



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA 2010

MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC SITES IN VIRGINIA



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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 ten Virginia places are considered as Endangered:

OLD ALBEMARLE COUNTY JAIL, CHARLOTTESVILLE

The old Albemarle County jail is the only un-restored structure in the court house area. Its restoration offers an opportunity to provide much needed museum space for the City and County and venue to tell the story of early incarceration. Years of neglect and lack of County resources have created a significant threat to the integrity of this site. The stone portion of the old county jail was built in the 1870's from materials from the previous jail formerly located on Court Square. The jail holds the historic distinction of serving as the site of the last public hanging in Virginia - the mayor of Charlottesville. The jail is intact with all cells and doors in place, something many other old jails now lack. It has been little altered from the time it was constructed. The Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society is actively engaged with the County of Albemarle in an effort to secure the complex for a museum and provide a unique heritage tourism destination.



Old Albemarle County Jail
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CORNLAND SCHOOL, CHESAPEAKE

Built in 1885, this early school shows the dedication of late 19th-20th century African Americans to obtain an education and provide that opportunity to their own children. The very community of people who used the school worked to construct it with little to no outside funding. Oral histories from former students also indicate that even adults occasionally attended the school to learn how to read and write. Cornland School is important to the local community and Virginia as a whole as it assists in interpreting the educational heritage of African Americans in Post Civil War Virginia.

The structure has been vacant intermittently for nearly fifty years. Over the last 15-20 years, it has been completely vacant. Though the owners and the City have interest in seeing the property preserved, they do not have the funds to pursue the restoration or even stabilization. Currently the building is open to the weather with several panes of glass missing along with a detached back door. The building has also been subject to moisture damage, and parts of the floor are rotting as a result. Without intervention, the structure will soon be lost.



Cornland School
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ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SCHOOL, POWHATAN

Built in 1895 as a school for African American girls, and as a partner venture with St. Emma Military Academy for boys, St. Francis de Sales was built of the finest materials: stone quarried from the property; bricks kilned on site; wood from the rich forests; imported Italian marble for the altars; specifically designed statues; wood carved pews and monastic stalls; elaborately and uniquely created stained glass windows. St. Katharine Drexel sponsored many, many places of education and worship among Native and African American peoples. She expended her entire heritage of the Drexel fortune for this ministry, including Xavier University of Louisiana, and a whole network of elementary and high schools throughout this country. When the schools closed in the 1970's the site was used for gatherings, retreats and agriculture.

This building has great historical significance, both architecturally and symbolically. St. Francis de Sales is treasured as a site where thousands of young African American women learned academic and life skills in an era when very few institutions of this caliber were available to young black women. Its significance, along with its partner school for boys, St. Emma Military Academy, is totally unique in Virginia history. And over its time of operations has enriched over 15,000 young people.

In March, 2010, a major section of the tower collapsed. It could no longer stand the weight of age and the lack of funding to secure its nobility. Further destruction is so imminent that to neglect its immediate reconstruction in a manner that assumes a new future, will bring about irreparable destruction to the rest of the building. What can be fixed now, immediately, will soon be totally irreplaceable.



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TAYLOR HOTEL, WINCHESTER

Historical accounts suggest that the hotel consisted of a large brick building, its ground floor occupied by a chain store, retains many-columned verandas on its second and third stories. As the Coffee House, McGuire's Tavern, the General Washington, and as Taylor's Hotel, it was a center of business and social life for 150 years. During the War between the States, the building was occupied by Confederate and Union officers. 'Stonewall' Jackson had temporary headquarters here, and General Banks used it at one time as a hospital. Burned in 1845 and rebuilt three years later, it was maintained by various owners until closed in 1905.

The property is located at the historic downtown core of the Winchester and remains highly visible to tourists, visitors, citizens, and the surrounding commercial businesses. The large facade along North Loudoun Street has become part of the historic streetscape. Public sentiment and preservationists have argued that the loss of the complete structure from its current site would be detrimental to the historic downtown area. The property was declared blighted by the Common Council of the City of Winchester on April 13, 2010. Without stabilization, further deterioration and potential loss of the complete structure is likely.



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WARM SPRINGS BATHHOUSES, WARM SPRINGS

The baths have served as the heart of Warm Springs for more than 200 years and are the reason the town was founded. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register, they are one of the country's oldest spas and the men's bathhouse may be the nation's oldest spa building. The custom of "taking the waters" for curative and social purposes was popular in Virginia in the late 18th and early 19th century among the aristocracy. The Warm Springs Bathhouses are significant as rare surviving examples of spa architecture from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and for their association with the social and medical history of Virginia. Washington is said to have bathed in the baths while Jefferson's three-week stay at Warm Springs to take the waters for his rheumatism.

The baths and the associated buildings are threatened by neglect. Routine maintenance has been deferred and peeling paint, missing roof shingles, and rotten wood are the result. Historic fabric is being lost on a daily basis and the buildings are in need of immediate attention.

GAVIS RESIDENCE, WINCHESTER

Identified in the 1976 Architectural Inventory Survey for the City of Winchester, the Gavis property consists of a two-story dwelling, circa 1881, representing an excellent example of 2nd Empire architecture and the only intact and original one in Winchester. The property is located within the local Historic Winchester District, as well as, the National Registry area of historic places.

For the past 25 years, very little has been done to restore the structure to its original grandeur. Over the years, the property has become a blighting influence on the surrounding community with the structural deterioration, overgrowth of weeds and grass, accumulation of inoperable vehicles and various items of equipment. It truly has the potential to be viewed as a premier property in the City, with proper attention and restoration.

WARWICK TOWN, NEWPORT NEWS

This site holds an extraordinary range of Virginia history. Archaeological evidence suggests that it served as the site of the first court house and related buildings for Warwick County and the site of a colonial port town, which although it never flourished, was a political and commercial center for the area during the colonial period. The site also contains archaeological components of Native American use and possibly 17th occupation. In addition, the site contains surviving Civil War earthwork fortifications at the mouth of Deep Creek.

The current Newport News Development plan for the Warwick Town area calls for the following to be built on the site: two 10-storey residential towers, four 5/6 storey residential flats, two 5 level parking garages and a 25,000 square foot restaurant/retail building. Such development would certainly damage and risk losing the opportunity to share the story of Warwick Town.



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Warwick Town
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HISTORIC FAMILY CEMETERIES, ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Cemeteries are among the most valuable of historic genealogical resources. Rural (and urban) family cemeteries can also provide an abundance of information through the study of gravestones and grave marker designs, cemetery landscapes and religious and mortuary practices and can provide information on rural Virginia settlement patterns and the ethnic character of the residents of an area. While much can be gained through the study of historic cemeteries, the major significance of these sites lies in the fact that they are sacred. The graves help to perpetuate the memories of the deceased and the remains of the people buried there should be treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

Development and neglect continue to create an urgent threat to these sacred sites across the Commonwealth.

CARVER NURSERY SCHOOL, ALEXANDRIA

This building is one of the most significant historical structures remaining in Alexandria's formerly segregated Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District, which was listed on the Virginia Landmark Registry in 2009 and the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. As the former Carver Nursery School, it is one of the very few remaining formerly segregated school buildings in Alexandria. Its name was presumably derived from that of scientist George Washington Carver, one of the most prominent African Americans of his time, credited as the inventor of peanut butter, who died the year the school was constructed.

In 1950 the school became home to the William Thomas American Legion Post. The building served as a center of community and cultural activity for African American Alexandrians during the era of racial segregation. The Post was named for William Thomas, the first African-American soldier from Alexandria to die in World War I.

The Greater Alexandria Preservation Alliance is leading the effort to save this structure, recently approved for demolition by the BAR and City Council. The decision for demolition has been appealed to the Circuit Court of Alexandria, and an initial trial date is set for November 2010.

MORRISENA, ALBEMARLE COUNTY

This property, circa 1748 is one of only a few properties in Albemarle County that has remained in the same family since the original land grant was issued and has been farmed continuously for 9 generations. It is the only such property that retains the original house. It is also one of the oldest remaining houses in the County and despite its overall condition, it is complete with original doors, mantels, trim and shutters. It stands today basically as it was originally built and may be the oldest house in the Historic District. This site is threatened by lack of home occupation and remains very vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Additionally, stabilization is needed to insure it will remain standing.



Historic Family Cemeteries
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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.

For Additional Information, Contact:

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