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ONE DOLLAR

Highway marker honors founders of town of Thoroughfare

By HARRY LEACH
Observer staff

Did you get stuck in the Thoroughfare traffic jam on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 10? If you did, it was all for a good cause. The Prince William County Historical Commission unveiled a highway marker, commemorating the founding of the town of Thoroughfare, now part of the Broad Run community, by the free and recently freed people of color. The founders of Thoroughfare were African Americans, Native Americans and people of mixed-identity. Descendents of the founders of the town petitioned the Prince William County Historical Commission for a highway marker. Five years ago Victoria Price, Karen Hughes-White and Pat Fletcher had

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From left, Karen Hughes-White, Pat Fletcher and her granddaughter Monica Malveaux and Victoria Price following ceremony unveiling highway marker commemorating the founding of the town of Thoroughfare
Harry Leach/the Bull Run Observer



INSIDE

More fun than scary

Many events and activities for Halloween begin this weekend... pages B1-B3.

13 schools affected

by boundary lines for two new schools under construction on the Linton Hall corridor...page A-18.

History on the side

CTB to be asked to rebid Linton Hall Rd. widening project

Efforts of three women pay off, Thoroughfare historical marker installed

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not met. Their passion about their ancestors and genealogy led them to each other. They discovered they were cousins.

Their passion also led to a meeting with Lillian Gaskill at the home of Mrs. Betty Berry in Thoroughfare. Mrs. Gaskill at that time was the chairwoman of the Prince William Historical Commission. Jim Burgess,

the current vice-chair of the commission, guided the petition through to final approval.

The marker was unveiled, following a program held at the Oakrum Baptist Church in Thoroughfare. Pastor Charles Jones gave the invocation and introduced Prince William County Supervisors John Stirrup of the Gainesville District and Wally Covington of the Brentsville District as the first speakers.

The Oakrum Church Choir entertained with a coral selection. Mrs. Betty Virginia Berry, who turns 99 years old on October 19, gave an inspiring talk on her life in the area. Mrs. Marie Louise Primas also spoke of her life and family in and around Thoroughfare. Several other descendants, elders, community and organization members also spoke of the past history of the Thoroughfare area. The original founders of the town were illiterate. Speaker after speaker emphasized how the founders' descendents became well-educated; many are college graduates and all have made a positive impact on Prince William County, the state of Virginia and many other places, coast to coast in the United States.

Pat Fletcher, Karen Hughes-White and Victoria Price spoke of their efforts to obtain a highway marker and also thanked the members of the Prince William County



Thoroughfare historical marker

Harry Leach/ the Bull Run Observer

Historical Commission. Jim Burgess thanked Pat, Karen and Victoria for their efforts in conceiving the idea of the highway marker and for arranging the commemoration program. Jim also spoke of the historical commission's role and of the importance of the marker to the community.

The attendees proceeded, with a Prince William County Police escort, from the Oakrum Baptist Church down Thoroughfare Road, across James Madison Highway to the highway marker site near the railroad crossing. Jim Burgess and Pat Fletcher, working as a team, cut the ribbons, covering the marker.

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IN HONOR OF
OUR ANCESTORS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2004



HIGHWAY MARKER

HONORING
THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR
AT
THOROUGHFARE, VIRGINIA

“ Families of African-American, Native-American, and mixed ancestry migrated here from Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock and Warren Counties after the Civil War. The Allen, Berry, Fletcher, Nickens and Peyton families, along with former slaves from this area, acquired parts of former plantations, built homes and established the farming community of Thoroughfare, which prospered through the 1940s. Many of the “Free People of Color” who settled here were illiterate but their families were not accepted into the schools and churches of their white neighbors. In 1885, the North Fork School was built by local labor with county funding on land donated by the Primas family. In 1899, community growth compelled the families to construct a second-floor room and hire an additional teacher at their own expense. Also, in 1909, members of the community built Oakrum Baptist Church on donated land and selected their own ministers.”

Nov. 30 the museum will for matching funds for tion of the cabin, an exact of Abraham Lincoln's ace in Hodgenville, Ky.

ording to museum staff the in Log Cabin has long been centerpiece of the museum's in Collection. Miss Forbes to serve hot chocolate in the to celebrate Lincoln's birth- Visitors included Carl Sand- former slaves and Civil War ans.

x-deductible donations may be to the Lincoln Cabin Preser- on Fund of the Forbes House cum, 215 Adams St., Milton.

orter Statue Restored

ORTSMOUTH, N.H. — Na- son Maj. Gen. Fitz John ter, who was memorialized with w Hampshire's first equestrian nument, was honored recently en the memorial's restoration s celebrated. The monument is in ven Park on the Portsmouth abor Trail. The city paid for the rk.

Porter, who was the nephew and usin of Commodore David Porter d Adm. David Dixon Porter, was veteran of the Mexican War and ight artillery at West Point before ie Civil War, which he entered as olonel of the 15th Regular Infan- y. He trained troops in Washing- on and led divisions in Gen. eorge McClellan's Army of the otomac on the Peninsula.

After Second Manassas, where he served in Gen. John Pope's Army of Virginia, Porter was court- martialed for refusing to obey orders, found guilty and dismissed from the army in January 1863. He was exonerated in 1878, but not restored to rank of colonel until 1886. He died in 1901 and is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brook- lyn, N.Y.

Kentucky Excavations



Free People of Color – The Prince William County Historical Commission unveiled a highway marker Oct. 12 in honor of the Free People of Color (African American, Native American, and mixed-identity) who founded Thoroughfare, Va., after the Civil War. From the left are descendants and cousins Karen Hughes-White, President of the Afro-American Historical Society of Faquier County; Pat Fletcher and her granddaughter Monica Malveaux; and Victoria Price. The women met five years ago while researching genealogy and submitted the marker request so that their ancestors and the little-known history would be remembered. One of Price's ancestors was a master carpenter in Thoroughfare during the war. His house survives.

(Jim Bradshaw photo)

Hooper in Fort Wright, where several dozen volunteers worked under supervision for two days in September. The Northern Kentucky battery was part of a 10-mile line of defensive fortifications and rifle

fessor of history at Northern Kentucky University, said civilians prepared the defenses. Confederates, seeing the show of strength, did not attack. University students are also working at the 14.5-acre site. Restoration of the battery and tion of a passive park will

UK Donors Visit

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Mem- bers of the American Civil War Round Table, United Kingdom, recently toured Kelley's Point Battlefield with local historian and Battle of Nashville Preservation Society immediate past president Bob Henderson Jr. The group donated \$2,000 to the society a few years ago to help interpret the recently opened site (Civil War News October 2004).

CWRT-UK president Tony Daly said the organization was very proud of the recent successes in saving and interpreting sites in Middle Tennessee and Nashville in particular. The visitors also took in other sites in Nashville and the 140th anniversary reenactment o the Battle of Franklin.

New Market Hts. Walk

RICHMOND, Va. — Henric County and National Park Servie historians recently led the first tw mile walking tour across portio of battlefield that witnessed t heaviest fighting of the Battle New Market Heights

The tour was one in a series special events this year to ce memorate the 140th anniversary the 1864 Overland Campaign. J before dawn on Sept. 29, 18 more than 3,000 United St Colored Troops led the U attack on New Market Hei against some 2,000 Confed soldiers, including those of legendary Texas brigade.

After two hours of combat two bloody assaults on ea fortifications the USCTs re:

Campaign W

Relive the forgotten b soldiers of the Civil V campaign with the A the "Buffsticks" of th

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Highway marker unveiled

By Briar S. Bogin
10/20/2004

The Prince William County Historical Commission unveiled a highway marker on Sunday, Oct. 12, honoring the Free People of Color who founded Thoroughfare, Va. after the Civil War.

Former residents and descendants of residents worked diligently to ensure that the 100 year old community was not forgotten. The new marker offers a brief account of Thoroughfare's history.

Families of African-American, Native-American and mixed ancestry from Rappahannock, Fauquier, Warren and Culpeper counties worked to establish the Thoroughfare area.

Rappahannock native Frank Fletcher left the tiny town of Scrabble in 1855 and walked nearly 45 miles to The Plains. There, he met Kate Vass, an enslaved black American Indian. The two had children whose descendency can be traced to Seattle resident Pat Fletcher and Maryland resident Victoria Price.

As a free person of color prior to Emancipation, Fletcher was required to obtain a pass from the courthouse to enable him to travel to other jurisdictions. He worked as a master carpenter and built many of the houses in the Thoroughfare area. That area is currently known as Broad Run.

Fletcher's granddaughter, Betty Berry, lived in Thoroughfare most of her life. Seventy of her 99 years were spent in a house there built by her grandfather many years ago. Though she sold it two years ago and moved to Warrenton, the house is still occupied.

The marker is located on the south side of John Marshall Highway near Thoroughfare Road. The installation was the culmination of a joint process between the Commission and the descendants of the Thoroughfare residents described on the marker.

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Letters
The Washington Post
1150 15th St, NW
Washington, DC 20071

May 15, 2005

Thank you for taking the time to write about The Settlement (Sunday, May 15, 2005), and for giving us the rich history of people of color, so often left to the knowledge and memory of only the families. Such histories deserve a much wider audience. A similar scenario has been taking place in Thoroughfare, Virginia, although not in the "one fell swoop" befalling Gainesville.

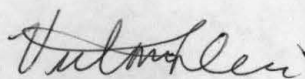
Unbeknownst to many of your readers, on Saturday, October 10, 2004, the Prince William County (Virginia) Historical Commission unveiled a highway marker in memory of the "Free People of Color" who founded Thoroughfare, also known as part of Broad Run, a hop and skip away from Gainesville, Virginia. Many of the founders of Thoroughfare have descendants still living in Thoroughfare and Gainesville. The marker is dedicated to the "families of African American, Native American and mixed ancestry...along with former slaves" who founded this community. They lie in their original burial grounds there.

This community, too, was founded after the Civil War, and was entirely self sufficient until the late 1940s. There were two blacksmiths, a grocery store, a church which was constructed in 1909 and still has an active membership, and many farms. One descendant, my cousin Betty Berry, will be 100 years old this October. Another cousin's late husband, Ernest Fields, was a blacksmith's grandson. A Native American carpenter, Frank Fletcher, built most of the houses in Thoroughfare. His wife was a black slave, Kate Vass. Although the Washington Post did send a reporter to this historical event, the ceremony, and the history that occasioned it, was never featured. And, yes, like The Settlement, the developers have been and are still "champing at the bit" for Thoroughfare land, which has been sold, parcel by parcel, over the past several years. I can also understand why the ancestors would not give up his walnut tree. My ancestors in Thoroughfare would come home from church and find their walnut trees cut down and hauled away for the lucrative walnut lumber market, threatening them with extinction.

I write this letter because the Post states that "few [enclaves] thrived as the Settlement did." I beg to differ. There are various and sundry reasons why and how rich histories

V. Price, Thoroughfare, pg. 2

“disappear.” Ironically, last week my cousin, Pat Fletcher and I further explored the history of Thoroughfare and our family genealogy. We both viewed maps of Thoroughfare in The Relic division of the Bull Run Public Library. Two government-sponsored maps, one from 1904 and another from the 1920s, clearly show the farming community of Thoroughfare, the farms and properties, and the owners. Yet a privately-drawn map of the same area in the 1950s excludes Thoroughfare and its residents altogether, as though they never existed. Three-hundred years ago, John Adams stated, “Records are destroyed. Histories are annihilated or interpolated or prohibited. Sometimes by popes, sometimes by emperors, sometimes by aristocratic and sometimes by democratic assemblies...such had been and such is the world we live in.” Perhaps if historical commissions and newspapers give our ancestors credence and historical validity, their memories and achievements will not be buried under seed houses that are springing up in perpetuity.



Victoria L. Price