

## Department of Historic Resources

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STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER  
"ANTHONY BURNS (1834-1862)"  
TO BE DEDICATED IN STAFFORD COUNTY

***—Anthony Burns, born enslaved in Stafford County, attained national prominence when, as an escaped slave in Boston, a court ruled he must return to his Virginia owner under the Fugitive Slave Act—***

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

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that recalls an important court case and event prior to the Civil War involving Anthony Burns, born enslaved in Stafford County, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 will be dedicated next week.

The dedication and unveiling ceremony for the marker will begin Tuesday, February 16, at 11:00 a.m. at the marker's location along the entrance to Historic Port of Falmouth Park, 401 River Road, in Falmouth.

Speakers at the ceremony will include Robert "Bob" Thomas, Jr., chairman of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors; H.E. "Chip" Mann, chair of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources; and Nancy Coll, principal at Anthony Burns Elementary School. The ceremony is open to the public.

Born in 1834, Burns had been hired out by his owner to work in Richmond. From Richmond, Burns escaped slavery by heading north to Boston. Burn's "owner demanded his return under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850," the highway marker reads.

"Burn's arrest on 24 May 1854 inspired abolitionists to attempt his rescue," the marker states. But the abolitionists were unsuccessful and a judge ruled that Burns had to return to Virginia and his owner.

“The episode increased antislavery sentiment across the North,” according the marker, and led activists “including African American Bostonians,” to free “Burns through purchase in 1855, after which he attended Oberlin College,” the marker states.

The Anthony Burns marker was approved for manufacture and installation by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources in 2012. The dedication ceremony is sponsored by Stafford County.

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:**

**Anthony Burns (1834-1862) E-133**

Anthony Burns was born into slavery in Stafford County. In 1854 Burns escaped from Richmond, where he had been hired out, to Boston. His owner demanded his return under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Burns’s arrest on 24 May 1854 inspired abolitionists to attempt his rescue. They were unsuccessful, and a judge ruled that Burns must be sent back to his owner. The episode increased antislavery sentiment across the North. Activists, including African American Bostonians, freed Burns through purchase in 1855, after which he attended Oberlin College. He became a minister and died in Canada West (later Ontario) in 1862.

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