Preservation Virginia Announces 2012 Most Endangered Historic Sites in Virginia

For the eighth 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:

LIBBY HILL OVERLOOK, RICHMOND

On this spot in 1737, William Byrd II declared that the beautiful view reminded him of Richmond on the Thames in England and named our city Richmond. The sister site in England is a celebrated and protected viewshed.

Threat:
The viewshed could be lost if proposed high-rise condo units are built along the river which would block this prospect.

Recommendation:
Historic Richmond Foundation and Scenic Virginia are working towards positive resolutions. We encourage the use of this designation to support a broad coalition of stakeholders to work with the developer and the City of Richmond to find a resolution that preserves this iconic view while achieving economic goals. Leighton Powell, executive director for Scenic Virginia www.scenicvirginia.org and Mary Jane Hogue, executive director for Historic Richmond Foundation www.historicrichmond.com are working with local organizers to help forward solutions.

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MEADOW FARM, CAROLINE COUNTY

With a rich history as agricultural and equestrian center, Meadow Farm cemented its place in the history books when Secretariat was born, arguably Virginia's most renowned racehorse. The Meadow has been a working plantation and home to a legendary Virginia horse-breeding and racing tradition, including the Camptown Races and most recently the home for the Virginia State Fair. Despite the installed infrastructure as an event park, the site retains its rural-agricultural character.

**Threat:**
With the declaration of bankruptcy by the State Fair of Virginia, this large historic farm faces sale at auction later this spring.

**Recommendation:**
When a new owner is identified, advocate for the donation of historic and land conservation easements to protect this property while continuing its productive economic and agricultural uses.

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT BY PENNY CHENERY AND THE SECRETARIAT’S MEADOW BOOK TEAM**

To us and millions of horse lovers across the country, The Meadow is much more than a piece of property headed for the auction block. As the birthplace of Secretariat, The Meadow is hallowed ground, a living shrine to Virginia's Triple Crown champion who transcended horse racing and became an American icon. In the next few weeks, sportscasters will invoke Secretariat's name time and again at the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont. Since 1973, his fame is undiminished, his records remain unsurpassed, and his progeny dominate the racetrack. His Virginia roots represent a singular legacy for our state, which any future owner of The Meadow should certainly appreciate.

A future owner should also appreciate the enormous tourism potential in The Meadow’s equine heritage. Thousands of people came here to visit the foaling shed where Secretariat was born on March 30, 1970; his stall in the yearling barn; the training barn where he first wore a saddle and bridle; the Cove where he frolicked as a foal. Fans flocked from all over the country to the annual Secretariat birthday party at The Meadow and to take the narrated tram tours for public and private groups. The Disney film “Secretariat” spurred even more interest.

We would like to make known our strong belief that any future owner should continue to respect and protect the iconic and irreplaceable structures and sites at The Meadow linked to Secretariat’s legacy. We very much hope that any future owner will see the inherent value of returning The Meadow to its best use not only as the site of the State Fair of Virginia, but as a historic equine destination that no other state can claim.

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of Secretariat’s unforgettable Triple Crown victory of 1973. Nothing could make it a happier occasion than for us to be able to hold this celebration at The Meadow where it belongs and to resume the “Secretariat’s Meadow Tours” and the planning for the Museum of the Virginia Horse. We stand ready to work toward this goal.

Sincerely,

Penny Chenery, owner of Secretariat, with Kate Chenery Tweedy, her daughter and co-author of “Secretariat's Meadow – The Land, The Family, The Legend;” Leeanne Meadows Ladin, co-author; and Wayne Dementi, publisher
Meadow Farm
Birthplace of Secretariat

This famous horse-breeding farm was established in 1956 by Christopher T. Chenery and continued under the management of his daughter, Helen "Peggy" Chenery until 1979. Secretariat (1970-1989) was born and trained here. A bright chestnut stallion with a white star and narrow stripe, he was a horse of uncommon excellence as he proved when he captured the Triple Crown in 1973. His win at the Belmont Stakes by 31 lengths won him the love and admiration of the nation. Other notable Thoroughbreds such as Riva Ridge, Hill Prince and Royal Landing also were raised at Meadow Farm.
NEW MARKET ROAD CORRIDOR, HENRICO COUNTY

This approach to Richmond through the eastern part of Henrico County crosses some of the most historic lands in the state. Dating back well before the coming of the English, this approach to the falls of the James has preserved and served an agricultural, low-density developed area. The Capitol to Capitol bike trail was recently added to allow for even more recreational tourism. Current proposals would ‘upgrade’ this corridor to a four lane divided highway and a high bridge connection to the city street grid. In addition to the loss of agricultural land, it could spur commercial development that would forever change this historic landscape corridor. Many local and regional groups are working to preserve the corridor through zoning and easements to protect it.

Threat:
In September of 2011 a consulting firm unveiled its proposal for how best to develop the historic New Market Road Corridor. Though it offered two options, they are identical in their suggestion that two-lane New Market should be converted to a four-lane divided highway. One variation connects this road to Richmond’s Main Street via a 7-story overpass that would block Church Hill’s view of the James; the view for which the city was named. The other alternative runs a four-lane highway through Marion Hill (a middle class neighborhood that has stood watch over the river since the 1800’s) and part of Fulton Hill (now a predominantly African American middle class neighborhood on the site where Christopher Newport and John Smith are said to have met Powhatan’s son). This is eerily similar to the eminent domain-driven road-widening projects that devastated Jackson Ward in the 1950’s and Oregon Hill in the 1960’s.

Recommendation:
To preserve the New Market Road Corridor’s historic assets, we encourage Henrico County officials to work with the New Market Road Corridor Development Team to identify alternative solutions to the current widening plan. The New Market Road Corridor Development Team is a coalition of organizations representing wide-constituencies around the Richmond region and across the Commonwealth that are willing to support an alternative plan. The Group has identified five key points that would preserve the New Market Road Corridor’s historic assets and enhance the region’s economic and environmental health. Contact with this coalition should be made.

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Additional Information may be obtained at: www.route5corridor.com
ASHLAND THEATER, ASHLAND

This local landmark, a centerpiece of the main street and the National Register Historic District of Ashland has sat vacant and under-used for 17 years. A group of local leaders in the Town are holding roundtable discussions to determine how the theater can be restored and reused.

Threat:
This former neon-illuminated downtown icon is becoming an eyesore and is in peril of becoming a negative symbol in the midst of revitalization efforts. The theater is deteriorating from neglect and disrepair.

Recommendation:
Local supporters should undertake a feasibility study to determine the viability of the repurposing of the theater into a performing arts venue, to support Ashland’s Main Street vision of being a thriving “destination location” for arts and culture and a prime heritage tourism destination.

GWALTNEY STORE, SUFFOLK

This early 19th century structure is a dominant feature that defines the Chuckatuck community of Suffolk. The City has condemned the building, which has been vacant for many years. The owners and local historical society are working with the City to find alternatives to its permanent loss.

Threat:
The City of Suffolk’s Department of Planning and Community Development served the property owner with a Notice of Violation in August of 2011. Subsequently a CONDEMNED sign was posted on the property stating that the building would be demolished in 90 days if the owner does not comply with the Notice of Violation. Since then the owner has begun a dialogue with the City of Suffolk but the fate of the building is not yet clear.

Recommendation:
A feasibility study should be undertaken to give the Greater Chuckatuck Foundation more time to develop a preservation plan for the store. The Greater Chuckatuck Foundation (www.chuckatuckhistory.com) would like to see this building serve as a museum that would house various items it has collected while researching their book, “Chuckatuck: A Crossroads in Time.”
SLATE SEED COMPANY, SOUTH BOSTON

This late 19th century Greek Revival frame building retains marvelous architectural elements reminiscent of its days as the site of one of the premier purveyors for tobacco seeds when tobacco dominated the local and regional economy. The site is now vacant and in danger of demolition. Due to the property’s small lot size, Halifax County has denied a variance that would make the property easier to sell and the structure available for rehabilitation.

Threat:
The Greek Revival building that housed this seed store faces demolition unless restored. Current zoning restricts the owner’s or potential purchaser’s flexibility to return the building to productive use.

Recommendation:
We encourage the Halifax Historical Society and County officials to work together to make the property and this building more attractive to potential purchasers. Conducting an initial analysis of the stability and rehabilitation potential of the structure would encourage adaptive reuse.

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TALBOT HALL, NORFOLK

One of two remaining antebellum plantation homes in the City of Norfolk, Talbot Hall sits in a park-like setting along the banks of the Lafayette River. For many years, this was the official residence for the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia. The Diocese has determined to sell the building. Because of its large site and beautiful setting, local citizens fear the property would be developed and the mansion house lost. A local foundation, the Talbot Hall Foundation has been formed to work for the preservation of the house and property.

Threat:
In February of 2012, at the Diocesan meeting, the decision to place the property on the market was made. With no protections in place, this decision has the potential to allow development to occur unchecked. The result could be the loss of this historic resource and viewshed.

Recommendation:
We encourage the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia to work with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) to develop and donate protective easements for the property prior to its sale, while providing the Talbot Hall Foundation time to raise funds for the purchase of the site.

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BOONES MILL DEPOT, FRANKLIN COUNTY

This early 20th century depot is a contributing structure to the Boones Mill Historic District. The owner, Norfolk Southern, has offered to donate the building so it can be moved and saved. The Boones Mill Town Council and local citizens are working to raise funds to move the depot across the tracks so it can be save and reused.

Threat:
No longer used for its intended purpose and sitting vacant and unused, the depot faces potential demolition by the owner, Norfolk Southern, unless a new owner is willing to accept the property for relocation.

Recommendation:
We encourage the citizens and leadership of the town of Boones Mill to work with Norfolk Southern and to redouble their efforts to identify funds to relocate the building and develop a proactive and sustainable reuse plan.

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VIRGINIA TECH, LANE, BRODIE AND RASCHE HALL, BLACKSBURG

The upper quad serves as the oldest section of the Virginia Tech campus, and these three threatened buildings are the oldest structures on the Upper Quad. Lane Hall still bears hundreds of signatures etched into its bricks and mortar by generations of cadets, some dating back more than 100 years.

Threat:
The commandant of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets (VTCC) is proposing to demolish Lane Hall (constructed 1888), Rasche Hall (constructed 1894), and Brodie Hall (constructed 1900), three historic buildings that occupy the historic Upper Quad of the Virginia Tech Campus in order to construct a new dormitory for the VTCC cadets.

Recommendation:
We urge the Virginia Tech Facilities Management team to work with specialized preservation architects, a focus group of architectural students and Virginia’s Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) to develop a plan to sensitively rehabilitate and modernize these existing buildings for continued use while protecting this group of structures, which form a large part of the oldest portion of campus.

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WHITEHORN-BANISTER RURAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPE,
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

This picturesque rural landscape played an essential role in the mid-18th century founding of Pittsylvania County during which plantation-based agriculture and local water-powered processing were the principal economic activities. The area has standing structures that span almost every era of the region including a Native American fishing weir, two gristmills built in the 1700s, an assembly of mansions from the Revolutionary War era and the home of J.E.B. Stuart’s grandparents—all of which are connected by pristine fields, woods, creek and rivers. The impending threat to the region arises from the construction and operation of a uranium mine and mill proposed at Coles Hill, within the rural historic landscape. In addition to the loss of its characteristic rural qualities, this development could lead to groundwater contamination, noise pollution and real estate value loss and hinder future heritage tourism initiatives. Local historians and concerned citizens seek to ensure that if the moratorium on uranium mining is lifted, Section 106 reviews are undertaken in the area prior to any licensing of the uranium mine.

Threat:
The Whitethorn-Banister area contains many diverse historic structures linked by pristine rural landscapes that represent the heritage of the area dating back to Native American fishing weirs, gristmills and plantation emblematic of the plantation based agricultural economy. If the mining and milling processes are allowed to take place, many acres of this historic landscape will be spoiled and its historic context disrupted.

There are environmental contamination risks as well as the potential decline in real estate values could negatively impact the historic houses in the area. This may also hinder any future heritage tourism initiatives that could be economically successful for the county and region.

Recommendation:
The irreparable consequences of the proposed mining on heritage tourism and subsequent impact on the local economy should be considered. Federal review, such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, would help document and mitigate the damage to these historic resources. We understand that it may not be required under the licensing of this mining and milling operation. If mining were allowed in the absence of 106 Review, these historic resources should be inventoried and documented. Specific plans for mitigation and protection should be developed to ensure that these resources are not lost forever.

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MORGANS FORD LOW WATER BRIDGE, WARREN COUNTY

This historic crossing of the Shenandoah River is approached from winding country lanes through some of Virginia’s most historic and scenic farmland. The single laned, 321 foot low water concrete bridge was constructed in 1925. VDOT proposes to replace it with an all-weather elevated bridge that would greatly change the character of the approach, the landings and the community served by the existing bridge. Concerned local citizens and land owners nominated the road and bridge to urge maintenance and preservation of the existing bridge.

Threat:
VDOT plans to replace the current one-lane bridge with an elevated, two lane, 40-ton limit bridge. Heavier traffic flow will likely require additional roadwork including widening the road and straightening the traditional approach to this bridge. These alterations will threaten the surrounding miles of narrow historic roads. Roads that currently depict a fragile cross section of American life, ultimately disrupting the rural farming landscape and opening the opportunity for inappropriate and unchecked development.

Recommendation:
Repair the existing bridge in its current configuration, rather than replacing it, ultimately preserving this rural landscape and saving the taxpayers millions.

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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, Hampton**
Strategically located on the Hampton Roads, Fort Monroe stands as sentinel to history. It was occupied for thousands of years by the Kecoughtan and named by John Smith as Point Comfort in 1607. In 1861, Fort Monroe became the birthplace of a freedom movement when three enslaved men took refuge and the steps toward emancipation began. Use as a military base continued until 2005 when the Department of Defense recommended closure—triggering a transfer to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Fort Monroe was designated in 2007 to raise awareness of the need for a complex planning effort to preserve and sustain this site. Preservation Virginia and partners including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Civil War Trust, the Citizens for a Fort Monroe, and many others continue to work with the Fort Monroe Authority, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the City of Hampton. On November 1, 2011, key portions of Fort Monroe were designated a National Monument thus bringing the strength of the National Park Service to the future of this site.

**Wilderness Battlefield, Orange County**
Listed in 2009, Preservation Virginia became part of the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, a group which included the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 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, Alexandria**
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.

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

**Historic Family Cemeteries Across the Commonwealth**
Listed in 2010 as a result of multiple inquires about the threat of ongoing development and neglect of historic family and African American cemeteries. Preservation Virginia proactively teamed with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) 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, as a result of multiple pleas for help regarding saving historic structures within the City, Preservation Virginia’s Most Endangered List included a rare designation — the entire City of Danville. Committed in 2008 to supporting the preservation process in Danville and the region, Preservation Virginia located their Field Representative in Danville.

Since its nomination to the list, Danville has made progress in its historic preservation efforts including assisting with a Preservation Task Force to save historic structures in the Old West End Historic District; the renovation of the historic Ferrell building and the formation of the River District Plan intended to improve and revitalize Danville’s historic downtown and tobacco warehouse district. Mandy Matherly, a Danville native who was instrumental in forming two high school preservation clubs in Danville, received Preservation Virginia’s Young Preservationist of the Year Award in 2011.

**Jefferson Pool Bath Houses, Warm Springs**
Upon the listing of the bath houses on our Endangered List in 2010, a local group formed. Now known as Preservation Bath, this group began a local conversation to respond to the need to halt the deteriorating conditions of the bath houses. These buildings are the oldest of their kind in the country. Preservation Bath, with strategic support of Preservation Virginia, initiated discussions with KSL, the management company of the Homestead and owners of the site. Those conversations continue about how to identify and address the preservation needs of these delicate buildings. Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.preservationnation.org) continue to consult with the local group to offer our technical expertise. To learn more about this positive progress and to help preserve this rare site visit www.friendsofthepools.org.

**Historic Tobacco Barns & the Evolution of the Tobacco Barns Project**
Responding to vast interest regarding protecting historic tobacco barns after their nomination to our most Endangered Historic Sites in 2009, Preservation Virginia started a project in Southside that encompasses Danville, Pittsylvania County and surrounding counties to raise awareness and help protect historic tobacco barns. The kick-off meeting was recently held and currently Preservation Virginia is hosting a poster contest for local middle school students on barn preservation. The project will also include a survey of tobacco barns and upcoming workshops on barn maintenance and reuse. To learn more contact Sonja Ingram at singram@preservationvirginia.org or 804-551-3249.

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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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JOIN US

Preservation Virginia serves as a major partner in Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifact program, sponsored by the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM), and applauds this effort to protect the artifacts that help interpret the stories of historic places.