the 1980s Rockabilly revival.

Sponsor: DHR

Proposed Location: To be determined