

## Department of Historic Resources

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## STATE APPROVES NEW HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS HONORING EARLY NEGRO LEAGUE POWER HITTER PETE HILL, VIRGINIA'S WAR OF 1812 LEGACY IN 10 LOCALES, AND 7 OTHER SIGNS

*—Baseball Hall of Famer Pete Hill was born in Culpeper County—*

*—War of 1812 markers slated for Caroline, Charlotte, Essex, Henrico, Lancaster,  
Middlesex, Northumberland, Orange, and Westmoreland counties, and Va. Beach—*

*—Other new markers recall people, places, or events in the counties of Halifax, Northampton,  
and Surry; and the cities of Norfolk, Radford and Richmond—*

RICHMOND – As one of black baseball's earliest power hitters, John Preston "Pete" Hill was welcomed home often by ecstatic fans of the many legendary African American teams for whom he played during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet Hill never made it back home to the place of his birth in Culpeper County, Virginia.

Now, through the teamwork of researchers including Culpeper historian Zann Nelson, Hill family members, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which late last week approved a new historical highway marker honoring his career, Hill is coming home.

Home, in this case, is Buena, a small, historically African-American community that arose along the Orange & Alexandria Railroad in Culpeper County after the Civil War. That railroad carried Hill's mother, likely a former slave, and her children north to eventually settle in Pittsburgh in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, making Hill, born on October 12, probably in 1882, part of the Great Migration of African Americans who departed the South during the era of segregation.

"With the approval of this new marker, we commemorate Pete Hill's accomplishments and his inspiring story of triumph, despite the limits imposed by an era of segregation," said Governor Bob McDonnell. "At long last, we welcome Hill home to Buena, the rural Culpeper County community where he was born. It's a homecoming that's long overdue,

and we have, in particular, Culpeper's own Zann Nelson to thank for the research that firmly established Hill's connection to Culpeper County," Gov. McDonnell added.

As in the example of Hill's career, the story of how the Hill highway marker came to be contains lessons in stick-to-it-iveness—and teamwork as well.

That story spans four years. And it involves “players” in North Carolina, Kansas, and Culpeper, and Hill family members in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and elsewhere, now connected to Hill kin in Virginia. All of them, like one of Hill's teams, have been brought together by the baseball legend, who was a star outfielder for many black teams including the Philadelphia Giants and Chicago American Giants, and who also hit 28 home runs for the Detroit Stars in 1919, the same year Babe Ruth hit 29 in more games.

The marker's story begins in 2006 when officials in Cooperstown inducted Hill into the National Baseball Hall of Fame with a plaque reading “Joseph Preston Hill” and citing his place of birth as “Pittsburgh, Pa.”

In 2007, avocational baseball historians Gary Ashwill, in North Carolina, and Patrick Rock, in Kansas, first questioned the accuracy of the Hall of Fame plaque. Based on documentation the two uncovered, Ashwill, through his blog, began publically making the case that “Joseph” Hill was actually John “Pete” Hill, born in Virginia, possibly Culpeper County.

Ashwill next contacted Hill's grand-niece Leslie Penn of Los Angeles and informed her about her connection to the great Negro League player and Virginia. Penn, in turn, relayed that news to her cousin, Ronald Hill, in Pittsburgh.

An inspired Ronald Hill, who has coached Little League, spent the next couple of years lobbying the Hall of Fame to correct his great-uncle's plaque. Seeking assistance with his efforts, in 2009 he eventually connected with Nelson, a former director of the Museum of Culpeper History, and a historian and columnist for Culpeper's *Star-Exponent*.

Excited by the prospect that Culpeper County was the birthplace of yet another baseball Hall of Famer (the other is Eppa Rixey, a white player whose career overlapped with Hill), Nelson spent much of 2009 doggedly pursuing the Hill story through court records, deeds, passenger manifests, census reports, Social Security documents, and death certificates, in addition to field investigations and personal interviews with numerous people including long time residents of the communities of Buena and Rapidan.

In December 2009, through a three-part feature story published in the Culpeper *Star Exponent*, Nelson summarized her research confirming that Hill was born in Buena. She also submitted her findings and documentation to officials at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

She struck a home run.

As a result of her work, the NBHF announced earlier this year that it would correct Hill's plaque. In a ceremony scheduled for later this month, on Hill's October 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, officials in Cooperstown will rededicate the Hill plaque, correcting his proper name and place of birth.

"Certainly, the fact that Culpeper can now claim two Hall of Fame baseball players is fun and a genuine source of pride," said Nelson. "But Hill's story personalizes a far greater message. He was a real-life super hero, rising from the same streets and fields that we walk every day. Times may be different, and many of the hardcore obstacles that Pete Hill faced have dissipated. Yet we share similar struggles and desires for opportunity, fairness, security and success," Nelson added.

Nelson's columns drew the attention of Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of the Department of Historic Resources, to the incredible story of Pete Hill, resulting in the department working with Ashwill (with input from Rock and Nelson) in developing the marker text approved by the Board of Historic Resources during its September 30<sup>th</sup> quarterly meeting.

"The Hill highway marker serves as a reminder that just as the history of our national game is incomplete without the story of black baseball, so too is American and Virginia history incomplete if we fail to recognize the struggles, triumphs, and contributions of all the people who have had a role in shaping it," said Kilpatrick.

In addition to Culpeper's County's Rixey and Hill, Virginia has three other baseball hall of famers, all of whom played in the Negro Leagues. They are Ernest "Jud" Wilson from Fauquier County; Leon Day from Alexandria; and Ray Dandridge from Richmond. DHR plans to sponsor and develop new signs to honor each of these Hall of Fame players. The department also will unveil the Hill marker during a public dedication ceremony in Buena in 2011.

### **War of 1812 Markers**

In addition to the Hill highway marker, DHR's Board of Historic Resources reviewed and approved a trove of other history-rich markers, including 13 new signs focusing on Virginia's important legacy of people, places, and events associated with the War of 1812.

"These new markers are part of a broad-based collaboration between DHR and the bicentennial commission for the War of 1812 to better inform the public about what many people call 'America's forgotten war,'" said Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "They recall crucial events in Virginia, such as the burning of Norfolk and the vulnerability of Hampton Roads, that profoundly shaped our post-war national defense policy as a young nation," Kilpatrick added.

According to the legislation enacted by the General Assembly to establish the bicentennial commission, "An estimated 70,000 Virginians served during the War of 1812. There were some 73 armed encounters with the British that took place in Virginia during the war." The legislation also states, "The nation's capitol, strategically located off the Chesapeake Bay, was a prime target for the British, and the coast of Virginia figured prominently in the Atlantic theatre of operations."

"Virginia's epic role in the American Revolution and the Civil War can all too easily eclipse the state's significant role in the War of 1812. It's appropriate to remind Virginians and visitors to our state about the Commonwealth's great sacrifices in that war as well," said Secretary of Natural Resources Doug Domenech.

These markers, developed by DHR in collaboration with The Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission, are aimed at boosting public awareness of Virginia's significant role in the war in advance of the bicentennial. Among the many subjects covered are --

- Dolly Madison's role as First Lady, and significantly when the White House was burned by the British;
- The soldiering contributions of many African Americans who sided with the British in order to gain freedom from enslavement;
- British attacks on towns in Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Essex counties, as well as Norfolk and present-day Virginia Beach.

### **Virginia's Civil War Sesquicentennial**

The DHR board also approved two new markers for Richmond as part of the department's initiative to create new signs as a part of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, which begins in 2011. The two markers highlight "Lincoln's Visit to Richmond" and "Richmond's Civil War Hospitals."

### **Other New Highway Markers**

The remaining markers chronicle significant events as well. These markers, like the Pete Hill marker, stem from DHR's nearly decade-long effort to sponsor or work with other sponsors to create new signs that reveal the full spectrum and richness of Virginia history.

Topics covered by this grouping include signs to—

- Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman whose cell tissue was removed "without permission" after her death in 1951 for medical research, giving rise to an internationally recognized cell line, the "HeLa line," a "gold standard" of cell lines, from which Jonas Salk developed his polio vaccine.
- Pauline Adams, an Irish-born, suffragist who co-founded the Norfolk Equal Rights Suffrage League and who was arrested in 1917 for picketing the White House.

- Lovely Mount Baptist Church in Radford; “the first church of the Baptist denomination in Radford, [it] served the African American community for more than 60 years until Radford College purchased it in 1961 and demolished it.”
- And two signs to educational facilities founded by and for African Americans in Surry County (“Temperance Industrial & Collegiate Institute”) and Northampton County (“Northampton County High School”).

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, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The manufacturing cost of each new highway marker approved by the DHR board is covered by its respective sponsor, except for those markers developed by the Department of Historic Resources, which are funded by a federal grant awarded to DHR.

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 Texts of Markers:**

#### **Lovely Mount Baptist Church (First Baptist Church)**

On 13 Nov. 1869, the Rev. Capt. Charles S. Schaeffer of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands met with the people of Lovely Mount (later Radford) and organized the Lovely Mount Baptist Church. In 1898, the congregation purchased the Lutheran church that stood at this location on Fairfax Street, and changed its name to the First Baptist Church. The first church of the Baptist denomination in Radford, Lovely Mount/First Baptist Church served the African American community for more than 60 years until Radford College purchased it in 1961 and demolished it to expand Peters Hall.

**Sponsor:** Radford University (contact Karen Castele)

**City:** Radford

#### **Temperance Industrial & Collegiate Institute**

On 12 Oct. 1892, Dr. John Jefferson Smallwood, born enslaved in 1863 in Rich Square, North Carolina, founded the Temperance Industrial & Collegiate Institute nearby with fewer than ten students. Sprawled over sixty-five acres on the James River in Claremont, his school provided a high level of education for African American boys and girls from Virginia and other states. After Smallwood’s untimely death on 29 Sept. 1912, his school underwent several mergers and name changes. By the time the school closed in 1928, more than two thousand students had attended.

**Sponsors:** Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation, Philadelphia, PA

**County:** Surry

### **Northampton County High School**

Constructed in 1953 as the county's first purpose-built African American high school, Northampton County High School reflects the desires of local African Americans to obtain modern educational facilities. It is an example of the statewide efforts by African American and Virginia Indian communities during the early 20th century to secure better education for their children. The building contained classrooms, a library, a gymnasium, and a 500-seat auditorium. Concurrent with integration of Virginia's public schools, the high school ceased operations with the 1970 class. Until 2008, the facility served as a junior high school and middle school for all Northampton County students.

**Sponsors:** DHR and Northampton County High School Alumni Foundation,  
**County:** Northampton

### **Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951)**

Born in Roanoke on 1 Aug. 1920, Henrietta Pleasant lived here with relatives after her mother's 1924 death. She married David Lacks in 1941 and, like many other African Americans, moved to Baltimore, Md. for wartime employment. She died of cervical cancer on 1 Oct. 1951. Cell tissue was removed without permission (as usual then) for medical research. Her cells multiplied and survived at an extraordinarily high rate, and are renowned worldwide as the "HeLa line," the "gold standard" of cell lines. Jonas Salk developed his polio vaccine with them. Henrietta Lacks, who in death saved countless lives, is buried nearby.

**Sponsor:** DHR  
**County:** Halifax

### **Pauline Adams (1874-1957)**

Born in Ireland in 1874, Pauline Adams was a suffragist and activist for women's rights, known for her militant approach to campaigning for women's suffrage. The Norfolk Equal Suffrage League was formed at her house here in Ghent on 18 Nov. 1910; Adams was elected its first president. On 4 Sept. 1917, Adams and 12 other women were arrested for picketing at a parade attended by President Woodrow Wilson in Washington D.C. In 1921, Adams passed the bar exam and became the second woman to practice law in Norfolk. She died on 10 Sept. 1957 and is buried in Norfolk.

**Sponsor:** DHR  
**City:** Norfolk

### **Pete Hill (1882-1951)**

John Preston "Pete" Hill, Negro League baseball player and manager, was born nearby on 12 Oct., probably 1882, and likely to formerly enslaved parents. Banned from

whites-only major leagues, Hill became a star outfielder for African American teams, notably the Philadelphia Giants and Chicago American Giants. A Cuban League 1910/11 winter-season batting champion (with a .365 average), Hill hit 28 home runs for the Detroit Stars in 1919 (when Babe Ruth hit 29 in more games), marking Hill as among black baseball's earliest power hitters. Hill died 19 Dec. 1951 and was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.

**Sponsor:** DHR  
**County:** Culpeper

### **War of 1812 Bicentennial Markers**

(DHR is the sponsor for each War of 1812 marker.)

#### **The War of 1812**

Impressment of Americans into British service and the violation of American ships were among the causes of America's War of 1812 with the British, which lasted until 1815. Beginning in 1813, Virginians suffered from a British naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay and from British troops' plundering the countryside by the Bay and along the James, Rappahannock, and Potomac rivers. The Virginia militia deflected a British attempt to take Norfolk in 1813, and engaged British forces throughout the war. By the end of the war, more than 2000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.

**Locale:** Various—would be placed on opposite side of some markers to provide background information.

#### **British Naval Blockade and Cape Henry Lighthouse**

During the War of 1812, a British naval blockade along much of the U.S. East Coast disrupted foreign trade and interfered with commerce. On 4 Feb. 1813, the blockade was extended to the Chesapeake Bay. At that time, the light at the Cape Henry Lighthouse was extinguished to prevent British ships from using it as a navigational aid. The British attacked the lighthouse early in Feb. 1813 and thereafter British scouting parties often visited the area to obtain freshwater from local wells. On 14 July 1813, Captain Lawson of the Princess Anne militia captured 20 British marines nearby.

**City:** Virginia Beach

#### **Capture of Tappahannock**

Here on 3 December 1814, British naval forces under the command of Capt. Robert Barrie assaulted and seized the town of Tappahannock during the War of 1812. Aiding the British were three companies of African American Colonial Marines. Although the British held the town for only a few hours, they destroyed a number of private houses, and completely demolished the Essex County courthouse. British Royal Marines

ransacked many of the town's dwellings, set fire to landmarks such as the Brockenbrough mansion, and pillaged the family burial vaults of the prominent Ritchie family before Virginia militia reinforcements arrived.

**County:** Essex

### **Capture of the Dolphin**

On 3 April 1813, one of the largest naval engagements in Virginia waters during the War of 1812 took place at the mouth of Carter's Creek. One hundred five British naval and marine forces under Lt. Polkinghorne managed to subdue four American privateers: Arab, Dolphin, Lynx, and Racer. The largest ship, Dolphin, out of Baltimore, had twelve guns and one hundred men commanded by Capt. W.J. Stafford. Stafford stubbornly refused to give up when the other ships were taken, and defended his ship until he was severely wounded and his ship boarded.

**County:** Middlesex or Lancaster (at one entrance to the Robert O. Norris Bridge, Rte. 3)

### **African Americans in the War of 1812**

During the War of 1812, thousands of enslaved African Americans gained freedom by fighting for the British or serving as guides during British raids on coastal communities. Many were given the choice of enlisting in the armed services or settling in various locations throughout the British Empire. East of here on Tangier Island, at the British base of Fort Albion, the British trained African Americans to serve in the Colonial Marines. From Fort Albion, the Colonial Marines, along with British troops, engaged the Virginia militia in numerous landings along the Northern Neck and the Eastern Shore throughout the summer of 1814.

**County:** Northumberland

### **Lt. Col. George Armistead (1780-1818)**

Known for his service in the War of 1812, George Armistead was born here at Newmarket plantation. Armistead distinguished himself in 1813 during the capture of Fort George, Canada, but is best known as the commanding officer of Fort McHenry during the 1814 Battle of Baltimore, for which he earned the rank of lieutenant colonel. The American victory proved a turning point in the war, and was the inspiration for Francis Scott Key's poem "The Star Spangled Banner." Armistead commanded at Fort McHenry until his death in Baltimore in 1818. He is buried there in Old St. Paul's Cemetery.

**County:** Caroline

### **War of 1812 Opposition—John Randolph**

The War of 1812 sparked intense opposition, particularly among members of the Federalist Party who unanimously opposed the June 1812 declaration of war. One of its most outspoken opponents was Virginia Republican Congressman and later Senator John Randolph of nearby Roanoke Plantation. Echoing other opponents, he denounced the war as needless and argued that it would lead to high taxes and a larger national debt. Randolph lost his reelection bid in 1813 over his opposition to the war, but was elected to his former seat in 1815. He died in Philadelphia in 1833 and is buried in Richmond.

**County:** Charlotte

#### **British Attacks at Kinsale and Mundy Point**

Two miles east on 3 Aug. 1814, 500 British marines and seamen under Adm. Sir George Cockburn landed at Mundy's Point and Kinsale. Opposing the enemy at the Point were Capt. William Henderson and thirty Northumberland county militiamen. Henderson's company was forced to retreat to the county courthouse. Later that day, British forces took Kinsale, burned the town, and seized tobacco. Three days later, they began raids along the Coan River. The British troops included about fifty formerly enslaved African Americans, who were among the thousands who gained freedom by fighting or working for the British.

**County:** Northumberland

#### **British Landing at Nomini Ferry**

On 20 July 1814, Adm. Sir George Cockburn sent about a thousand marines ashore at Nomini Ferry to attack the Westmoreland County militia under the command of Lt. Col. Richard E. Parker. Parker's Virginians bravely defended their positions, but were soon outflanked by superior British forces and forced to retreat to Westmoreland Court House (Montross). Before they left the next morning, the British marines burned and destroyed a number of houses and several plantations in the immediate area, such as Bushfield, and ransacked nearby Nomini Church.

**County:** Westmoreland

#### **Richmond's War of 1812 Defensive Camps**

During the War of 1812, Virginia established three militia posts on the outskirts of Richmond to guard against possible British invasion. Within a mile of this point was built Camp Carter (Sept. 1814-Feb. 1815) under the command of Gen. John H. Cocke. Camp Holly Springs (April 1813-Feb. 1814) was located five miles southwest at Route 5 near Newmarket Road, under Gen. Robert Porterfield. Camp Bottoms' Bridge (Sept.-Nov. 1814), under the command of Gen. William Chamberlayne, was two miles east at Bottoms Bridge. These posts were never threatened by British forces during the war.

**County:** Henrico

### **Admiral Sir George Cockburn on the Chesapeake**

During the War of 1812, a British naval squadron arrived in Hampton Roads on 4 February 1813 to establish a naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay. Later commanded by Adm. Sir George Cockburn, the squadron remained in the Bay for two years. Its missions were to seize USS Constellation, to occupy Norfolk, and to harass, seize, and destroy commercial traffic on the Bay and its tributaries. Although the attempt to seize Norfolk failed, Cockburn's squadron carried out numerous raids on the James, Rappahannock, York, and Potomac rivers. In August 1814, British forces burned Washington, but were later defeated at Baltimore.

City/County: TBD (Hampton Roads area)

### **Governor James Barbour**

Here at Barboursville lie the ruins of the family home of James Barbour, Virginia's governor during the War of 1812. As commander in chief of Virginia's militia forces, Barbour planned, organized, and directed the defense of Virginia from January 1812 until December 1814. Known for his oratorical skills and organizing talents, he inspired his fellow Virginians to defend the Commonwealth from relentless British incursions in Hampton Roads and the Northern Neck. On a few occasions, he took command of the militia while in the field. He later served as U.S. Senator from Virginia and U.S. Secretary of War.

County: Orange

### **Dolley Madison (1768-1849)**

Born to Quaker parents in North Carolina, Dolley Payne lived with her family in Hanover County, Virginia until 1783. Following the death of her first husband, John Todd, she married Congressman James Madison in 1794. As First Lady of the United States from 1809-1817, her social graces, political acumen, and enthusiasm for public life became the standard by which first ladies were measured for more than a century afterward. Before the British burned the White House in August 1814, Mrs. Madison oversaw the removal and safeguard of many national treasures, including a large portrait of George Washington. She is buried at Montpelier.

County: Orange

### **2011 Civil War Sesquicentennial Markers**

(DHR is the sponsor for each Civil War Sesquicentennial marker.)

### **Lincoln's Visit to Richmond**

President Abraham Lincoln first entered Richmond at Rocketts Landing on 5 Apr. 1865. He was brought upstream from City Point for a tour of the captured capital by Adm. David Dixon Porter on his ship, USS Malvern. Crowds formed as Lincoln walked through Richmond to the White House of the Confederacy. The president also visited the State Capitol, Camp Lee where U.S. Colored Troops had made camp, and Libby Prison and Castle Thunder, former Confederate prisons then holding Confederate officers. On 9 April, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, ending the Civil War.

**City:** Richmond

### **Richmond's Civil War Hospitals**

Hospitals such as Chimborazo, erected on this site in 1861, were built to handle the increasing influx of wounded Civil War soldiers to Richmond from nearby battlefields. The construction of Winder Hospital followed to the west in 1862. Eventually, soldiers from throughout the Confederacy were brought to Richmond for treatment here and at more than twenty-five warehouses, private homes, and churches used as hospitals throughout the city. Although officials at first prohibited women from working in these hospitals, they later relented and women such as Juliet Hopkins, Phoebe Pember, and Sally L. Tompkins gained distinction through hard work caring for wounded soldiers.

**City:** Richmond

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