

Department of Historic Resources

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Contact: **Randy Jones**

Department of Historic Resources

(540) 578-3031 / Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov

STATE ADDS 12 HISTORIC SITES TO THE VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER

—New listings cover sites in the counties of Bath (4), Franklin, Highland, Loudoun, Nelson, Powhatan, and the cities of Richmond (2) and Roanoke—

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

RICHMOND – From an iconic building once associated with a Confederate soldiers’ home to modest structures built by African Americans in mountain communities in western Virginia to the high-style mansions of Virginia’s elite, the commonwealth’s post-Civil War and early 20th-century history is represented in 12 sites recently listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The Robinson House in **Richmond**, located on the campus of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, is significant for its distinctive architecture and compelling history, particularly as part of the nation’s first successful and oldest operating home for needy Confederate veterans.

Constructed in the mid-19th century as the country house of Anthony Robinson Jr., a prominent Richmond banker and landowner, the Robinson House indicates the popularity of Italianate architecture with Virginia’s antebellum high society. In 1884 the Robinson family sold the house to the R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Confederate Veterans, at which time it was transformed into a three-story institutional headquarters for the R. E. Lee Confederate Soldiers’ Home. For 56 years thereafter, Robinson House—renamed Fleming Hall during the Soldiers’ Home era—served as a barracks, administrative center, and museum until the facility officially closed in 1941.

The building’s role as the literal and symbolic center of the large residential complex for Confederate veterans made it a visual icon of the “Lost Cause” and a long-standing, important site for collective commemoration, remembrance, and reconciliation events. While more than 30 buildings and structures once stood on the grounds of the Soldiers’ Home, only Robinson House and the Confederate Memorial Chapel remain, both of which are now owned and maintained by VMFA.

In Bath County, two buildings—Switchback School and John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church—associated with African American communities there are now listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR), the state’s official list of important historic sites and districts.

Switchback School, also known as Union Hurst School, was completed in 1924 using building plans and money from the Julius Rosenwald Fund to leverage additional financial support from the local black community as well as the **Bath County** school board. The Rosenwald fund provided crucial support for the construction of more than 5,000 schools in 15 southern states between 1917 and 1932, offering educational opportunities to African Americans during an era when public schools were segregated.

Several generations of black students from the Hot Springs area attended Switchback School. The one-story, frame building, typical of the rural Rosenwald schools, stands on its original site today and preserves a

substantial amount of its historic building materials. The school, which began as a two-teacher facility later enlarged by the serial addition of two classrooms, is one of two Rosenwald-sponsored schools built in Bath County. It is also one of approximately 70 still surviving out of the 364 that were built across Virginia.

Switchback School closed in 1965 when Bath County ended its official policy of segregation. Secondary contributing historic resources on the site include a late 1930s stone and concrete cistern and three stone walls, structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church is the only remaining building from the first decades of West Warm Springs, a community settled by African Americans who came to Bath County after the Civil War seeking employment in the area's springs resorts and related industries.

The church was the first religious building for blacks in the community. It became a recreational and religious hub and part of the broader community development patterns former slaves created in the wake of Emancipation and Reconstruction. Today it is the only remaining log building in the community and the only surviving example of a Bath County religious institution constructed by, and once serving emancipated African Americans. A small cemetery is located on an adjacent parcel west of the church.

Two other **Bath County** sites, Barton Lodge and Three Hills, indicate the appeal of this far western area of Virginia to wealthy outsiders.

Barton Lodge, now known as Malvern Hall, was built between 1898 and 1900 on a hill overlooking The Homestead in Hot Springs. Its original owner, Seth Barton French, was a major investor in the Virginia Hot Springs Company. In 1927, a renamed Barton Lodge became the Malvern Hall residence of Letitia Pate Whitehead Evans, a philanthropist who was named to the board of the Coca-Cola Company after her husband's death, making Evans one of the first women in the U.S. to serve on the board of a major American company.

Malvern Hall is a sophisticated example of the Neo-Classical Revival style. It also incorporates early-20th-century building technology into its steel frame and features design trends popular during the latter 19th century. Evans, who died in 1953, contributed to numerous religious, educational, and charitable organizations across the South and Virginia. In 1961, the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation transferred Malvern Hall to nearby St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

Located on a hill at the outskirts of the village of Warm Springs, the estate known as Three Hills was built in 1913 by author Mary Johnston as her residence. Johnston, the first best-selling novelist of the 20th century, gained popularity for her historical romances featuring heroes and heroines of colonial Virginia. She lived at Three Hills until her death in 1936 during the latter and most productive period of her life and career, when she wrote 16 novels and one book of nonfiction. While Johnston faded from the canon of American authors by the mid-20th century, scholars have taken renewed interest in her with the rediscovery of her early involvement in the women's suffrage movement in Virginia.

The main house at Three Hills, completed in an Italian Renaissance style with a Colonial Revival-style interior, was designed by Richmond architects Carneal and Johnston and is the only known example of their work in western Virginia. The property features a small formal boxwood garden and three Craftsman-like cottages that were built in the 1910s and 1920s, including Garden Cottage, where Johnston wrote many of her works.

In northern Virginia, Huntland, an estate covering about 400 acres in **Loudoun County**, was once devoted primarily to foxhunting, a sport that reinvigorated the economy of the region in the early-20th century. The property was purchased in the early-20th century by wealthy New Yorker Joseph B. Thomas. He converted and enlarged a stately brick country dwelling dating to 1830 into a Colonial Revival-style masterpiece. He also enhanced the grounds with gates, walls, and terraced gardens that are reminiscent of English manor estates and designed Huntland's state-of-the-art kennels and horse stables.

By the mid-20th century, when it was owned by two wealthy Texans, Huntland became a retreat for notable Washington dignitaries including then-Senator—a later U. S. President—Lyndon B. Johnson. In 1962, Huntland was also the site of secret international negotiations that resulted in a treaty between Indonesia, the Netherlands and the United Nations centering on the future of New Guinea. The property today also includes a springhouse, smokehouse, and a guest cottage, all constructed around 1834 and early-20th-century resources that include secondary dwellings, a dairy barn with attached silos and a corncrib, a milking parlor, five sheds, a garage, a pump house, and a cistern.

Other sites approved for listing in the VLR by DHR's Board of Historic Resources during its quarterly meeting on September 19 are—

In central Virginia:

- The Chesapeake Warehouses in **Richmond**, constructed in 1929, resulted from the consolidation of tobacco warehouses after the advent of new technologies allowed for the high-speed manufacture of cigarettes. These large warehouse complexes marked a shift away from the use of independent warehouses. The Chesapeake Warehouses, one of the first such complexes, consisted of single-story, high-bay frame, rail- and truck-serviced buildings, serving Richmond's cigarette manufacturing plants during the 1920s. The buildings' construction and modifications over time reflect changes in the technology of the tobacco industry. They also recall Virginia's rich tobacco heritage and the industry's significant 20th-century legacy in Richmond.
- Fighting Creek, originally part of a 1,699-acre plantation located in **Powhatan County** and built around 1841, is a good example of a mid-19th century plantation home. Blending both Classical Revival and Italianate architectural elements in a two-story stucco home with one-story wings, the house retains much historic building material and its original floor plan. According to local tradition, Fighting Creek was designed by renowned New York architect Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), who designed the nearby Gothic Revival Belmead Plantation.
- Three Chimneys, constructed around 1795 for Major James Woods, is one of the earliest extant brick houses in **Nelson County**, and an excellent example of a late-Georgian style dwelling. It features an unusual floor plan, and one of the most elaborate chimney pieces in the area. The property also has several outbuildings including an original kitchen constructed of brick. In 1915, new owners added Classical Revival features to the house, resulting in a finely-blended architectural hybrid.

In western Virginia:

- The C.P. Jones House and Law Office, located in Monterey in **Highland County**, is an evolved dwelling with Victorian elements that has at its core a two-story log structure built around 1850. The log building may have functioned as the first tavern in the area, and according to local tradition it may also have served as a courthouse before the county courthouse was completed. In 1873, Charles Pinckney Jones purchased the property and began making additions and exterior finishes in the then-current Late Victorian architectural style. He also had additional outbuildings constructed, including his law office. Jones practiced law in Highland and surrounding counties, and served as a delegate and a senator in the Virginia State Legislature, and on the board of visitors for the University of Virginia, which elected him rector of the university. Today's property retains several contributing secondary resources including a mid-19th-century brick springhouse site and a frame smokehouse and apple cellar, both built about 1900.

In southwestern Virginia:

- The Ferrum College Historic District in **Franklin County** encompasses the historic core of what was originally the Ferrum Training School, a Methodist-affiliated high school established in 1913. Virginia Methodists established the school to provide educational opportunities to underprivileged youth in the state's Blue Ridge Mountains region. The eight buildings constituting the historic campus date from 1914 to 1942 and are primarily of Colonial Revival and Classical Revival character. They also include two houses, one of which has served as the president's residence since 1915, and a 1940 infirmary that served for a time as the county's best-equipped health center. In 1926 Ferrum's trustees voted to recast the institution as a junior college and by the eve of World War II approximately half of the enrolled students were college level. By the 1950s the junior college transformation was complete. In 1976 Ferrum achieved accreditation as a four-year college.
- The Roanoke River & Railroad Industrial Historic District centers on a tract of land along the Roanoke River in southeast **Roanoke** that developed rapidly as an industrial corridor with the completion of the Roanoke & Southern Railway in 1892 and the Virginian Railway line in 1909. Industries that arose along these two rail lines reflected the tremendous growth Roanoke experienced with the construction of the railroads. From lumber yards to iron and bridge works, the industries were directly tied to either the construction of the railroad or the many houses built during the early boom years of Roanoke. The district's period of significance extends from 1892, the year a Roanoke & Southern Railway line was completed, to 1959, when the Virginian Railway merged with Norfolk & Western and the district's rail station ceased service for freight or passenger traffic.

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

A slideshow of these new listings is available for viewing on the website of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The slideshow can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/SlideShows/BoardMeetings/2013September/Sept2013.index.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.

Photographs and the nomination form for each of these properties can be accessed on the DHR website here: <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/boardPage.html>.