

Department of Historic Resources

MEDIA ADVISORY

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STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER "FIRST AFRICANS IN VIRGINIA" TO BE RE-DEDICATED AT FORT MONROE, AUG. 20

What: "First Africans in Virginia," a revised and updated state historical marker that replaces an earlier marker of the same title will be re-dedicated. The marker was approved and issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

When & Where: The dedication ceremony begins at **5 p.m., Thursday, August 20**, at the marker's location at **51 Fenwick Road, Fort Monroe**. In case of rain, the dedication will be held inside 51 Fenwick Road, Fort Monroe.

Who: Speakers will include Lt. Governor Ralph Northam; Hampton Mayor George Wallace; and Julie Langan, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Musical contributions will be provided by African Drummers.

Significance: In August 1619 the first documented Africans arrived in Virginia on an English privateer. "Colonial officials," in the marker's words, "traded food for these '20 and odd' Africans, who had been captured from a Portuguese slave ship. Among present-day Hampton's earliest African residents were Antony and Isabella. Their son, William, was the first child of African ancestry known to have been born in Virginia (ca. 1624)." While many of the earliest Africans were held as slaves, some individuals became free. As the marker states, "A legal framework for hereditary, lifelong slavery in Virginia evolved during the 1600s."

Background: Supporters of the dedication ceremony include Fort Monroe, the City of Hampton, Project 1619, and the Department of Historic Resources. The "First Africans in Virginia" replacement marker was approved by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources in March of this year.

Media Visuals: The Tucker Family, recognized as descendants of Antony and Isabella's son William, the first known child of African ancestry to have been born in Virginia, will lay a memorial wreath at the marker's location, and Brenda Tucker will provide a musical tribute. After the marker unveiling African Drummers and Dancers will lead a procession to Continental Park for African Landing Day Program.

Text of the marker:

First Africans in Virginia W-96

The first documented Africans in Virginia arrived here in Aug. 1619 on the *White Lion*, an English privateer based in the Netherlands. Colonial officials traded food for these "20 and odd" Africans, who had been captured from a Portuguese slave ship. Among present-day Hampton's earliest African residents were Antony and Isabella. Their son, William, was the first child of African ancestry known to have been born in Virginia (ca. 1624). Many of the earliest Africans were held as slaves, but some individuals became free. A legal framework for hereditary, lifelong slavery in Virginia evolved during the 1600s. The United States abolished slavery in 1865.

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