

# Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail HB 1602 (2011)

## Historical Marker/Directional Signage Subcommittee

### Summary

#### Background

The 2011 Virginia General Assembly enacted House Bill 1602 to establish the Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail, one of the signature events of the bicentennial of the war. The Trail encompasses existing and 15 new War of 1812-relevant sites throughout the Commonwealth approved by the Board of Historic Resources. The new historical markers signify, among other things, prominent Virginians and other personalities, the contributions of African Americans, the role of Native Americans, battles and water routes, cemeteries in which Virginia veterans of the War of 1812 are interred, Tangier Island, the Sack of Hampton, the capture of Alexandria, the Virginia Militia, the hiding of the Declaration of Independence, and other sites and edifices related to the War of 1812 throughout the State. The first of the new markers, the Dolly Madison at Montpelier, was dedicated on March 16, 2011.

The Trail is one of the focal points during the bicentennial designed to highlight Virginia's significant role in the war and is also a potential economic development opportunity. According to information submitted to the Commission at least two other historical markers have been installed; however, these markers have not been dedicated. The Department of Historic Resources advises that the fabrication cost of historical markers has increased, and that the Virginia Department of Transportation must determine the appropriate location for each marker. Efforts must be made to ascertain the localities which have responsibility for the maintenance of their roads in order that the Commission may negotiate the establishment and maintenance of the markers. Working collaboratively with the Department of Historic Resources, the Commission must set a schedule for the dedication of historical markers.

#### Requirements of HB 1602 (2011)

In addition to establishing the Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail, the legislation directs the Virginia Department of Transportation to erect historical highway markers approved by the Board of Historic Resources in the Department of Transportation's right-of-way at the request of the Department of Historic Resources. Further, directional signage for travelers to sites may be erected by the Department of Transportation at the request of the governing body of a locality or historical organization or foundation custodial responsibilities for the site.

Also, House Bill 1602 requires that:

"directional signage shall be placed at the nearest intersection to each site in the Department of Transportation right-of-way if there is no conflict with other Department signage. All directional signage shall consist of a common sign design developed by a committee established by and under the direction of the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission (the Commission).

The committee shall include, but not be limited to, the Director of the Department of Historic Resources or her designee, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation or his designee, and one representative of each historical organization, foundation, or local governing body in proximity to the site of the sign. Directional sign panels and posts shall meet Virginia Department of Transportation specifications.

All costs associated with manufacturing, erection, and maintenance of directional signs under this section shall be borne by the requesting party. Directional signs erected by the Virginia Department of Transportation under this section shall be developed in accordance with applicable provisions of § 10.1-2209 of the Code of Virginia and placed in accordance with all applicable Virginia Department of Transportation regulations."

**Continued**

## Interpretation and Branding

The subcommittee must reach consensus on the message of directional signage for the historic markers on the Trail. Effort should be made to ensure consistency and visibility of War of 1812 sites for tourists and visitors across the Commonwealth. Recommendations concerning management of the Trail and maintenance of the markers and the corresponding costs are other matters that must be determined.

There are Virginia sites relevant to the War of 1812 which overlap with sites on the Star-Spangled Banner National Trail. To the extent such overlap exists, discussions regarding the possibility of co-branding should begin with the National Park Service and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

## New Markers Approved by Board of Historic Resources

• British Naval Blockade and Cape Henry Lighthouse	Virginia Beach
• Capture of Tappahannock	Essex County
• Capture of the Dolphin	Lancaster County
• African Americans in the War of 1812	Northumberland County
• Lt. Col. George Armistead	Caroline County
• War of 1812 Opposition--John Randolph	Charlotte County
• British Attacks on Kinsale and Mundy Point	Northumberland County
• British Landing at Nomini Ferry	Westmoreland County
• Richmond's War of 1812 Defense Camps	Henrico County
• Admiral Sir George Cockburn of the Chesapeake	TBD Hampton
• Governor James Barbour	Orange County
• Dolley Madison	Orange County
• War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses	Norfolk
• War of 1812 Military Legacy	Hampton
• Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott	Dinwiddie County
• Sack of Hampton	Hampton
• Declaration of Independence Hiding Site	Fairfax County
• Elizabeth Monroe	Albemarle County
• Chesapeake-Leopard Affair	Hampton

Of these markers, the Department of Historic Resources has advised the Commission to place priority on the dedication of the following:

- Winfield Scott (Dinwiddie)
- Capture of the Dolphin (Lancaster)
- Capture of Tappahannock (Essex)
- British Landing at Nomini Ferry (Westmoreland)
- Richmond's War of 1812 Defensive Camps (Henrico)

Department representatives indicate that the locations for the markers have already been approved and there are constituent groups that would be willing to help host dedications. The Commission agreed at its September 19, 2012, meeting to establish a schedule, in collaboration with the Department of Historic Resources, for dedicating new historical markers, beginning in March 2013.

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