

Department of Historic Resources

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STATE ADDS NATURAL BRIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT AND TEN OTHER SITES TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

—New listings cover sites in the counties of Charles City, Fauquier, Loudoun, Nelson, Rappahannock, and Rockbridge, and the cities of Norfolk, Richmond (3), and—

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

RICHMOND – Two places of recreation—a historic district centering on the iconic Natural Bridge in Rockbridge County and William Byrd Park in Richmond, as well as a nearby residential development and a neighborhood on the west side of the city park, and a rural historic district in Rappahannock County are among eleven historic sites added to the Virginia Landmarks Register earlier this month.

The Natural Bridge Historic District tells the story of the commercial development of the resort and tourist area surrounding the Natural Bridge landform, which is a National Historic Landmark. The district's period of significance spans from around 1740 to 1965, marking the earliest known European discovery of the Natural Bridge and extending through completion of a rebuilt Natural Bridge Hotel.

Owned originally by Thomas Jefferson, commercialization of Natural Bridge began soon after the property left the possession of the Jefferson family. As the landmark drew more tourists, by 1835 the first hotel arose. During the 1880s, landscape architect Charles Eliot developed the area into a park-like setting.

With the advent automobile transportation in the early 20th century and growing tourism, a Natural Bridge Hotel was built in 1906 and expanded in 1917. The hotel burned in 1964 and a large three-story Colonial Revival-style, brick building replaced it.

Other important features in the Natural Bridge Historic District include Washington Hall, Colonial Revival-style domestic buildings, a scattering of late-18th to mid-19th century domestic buildings, early 20th-century commercial buildings affiliated with the Natural Bridge Hotel, as well as a trail system around Natural Bridge.

Sometimes referred to as **Richmond**'s "Central Park," William Byrd Park at about 275 acres is the city's largest. The park began during the Reconstruction era in 1874, when the city acquired land for it under the guidance of Col. Wilfred Emory Cutshaw, Richmond's city engineer from 1873 to 1907.

During Reconstruction, Cutshaw oversaw responsibility for the significant improvements Richmond made to its municipal facilities including expanding its park system. His vision inspired creation of a major municipal park around the city's new reservoir. Accordingly, William Byrd Park evolved through a complex process of land acquisition and incremental improvement projects.

Byrd Park's design reflects the influence of the American Parks and the City Beautiful movements, and general picturesque landscaping principles developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The park's designed and natural areas include tennis courts and ballfields, hiking and biking paths, picnic areas, open spaces and lakes. It also contains the Shields-Robinson Cemetery, a reminder of the families who lived on the Poplar Vale property that became the eastern side of Byrd Park.

Among the park's 39 contributing historic buildings, structures, and objects are the American Legion Memorial Flagpole, the Virginia War Memorial Carillon (the state's official World War I memorial, also listed individually on the state and national historic registers), and a statue honoring Christopher Columbus erected by Italian-Americans in 1927. Today's park remains an important recreational, social, and ceremonial gathering place for residents of the city and the surrounding region.

Located near William Byrd Park is Byrd Park Court, a twelve-building (eighteen-unit) residential development completed in 1921 during the City Beautiful Movement era. One of Richmond's leading designers of the first half of the 20th century, architect Carl Max Lindner, Sr., with partner Charles H. Phillips, used a plan that featured three houses outside of a Beaux Arts-styled gate and nine houses, arranged around an inner loop, behind the gate. The complex's variety of architectural styles reflect popular trends in Richmond's then fast-developing West End and includes Beaux Arts Classical, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean Revival, Craftsman and Tudor Revival. Byrd Park Court is an exceptional and highly intact example of an early 20th century residential court design in Richmond.

Taking its name from a nearby landmark bell tower, the Virginia War Memorial Carillon, **Richmond**'s Carillon Neighborhood Historic District comprises approximately 148 acres and 499 contributing historic resources including two churches and an elementary school. The district exhibits historical construction from the late-19th through the mid-20th centuries.

Spurred by the ongoing development of adjoining William Byrd Park, the neighborhood took shape during sequential real estate campaigns in the first half of the 20th century beginning with an upscale enclave of revival-style residences in the 1920s, followed by a sprinkling of middle-class dwellings during the Great Depression, and then the rapid growth of hundreds of modest-sized residences and an elementary school during the post-World War II housing boom of the 1940s and 1950s.

During the desegregation era of the 1960s and 70s, the neighborhood gained renown when community leaders decided to nurture racial integration, countering the era's "white flight," referring to the departure of whites from the Richmond to the suburbs, a pattern occurring in cities throughout the U.S. at the time. As a result, in 1968 white and black volunteer residents founded the Carillon Civic Association. Over the next decade, CCA waged an active campaign against discriminatory practices that fueled instability, such as block busting and racial steering by real estate companies.

The association also supported the city's transformation of nearby John B. Cary Elementary into an integrated "model school" in 1969. By the mid-1970s, the neighborhood and CCA had gained state and national reputation for progressive leadership in housing equality. In 2014, Virginia's General Assembly passed a Joint Resolution commending the district and the CCA for its significant social history and ongoing civic engagement on the occasion of its 45th anniversary.

Running along Ben Venue Road (Route 729) between the late-18th-century villages of Gaines Crossroads and Flint Hill, the Ben Venue Rural Historic District in **Rappahannock County** features farmsteads and residences of historic buildings and supporting structures dating from the mid-18th century through the mid-20th century. The district encompasses a rolling landscape of open pastures, forests, and views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Ben Venue Road, originally known as Richmond Road, was incorporated into an early regional turnpike for conveying goods from the mountains to markets in Richmond and beyond. The curving, narrow, paved road transects the district and is lined by historic stone walls and wood fences. Ben Venue Historic District reflects a broad and evolving range of cultural patterns including early settlement, crossroads communities, transportation corridors, and a multitude of supporting small farms and orchard lands. The county's comprehensive plan and increasing numbers of conservation easements help to ensure ongoing preservation of the historic landscape.

The remaining six other sites listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register during the December 10 joint quarterly meeting of DHR's Historic Resources Board and State Review Board are:

- Dancing Point in Charles City County is significant for its archaeological resources. It is also important for the landscape and architectural design work commissioned and executed there between 1970 and 1976 for the property's then owners Eugene B. Sydnor Jr. and Lucy Harvey Sydnor. Nationally renowned California-based landscape architect Thomas D. Church created a property that emphasized spare design, simple planting schemes, the site's natural openness, and dramatic views of the land, which forms a point at the confluence of the James and Chickahominy Rivers. Richmond architect Robert W. Steward designed a Postmodern classicist house at Dancing Point, in collaboration with Church. Archaeological resources on the property include sites associated with prehistoric Native American occupations dating to the Archaic and Woodland periods, as well as Euro-American settlements dating to the 17th and 18th centuries.
- **Richmond's** Jerman Residence, a Georgian Revival-style brick house, occupies an important place in the history of Colonial Revival architecture in Virginia. Designed in 1935 by William Lawrence Bottomley and completed in 1936 by the firm of Claiborne & Taylor, the house is an appealing creation of the legendary partnership of architect and builder Herbert Augustine Claiborne that produced some of the finest houses in Virginia in the 20th century interwar period. The Jerman Residence represents the effective coda of that celebrated Bottomley-Claiborne collaboration and is the last-built of a series of distinguished houses in Richmond and Henrico County designed by Bottomley between 1915 and 1935. It is also among Bottomley's last fully-realized domestic designs in Virginia, where he enjoyed the patronage of discerning clients from 1915 to 1947 and produced for them the largest body of work in his career outside of New York. Reflecting his particular assimilation of tradition and precedent with a genius for scale and detail, the Jerman Residence is a notable example of Bottomley's own signature style and a house with a distinct personality that met the needs of his clients, William Borden Jerman, an executive with the Virginia Trust Company, and his wife, Mary Aglionby Johnson Jerman.
- Located in **Loudoun County**, Oakham Farm dates back to around 1790, its earliest construction date. The 100-acre property features a Greek Revival residence with later-incorporated Classical Revival elements, a schoolhouse, and agricultural dependencies. It illustrates social and economic changes in Loudoun County from its antebellum slavery-based agriculture through to an early 20th-century gentrification that emerged with the arrival of wealthy Northerners who had a passion for the Virginia hunt country. Oakham Farm is also significant for its association with Col. John Singleton Mosby, who initiated the Confederate guerilla group Mosby's Rangers in Oakham's parlor during the Civil War. A legendary cavalry unit during the war, it is commemorated today by the Mosby Heritage Area, Virginia's first such designated heritage area. Oakham's former owner Eugenia Fairfax, who died in 1966, was an early preservation leader in the county, and left her mark on the house when she oversaw its extensive Classical Revival renovations in 1927.

- Oakwood in **Fauquier County** dates back to around 1785, marking the construction of a stone house and attached summer kitchen. Around 1838, a two-story house was constructed with a temple-form, Greek-Revival front, and about 1845 a two-story, stair-hall wing was built to connect the temple front to the original stone house. In 1922, the property hosted the premier running of the nationally-renowned Virginia Gold Cup Race. In addition to the race track and main residence, to which architect Alexander H. Sonnemann added Colonial Revival renovations during the 1920s, the property boasts two secondary dwellings, a schoolhouse, a bank barn, two springhouses, two stone terraces, a goldfish pond, four foundations, a landscaped garden, three wells, stone fencing, two pairs of gateposts, and two cemeteries.
- Completed in 1841 and expanded in 1851, the house at Riverside Farm in **Nelson County** is locally important for its modest, late Federal-style architecture. The main house features sophisticated architectural elements seen in earlier, grander houses in the county but executed at Riverside on a smaller scale, reflecting architectural ambitions beyond its size and reportedly the original owner's financial capacity. The farm, which contains several early outbuildings, evolved through time to meet changing agricultural needs.
- Constructed around 1802, Talbot Hall in **Norfolk** has a more than 150-year association with the locally prominent Talbot family, who occupied the dwelling from its plantation era through the era of 20th-century suburbanization. Of several Talbot family properties at one time in Norfolk, Talbot Hall is the dwelling longest occupied by the family. The property also represents one of only three houses left in Norfolk which were formerly plantations outside the city proper, and it is one of only ten dwellings in Norfolk from around the 1800 period and earlier. The interior wood and plaster work are of high quality, in good condition, with strong integrity and are a rare and important example of craftsmanship within Norfolk and the surrounding area. In 1954, the property was transferred to the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.

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.

Complete nomination forms and photographs for each of these sites can be accessed on the DHR Website at <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/boardPage.html>.

Listing a property in the state or national registers is honorific and sets no restrictions on what a property owner may do with his or her property. The designation is, first and foremost, an invitation to learn about and experience authentic and significant places in Virginia's history.

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. 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 play significant roles in promoting the preservation of the Commonwealth’s historic places and in spurring economic revitalization and tourism in many towns and communities.

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