

# Department of Historic Resources

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## STATE ADDS EIGHT HISTORIC SITES TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

**–New listings cover historic sites in the counties of Albemarle (2), Caroline, Clarke, Gloucester and Rockbridge, and the cities of Newport News and Norfolk–**

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**–Va. Dept. of Historic Resources also approved a significant boundary increase and updated nomination for previously-listed Appomattox Court House National Historical Park in Appomattox Co. –**

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

RICHMOND – An African American community in the northern Shenandoah Valley founded after the Civil War, along with two buildings exemplifying mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Modernist architecture, and the oldest known commercial swimming pool in the Commonwealth are among historical sites added to the Virginia Landmarks Register by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources earlier this month.

Additionally, the Meadow Historic District in Caroline County, where legendary racehorse and Triple Crown winner Secretariat was born, was added to the VLR. The listing of The Meadow Historic District on the VLR was announced earlier this month.

Josephine City Historic District, a historically African-American community in the **Clarke County** seat of Berryville, was founded by freedmen in 1870 on a 31-acre parcel conveyed by Ellen McCormick, owner of nearby Clermont estate. McCormick sold the land to 24 formerly enslaved African Americans including Josephine Williams, the presumed namesake of Josephine City. The transaction was unusual for its era in that a woman—Williams—was among the grantees. The settlement of Josephine City conforms to ideas articulated by Frederick Douglass, and reported in the local *Winchester Times*, that urged recently emancipated people to remain close to their agricultural roots and livelihoods and refrain from moving to urban areas, particularly in the North.

About a dozen of the district's dwellings were constructed during the first decade of Josephine City's existence, and a few survive from around the 1880 period. Two of the buildings reflect the importance of education to the community; these are an 1882 schoolhouse, among the district's earliest surviving buildings, and the previously

all-black Johnson-Williams High School, which opened as a training school in 1930 and in 1966 became a racially integrated middle school. Other historic buildings in the district include modest dwellings and outbuildings and a church and cemetery, all dating from the late-19th century through the mid-1960s. Although some historic buildings were demolished and replaced with new ones after public utilities were extended from Berryville to Josephine City in the late 1960s, the community retains its visual cohesiveness and identity.

Two new listings in the VLR—one a temple, the other a residence—reflect the influence of modern architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Temple Sinai in Newport News is locally significant as the first and only Reform—one of three major movements in modern Judaism—synagogue on the Virginia Peninsula. Designed by architect Edward Loewenstein, it is also an important example of Modernist design in Virginia. The organic form, derived partly from Wright's ideas and M.I.T. design school experience, is a characteristic aspect of Loewenstein's other works, primarily in North Carolina. Loewenstein, who practiced in Greensboro from 1946-1970, articulated a design vision for the South quite different from the predominance of the Colonial Revival tradition.

Soon after Temple Sinai was founded in 1955, the congregation began planning construction of a custom-built synagogue and worked closely with Loewenstein until the building was dedicated and occupied in December 1960. The Modern architecture is evident in the saddle-shaped building form that is patterned after Noah's Ark, the long, simple exterior showing natural brick, the terraced front area, and the open interior of the sanctuary and social hall, all of which subtly reflect the union of man and God according to Reform Judaism theology.

Originally the residence of Dr. Robert and Elizabeth Munger, Boxerwood, in **Rockbridge County**, consists of a Modernist house completed in 1952 and is one of the earliest examples of such architecture in the county. The property also includes an extensive private garden and arboretum. Designed by Roanoke architects William Gordon Wells and Richard Leo Meagher, the house features intersecting shed-roofed wings, redwood and stone cladding, and a window wall with views of the garden and the Blue Ridge Mountains. A stone chimney core, under-floor radiant heating, hearth-centered spatial planning, built-in furnishings, and other elements suggest the influence of Wright's Usonian residential architecture. Wells and Meagher also designed an addition with a Japanese-inspired multipurpose room and a butterfly-roofed guest house built in 1956.

Dr. Munger, an avid gardener and specimen collector, in 1957 inaugurated the development of the garden and arboretum, which now boasts more than 2,500 specimen trees and shrubs. Today the house and gardens are operated by the Boxerwood Education Association, Inc., as a nature education center for area schools.

**Albemarle County**'s Blue Ridge Swim Club property was originally developed in 1909 as part of a 200-plus acre Blue Ridge Camp for boys. Today's 12.1-acre wooded, park-like setting with landscaped pathways features a swimming pool built in 1913 that is 100-yards long and 10-yards wide. It is among the oldest known commercial concrete outdoor swimming pools in Virginia and the nation. (To date, only two older concrete pools have been documented in the U.S, at Colorado's Glenwood Hot Springs, built in 1888, and Eldorado Springs, built in 1906.) The Blue Ridge Swim Club has maintained its recreational use from the time of its construction through the present day, making it a rare surviving example from an important period in the development of outdoor recreation in Virginia.

Other sites approved for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register by DHR's Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting on March 19 are—

- Harris Farm, in **Albemarle County**, traces back to a larger late 18<sup>th</sup>-century farm owned by Thomas Jefferson's brother in law, Charles L. Lewis. The main residence—consisting of two I-houses situated back to back and constructed in different periods—is an example of the development of the popular I-house form in central Virginia. Built around 1850, the original house is in a simple Greek Revival style; a Victorian-era I-house addition, constructed between 1898 and 1905, expanded the residence. The house also includes a rear ell addition. In 1898, Hilton Ashby Harris purchased the house and 300 acres, and since then the farm has remained Harris family-owned and operated. In 2011, Harris Farm was placed into the Virginia Outdoors Foundation conservation easement program.
- Kenwood, in **Gloucester County**, began in the early 1800s as a simplified Federal-style house. It is located near the "Greate Road" (today's U.S. 17), a corridor of increasing economic activity in the county during the Antebellum period. By 1860, owner John R. Cary had expanded the original house into an elegant mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Italianate-trimmed residence that featured expanded entertaining space, and formal entrances and porches. The house preserves the design and workmanship of enslaved African American craftsmen who manufactured and installed brick for the walls and wood elements such as doors, brackets, railings, stairs, and interior trim. Archaeological remains on the property include a brick kiln and clay extraction area and the site where a large barn once stood. Today, Kenwood's house sits on a secluded, tree-edged lot surrounded by agricultural fields that continue to evoke its agricultural past.
- The Meadow Historic District, in **Caroline County**, is comprised of stables and agricultural buildings associated with the Thoroughbred horse breeding and racing operation established by Christopher Thompkins Chenery, beginning in 1936 when he bought the property and constructed many of its buildings.

The Meadow had its greatest success under the leadership of Chenery's daughter, Penny Chenery Tweedy, a trailblazer for women in the sport. She presided over business operations when Meadow Stable won five of six consecutive Triple Crown races, beginning in 1972 with Riva Ridge's win of the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes and continuing in 1973 when Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes, becoming the first horse in 25 years to win the Triple Crown—and the only one of the 11 Triple Crown winners since 1919 to break all three track records. No other racing stable had ever accomplished this feat. The Meadow Historic District features stables designed by Chenery in a Colonial Revival style with clapboard siding painted white with corner caps in royal blue (the colors of his alma mater, Washington and Lee University) and includes Secretariat's Foaling Shed. All three of Secretariat's 1973 Triple Crown track records still stand today, 41 years later.

- Norfolk & Western Railroad Historic District in Norfolk, dates back to 1884, when a rail spur to Lambert's Point was constructed. The district's architecture reflects its historic development as a densely built railroad corridor and encompasses a large number of commercial and light industrial buildings that have housed various businesses for more than a century. The construction of the rail spur and subsequent development of the area also stems from increased mining in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century of western Virginia's Pocahontas coal fields, from where coal was shipped by rail to Norfolk for ocean bound shipping. The district also is significant for its association with Norfolk's leading Jewish and business entrepreneurs, the Margolius family, who built a large number of the district's buildings and who also pioneered new methods for developing real estate in the city.

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.

In addition to the listings above, the Board of Historic Resources also approved a significant boundary increase and update to the nomination for the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. The nomination document had not been updated since the site was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966.

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 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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