

## Department of Historic Resources

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### STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER

"ROADSIDE COMMERCE"

TO BE DEDICATED IN WAKEFIELD

*—Sussex County historical marker recalls early automobile history  
via the origins of Route 52 and US 460 and the advent of roadside  
businesses including the Virginia Diner—*

*—The marker's text is reproduced below—*

RICHMOND – A new state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that highlights the development of U.S. 460 and the advent of roadside businesses including Sussex County's Virginia Diner will be dedicated next week in Wakefield.

The dedication and unveiling ceremony for the marker will begin at 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, August 12, at the marker's location alongside the Virginia Diner at 408 County Drive, North, in Wakefield. The event is open to the public.

Speakers at the ceremony will include Wakefield Mayor C. Winston Britt; T. Robins Buck of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and H. E. Mann, a member of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources, which must approve all new and replacement state historical markers.

The "Roadside Commerce" marker recalls that in 1928 State Route 52 was established to connect Suffolk with Prince George County. "In 1933," according to the marker, "this road [Rte. 52] became part of the new U.S. 460 from Roanoke to the Chesapeake Bay."

Later, highway 460 was extended westward, with its terminus “eventually fixed at Frankfort, Kentucky,” in the marker’s words.

With the advent of increasing automobile ownership and travel, businesses such as gas stations, motels, and cafes arose along U.S. 460, as they did on other roads, to cater to the needs of travelers. Among these new auto-oriented businesses in Sussex County was the Virginia Diner, which original owners D’Earcy and Laura Davis established “in 1929 inside a refurbished Surry, Sussex and Southampton Railroad car,” the marker states.

A representative of the Davis family will attend the marker dedication along with current Virginia Diner owner, Mary Ann Galloway. The new marker was sponsored by the Virginia Diner, which covered the manufacturing costs of the sign. The Virginia Board of Historic Resources approved the historical marker in March of this year.

Virginia’s historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,500 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT’s authority.

**Text of the marker:**

**Roadside Commerce**

Virginia’s highway system took shape during the 1920s as automobile ownership expanded rapidly. State Route 52 was established in 1928 to connect Suffolk with Prince George County. In 1933, this road became part of the new U.S. 460 from Roanoke to the Chesapeake Bay. The highway was later extended to St. Louis, Missouri, but its western terminus was eventually fixed at Frankfort, Kentucky. To accommodate travelers’ needs, entrepreneurs opened gas stations, motels, and cafes along the roadside. Among these was the Virginia Diner, which D’Earcy and Laura Davis established here in 1929 inside a refurbished Surry, Sussex and Southampton Railroad car.

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