



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA 2011

MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC SITES IN VIRGINIA



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA ANNOUNCES 2011 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC SITES IN VIRGINIA

For the sixth consecutive year, Preservation Virginia presents a list of places, buildings and archaeological sites across the Commonwealth that face imminent or sustained threats to their integrity or in some cases their very survival. The list is issued annually to raise awareness of Virginia's historic sites at risk from neglect, deterioration, lack of maintenance, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. The intent is not to shame or punish the current owners of these places. The listing is intended to bring attention to the threats described and to encourage citizens and organizations to continue to advocate for their protection and preservation.

In no particular order of severity or significance, these Virginia places are considered as Endangered:

CITY OF NORFOLK'S AT RISK HISTORIC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools at Risk:

- Ocean View Elementary School, 9501 Mason Creek Road, Norfolk, Virginia 23503
- Larchmont Elementary School, 1145 Bolling Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23508
- Madison Alternative Center, 3700 Bowdens Ferry Road, Norfolk Virginia 23508
- Meadowbrook School, 7620 Shirland Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23505
- Ballentine School, 2415 Ballentine Blvd. Norfolk, Virginia 23509
- J.E.B. Stuart School, 446 Virginia Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23508

All of these buildings have been part of the City of Norfolk's public school system since constructed, although some of them are currently not in use. Each of them is a key part of their neighborhood's and the City's 20th Century experience, including wars, segregation and desegregation, urban decay and renewal, and have survived intact into the 21st Century. A loss of these structures would surely be a loss of a major part of the historic fabric of the city. Each of these schools have special architectural character and great integrity. They add value to their neighborhood's, the students and staff who spend time there and the City as a whole. They should be better appreciated and there should be a commitment to retain and continue their use, preferably as schools, but, if not, for some adaptive reuse.

Threat:

The new school administration has implied that replacing these structures in the long run may be a less expensive alternative to saving them. The two recently disused buildings, J.E.B. Stuart and Meadowbrook face a highly uncertain future.

Recommendation:

The Norfolk system has successfully rehabilitated other schools in the system. Leadership in the school system should work with the preservation community to identify opportunities for rehabilitation or community use for these significant buildings.



Ocean View Elementary School,
Norfolk, Virginia



Larchmont Elementary School,
Norfolk, Virginia

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Larchmont Elementary School, Norfolk, Virginia

RICH NECK FARM, SURRY, VIRGINIA

Rich Neck Farm is irreplaceable on many levels. Constructed in the early nineteenth century, the house is remarkable for the number of original accessory features which survive. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places, May 19, 1980, Rich Neck provides a vivid impression of life on a prosperous Southside plantation in the early nineteenth century. Long connected with the Ruffins, one of the prominent families of Southside Virginia, Rich Neck possesses a collection of buildings which are among the best preserved and most noteworthy of their type in the region. Situated behind the house are a nineteenth-century smokehouse, an early and mid nineteenth century office, an outhouse, a well house and a chicken house, all built in the twentieth century. Original sashes, most of the doors, hinges (many with their leather washers), locks, and other hardware remain.

The Ruffin family figured in Virginia's social and intellectual history throughout the colonial and early national periods. Its most notable member was Edmund Ruffin, an agricultural pioneer. Research indicates Rich Neck was owned by the Ruffin family until 1865.

Threat:

Rich Neck Farm stands vacant and in a state of disrepair. Used for storage of farm equipment and hay, the house is being demolished by neglect and is open to elements.

Recommendation:

The owner should be encouraged to stabilize the structure and if necessary find a willing buyer who would restore and protect the house.

SHERWOOD FOREST, STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Sherwood Forest was built in 1810 on a tract of land previously owned by Mary Ball Washington (George Washington's Mother) until 1778. It is extensively documented as a Union stronghold during the Civil War and served as a hospital as well as lookout point and balloon launching site. Sherwood Forest itself sits on a high bluff overlooking over 800 acres of productive farmland. It is currently vacant and owned by an absentee landlord. When visited recently the grounds were overgrown, and the house was in a state of tragic disrepair. This area of Stafford County is a target for development (either as residential or commercial) due to water and sewer service, its long frontage on a primary access route into Fredericksburg (approximately 5 miles) and a spur rail line on the back of the property. The previous owner secured subdivision rights into 30+ buildable lots and the current owners are attempting to rescind that provision and will likely seek higher density development rights.

Threat:

The threat comes from its proximity to a thriving urban center and the appeal it would have for dense residential development. This would result in the loss of hundreds of acres of productive farmland and a total loss of context for the house itself. Commanding as it does the surrounding acreage, its context is a major part of what makes it a significant place. The fear is that the absentee owner is interested only in developing the land and, thus far, has expressed no interest in preserving the house. The company has already packaged the



Rich Neck Farm, Surry County

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Sherwood Forest, Stafford County

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development potential and is selling shares to investors on foreign exchanges. The current owners have expressed an appreciation for the historical assets and an interest in involving local groups as plans are developed.

Recommendation:

The developer should work with the local planning commission and preservation organizations to find ways to balance the growth and development of the site while protecting and preserving the house and as much farmland as possible.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES ON VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Public and private college and university campuses reflect the history and legacy of higher education in Virginia. Preservation Virginia received several nominations that highlighted threats or potential threats to historic structures on these campuses. The buildings bring distinction, history and unify graduating classes over decades. Buildings can be adapted to accommodate new technologies while retaining their historic significance and utility. Goals for environmental and energy conservation also are achieved since the greenest building is the one that is already built. Through thoughtful planning and with the support of the governing boards and the legislature, the future of these historic structures can be assured. There are examples of leadership on campuses. After hearing objections to its comprehensive plan that called for the demolition of some historic buildings, the University of Mary Washington formed a task force to make preservation recommendations for the buildings on their campus. Private institutions such as Shenandoah University are undertaking renovations of historic structures to expand their housing of students in the downtown core near their campus. The University of Virginia held a forum to discuss the preservation of the Rotunda. To provide a tool for recognizing and assessing the critical needs of state owned historic buildings including those on colleges and universities, Preservation Virginia supported legislation in 2006 calling on the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to develop biennial reports related to the stewardship of such properties with the intention of engaging state agencies in consultation with the Department to meet priorities and resolve issues. Released in May, public colleges and universities now have additional information to help them meet stewardship goals for historic buildings while maintaining their functionality, including achieving energy efficiency goals in an appropriate way.

[CLICK HERE to download the 2011 State Stewardship Report](#)

(Will launch your web browser to download the PDF)

Threat:

These structures are generally viewed as costly to maintain and not adaptable to the modern educational process. Instead these iconic structures, inspiring architecturally and recognizable, embody Virginia's commitment to education.

Recommendation:

This listing of historic structures on Virginia's college and university campuses is a call to leadership at all of these institutions to institute prudent stewardship for the historic treasures used by their students and local community every day.

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THE CCC LEGACY BUILDINGS IN VIRGINIA'S STATE PARKS

During the dark days of the Great Depression Virginians were struggling to create jobs, enhance the quality of life for its citizens and stimulate the economy. They grew to believe that our remarkable landscapes – from the Atlantic and the Chesapeake Bay to the Blue Ridge and beyond harbored an incomparable collection of natural treasures. They also believed fervently that Virginia had the richest cultural history of all of the states. 2011 marks the 75th anniversary of Virginia's nationally recognized state parks. When the park system opened in 1936 it was viewed as a "chance of a lifetime". Not only would Virginia realize its dream of building a system of state parks for the benefit of the working man and his family, but unemployed young men would be put to work building parks.

They ultimately created a legacy of lakes, nature trails, bridges, visitor centers, campgrounds, cabins, lodges and restaurants that today stand as a testament to the sustainability and beauty of these natural park structures. Seventy-five years and millions of visitors later, Virginia's original six state parks built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and loved by generations of Virginians are showing wear and stress brought by heavy use and modest maintenance funding.

Virginia's Original Six State Parks Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps Include:

- Hungry Mother
- Douthat
- Fairy Stone
- Staunton River
- Westmoreland
- Seashore/Now First Landing

[CLICK HERE to gain additional information regarding the history of each of these parks](#)

Threat:

Growing visitation, 8.1 million visitors annually, and the general aging of these exceptional properties is creating a demand for increased maintenance concerns, especially for historic structures in the park inventory.

Recommendation:

The Governor and the General Assembly move to better protect the legacy of the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Virginia by appropriating sufficient funds to ensure that maintenance needs are met for both historic and newer facilities, thereby better ensuring that the state park system remains meaningful and useful to visitors.



CCC workers who built the Great Lodge at Douthat State Park, Department of Recreation and Conservation, Courtesy of the Library of Virginia



CCC workers building the Great Lodge at Douthat State Park, Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

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THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF PRESERVATION VIRGINIA'S ANNUAL ENDANGERED SITES LIST:

The annual listing of endangered sites is a tool Preservation Virginia provides to local groups to advocate for significant places. Through the years, the properties have varied geographically, thematically and by the threatening condition. Some sites have succumbed to the threat. More often than not the listing has empowered local organizers to advocate for a site's preservation. This year, we are highlighting some of the ongoing efforts to secure the future of past year's listings.

Fort Monroe and Old Point Comfort

Four centuries of history tell the story of our nation's beginnings, conflicts and resolve at Fort Monroe. The maritime history of Hampton Roads and the distinct beauty of its natural resources make this place a national treasure. In 2005, the Department of Defense recommended closing Fort Monroe and because of existing agreements, the nearly 565 acres is due to transfer to the Commonwealth in September 2011. To call attention to the need for innovative planning and strong partnerships on all levels, Fort Monroe was listed in 2007. As the clock ticks down to the transfer, Preservation Virginia, the Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park, the Civil War Trust, the National Park Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have worked alongside the Fort Monroe Authority, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the City of Hampton, and other local, state and federal agencies to ensure the preservation of these distinct resources and an economically sustainable plan for the future. Currently, the Virginia Delegation—with the encouragement of all of these groups—is determining exactly how Fort Monroe will be included in the National Park System.

Wilderness Battlefield

Listed in 2009, Preservation Virginia became part of the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, a group which included the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the Civil War Trust, the Piedmont Environmental Council, Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, the National Parks Conservation Association and a number of other conservation organizations committed to protecting and preserving the Wilderness Battlefield. The threat came from a proposal to build a Walmart Supercenter within the boundaries of the battlefield, the site of one of the most important battles of the Civil War. On January 26th, 2011 Walmart withdrew its proposal to build within the boundaries of the battlefield and committed to working with local Orange County officials to identify an alternative location. Work of the coalition still proceeds by advocating for the need of comprehensive gateway planning that will ensure the context and approach to this hallowed site.

Carver School

Listed in 2010, this African American Nursery School saw a variety of uses before it was abandoned and began to decay. Caught in a legal challenge between a private citizens group, the City of Alexandria and a developer, the building's future seemed uncertain. Since its listing, a settlement has been reached to market the building with historic easements to a buyer who will restore the property.

THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF PRESERVATION VIRGINIA'S ANNUAL ENDANGERED SITES LIST:

Mill Mountain

Listed in 2008 and famed for its star that lights the Roanoke skies, the crest of Mill Mountain was slated for development that would have removed trees and landscape from the natural area. Visible from the city, this development would irreparably alter the views of the mountain from the City. In part because of the listing, the Preservation Foundation, the Mill Mountain Conservancy and many individual residents were able to prevail and just under 600 acres were placed under a land conservation easement that was approved by the City Council in 2010.

Historic Family Cemeteries Across the Commonwealth

Listed in 2010 as a result of multiple inquiries about the threat of ongoing development and neglect of historic family cemeteries. Preservation Virginia proactively teamed with the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to offer a series of workshops that could serve as a resource for cemetery preservation in the Commonwealth and continues to advocate for their protection.

City of Danville

In 2007, Preservation Virginia's Most Endangered List included a rare designation— the entire City of Danville —as a result of multiple pleas for help regarding saving historic structures within the City. Committed to supporting the preservation process in Danville and the region, Preservation Virginia partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to participate in the Partners in the Field Program and employed Sonja Ingram as Preservation Virginia's Partner in the Field Representative in Danville.

Since its nomination to the list, Danville has made progress in its historic preservation efforts including assisting with the creation of a Preservation Task Force to combat blight and save historic structures in the Old West End Historic District and assisting with a group dedicated to creating an African American cultural center in Danville. Other positive preservation efforts in Danville include the renovation of the Ferrell building on Main Street— something that many thought would never happen; the creation of two high school preservation clubs by the Danville Historical Society; and the soon-to-open Schoolfield Museum & Cultural Center facilitated by the Schoolfield Preservation Foundation.



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Preservation Virginia is to preserve, promote and serve as an advocate for the state's irreplaceable historic places for cultural, economic and educational benefits of everyone.

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