

Department of Historic Resources

For Immediate Release

December 23, 2014

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STATE ADDS TEN HISTORIC SITES TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

—New listings cover historic sites in the counties of Amherst, Bath, Buckingham, James City, Lee, Pittsylvania, Russell and Tazewell, and the City of Harrisonburg—

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

RICHMOND – Two summer youth camps in Bath County, one of which is the oldest known and still-operating camp in Virginia; a cemetery established by an emerging community of formerly enslaved African Americans in Harrisonburg; and a rare-surviving railroad depot in Tazewell County are among the 10 new listings added to the Virginia Landmarks Register by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources earlier this month.

Located in **Bath County**, the Camp Alkulana Historic District and the Camp Mont Shenandoah Historic District were both born out of the back-to-nature youth camp movement that arose in the northern U.S. during the 1880s before catching fire as a national trend during the first half of the 20th century. The movement sought to improve the minds, bodies, and spiritual foundations of young men and women in an increasingly urbanized America by offering experiences and activities in landscaped natural settings. While both camps Alkulana and Mont Shenandoah were inspired by the camp movement, founded by the same person—Richmond resident Nannie Crump West—and located only a few miles apart, they have notably different histories.

Camp Alkulana, the oldest known and still-operating summer camp in Virginia, was established near Bubbling Springs in 1917 by West through her work as director of a Baptist-affiliated settlement house for Richmond's poor. Inspired by organizations of the day such as the Camp Fire Girls, Camp Alkulana provided underprivileged girls a summer retreat in the Allegheny Mountains of western Virginia, offering a host of outdoor activities. Operated today as a nonprofit organization and encompassing 20 acres and now serving both boys and girls, Camp Alkulana features Rustic-style cabins and other buildings dating from the 1920s and 1930s, a circa-1900 mill house and a frame house repurposed as a lodge, a campfire circle from 1955, and a lodge built in 1960, among its buildings and structures. In 1968 the camp was desegregated.

Camp Mont Shenandoah was founded by West in 1927 as a private venture, independent of the Baptist church,

to serve Richmond's privileged young women. Encompassing 60 acres today along the Cowpasture River, the camp boasts more than a dozen one- or two-story Rustic-style sleeping cabins, a dining hall, and infirmary, all dating from the 1920s, a lodge from the mid-1930s, among other buildings and structures contributing to the site's historical significance. Still operating today as a private business and now serving young women from across the U.S., Camp Mont Shenandoah is the oldest girls' camp in Virginia in continuous operation.

The Newtown Cemetery in **Harrisonburg** is locally significant for its role in the development of the city's historically African American community of Newtown, which arose soon after the Civil War on the then-edge of northeast Harrisonburg amidst the farm fields of a former plantation. Founded in 1869, Newtown Cemetery got its start when the cemetery's five original trustees, members of the emerging community, purchased three lots for the express purpose of creating a graveyard "for all persons of color."

Coinciding with the growth of Newtown and Harrisonburg, the cemetery expanded with the trustees' purchases of additional lots in 1898, 1907, and 1920, resulting in today's 3.9-acre property, which contains the graves—dozens now unmarked—of more than 900 individuals. While the Newtown Cemetery reflects the hardships of Harrisonburg's Newtown community, it also represents the self-sufficiency and resilience of its members. Buried in the cemetery are individuals who greatly influenced the lives of people in the Newtown community, the city, and Rockingham County and the central Shenandoah Valley as well. Noted burials include community founders and entrepreneurs, leading educators and social activists, the city's first black council and school board member, and veterans of World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as two confirmed Civil War veterans who served as United States Colored Troops.

Located in the county seat of Tazewell, in **Tazewell County**, the Tazewell Depot is important for its association with the Norfolk & Western Railway (today's Norfolk Southern Corporation), a driving economic force in the region and county, beginning in the late 1800s, when the area's coal and other natural resources began to be systematically extracted and exploited. The depot is situated 1.5 miles north of the county courthouse in the bottomlands of the Clinch River.

Constructed in 1928 of brick, the depot separated passenger traffic from growing freight shipments of livestock, lumber, and coal. Previously, both passengers and freight were routed through a frame depot built in 1888. The two depots operated side-by-side until around 1957, when a decline in passenger service removed the need for both depots. As a result, the Norfolk and Western Railway demolished the 1888 depot and modified the 1928 depot to accommodate both freight and passenger service on the Clinch Valley Line. By 1959 passenger service was discontinued, leaving the lone depot for freight traffic until its closing in 1974. The Tazewell Depot embodies the hallmarks of the N & W design, and remains a significant landmark in the Town of Tazewell,

which now owns the building. Its relatively late construction date and solid masonry workmanship contribute to its good condition today and make it one of only two remaining depots of the 29 that once served the 103-mile long Clinch Valley Line between Bluefield, WV, and Norton, VA. The town plans to restore and re-purpose the depot.

Other sites approved for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register by DHR's Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting on December 11 are—

- Kenmore Farm in **Amherst County**; established in 1856 as a farmstead to raise livestock and crops for subsistence and market, the property features a Greek Revival-style main house. After the Civil War, from 1872 until 1889, new owner Henry Aubrey Strode operated the Kenmore University High School, a respected preparatory school that provided a practical secondary education for young men bound for studies specifically at the University of Virginia. The school was briefly re-opened by Strode's son, Aubrey Ellis, in 1896 but closed permanently in 1899. In addition to its main house, Kenmore Farm today includes a collection of historic outbuildings that recall the property's historic uses as an active farm and a one-time preparatory school.
- The site of the Rosenwald-funded Buckingham Training School, near Dillwyn, constructed during Virginia's era of racial segregation. Known today as Stephen J. Ellis Memorial Park, the is significant for its direct association with the efforts of local African Americans to obtain education during segregation. From 1924 to 1954, the now-demolished training school functioned as the only high school for blacks in **Buckingham County**. Emphasizing training, the school instructed male students in skilled trades, while female students learned homemaking, cooking, and child rearing skills. Today's property notably features a standing affiliated shop building, built in 1932 and one of only 11 Rosenwald-funded shops constructed in Virginia. Within these shops, male students were trained in agriculture and skilled trades. The Buckingham Training School closed in 1954, when a new, segregated Carter G. Woodson High School opened. Soon afterwards, the training school re-opened as Steven J. Ellis Elementary School, which closed in 1964.
- Amblers is a brick farmhouse in **James City County**; distinguished by its architectural history, Amblers was built in 1852 in a style known as Picturesque, a design characterized by asymmetry and irregular building proportions. Amblers' original section is the only known surviving example of a Picturesque-style dwelling on Virginia's Lower Peninsula. In the 1950s, Amblers was added onto using materials similar in appearance to those of the original house but in a Colonial Revival design, then popular in Virginia, that undid the original style, resulting in symmetrical and balanced building proportions.

Today's property, the central remnant of a large farm that operated from the late-18th century until it was subdivided in 1917, is owned by James City County and is located entirely within the Governor's Land Archaeological District, listed in the state and national registers in 1973.

- Located in western **Lee County**, the Sayers Homestead was established around 1796 by William Sayers, along the Wilderness Road and near the Cumberland Gap. The Sayers Homestead features a two-story stone house, built of limestone. Historically a relatively rare building type in southwest Virginia, stone houses today are exceptionally rare in the region, with perhaps less than a dozen examples still existing. In the 1890s, the Sayers house was added onto with a two-story, wood frame Victorian-style wing, resulting in a clear contrast between two distinct building traditions from different eras, nearly a century apart. The property also contains a limestone garage and an assortment of farm buildings dating to the late-19th and early-20th centuries; a circa 1900 vehicular bridge, and a pre-1840 trace of the Old Wilderness Road.
- The Thomas Claiborne Creasy House in **Pittsylvania County**'s Town of Gretna is where Thomas C. Creasy resided during a career that brought him wealth and saw him operating a mercantile warehouse, owning numerous parcels of land, and rising to local prominence as a merchant, bank president, justice of the peace, and philanthropist who donated land and money to establish churches and schools in Gretna. The original circa-1840, two-story frame house was purchased by Creasy in 1883 and evolved through various additions and alterations into one of Gretna's finest residences, one that now features vernacular elements, as well as Italianate-, Colonial Revival-, and Craftsman-derived influences in its architecture.
- The Samuel Gilmer House, located in **Russell County** and built around 1820, is one of the few surviving examples of Federal-style architecture in far southwest Virginia. While the building has been refurbished, restored and annexed throughout the past 194 years, it retains classic Federal-style characteristics both in the interior and exterior. Other buildings and structures on the property that contribute to its historical significance include a detached original kitchen and cellar building, and the remaining stone piers and abutments of a circa-1848 covered bridge that was likely part of the Cumberland Gap Turnpike.

All of these listings in the state landmarks register will be forwarded to the National Park Service for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The complete nomination forms and photographs of each of these sites can be accessed on the Department of Historic Resources' Website at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/boardPage.html>.

Listing a property in the state or national registers places no restrictions on what a property owner may do with his or her property.

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. Such 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 conservation of the Commonwealth's historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in many towns and communities.

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