

Department of Historic Resources

(www.dhr.virginia.gov)

For Immediate Release

October 29, 2014

Contact:

Randy Jones

Department of Historic Resources

540.578-3031 (cell)

Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov.

STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER
"FOUNDING OF KAPPA ALPHA ORDER"
TO BE DEDICATED IN LEXINGTON

—Marker recalls the founding in 1865 of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity at then-Washington College; student founders were inspired by the college's president, Robert E. Lee—

—The marker's text is reproduced below—

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that highlights the founding in 1865 of the fraternity Kappa Alpha Order at today's Washington and Lee University, inspired by the college's then-president, Robert E. Lee, will be dedicated in November.

The dedication and unveiling ceremony for the marker will begin at 4 p.m., Friday, November 7, at the sign's location at the corner of U.S. 60 west and Liberty Hall Road in Lexington in front of Mulberry Hill, the historic building which now houses the organization's national headquarters. The event is open to the public.

Speakers at the dedication will include Lexington Mayor Dr. Mimi Elrod; William E. Dreyer, national president of Kappa Alpha Order; and William E. Garner, president of the George Washington Foundation and a former executive director of the Kappa Alpha Order Educational Foundation and current vice-chair of the Governor-appointed Historic Resources Board of the Department of Historic Resources. Special guests attending the ceremony will include Kappa Alpha Order's national board of directors and executive director.

The “Founding of Kappa Alpha Order” sign states that the fraternity’s founding members “modeled their organization on the gentlemanly conduct they believed was best exemplified by Robert E. Lee, the college president” at then-Washington College. “New chapters took root across the South and beyond,” the marker notes.

Kappa Alpha Order has conducted activities supporting the Muscular Dystrophy Association and in 2004 the fraternity moved its National Administrative Office to Mulberry Hill, in Lexington, a Georgian-style house dating to the late 18th century and listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The sponsor of the historical marker—the first one approved in Virginia for the founding of a fraternity—is Kappa Alpha Order, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2015. The sign was authorized by the Department of Historic Resources earlier this year and the sponsor is covering the cost of the marker’s manufacture.

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:

Founding of Kappa Alpha Order I-30

One half mile east, students at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) founded Kappa Alpha Order in 1865. The fraternity held its first meetings on campus, at the Lexington Hotel, and at the Ann Smith Academy. Members modeled their organization on the gentlemanly conduct they believed was best exemplified by Robert E. Lee, the college president. New chapters took root across the South and beyond. Kappa Alpha Order’s philanthropic efforts have aided the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In 2004 the fraternity moved its National Administrative Office here to Mulberry Hill, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

###