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AN IRON CATALYST: VIRGINIA'S ROADSIDE HISTORICAL MARKERS AND THE SHAPING OF A HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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ABSTRACT

An Iron Catalyst: Virginia's Historical Marker Program and the Shaping of a Historical Consciousness

By: Joseph D. Bayless III, MA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

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The following thesis analyzes the origins and the formative period of Virginia's historical marker program. It shows that historical markers were critical to the success of Harry Flood Byrd's administration and his Commission on Conservation and Development. The thesis also examines how Virginia's marker program set the standard for roadside commemoration across the entire United States. Lastly, the work appraises the influence of Dr. Hamilton James Eckenrode, his pioneering methods of historical commemoration, and his central role in the success of Virginia's marker program.

Introduction:

Following his inauguration to the Virginia governorship in 1926, Harry Flood Byrd pursued a progressive agenda of economic reforms to attract business and modernize the state governing apparatus of the Commonwealth. The Governor's "Program of Progress" cut taxes, encouraged industrial development, and streamlined the state bureaucracy to function in the same manner as a corporation, with Byrd operating as CEO.¹ Virginia underwent a reinvention, as its leaders sought to propel the Commonwealth onto the modern American stage, free of the debilitating shackles of its association with the benighted South. There was more to Byrd's program, however, than mere business reform. A significant and increasingly relevant aspect of Byrd's agenda was the way in which it revolutionized the presentation of historical resources to the public. Reinterpreting the Old Dominion's heritage in the form of a commodity, Byrd's overarching plan of development made historic sites an invaluable advertising tool. William E. Carson, the governor's enterprising czar for development and the Commissioner of the Conservation and Development Commission, ushered in the transformation when he created a subordinate Division of Archeology and History.² Led by Dr. Hamilton J. Eckenrode, a self-styled "State Historian," the Division formulated the revolutionary policy of marking historic sites along roadways to attract tourism. Academically trained in the scientific methodology of

¹ For works relating to Byrd and his "Program of Progress," see: Ronald L. Heinemann, *Harry Byrd of Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); John F. Horan, Jr., "Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation Commission, 1926-1934," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 92, No. 4, (1984); Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., "The Emergence of a Leader: Harry Flood Byrd, Governor of Virginia, 1926-1930," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 82, No. 3, (1974); Dennis E. Simmons, "Conservation, Cooperation, and Controversy: The Establishment of the Shenandoah National Park," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 89, No. 4, (1981).

² The majority of primary source material for this thesis is in the following sets of records: *Virginia Department of Conservation and Development, Division of History, Records* (herein referred to DOHR,) 1927-1950. Accession Numbers: 24806 a-c, 25913, 41471; also see: *Virginia State Commission on Conservation and Development, Minutes and Program Meeting Books* (herein referred to as CCM and PMB) 1926-1933. Accession 23645. All archival records for this thesis are in the State Government Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

archival research, Eckenrode developed a sweeping series of measures that connected the American public with local histories written from primary sources, highlighting Virginia's central role in Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War history.

With the aid of Assistant Director Col. Bryan Conrad, along with multiple field assistants and regional historical experts, the Division of Archeology and History blanketed the Commonwealth with historical markers. It was a unique endeavor, the first time that a centralized historical authority was given state sanction to commemorate the Virginia landscape with a unified system of "official" markers. The burgeoning highway system and tourist trade, fueled by the prosperity of the "Roaring Twenties," provided additional assistance. Nevertheless, there is more to the story than the mere act of commemoration. As markers went up, there was also a surge in public interest toward Virginia history. Tourist guides went into circulation, utilizing the network of historical markers to highlight historic hot spots in every region of the Commonwealth. The response was tremendous; thousands of letters poured into the Division from all over the Commonwealth and across the United States. Local citizens, piqued by the idea of commemoration, lobbied Eckenrode for historical markers in their own locales. Tensions arose too, as the officially sanctioned state histories clashed with regional remembrances. As the Division's activities drew attention from outside Virginia, letters from a multitude of other states began to arrive at Division headquarters. There were missives filled with commendations and praise from admirers who saw the markers as they traveled through the Old Dominion, while officials from other states wanting to copy Virginia's success inquired about how to set up state marker systems of their own. In time, the Division became an open forum, as any site of reasonable and verifiable historical significance was eligible for a historic marker, and Eckenrode's Division directed acts of official commemoration.

The Topic

The following thesis argues that Division of Archeology and History, and its historical marker program played a central role in the success of the Commission on Conservation and Development's formative period of development from 1926-1930. As the thesis shows, the historical marker program enabled the Commission to execute an innovative advertising campaign, leading tourists into every region of the Commonwealth, while, at the same time, re-branding Virginia's "historic" role in the Nation's history. The proliferation of markers commemorating Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War history raised the historical consciousness of both the Commonwealth and the greater United States, framing Virginia as the historical pivot point in the national narrative. The creation and mass distribution of tourist guidebooks, along with the publicity blitz in local newspapers and national publications stoked the flames of popularity, making Virginia's marker program an object of envy and emulation. As a result, the Commission on Conservation and Development was perceived as legitimate across the nation.

The thesis will also show that the Director of the Division of Archeology and History, Dr. Hamilton James Eckenrode, was the mastermind behind the Historical Marker Program. The State Historian, never before examined in the historical record, wrote and implemented the Division's methodology for the research and emplacement of markers; he influenced legislation to protect the markers; he also prescribed new duties for owners of historical properties. The thesis finally affords Eckenrode the credit that he rightfully deserves as the pioneer of roadside commemoration.

Lastly, the thesis will prove that Virginia's historical marker program was the first in the United States, and it will show that Virginia's model for roadside commemoration was emulated

across America, as other states sought to copy Virginia's success. Taken in its entirety, the thesis elevates both the legacy of the Commission on Conservation and Development, in addition to H.J. Eckenrode—whose avant-garde concepts influenced the national practice of roadside commemoration.

A Word on the Sources:

This thesis is the first and only in-depth study on Virginia's historical marker program. Some short studies of the marker program are extant in the record, but lack critical analysis, and will be addressed in the first chapter.³ Sources and documentation to support the argument are centrally located in Richmond, the majority of which are in the *Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Archeology and History, Records*, located at the Library of Virginia.⁴ The collection contains more than 108 boxes of correspondence, memoranda, records, maps, and photos that detail the operations of the Division of Archeology and History from its creation in 1926 to its disbandment in 1950. Because the collection is so vast, the thesis will focus primarily on internal correspondence from within the Division, especially the communications between Eckenrode, his assistants, and the Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Development between 1926 and 1930.⁵

The progression of the Division's fieldwork as well as its various other historical activities is best told through the interpretation of the correspondence between Carson, Eckenrode, and Conrad. Although the three men were not equal in actual rank, they

³The most recent examination was published during the writing of this thesis, see: Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010).

⁴ The guide to this collection is available online via the *Virginia Heritage: Guides to Manuscripts Archival Collections in Virginia*. See: "A Guide to the Department of Conservation and Development, Division of History, Records, 1927-1950." Virginia Heritage Website, accessed 11 January 2010, <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/lva/vi00960.xml.frame>.

⁵ DOHR: Boxes 55-70.

communicated to one another as friends.⁶ As a result, the three did not operate in the standard pyramid mold of command; instead, hierarchy between the Division and Commission was flattened, more akin to a horizontal line of authority. Consequently, their candid exchanges reveal the three acting jointly, with Eckenrode handling office affairs and the program of historical marking and Conrad as responsible for the eastern half of the state and battlefield projects. Eckenrode, Conrad, and Carson corresponded on a daily basis. As a result, all three serve as critical pivots of information, since every important issue and project had to go through their offices.

The thesis also uses the Conservation and Development Commission's Meeting Minutes, footnoted as CCM, and the Program for Meetings Book, referred to as PMB. Both sets of records are in bound form and provide a chronological account of Commission Committee meetings. The pagination is, at times, confusing, however. Therefore, the system of citation devised for the thesis needs some explanation. First, the Meeting Minutes (again, referred to as CCM) are cited by volume, with the date of the meeting in parentheses. Thus: CCM, Vol. 1, (15 December 1926), 10 corresponds to the first volume, the meeting that occurred on 15 December 1926, page 10 of the booklet. Page numbers start over for each meeting, so the researcher interested in using the collection will have to find the specific meeting referenced to examine the source material.

Next, the Program of Meeting (PMB in the footnotes) is cited the same exact way. Because the PMB contains miscellaneous material—everything from monthly reports to magazine articles—I included additional information to help the researcher key into the source. For instance, PMB: Vol. 2, “January memo of Dr. Eckenrode” (24 February 1927), 50, the

⁶ Conrad and Carson were particularly candid in their exchanges, as the former always addressed the Commissioner by his first name.

researcher is directed to the second volume of the Program for Meetings Book, the meeting of 24 February 1927, page 50, which is the January memo of Dr. Eckenrode.

Chapter I:
A Historiographical Examination of Virginia's Historical Marker Program

Virginia's state-controlled historical marker program is the oldest in the United States. Operating since 1926, it has placed over 2,200 markers along the Commonwealth's roads.⁷ Despite its long history and omnipresence along Virginia's roadways, the program has yet to receive its proper due in the historical record. The oversight is reflective of an even larger void of studies on historical markers in the wider historiography. Despite the fact marker programs exist in almost every state, there is not one extensive study on the subject as of this writing. It is intellectual territory worthy of exploration, as historical markers can reveal much in the way of historical memory, commemoration, and the praxis of applied history. A history of markers will help illuminate the evolution of memorialization in America; its priorities mirror the fluid historiography of our nation's history. Thus, before delving into the particulars regarding the origin of Virginia's roadside historical markers, the following chapter will plumb the existing literature that has barely skimmed the surface on the subject of roadside commemoration. The examination exposes a need to incorporate additional studies of historical markers to help strengthen the existing histories of Virginia in addition to the broad topic of Southern memory.

A Beckoning Subject: The Inadequacies of Existing Studies on Historical Markers

Records show that Commonwealth officials recognized the potential for a good story on the Virginia's historical marker program from its earliest days of operation. In 1928, only two years into operations, William E. Carson, the Commissioner of the Conservation and Development Commission, was gushing with optimism, certain of what he perceived as the inevitable fame of Virginia's historical markers. He expressed his sentiment to Hamilton James

⁷ "Virginia Highway Historical Markers," *Virginia Department of Historical Resources Website*. Last Accessed 7 January 2011, http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/hiway_markers/hwmarker_info.htm.

Eckenrode, Director of the Division of Archeology and History, in a memo, exclaiming: “You are right; our markers are being read and some day people will be saying ‘what vision Virginia had in setting up her markers, and how wonderfully they have been worded,--who was the guy that did this?’”⁸ One year later, as national publicity focused on the marker program, Carson suggested to Eckenrode that, “when we finish up the markers we should then sit down and write something interesting on any of the markers that would carry a good story and get out a real book on the whole proposition that would be good for fifty years.”⁹ Alas, such a history of Virginia’s historical marker program has never been written.

The only known work that has attempted to examine the significance of Virginia’s marker program was an MA thesis written in 1952 by Julian Murry Howell. Apparently, Eckenrode assisted the author and is listed in the thesis’s acknowledgements for “the information supplied for its preparation” and praised as the one “who so capably carried out the program herein described.”¹⁰ It is unclear how much actual assistance Eckenrode was able to render to Howell, however. The thesis, submitted in March of 1952, was finished six months before Eckenrode’s death in September of the same year that followed months of “failing health.”¹¹ The work itself, however, does address some historically relevant aspects of Virginia’s marker program. For instance, Howell elucidates some of the program’s origins while also making the case that it served as an emulative model for other states. Nonetheless, analysis is wanting, as it was supported with only scant references to the Conservation and Development Commission meeting minutes. The records of the Division of Archeology and History were not available to

⁸ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 2 January 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

⁹ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 6 September 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

¹⁰ Julian Murry Howell, “Virginia: The Pioneer in Historical Markers,” (MA Thesis: University of Richmond, 1952), not numbered, acknowledgments page.

¹¹ See obit in: “Funeral Held for Dr. Eckenrode, Retired Historian,” *The Free-Lance Star*, 29 September 1952, 2.

him; therefore, Howell was compelled to make broad generalizations without the support of primary source evidence.

Case in point, Howell mentioned key developments in the marker program, such as the realization that “the public could make definite contribution.”¹² He alluded to the recurring problems associated with historical memory and the fact that “family and local pride caused considerable embarrassment to the division putting up the markers.”¹³ Howell also recognized the influence that Virginia’s program had on other states, boldly asserting:

Finally, the subsequent beginning of almost identical programs in other states using much the same methods and techniques first employed in our own State is conclusive evidence of the tremendous influence which the marking of historical spots in Virginia had on similar endeavors in the nation.¹⁴

While all of Howell’s abovementioned assertions are provable in the historical record, he had to rely on conjecture rather than documentary evidence. It appears as though Howell’s narrative was influenced by Eckenrode’s own account, as the author was able to tell the story of the marker program in narrative form without the use of extensive documentation to support his argument. In spite of this, the thesis itself, without adequate source material, was and remains of little use to historians and did not incite further study on the topic.

The next set of publications addressing the subject of historical makers emerged more than twenty years after Howell’s thesis, in the late 1970s. Raymond F. Pisney, a public historian and former Historic Sites Administrator for North Carolina’s Department of Archives and History, wrote the two works. One was a guide to setting up a historical marker program entitled *Tombstones on Posts?*¹⁵ The other was a comprehensive bibliography listing sources relating to

¹² Howell, “Virginia: The Pioneer in Historical Markers,” 18.

¹³ Ibid, 18.

¹⁴ Ibid, 112.

¹⁵ Raymond F. Pisney, *Tombstones on Posts: A Preview to Historical Marking* (Verona, Va: McClure Press, 1976).

historical markers titled *Historical Markers: A Bibliography*.¹⁶ The first was purely instructional, meant to give “the introductory framework for planning and establishing a program of historical marking.”¹⁷ Absent is any sort of contextual analysis regarding the history of historical marker programs or commemoration. Pisney claimed the objective of any such program was “to develop a broader community understanding of history, as well as promote the continued conservation of the significant physical remains of our historical and cultural heritage.”¹⁸ The topic of “historical” and “cultural heritage” is not examined in the work. Hence, neither is a discussion on the need to examine the type of heritage or culture being commemorated.

There is only one academic article on Virginia’s Historical Marker program published during the writing of this thesis. Composed by Dr. Daniel Bluestone of the University of Virginia School of Architecture in an edited volume, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, it is the first published source to utilize correspondence from the Division of Archeology and History records. Even so, the article has some serious flaws. Most glaring was the author’s lack of attention to detail in his use of the primary source archival material, which, in turn, weakened some of his main contentions. For instance, Bluestone argues that the historical marker program “stretched and even burst the earlier spatial bounds of landmark designation.”¹⁹ Noting that roadside commemoration sometimes sacrificed “geographical precision,” Bluestone argues it set a precedent “for a geographically vague sense of historic atmosphere.”²⁰ He addressed the marker guidebooks specifically, positing that they “put in place a system that detached history

¹⁶ Raymond F. Pisney, *Historical Markers: A Bibliography* (Verona, VA: McClure Press, 1977).

¹⁷ Pisney, *Tombstones on Posts*,” preface.

¹⁸ Ibid, preface.

¹⁹ Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 249.

²⁰ Ibid, 250.

further from its connection with any particular site, people would now ‘get the message of the marker when going at any rate of speed.’”²¹

A more thorough examination of Virginia’s Division of Archeology and History records, however, suggests the inverse of Bluestone’s argument. Absent from his analysis was the first tourist publication, *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*. As the first tourist guide to incorporate the historical markers, it set a precedent that led tourists into the Commonwealth who otherwise would have remained completely detached from the “geographical precision” of historic sites in Virginia.²² Furthermore, Bluestone did not examine one of the subsequent tourist guides featured in his article, the 1931 edition of the Shenandoah Press’, *Virginia Highway Historical Markers*.²³ That particular booklet directed tourists to exact historic locations with the aid of historical markers and illustrations of every major highway in the Commonwealth, while providing concise county histories with photos of historic houses and shrines.²⁴ Markers served as the principle framework to lead tourists into the regions of the Commonwealth so that they could connect with the histories.

Bluestone also claimed that the markers only “fostered a ‘sense’ of Virginia history” because, in some cases, they lacked the “precision of more traditional commemorative landmarks.”²⁵ He backed up his claim with examples of markers that gave vague references to a specific historic events or places, such as: “Near here is the Menokin home of Francis Lightfoot

²¹ Ibid, 249.

²² See the included map in: *Virginia: The Beckoning Land* (Richmond: Virginia Commission on Conservation and Development, 1928).

²³ Bluestone uses the cover of the 1931 edition. The first edition was printed in 1930. See: *The Virginia Highway Historical Markers: The Tourist Guide Book of Virginia Featuring the Inscriptions on the Official Markers Along the Historic and Romantic Highways of the Mother State*, 1st Addition (Strasburg, VA: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1930).

²⁴ *The Virginia Highway Historical Markers: The Tourist Guide Book of Virginia Featuring the Inscriptions on the Official Markers Along the Historic and Romantic Highways of the Mother State*, 4th Edition (Strasburg, VA: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1931), 159.

²⁵ Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 249.

Lee, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Lee was a member of the Continental Congress from 1775 to 1779 and died at Menokin in 1797.”²⁶ Bluestone was correct, for in some cases of highway commemoration the spatial lines of designation were stretched, as the Division was only able to reference points that lay a distance from the road. This was certainly not the case in every instance, however, as roadside commemoration included historic buildings, county lines, and state institutions at the actual location. In addition, many of the road signs pertaining to Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War History, commemorated the spots of specific events in history because many of Virginia’s highways were built along the historic thoroughways.²⁷ One only has to look at the marker on the cover of the first *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia’s Highway Historical Markers*, published in 1929, for an example of this:

**JACKSON’S BIVOUAC
STONEWALL JACKSON’S MEN, GOING
TO FIRST MANASSAS, HERE SANK
DOWN TO REST, JULY 19, 1861. WITH-
OUT PLACING PICKETS. JACKSON SAID:
LET THE POOR FELLOWS SLEEP. I WILL
GUARD THE CAMP MYSELF.²⁸**

Thus, the evidence suggests that the Division’s markers’ key role in tourist promotions tightened the spatial bounds between Virginia’s so-called “heritage” and the public, as thousands flocked to the Commonwealth during the tourist season.²⁹ If anything, it brought people closer to the romantic interpretations of Old Dominion history, another aspect not taken up by Bluestone.

²⁶ Ibid, 249.

²⁷ *A History of Roads in Virginia: The Most Convenient Ways*, Richmond: Office of Public Affairs Virginia Department of Transportation, 2006, Last Accessed 14 January 2011, <http://www.virginiadot.org/info/resources/historyofrds.pdf>, pp. 11, 27.

²⁸ *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers* (Richmond: Division of Purchasing and Printing, 1929), front cover.

²⁹ Bluestone cited the DOHR records as it existed before being reorganized in 2005, making it difficult for researchers to use his citations.

Markers in Virginia History

Despite its obvious importance as an advertising tool and its pervasive presence on the Virginia landscape, historical markers are hardly mentioned in histories of Byrd's administration. Neither are they examined in the few short histories of the Conservation and Development Commission. For example, Ronald L. Heinemann's exhaustive study of Byrd's political career, *Harry Byrd of Virginia*, does not once mention historical markers. The author only gives a vague allusion to the program in a short passage on William E. Carson, stating: "[W]hereas Byrd emphasized the need to attract industry, Carson preferred to develop Virginia's natural resources and history to lure tourists and businessmen."³⁰ The oversight is surprising, because primary source documents show that Byrd designated historical marking as one of his top priorities in office, and considered it a critical component to his overarching development plans.

For instance, Byrd mentioned the program in his inaugural address, calling for "[t]he marking of historic places in Virginia under some unified system."³¹ Later, in his first address before the Virginia General Assembly, the Governor once again commented on the program. After labeling the Commission on Conservation and Development "as one of the most important branches of our government," he declared that one of its most exigent tasks was the development of "an advertising plan," which "included...the conservation of Virginia's most treasured historic values through a highway marker program."³² When Byrd delivered his development plan, dubbed "Program of Progress," to the Virginia Assembly, he again mentioned the economic potential of tourist travel in the Old Dominion, and reported that the "Commission

³⁰ Ronald L. Heineman, *Harry Byrd of Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 89.

³¹ "Inaugural Address of Harry Flood Byrd, Governor, to the General Assembly and the People of Virginia, Monday, February 1, 1926," (Richmond: State Publishing Office, 1926), 15.

³² "Harry Flood Byrd Address, January 11, 1928," *Senate Document No. 1*, 32.

is marking our historic sites” and “advertising in periodicals of national appeal.”³³ Lastly, in the Governor’s final address before leaving office, Byrd applauded the Commission’s historical work, stating that it had “done much to develop the interest of Americans and historic shrines and cradles of liberty that make Virginia a veritable museum of the founding and growth of this country.”³⁴

Considering the fact that the historical marker program remains an unexplored topic in the study of Byrd’s administration, it should come as no surprise that there is also a dearth of studies on the Commission on Conservation and Development.³⁵ Only two published studies exist that examine its policies. One, Dennis E. Simmons’s “Conservation, Cooperation and Controversy,” published in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (1981), is an adaptation of a longer PhD dissertation.³⁶ Focusing on the establishment of both the Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive, Simmons’s narrative follows the political maneuvering of William E. Carson, whom he described as, “The most unsung of heroes in the whole story...who displayed patience, resourcefulness, and vision in steering the project through eight years of legal and financial battles.”³⁷ Simmons shows that Carson was adept at drawing support for his endeavors, using as an example the highly publicized negotiations with Herbert Hoover to establish a Presidential fishing retreat on the Rapidan River.³⁸ But he neglected one of the

³³ “Program of Progress: An Address by Harry Flood Byrd, Governor, Delivered Before the General Assembly of Virginia, January 16, 1928,” *Senate Document No. 5* (Richmond: State Publishing Office, 1928), 5.

³⁴ “Address of Harry Flood Byrd, Governor, Delivered before the General Assembly of Virginia, convened in Richmond in Regular Session, Wednesday, January 8, 1930” (Richmond: State Publishing Office, 1930), 6.

³⁵ See: Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., “The Emergence of a Leader: Harry Flood Byrd, Governor of Virginia, 1926-1930,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 82, No. 3, (July 1984), 259-281.

³⁶ Dennis E. Simmons, “The Creation of Shenandoah National Park and the Skyline Drive, 1924-1936” (Ph.D, Diss. University of Virginia, 1978).

³⁷ Dennis E. Simmons, “Conservation, Cooperation, and Controversy: The Establishment of the Shenandoah National Park, 1924-1936.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 89, No. 4, (October 1981), 387-404.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 397.

principal means that Carson used to rivet attention toward the preservation projects of his Commission on Conservation and Development: historical markers.

Documentary evidence shows that Carson was emphatic in his use of the historical markers to elevate Virginia's reputation and spur interest in preservation programs—whether historical or environmental. For instance, in April 1928, Carson stated:

One of the most potent forces in Washington told me before I could turn a wheel, I would have to sell the Shenandoah National Park to Mr. [Robert Sterling] Yard...I know that the indirect selling is very more effective than the go-getter type, so I started Mr. Yard on our Marker Program, and drew him into the park project, and I believe have regained his sympathy for the Shenandoah National Park.³⁹

The following year, Carson took his “indirect selling” technique to the next level, and put Virginia's historical assets on exhibition to large group of the most influential leaders of the conservation movement in Washington D.C. In a memo to Eckenrode, Carson ordered:

I want you to arrange your engagements so that you can go with us on a short trip through the State. I am planning to bring the Director of Public Parks, Mr. Horace Albright, Senator Nye, Chairman of the Public Land Committee in the Senate, and Mrs. Nye, and Mr. Crampton, Chairman of the Appropriation Committee in the House, and Mrs. Carmpton, [sic] to Fredericksburg, Richmond, Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown.⁴⁰

Carson's next paragraph, circled by him in pencil, explained the intent of his historical field trip:

The purpose back of it all is to get these people interested in taking over Yorktown as a national Park [sic]. I think they are the most important group in the United States Government for us at this time, and it has taken no small amount of maneuvering and pulling to get them to come. And as you are the historian of historians in Virginia, we want you to go along with us and help to entertain them.⁴¹

The trip left a deep impression on the visitors. Whisked from Washington down U.S. Route One to Richmond, and then along State Route Five to Williamsburg, the guests were treated to the Commonwealth's most historically bedizened roadways. Carson's engineered visit dazzled the travelers, helping him to enlist them as influential allies for his causes. Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service, expressed the sentiments of the guests in a letter to

³⁹ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 11 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9), 1.

⁴⁰ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 9 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

⁴¹ Ibid.

Eckenrode: “That trip made us all enthusiastic about the project, and had the result of enlisting Mr. Crampton’s vigorous leadership on behalf of the plan.”⁴²

Albright then went on to praise the marker program directly, underscoring the effect it had on the visitors as they traveled through the Old Dominion:

In closing, may I refer to our very great admiration of the work accomplished by the Virginia Commission on Conservation and Development in the marking of highways in order to give accurate and interesting information to travelers through the State. It is necessary for me in the performance of my duties to travel each year through most of the States of the Union and in all my travels I have not seen anywhere a system of highway marking comparable to that which the Commission has developed for Virginia.⁴³

Albright’s praise stands as ironclad proof that Virginia’s Historical Marker Program segued into additional historical projects; but despite this fact, scholars have yet to frame the marker program as having played a significant role in Commission’s drive to develop National and Battlefield Parks in the Commonwealth.⁴⁴

The only article published to date that has specifically addressed William E. Carson and the Commission is John F. Horan’s “Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation and Development Commission, 1926-1934.”⁴⁵ Here, too, the author glossed over the historical marker program’s contribution to the Commission’s success. Horan does state that “[t]ours of the area” around Yorktown helped to “convince congressmen of the wisdom of Carson’s idea” for the Colonial National Monument.⁴⁶ Yet, he did not acknowledge the important role markers played in publicizing Virginia’s historical resources. In fact, he only gave the marker program an oblique mention, in one paragraph, claiming that it made the state an “open air classroom.”⁴⁷

⁴² DOHR: Albright to Eckenrode, 13 January 1930, (Box 2, Folder 7), 2.

⁴³ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁴ The Commission’s role is also alluded to by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. in his exhaustive study of the history of preservation. See: Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949*, Vols. 1-2, (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1981), Ch. 7, 469-577.

⁴⁵ John F. Horan Jr., “Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation Commission, 1926-1934,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 92, No. 4, (October 1984), 391-415.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 403.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 403-404.

Horan's examination fell short, however, as he used only a single secondary source to discern the program's importance.⁴⁸

The commentary above, although critical, is not meant to serve as a series of captious critiques and objections. A meticulous survey of existing material, however, does underscore a need for a reinterpretation of Virginia's dynamic period of modernization and development that occurred between 1926 and 1934 with the inclusion of the historical marker program.

Furthermore, it must be said that the authors of the existing studies are not at fault, as the Division of Archeology and History's records were made available only recently, processed into more research accessible form in 2005. Before, historians desiring to analyze correspondence from Carson were limited to copies contained in the Harry Flood Byrd papers at the University of Virginia. The Division of Archeology and History Records afford the researcher with thousands of copies of Carson's correspondence that span his entire tenure as Commissioner.⁴⁹

The incorporation of that source material into existing studies will not only elevate the Commission's role in Byrd's administration, it will also allow for a much needed, extensive study focused on William E. Carson.⁵⁰

Historical Markers and their Relation to Memory

Historical markers transmit history; that much is obvious. Closer examination reveals much more than a specific account of an event that occurred at a particular place and time. A marker may also reveal what the commemorator considered as valuable or necessary to

⁴⁸ Horan used a book by Marshall Fishwick that was only a superficial history of the Old Dominion. See: Marshall Fishwick, *The Virginia Tradition* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1956). Fishwick mentioned the program on page 82 and 83 of his work.

⁴⁹ See: DOHR: boxes 55-57. The three boxes contain nine folders of Carson's correspondence with the Division of Archeology and History spanning from 1927 to the year of his death in 1942.

⁵⁰ One of the reasons Carson is absent from the historical record was probably due to his relegation to obscurity following an ignominious fall from political grace following a conflict with Harry Flood Byrd. See: Horan, "Will Carson and the Conservation Commission," 408-415.

commemorate. If multiple markers are available, one can gauge the wider scheme of commemoration and discern possible motives of the commemorating authority. In short, markers offer an interpretation or selective memory of the past. In the case of Virginia's program, with the copious amount of correspondence and documentation, a historian is given a vista into the *mentality* and context permeating the nascent years of the Division of Archeology and History. With this in mind, a history of the program serves as a contribution to the wider historiography on memory studies, particularly the works that deal with social memory.

Erected by a state authority for the public, the historical marker program was invested with the power to shape perceptions of history. Such an endeavor blurs the lines between history and memory because markers are, in essence, an "iron" interpretation of a historical event. Time renders its narratives physically rusted and, in some instances, intellectually obsolete. They become mnemonic guideposts to old perceptions of the past. As Geoffrey Cubitt argued in his recent work entitled, *History and Memory*:

Past is linked to present in a continuous flow of development, and the present is thus to be thought of less as a vantage-point from which the past can be summarized and assessed than as simply the latest moment in an inexorably advancing stream of historical happenings and interactions.⁵¹

Time and experience add to historical perspective and historiographical techniques; perceptions of the past inevitably change. Therefore, "it is not the past that produces the present, but – figuratively at least – the present that produces the past, through an effort of the creative or analytical imagination."⁵² Any effort to preserve something necessitates a value judgment: something is deemed worthy of preserving. Historical markers can offer a window into the phenomenological study of a particular era with the use of memory as a hermeneutic tool. As Fentress and Wickam argue, memory is an act that "tells us who we are, embedding our present

⁵¹ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (New York: Manchester Press, 2008), 27.

⁵² *Ibid*, 27.

selves in our past, and thus underpinning every aspect of what historians often now call *mentalities*. For many groups, this means putting the puzzle back together: inventing the past to fit the present. We preserve the past at the cost of decontextualizing it, and partially blotting it out.”⁵³ This is certainly true for Virginia’s program, as the emphasis on Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War history to promote the popular conception of the past blotted out histories relating to African American and Native American history. That being so, the history of Virginia’s historical markers aligns with the existing studies on memory, because the markers highlight how idealized conceptions of the past sometimes obfuscate complex contexts that cannot fit onto an iron inscription.

Skeptics of Memory

The consensus among scholars is one of skepticism regarding attempts to capture history to educate the public because of the risks of *discursive* memory—histories employed to shape public perception in a hegemonic manner. In numerous cases, history has been doctored, or shaped in a reactionary way to suppress the public. Nevertheless, the practice is not limited solely to such works as Joseph Stalin’s *Short Course of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* or Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. America, too, has a storied past of such propagandistic works. In fact, the Old Dominion, in particular, has a known history of this, having produced textbooks to “educate” school children on the *Lost Cause* history of the South.⁵⁴

The historiography of memory studies tends to focus on the proclivity of historians to invoke skewed notions of history. David Lowenthal argued that “[d]ismay at massive change

⁵³ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 201.

⁵⁴ See: Adam Wesley Deen, “Who Controls the Past Controls the Future: The Virginia Textbook Controversy,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 117, No. 4, (2009), 319-335. For a more recent controversy that erupted over exaggerated claims that African-Americans fought for the Confederacy see: Marjorie Kehe, Textbook Controversy Over Claim that Blacks Fought for the Confederacy, *Christian Science Monitor*, accessed 12 January 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2010/1021/Textbook-controversy-over-claim-that-blacks-fought-for-the-Confederacy>.

stokes demands for heritage” or one’s own version of the past.⁵⁵ Authorities, he argued, employ this technique to “erode future expectations, heighten past awareness, and instill among millions the view that they are owed a heritage.”⁵⁶ The contemporary relevance of this topic has spurred a veritable memory studies industry. The dialectic on this subject has been raging since the dawn of modern history, receiving the attention of some of the most prominent philosophers in the western tradition. Georg W. F. Hegel posited that the state had the power to shape the *Weltanschauung*, or, a historical world-view:

The state, its laws, its arrangements, constitute the rights of its members; its natural features, its mountains, air, and waters, are *their* country, their fatherland, their outward material property; the history of the State, *their* deeds; what their ancestors have produced, belongs to them and lives in their memory. All is their possession, just as they are possessed by it; for it constitutes their existence, their being.⁵⁷

Karl Marx, in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, viewed the past in terms of a material power struggle:

Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living. At the very time when men appear engaged in revolutionizing things and themselves, in bringing about what never was before, at such very epochs of revolutionary crisis do they anxiously conjure up into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battle cries, their costumes to enact a new historic scene in such time honored disguise and with such borrowed language.⁵⁸

Marx framed the concept of history, and whatever associative worldview it might contain, in a revolutionary praxis. Claiming that history provided meaning to individuals, able to influence one’s teleological outlook, Marx argued history was a means for elites to bring the public in line with an agenda to reinforce the dominant mode of production.

Frederich Nietzsche took the argument one step further and posited that all concepts were “periodically reinterpreted by those in power in terms of fresh intentions.” He described history

⁵⁵ David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 52.

⁵⁸ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Daniel De Leon (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1913), 9-10.

as a process of “outstripping and overcoming” that entailed “interpretation...re-interpretation, rearrangement in the course of which the earlier meaning and purpose are necessarily either obscured or lost.”⁵⁹ In modern times, Antonio Gramsci, the purveyor of hegemony, echoed the pessimism of the previous century from his prison chamber when he declared, “The philosophy of an historical epoch is, therefore, nothing other than the ‘history’ of that epoch itself, nothing other than the mass of variations that the leading group has succeeded in imposing on preceding reality.”⁶⁰

The philosophers’ warning proved prescient as information became weaponized to shape public opinion in support of military campaigns or the agenda of political elites. Harold D. Lasswell, one of America’s pioneering communications theorists, called for the use of propaganda as a means to control the population. He warned:

A well-established ideology perpetuates itself with little planned propaganda by those whom it benefits the most. When thought is taken about ways and means of sowing conviction, conviction has already languished, the basic outlook of society has decayed or a new triumphant outlook has not yet gripped the automatic loyalties of old and young. Happy indeed is that nation that had no thought of itself; or happy at least are the few who procure the principal benefits of universal acquiescence.⁶¹

The short précis above illustrates the building of pessimistic fervor over the blending of history and memory. Adding to the concern is the materialization of perception as a field of military science. Since the beginning of the “War on Terror,” Information Operations has emerged as a critical component of what is known “non-kinetic” targeting—the use of non-lethal means to assist in military operations. Defined as “primarily concerned with affecting decisions and decision-making processes, while at the same time defending friendly decision-making processes,” the doctrine employs “primary mechanisms...used to affect the information

⁵⁹ Frederick Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffin (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), 209.

⁶⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 345.

⁶¹ Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 31.

environment...[that] include: influence, disruption, corruption, or usurpation.”⁶² Employing tactics such as “perception management,” the doctrine enforces “[a]ctions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning.”⁶³

The use of history or the perception of a history for nefarious or hegemonic ends is becoming increasingly refined with new technology. The explosion of non-tangible digital media, which is easy to manipulate, only adds to the collective unease among scholars. Thus, the controversy over memory and history is far from over, and, rightfully so, debate will continue to rage. Nevertheless, there is more to the historiography than lamentations over the increasing significance of hegemony in every day life, as there are a slew of studies that deal exclusively with memory and its heuristic role in historical interpretation.

Historiographical Interpretations of Collective Memory

The expansive historiography of memory studies is well beyond the purview of this thesis. It spans multiple fields of study, from psychology, anthropology, and sociology, to history and its oral, cultural, and social subfields. Such a wide expanse has rendered most of its methodological concepts protean, as scholars constantly apply terms across such a wide swathe of scholarship. Hence, for the purposes of this thesis, the following section will isolate the concept of social and collective memory, to discern how it influences individual memory. Historical markers are commemorative, and transmit both history and a conceptualized viewpoint, or memory, of the past. Pinpointing the methodological concept of social memory

⁶² “Information Operations.” *Joint Publication 3-13*, 13 February 2006, pp. I-6, accessed 9 January 2011, http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_13.pdf.

⁶³ “Perception Management,” *Usmilitary.about.com*, accessed 9 January 2011, <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/glossaryterm/g/p4712.htm>.

will assist in the subsequent examination of the wider historiography of commemoration in the South.

The noted French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs pioneered the concept of collective memory and its effects on individual consciousness. He based his theory on the following bold assertion: “No memory exists outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.”⁶⁴ What is more, Halbwachs insisted society’s “frameworks” were in a constant state of flux. “Depending on its circumstances and point in time,” he argued, “society represents the past to itself in different ways: it modifies conventions.”⁶⁵ According to Halbwachs, the collective milieu exerted an inexorable shaping effect on the individual consciousness, as an individual could only relate one’s memory within the bounds of the collective framework. That same framework provided the means to recall memories, as memories are both related and relatable to the society in which the individual lived. For Halbwachs, this phenomenon was strengthened through discourse: “[T]o discourse upon something means to connect within a single system of ideas our opinions as well as those of our circle...In this way, the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other.”⁶⁶ Thus, he declared, “It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past.”⁶⁷

Halbwachs’s theory suggests that history, too, is in a constant state of flux. Just as “the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society,” it can also reconstruct history.⁶⁸ Hence, particular histories may become revered or reviled at any one point in time because of the

⁶⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans. Lewis A Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 172-173.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 173.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 51.

social framework's shaping influence on the consciousness. The dialectic parallels a social tendency outlined by Halbwachs:

Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess.⁶⁹

When applied to the subject of historical markers, Halbwachs's methodology raises important questions concerning the social framework in which they were produced. At once the monument becomes more than a mere inscription of a historical event; it opens a window into its own milieu, exposing what was revered in the age in which the monument was constructed.

Halbwachs's works on collective memory encouraged further study on the history of dominant social frameworks. Jacques Le Goff, of the *Annales* School, examined the history of the western consciousness, asserting it colored the lens of perception, and influenced the perception of past, present, and future. Le Goff summed up his argument most aptly in the following statement:

Collective attitudes toward the past, the present, and the future can be schematically expressed as follows: in pagan antiquity, the valorization of the past predominated along with the idea of a decadent present; in the Middle Ages, the present is trapped between the weight of the past and the hope of an eschatological future; in the Renaissance, on the contrary, the primary stress is on the present, while from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the ideology of progress turns toward the valorization of the future.⁷⁰

Le Goff argued that from the study of different mentalities, such as those that are listed above, one will gain a clear understanding of the consciousness that underpinned the memories of a particular age—how one reflected on both the past and the future. Hence, he proffered the study of historical consciousness to inspire scholars to look backward as well as forward, charging

⁶⁹ Ibid, 51.

⁷⁰ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 11.

historians to “render an account of these memories and of what is forgotten, to transform them into something that can be conceived, to make them knowable.”⁷¹

Other works in the field of memory studies have sought to refine the methodological framework of collective and social memory. Paul Connerton broadened the subject through an examination of how societies remember, which he described as continuous process in which memories are “conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances.”⁷²

Commemoration was central to this process, illuminating the linkages with the broad framework of collective memory. The “ritual” of commemoration helped to reveal power relationships in society, since the authorities that commemorate “have as one of their defining features the explicit claim to be commemorating such a continuity.”⁷³ Hence, Connerton was able to apply the practice of commemoration to the social realm, and pose an important question: “May we not then infer from this that such commemorative ceremonies play a significant role in the shaping of communal memory?”⁷⁴

Kendall R. Phillips took this question one step further, breaking down the process of transmission in *Framing Public Memory*.⁷⁵ He offered a “comparative phenomenology” of memory, claiming that three types, individual, social, and collective build upon one another to produce the all-pervasive public memory. According to Phillips, public memory deserves special distinction, because “[i]n contrast to other primary kinds of remembering—which can occur with people who are quite isolated from each other (individual or collective memory) or in already constituted groups (social memory), public memory occurs only when people meet and

⁷¹ Ibid, xii.

⁷² Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4.

⁷³ Ibid, 48.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 48.

⁷⁵ Kendall R. Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004).

interact in a single scene of interaction.”⁷⁶ His designation lends itself to the study of commemoration because public monuments serve as a constant physical reminder of a particular event. Hence, they become memories “fixated without in monuments and texts” and are “carried on within our individual and shared sense of public identity.”⁷⁷ Phillips does not view the commemorative acts that underpin public memory as necessarily pejorative. Recognizing that “public memories are continually subject to revision,” he argued that the process of reinterpretation “demonstrate[s] the capacity of public memories to speak to each era, not so much in this era’s language (perfect translatability is an idle ideal) as in terms of its changing needs and perceptions.”⁷⁸ Phillips’s interpretation holds true for historical markers and, more broadly, the subject of southern commemoration. Southern guideposts to memory are a subject of constant reinterpretation in the field of memory studies.

Southern history is a fertile field for the harvesting of social memory, its landscape teeming with monuments meant to evoke the *Lost Cause* mythology of the Confederacy. Most of the monuments, erected between in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century were reflections of what W. Fitzhugh Brundage dubbed “white memory.”⁷⁹ Erected in the midst of segregation, many southern monuments to the Confederacy did not take into consideration the historical perspectives of African-Americans. In some instances, the history of the antebellum South was framed as an Elysian vision, with bucolic plantations and dashing Southern cavaliers, defenders of states rights and upholders of the “the beneficial institution” that was slavery. The Southern past was selective, framed to the public in order to shape a perception that was not

⁷⁶ Ibid, 32.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 38.

⁷⁹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where these Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 7.

actual history. Brundage tackled these questions head on, always cognizant that “one conspicuous manifestation of both the interpretive character of historical memories and standards of credibility is the propensity of groups to suppress as well as to recall portions of the past.”⁸⁰

Brundage’s groundbreaking work *The Southern Past* examines mnemonic conflicts in the South, giving particular attention the competing black and white historical narratives. Viewing power as “central to the propagation of a version of history,” Brundage contended that the social and political domination of African Americans through post-bellum and Jim Crow South is what enabled whites to monopolize the framing of memory through commemoration.⁸¹ Following his argument through to the emergence of automobile tourism, Brundage argued, “[t]he tourist South became a stage on which southerners presented the South both as they wanted to see it and as the imagined tourists wanted to experience it.”⁸² As in the case of the Commonwealth’s marker program, white Southern business and government officials made history into a commodity to sell across the United States.

Summing up, a history of Virginia’s historical marker program brings the scholar in contact with the relevant questions concerning memory, its transmission, and the way it is framed to the public. It fills a wide gap in the historiography of Virginia history, and the broad topic of Southern memory. Even so, one must not enter into a history of Virginia’s marker program focused squarely on memory conflicts and the hegemonic interplay it usually entails. With such a copious and carefully documented history as the Division of Archeology and History, it is important to first understand the context or social framework in which its workers operated. As the thesis will suggest, the men did not seek to oppress others’ memories, instead

⁸⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁸¹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 8.

⁸² Ibid, 184.

they merely conducted history within their own social milieu, and operated according to their era's professionalized standards of historic commemoration.

Chapter II: **The Formation and Implementation of Virginia's Historical Marker Program**

Markers in the Context of the 1920s

Virginia's innovative historical marker program was a means to capitalize on the modernizing trends sweeping the over the United States in the 1920's. That decade saw an explosion in automobile use, with over 85 million registrations of automobiles reported nationally, from 1921-1926, a figure that more than doubled to over 173 million by 1930.⁸³ Highway construction experienced an unprecedented period of growth as well, with the total miles of rural paved highways expanding from 14,442 in 1914 to 125,708 in 1930.⁸⁴ The increase in automobile registrations reflected the rise of consumer spending and overall per capita income. At \$354 dollars per household in 1920, it increased to \$416 in 1926, cresting at \$437 in 1929 before the Great Depression.⁸⁵ With more income and the means to travel vast distances, the public sought out tourism in its free time. National Park attendance experienced a massive upsurge of visitors. In 1920, it was reported that 920,000 had visited National Parks across the country, a figure that rocketed to 1,761,000 by 1925, almost doubling to 2,775,000 in 1930.⁸⁶

The modernizing trends on the nation's infrastructure also caused an upswing in the professional trades, which had increased almost ten times over from 1870 to 1930.⁸⁷ Not only did this trend engender the rise of technocrats to assist in the massive retooling of society as it adapted to the modern modes of production, it also elicited the rise of the professional historian

⁸³ Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, Vol. 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1933), 173. For an added perspective, it was reported that registration of automobiles increased twenty-fold between 1913-1931, *ibid*, 172.

⁸⁴ *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, Vol. 2, 921.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 859.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 920. There was also an explosion in attendance to National Forest, increasing from 4,833,000 in 1920 to 31,905,000 in 1930. *Ibid*, 920.

⁸⁷ *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, Vol. 1, 300-301.

trained in the scientific methodology of archival research. The technical trades demanded precision, and employed what was then considered as the dominant and unfaltering language of science.⁸⁸ The shift in methodology toward empiricism increased the hegemonic influence of the professional, male historians trained in the scientific method. Power struggles ensued.

Before the rise of the scientific historian, historical preservation and commemoration resided mostly in the female sphere of influence, particularly in the South. Brundage argued that women were afforded the task of commemoration because “memorialization and mourning belonged to the realm of sentiment that white men deemed and white women accepted as ‘peculiarly fitting to women.’”⁸⁹ Whatever the reason, the fact was that women’s organizations were able to control commemoration with relatively little specialized academic or technical training and for a while at least, men did not encroach upon this female dominated task. In Virginia, commemoration was dominated by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. Able to cast itself as a champion for “symbols of Virginia’s greatest” amidst the tide of modernization, it also served as a means to give women voice in the sphere of public life.⁹⁰

As the field of history became more specialized, however, the women were pushed out of the commemorative mainstream by both the professional historian and the businessman who commoditized heritage for the tourist industry. Quickly, the women’s role in preservation and commemoration diminished. James M. Lingren posited that the shift was illustrative of the dynamic effects of capitalism, resulting in a “traditionalism” that “increasingly reflected the new

⁸⁸ Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 64.

⁸⁹ Brundage, *Southern Past*, 26.

⁹⁰ James M. Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 11.

economy” that was developing in the South.⁹¹ This was not only limited to infrastructure, but also to the standard methodologies employed in the sciences, including history. Women, who were not afforded the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts, became supplanted by both the entrepreneurial male-dominated class, and the specialized historian. As Seth C. Bruggeman remarked in his study of George Washington’s birthplace, “the ranks of volunteer women who had donned colonial costumes and dedicated themselves to the care and revision of the nation’s domestic history found themselves replaced by professional men trained in history and new disciples like the curatorial sciences.”⁹² With the change to the economic infrastructure, historic commemoration became a means to project power and make money. In the case of Virginia, the changed sparked the scramble to shape Virginia’s history into marketable commodity, one that would sell and, at the same time, project an enhanced, profitable image of an Old Dominion across the entire nation.⁹³

The Commission on Conservation and Development

Virginia’s historical marker program was an outgrowth of Harry Flood Byrd’s “Program of Progress,” a progressive business plan designed to spur economic development in the Commonwealth. The Governor’s initiatives not only sought conventional methods such as tax incentives to attract businesses, industry, and “individuals of wealth,” but also a major

⁹¹ Ibid, 241.

⁹² Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born*, 64.

⁹³ The history of tourism in America and its relationship to memory is still largely unexplored. For some of the principal works in this emerging historiography see: Marquerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Richard H. Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture 1790-1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008). Newer publications that examine tourism and memory are largely from Europe, see: C. Michael Hall, ed., *Tourism and National Park: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change* (London: Routledge, 2009); Richard Voase, ed., *Tourism in Western Europe: A Collection of Case Histories* (New York: Cable Publishing, 2001); John K. Walton, ed., *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005).

advertising campaign to project “the advantages and resources of Virginia before the public.”⁹⁴ Central to the execution of Byrd’s overarching development plan was the Conservation and Development Commission. Formed in 1926, Byrd molded the Commission in the form of a business model, placing five of Virginia’s most prominent entrepreneurs at the helm to “constitute a body corporate under the style of the ‘State Commission on Conservation and Development.’”⁹⁵ Once established, the Commission immediately began to enhance and streamline the effectiveness of the state’s development bureaucracies, consolidating the separate departments of Water Power and Development, Geology, State Forestry, and State Parks under one unified entity.⁹⁶ In addition, Governor Byrd granted the Commission control of the State’s \$100,000 advertising fund, affording the Commissioners generous latitude to advertise “the resources and advantages of the Commonwealth in such manner as it may deem best.”⁹⁷ The Commission also had the implied task of developing and conserving the physical landscape of Virginia, as the act provided the authority to “condemn and acquire land and other property for public park purposes.”⁹⁸ Even with the carte blanche authority to enhance Virginia’s resources, the Commission focused its work primarily on conservation initiatives. In fact, its conservation policies served as the principal means for development in the Commonwealth.

A prime example is the Commission’s advertising campaign to attract development that used Virginia’s historic resources in its strategic pitch. The strategy was devised to net renewed interest and pride in the Commonwealth among local residents while also increasing the flow of travelers and revenue from abroad. It was thought that tourism would serve as the central means

⁹⁴ Harry Flood Byrd, Governor, “Program of Progress,” 4-5.

⁹⁵ “Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia: Session which Commenced at the State Capitol on Wednesday, January 13, 1926,” (Richmond: State Publishing Office, 1926), [HB 487, Sec. 1], 307.

⁹⁶ “Acts and Joint Resolutions,” (1926), [HB 487, Sec. 3], 308.

⁹⁷ “Acts and Joint Resolutions,” (1926), [HB 487, Sec. 11], 309-310.

⁹⁸ “Acts and Joint Resolutions,” (1926), [HB 487, Sec. 14], 312

to attract business into the Old Dominion. The Commission expressed that sentiment in an informational pamphlet published in 1927 that stated:

[The Commission] has come to the conclusion that the most effective method of making known the attractions and commercial possibilities of our State is by bringing people to Virginia as tourists and while they are here, bring to their attention the industrial, business and residential possibilities of the State.⁹⁹

Rendering Virginia's historical resources "adequately marked with tablets of information" and then cataloguing them "on maps and in guide books" would lead the visitors into the less traveled areas of the Old Dominion, making the state as a whole into a beacon of tourism.¹⁰⁰ In the mean time, the Commission engaged in complementary conservation initiatives. The Shenandoah National Park, when completed, would command the attention of "millions of the East...when spring returns each year and the call comes to go to the great out of doors."¹⁰¹ The wide variety of historical and natural attractions, it was argued, would have a profound effect on the visitor, transforming each into "an animated advertisement, talking up the attractions and advantages of the state upon his return home."¹⁰² Indeed, the Commission did not want to develop Virginia into a modern Mecca of new and innovative development; it wanted to develop and advertise the organic assets of the Old Dominion, whether historical or natural, as a means to attract revenue and business.

For that reason, the Division of Archeology and History was committed to the highest standards of professionalism to protect, in Carson's words, "Virginia's dignity."¹⁰³ Leery of the fundamental changes entailed by policies of innovation and development, the Commission

⁹⁹ "A Publicity Program for the Development of the State of Virginia," *State on Conservation and Development Commission, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond: State Publishing Office, 1927).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Harry Flood Byrd, Governor, "Program of Progress," 5.

¹⁰² William E. Carson, report, "Conserving and Developing Virginia," Report of W.E. Carson, Chairman State Commission on Conservation and Development, July 26, 1926 to December 31, 1934 and Shenandoah National Park. (Available at LVA), 71.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 4.

essayed its duties with careful, deliberate planning. Carson was especially mindful not to plunge headlong into an advertising campaign that would cheapen or degrade Virginia's heritage.¹⁰⁴

The Commissioner demonstrated his concern by personally choosing the men of the Commission, seeking out the "pick of the state" with proven records of accomplishment, men who were "sound, loyal, [and] levelheaded".¹⁰⁵ In the end, the Commission selected a panoply of the best business leaders in the Commonwealth, which included the likes of Lee Long, of Dante; Coleman Worthham, affiliated with a stockbroker in Richmond; Rufus G. Roberts, owner of the *Culpeper Star*; Thomas L. Farrar, vice president of Charlottesville Bank; Edward Griffith Dodson, a Norfolk bank officer and politico; and Junius P. Fishburn, editor of the *Roanoke World-News* and a former president of the state chamber of commerce.¹⁰⁶ A solid team was essential to get the Commission off the ground, for as Carson would point out at the end of his term as Commissioner in 1934, he was beset with rampant "babbitry" and "go-getters" who were "projecting their ballyhoo viewpoints" on how to advertise state assets.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, when one gauges Carson and his words against the actions of the Commission and the Division of Archeology and History, there emerges a discernable, unified intent to conduct a brand of applied history that was fair and objective, within the context of that particular time. The markers were to project history as it appeared in the archival records. Such high standards of scholarship and conduct were essential, Carson argued, so that he could, "develop such a public

¹⁰⁴ Horan, "Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation Commission," 396.

¹⁰⁵ Carson to Dodson, 11 May 1926, E. Griffith Dodson Papers, 1923-1962. Accession 25244, Personal Papers Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA 23219, (Box 5, Folder 8). The collection will herein be referred to as the Dodson Papers.

¹⁰⁶ Horan, "Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation Commission," 395. Also see: "Flippen Named By Commission: Gets Appointment as Full Time Secretary of Body," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, 23 July 1926, 1; "State Commission is Organized Here: Newly Developed Body on Conservation and Development Meets," *Richmond News Leader*, 22 July 1926, 1; "Governor Names Commissioners: Coleman Wortham, of Richmond, to Serve with W.E. Carson," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, 1 July 1926, Virginia News Section.

¹⁰⁷ William E. Carson, "Conserving and Developing Virginia," 4.

sentiment that I can fully establish and have recognized as a part of the state government, the Archeological and Historic Bureau.”¹⁰⁸

The Genesis of Virginia’s Historical Marker Program

It is not clear who originated the plan to mark historic sites in Virginia. One tale states that Byrd and Carson devised the plan after stumbling upon a plaque commemorating Jack Jouett’s famous midnight ride on 3 June 1781 to warn Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia legislature of an impending raid by Tarleton’s British cavalry—an act that earned Jouett the sobriquet of “Paul Revere of the South.”¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, there are other claimants to the idea of a centralized historical commemoration run by the state. For example, a recent *Encyclopedia Virginia* article claimed that amateur historian Richard C. Wight was the originator, and that he did not see his idea come to fruition because he proposed it at the end of Governor Elbert Lee Trinkle’s term (1922-1926).¹¹⁰ Disagreements aside, state records reveal that efforts on behalf of the Commonwealth to monitor historical commemoration date back to a state law adopted in 1922, which decreed:

The Governor may appoint a board composed of one representative from each the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of Eighteen Hundred and Twelve, and the Daughters of the Confederacy, which board, if and when appointed, shall be authorized to place suitable monuments or markers on, at or in places of historical interest located in the Commonwealth.¹¹¹

Written before the male takeover of historical commemoration, the law reflected the monopoly females still held on the practice. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that the abovementioned resolution entailed a parallel plan of standardized commemoration and there was certainly no

¹⁰⁸ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 22 October 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8).

¹⁰⁹ Fishwick, *The Virginia Tradition*, 82-83. Fishwick claimed that the story was “corroborated in a letter to the author from Senator Harry F. Byrd, dated November 4, 1948.” See: *ibid*, pp. 107.

¹¹⁰ Arthur Striker, “Historical Highway Marker Program,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*. ed. Brendan Wolfe. (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 16 June 2009), accessed 3 SEP 2010, http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Historical_Highway_Marker_Program.

¹¹¹ “Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia: Session Which Commenced at the State Capitol on 11 January 1922,” (Richmond: Davis Bottom, 1922), [SB 210, Sec. 1], 210-211.

mention of state funds to support the effort. A centralized program of commemoration in the Commonwealth became discernible only after the Conservation and Development Commission created the Division of Archeology and History. Tourist literature published before the creation of the Division corroborates this claim.

Following the passage of the 1922 resolution, there were attempts to catalogue Virginia's historic assets in tourist guides for persons traveling via highway. Even so, the guides highlighted the fact that a system of historical identification was still wanting, as they restricted visitors to main cities and the traditional places of interest. For example, a 1924 *American Motorist* magazine published a full issue dedicated to Virginia, promoting the Commonwealth as having "more important incidents in connection with American history than in perhaps any similar territory of the United States."¹¹² Nevertheless, the guide focused its attention squarely on the cities along the highway. Historical events that had occurred on the wider landscape of Virginia had yet to be catalogued. In 1926, the Virginia Historic Highway Association in cooperation with the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce published a *Virginia Historic Highway Tour* pamphlet. Again, as with the *American Motorist Magazine*, emphasis was limited to Mt. Vernon, Monticello, Williamsburg, and Lexington.¹¹³ Thus, the Division of Archeology and History emerged to fill both a commemorative and commercial void. It commemorated and catalogued historic assets to conserve the landscape while drawing visitors into the hinterlands to increase tourist revenue.

¹¹² "Virginia: The Beckoning Land," *American Motorist*, 16, No. 5 (1924), 2.

¹¹³ *Virginia Historic Shrines and Scenic Attractions Accessible by Virginia Historic Highway Tour*, Compiled by Virginia Historic Highway Association in cooperation with Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, (1926), 1.

An Idea Put into Action: The Formation of the Division of History and Archeology

The first extant discussion of historical markers among the Commission is in the records of the 15 October 1926 meeting. Minutes refer to previous conferences that had been held on the topic, stating that E.G. Shirley, Director of the State Highway Commission, had suggested the Commission assist in the marking of sites adjacent to highways, using concrete columns affixed with metal tablets for \$75.00 each.¹¹⁴ When it was suggested that the Commission use part of the advertising budget to mark historic sites, Carson informed them that he had secured \$50,000 of the state's advertising fund for the endeavor that would be "available at once, if desired."¹¹⁵ That move implied that Carson had already been at work behind the scenes developing the idea. The Commission supported the concept and responded with the following proposal that was unanimously adopted: "That the Commission employ a qualified person to carry on the historical research relating to the location and appropriate marking of historical sites throughout Virginia, and to handle the administrative details of the program of setting up these markers."¹¹⁶ Despite agreeing on a resolution to mark historic sites, the Commission did not reach an agreement on how to go about doing it, electing to investigate what type of a uniform system of marking to use.

Following the committee's October meeting, Carson spent the next two months in search of someone to put in charge of the project. It was a decision that he did not take lightly. For that reason, the Commissioner held multiple conferences on the issue. Eventually he met with the noted Virginia historian and editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, Douglas Southall Freeman, who suggested that the Commission tap Hamilton James Eckenrode for the post. Freeman's

¹¹⁴ PMB: Vol. 2, "Program of Meeting," (15 October 1926), 9.

¹¹⁵ CCM: Vol. 1, (15 October 1926), 42.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 42.

intercession came complete with the highest praise for Eckenrode, endorsed as “the man best qualified to head this new division of work.”¹¹⁷ It also helped that Eckenrode had a strong resume, having been the State Archivist, a member of Virginia’s World War I History Commission, a noted author, and a graduate of the famed Johns Hopkins History Ph.D. program.¹¹⁸ Eckenrode’s specialty was Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War Virginia history. He was from Fredericksburg, and his mother lived in the Horace Lacy House, at 1405 Washington Avenue, what is now the Washington Avenue Historic District.¹¹⁹ Within view of the Kenmore Plantation house and the Fredericksburg Confederate Cemetery, Eckenrode was confronted with symbols of the past during every visit home. His dissertation, *The Political History of Virginia During Reconstruction*, illustrated his affinity to the Lost Cause narrative of the Confederacy, as he did not look favorably on the North’s political maneuverings following the Civil War.¹²⁰ He went on to write a multitude of other works the history of Virginia, including a work in 1926 that offered a biological explanation for the Civil War, arguing that the harsh climate in the South had elicited a new breed “tropical Nordics.”¹²¹ At the time of his hiring, Eckenrode was working as an editor for the Johnson Publishing Company in

¹¹⁷ CCM: Vol. 1, (15 December 1926), 10. The minutes also state that Eckenrode had assisted Freeman in “historical matters;” namely, “the placing of markers around Richmond.” Nonetheless, the extent Eckenrode and Freeman’s joint-commemoration activities are unknown. See: *ibid*, 10.

¹¹⁸ DOHR: CV of H.J. Eckenrode, (Box 39, Folder 11). The biographical history of Eckenrode remains difficult to fully discern, as no personal papers are known to exist. However, a repository of manuscripts, many of which that were never published, provides a window into the psyche of Eckenrode. The records are available at the University of Mary Washington, Special Collections Library (the records have yet to be catalogued). For a more personal account of Eckenrode, Pocahontas Wight Edmunds, “State Historian of Virginia,” *The Richmond Quarterly*, 6, No. 3, (1983), 38-46. Also, see: “Rites Set in Fredericksburg for Dr. Eckenrode, Historian,” *Richmond News Leader*, 29 September 1952, 8; “Dr. Eckenrode, Ex-Historian of State, Dies,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 September 1952.

¹¹⁹ National Register for Historic Places Registration Form for the Washington Avenue Historic District, Fredericksburg, VA. VDR ID No. 111-5262 (2001, pgs 1-38).

¹²⁰ H.J., Eckenrode, *The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1904).

¹²¹ H.J. Eckenrode, *Jefferson Davis: President of the South* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 56.

Richmond.¹²² A bachelor who would never marry, Eckenrode could devote all of his energy to the Commission's commemoration efforts.

With Freeman's recommendation Carson's mind was made up, and he had the Commission approve Eckenrode's nomination at the 15 December 1926 meeting as the "Director of Archeological and Historical Investigation," at a salary of \$250 per month.¹²³ The local press responded with a flourish of laudatory remarks. Not surprisingly, Freeman's *News Leader* ran a front-page article, highlighting the "great satisfaction" among the Commission for the appointee who was so "eminently qualified for the post."¹²⁴ In order to help familiarize the public with the Division's innovative historical activities, the press outlined Eckenrode's responsibilities, stating that he would have full authority to "determine the location of all markers and their inscriptions."¹²⁵ Thus, with the public introductions out of the way, and his authority defined, Eckenrode began formulating the scope and aim of the program. Since commemoration had never been done on such a grand scale—uniform and state wide—careful policies and procedures were necessary.

Eckenrode focused his immediate efforts on how to best utilize the new Division of Archeology and History. His top priority: show proof of the Division's "unquestionable usefulness" to the public in order to ensure that the project would endure.¹²⁶ Nothing was to be done haphazardly. Therefore, Eckenrode formulated a plan that addressed every conceivable aspect of the Division's work, from the aesthetics of the actual markers themselves, to other historical projects that could be taken on to develop and preserve Virginia's historic assets. He

¹²² DOHR: CV of H.J. Eckenrode, (Box 39, Folder 11).

¹²³ CCM: Vol. 1, (15 December 1925), 10.

¹²⁴ "Dr. Eckenrode to Supervise Research Work," *The Richmond News Leader*, 17 December 1926, 1.

¹²⁵ "Invite Eckenrode to Place Markers," *The Richmond News Leader*, 16 December 1926, 4.

¹²⁶ PMB: Vol. 2, "January Memo of Dr. H.J. Eckenrode Relating to Work of the Division of Archeology and History and the Placing of Historical Markers," (24 February 1927), 48.

poured over photos of monuments from “New York, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere” in order to create a newer design for the roadside that would prove “better than anything now in use.”¹²⁷ Next, he developed inter-agency ties, establishing relationships across a wide spectrum of state and national entities, including the United States Bureau of Standards and the National Fine Arts Commission of Washington.¹²⁸ Perhaps even more remarkable was that Eckenrode brought Virginia’s scholarly community into the process of his Division’s historical work. Desiring to “[add] weight to the decisions of the Commission,” Eckenrode formed an advisory committee to assist the Division in the vetting of marker inscriptions, making sure to have members from every major Commonwealth educational institution, in addition to well-known experts in the historical field.¹²⁹ The said committee would be comprised of the following: Dr. Douglas Freeman, Editor of the *Richmond News Leader*; Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, of Holdcroft, former president of William and Mary and founder of *The William and Mary Quarterly*; Dr. R.L. Merton and Dr. J.A.C. Chandler, current president of the College of William and Mary; Dr. D. R. Anderson, president of Randolph Macon College; Dr. J.W. Wayland, State Teachers College of Harrisonburg; Dr. J. D. Eggleston, president of Hampden-Sidney; Dr. H. R. McIlwaine, State Librarian; Dr. P.A. Bruce, historian of colonial history at the University of Virginia; Dr. J. P. McConnell, State Teachers College of East Radford; Dr. S. C. Mitchell, President of University of Richmond and Mr. Fairfax Harrison, historian of Northern Virginia and resident of Washington D.C.¹³⁰ The board was a solid line up, but, note, there was not one historian from one of Virginia’s African American educational institutions.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 50.

¹²⁸ PMB: Vol. 2, “Program of Meeting,” (24 February 1927), 8.

¹²⁹ PMB: Vol. 2, “January Memo of Dr. H.J. Eckenrode,” (24 February 1927), 50.

¹³⁰ The finalized committee was mentioned in the following memo: DOHR, Eckenrode to Carson, 02 November 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8), 1. Eckenrode would soon come to feel tinges of regret for bringing on McIlwaine. In one

In order to standardize and streamline the process of creating roadside markers, Eckenrode divided the Commonwealth in half and took responsibility for all of the inscriptions prepared for eastern Virginia. Col. Bryan Conrad, the Assistant Director and second in authority to Eckenrode, was responsible for all inscriptions for the western half of Virginia. Even though the Director delegated part of the Commonwealth to Conrad, Eckenrode still served as the final approving official for all markers. His authorization was required before any inscription could go to the advisory committee for “criticisms and suggestions.” Once it cleared the committee, final corrections were made and the inscription was then sent off to the manufacturer. The process was aided by a small office staff. Mrs. Mable Dyson, Research Assistant, assisted in research of particular routes, even helping to write inscriptions. Mrs. Lena Whitworth, Office Assistant, managed correspondence and was responsible for filing all historical data. Matthew F. Pleasants handled the task of erecting the historical markers. Designated as the bureau’s Field Assistant, Pleasants was responsible for “[e]verything concerning the physical side of the work” regarding the historical markers. His additional duties included maintenance, map-making, and determining the location of where to place the markers. Although the Division would later accept inscriptions from third parties, the office staff would remain at five personnel through 1930, and every inscription was subject to the same process outlined above, with Eckenrode as the ultimate authority.¹³¹

Eckenrode’s aesthetic plans for the road markers were also forward-looking, meant to ensure that the authority of the signs would endure for generations to come. Considering the

letter, the State Librarian castigated the Director for keeping a library book beyond the due date: “I think it will be necessary for you to pay the fine. State Officials are not required to pay fines when they keep books out because it is necessary I the prosecution of their work, but this book, even if you were using it in connection with state work, you had ceased to use for some time.” See: DOHR, McIlwaine to Eckenrode, 07 September 1927, (Box 66, Folder 2), 1.

¹³¹ All information from the paragraph was gleaned from the following: DOHR: “Organization of the Division of Archeology and History,” (Box 12, Folder 9), 1-2.

issue of “proper marker tablets” as a “most important” issue that “should be considered with great care,” Eckenrode requested that each have “a special device” to “show that the markers were erected by the state.”¹³² Next, Eckenrode devised a system of labeling for the markers for their eventual inclusion “in literature issued by the Commission,” arguing that “an important part of the work will be the preparation of folders describing the markers and giving an outline of the history with which they are connected.”¹³³ The abovementioned proposals were especially prescient, since the State’s authority would provide the necessary weight to overcome disputes over more localized versions of historical events; moreover, a future guidebook for the markers, printed by the Commission, would enshrine the work in popular texts, giving tourists information on where to go while also projecting the Division’s histories beyond just Virginia. In essence, Eckenrode laid the groundwork that was to become the popular topographical history of the Old Dominion.

Eckenrode even sought to take the Division’s work beyond the scope of markers, proposing a “Battle Highway” that would weave through “the principle points in Virginia connected with the War Between the States.”¹³⁴ He envisioned all of the said work culminating in a yearly historical pageant, an “Open House Week in Virginia” comprised of “historical plays, fetes, costume balls” and a “reception by the Governor.”¹³⁵ Markers were to serve as the foundation of the plan, reference points to get the public interested in multiple aspects of Virginia history. By binding up his ambitious proposals, Eckenrode hoped to spark a popular historical movement that would carry beyond Virginia’s border:

¹³² PMB: Vol. 2, “January Memo of Dr. H.J. Eckenrode,” (24 February 1927), 49-50.

¹³³ Ibid, 50.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 49.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 53.

It is believed that by putting up a number of good markers along the principal highways, and then by having a historical celebration of a new and striking character, the people of the United States would be favorably impressed by the efforts of Virginia to make her historical places available to the outside world. The co-operation of many important people in the North, South and West might be invited, and, if obtained, would almost certainly crown our enterprise with success. Virginia is the historical region of the continents of North and South America, and the fact should be made so plain that he who rides may read.¹³⁶

Later, Eckenrode sought to enlist the services of the nationally renowned artist and Washington D.C. socialite Alice P. Barney. Describing his pageant plans as something that might attract “national attention” and “awaken interest in Europe as well,” he proposed to her a “pageant-opera of Virginia history in Norfolk; a pageant play of Washington at Alexandria; a street pageant at Fredericksburg; an indoor historical play and street parade at Richmond, and so on.”¹³⁷ Barney, however, never signed on to Eckenrode’s elaborate pageant plans, as there is no evidence to suggest any subsequent collaboration between the two.

Although Eckenrode never realized his dream of a weeklong historical fete, his plans reveal that he was a historian striving to present the past in ways that were unique for his time. He was not interested in mere for-profit advertising, but in raising the historical consciousness of Virginians. On 24 February 1927, Eckenrode presented the abovementioned ideas at the Commission meeting. The outline met with approbation; and the minutes recorded that “the general progress of [Eckenrode’s] work seemed to be approved without motion.”¹³⁸ In fact, almost all of the Director’s proposals were adopted; the symbol of state authority, which eventually became standard on all markers, was presented: a triangular device with the seal of the Commonwealth, in addition to an identifying phrase for the Conservation and Development Commission was to go on every tablet.¹³⁹ The only topics not taken up in earnest by the Commission were Eckenrode’s ambitious proposals for state pageants and “Battle Highways.”

¹³⁶ Ibid, 53.

¹³⁷ DOHR: Eckenrode to Barney, 6 August 1927, (Box 3, Folder 2), 1-2.

¹³⁸ CCM: Vol. 1, (24-25 February 1927), 16.

¹³⁹ PMB: Vol. 2, “Program of Meeting,” (24 February 1927), 10.

The Commission did, however, assign Eckenrode the added task of cataloging all of Virginia's historic shrines, "such as old residences, sites of public buildings, like the house of Burgesses, [and] battlefields" for a future publication to be distributed to "agencies or persons [whom] may consider particular projects for rehabilitation."¹⁴⁰ Thus, the Division was able to assume even more responsibilities within the realm of historical preservation.

The committee was still unable to come to an agreement on the type of marker to adopt, because debate continued over materials, with wood, aluminum, iron, concrete, and stone all under consideration. In the mean time, fieldwork commenced, and sites were marked with wooden stakes as a temporary measure. Nonetheless, it immediately became apparent that the job of commemoration was much more difficult in practice than in theory. As Eckenrode proceeded with his plans, the Division entered into a dialectical process of refinement. Internally, there was a constant interplay between members of the Division to perfect the procedures of historical engagement. Secondly, external interactions with the public also shaped the Division's methodology for public history.

Bringing History to the Public: the Praxis of Eckenrode's Plan

The Archeology and History Division's top priority during its first months of operation was to get its work noticed. Therefore, all efforts were focused on main highways, with the actual items slated for commemoration subdivided into four separate groups: Colonial, Revolutionary, Civil War, and individual.¹⁴¹ It was understood that some markers would fall outside of the said categories, but "they would be relatively few in number and could be considered later."¹⁴² The choices reflected the historiographical standards of the time, as the

¹⁴⁰ CCM: Vol. 1, (24-25 February 1927), 19.

¹⁴¹ PMB: Vol. 2, "January Memo of Dr. H.J. Eckenrode," (24 February 1927), 53.

¹⁴² Ibid, 53.

“great men” and nationalist narratives were most popular. Furthermore, the choices reflected Eckenrode’s own historic tastes, as he had written extensively on Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War history. He was explicit as to the reasons why he wanted to mark those particular sites, as he argued: “The wealth of historical incidents in Virginia needs to be preserved in readily accessible form as the heritage from the past of people of the State and Nation and as a beacon of inspiration for the future.”¹⁴³ For Eckenrode, the past was paramount, because “future actions and ideals of men are in a large sense a projection of their antecedents.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, perpetuating Virginia’s “ideals and...landmarks,” testaments, to a state that had “given to the world so many men of outstanding ideals and examples of public service,” would, in his view, positively impact the public.¹⁴⁵ Despite whatever possible ideological motives that may have contributed to the choices of commemoration, the fact was that the Division capitalized on the most popular historical subjects of the time. Naturally, some southern white men of the 1920s and 1930s viewed acts of preservation as a means to preserve their identity in the face of a rapidly changing society and infrastructure. Eckenrode endeavored to shape his program into a national resource, one that would strengthen the nation as a whole, perpetuating the so-called historic deeds and values of the region to visitors from the greater United States. It was a remarkable strategy, allowing him to wrap Virginia’s program of commemoration in the cloak American patriotism. Furthermore, it melded with the strategic advertising campaign of the Commission. Raising the historical consciousness of Virginia was necessary if the Commission were to shape the Old Dominion as both a pivot in America’s past and a dynamic bellwether of the future.

¹⁴³ DOHR: Eckenrode, “Internal Report: History and Archeology,” undated, (Box 88, Folder 1), 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 1.

In April of 1927, Eckenrode laid out the tactical plan in a memo to the Assistant Director of the Division, Bryan Conrad:

Our plan in the beginning is the marking of points of historical interests in the state that includes the principle highways and not points a distance from them; in other words, we expect to mark the highways from Richmond to Washington and from Richmond to Williamsburg, the Valley Pike and the Tidewater Trail. After these arteries have been marked, we hope to be able to branch out over the rest of the state.¹⁴⁶

The task of marking history was to prove far from easy, however, because the facts pertaining to Civil War and Colonial history were muddled with local, oral histories, and popular myths from the outset of the program. Augurs perceived the inevitable clashes in historical memory that would arise between the Division and the public. For instance, in response to Eckenrode's epistle above, Conrad, while in full agreement with physically marking historic sites, also stated that the early history of the Valley Pike had "become so entangled with old women stories that the truth is hard to dig out."¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, he expressed some skepticism on whether or not the Division would be able to ascertain the true histories of specific locales because individuals that did in fact know the actual histories were few, and many of them were about to "pass on to the other side of the river."¹⁴⁸ But Eckenrode and Conrad would experience more challenges than the mere contestation of local histories. They would have to develop a legitimate praxis for their innovative model of commemoration.

By the summer of 1927, the Division began working across the entire Commonwealth. Eckenrode parceled out the state into three districts, assigning field assistant, Matt F. Pleasants, to cover the southwestern and southern counties and the future Assistant Director, Bryan Conrad, to handle the northern part of the Valley and neighboring piedmont counties.¹⁴⁹ As intensive work began on the highways, road markers became the top priority, despite the initial push to

¹⁴⁶ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 16 April 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁴⁷ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 19 April 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ PMB: Vol. 2, "July Report of the Division of Archeology and History," (16 July 1927), 18.

document shrines. With a possible appropriations battle looming, Carson wanted “five hundred markers placed on the highways of Virginia before the end of the year,” because it would be necessary “to show the legislature some visible signs of our work we have accomplished.”¹⁵⁰

Additionally, Bryan Conrad became an integral part of the whole operation, eventually rising to the position of Assistant Director, responsible for the western half of Virginia—while Eckenrode covered the eastern half.

From Luddite to Public Historian: The Peregrinations of Col. Bryan Conrad

Bryan Conrad was a local attorney and a retired colonel of the United State Army with a decorated military record. Having served in the Spanish American War, the Philippine Insurrection, China, and the First World War, he brought a worldly perspective to the Division.¹⁵¹ He hailed from Winchester, where he was a veritable institution and friend of both Governor Byrd and William Carson. Upon his appointment to the Division of Archeology and History, the *Winchester Star* ran a front-page story touting the fact that Conrad was “appointed to an important post” and would “engage in research work to establish definitely the places of historic interest to be marked.”¹⁵² At a salary of \$200 a month, plus traveling expenses and a new Chevrolet, Conrad was initially expected to cover most of Northern Virginia; specifically, the Valley Pike and the northern region east of the Blue Ridge along the Lee-Jackson and Lee Memorial highways.¹⁵³ His fieldwork was to consist of picking out historical points and marking them with stakes for when the actual markers were available, while sites already marked by other organizations were to be catalogued.¹⁵⁴ Conrad’s duties also required that he go into the said

¹⁵⁰ DOHR: Carson to Conrad, 01 August 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8).

¹⁵¹ DOHR: Conrad to Atkinson, 14 July 1945, (Box 2, Folder 1).

¹⁵² “Colonel Conrad is Appointed to Important Post,” *Winchester Evening Star*, 30 June 1927, 1.

¹⁵³ DOHR: Flippin to Conrad, 27 June 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6), 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

regions and engage with community organizations and the general citizenry to, as outlined in his initial terms of employment, “get their interest and support,” in order to spread a “spirit of cordiality and cooperation.”¹⁵⁵ With his marching orders in hand, the old soldier immediately set about, essaying his duties with vigor. The modern operation came with a steep learning curve, however. Conrad had no experience in the new brand of professional history; furthermore, taking history to the people was a relatively untested concept. His assignment would require some on-the-job training.

Conrad was not at all up to the modern standards of 1927 historical work. Before he was able to start on historical matters he had to first teach himself how to drive, type, and take pictures.¹⁵⁶ Always one to show initiative, he was sure to poke around the office of the Commission’s executive secretary, Elmer Flippin, while in Richmond, “just to see how things are run by a modern powered executive.”¹⁵⁷ It was a side-visit that, as Conrad later said, that “stumped me for some days,” because he had never beheld a workspace “as clear of desk trick ornaments.”¹⁵⁸ Upon his return home, Conrad copied Flippin’s technique, causing him to exclaim, “I have all the room that I never before knew how to get,” despite the fact that “it hurt to store many things that had stood on my desk for thirty years.”¹⁵⁹ Conrad never let his lack of experience get him down; in fact, he actively sought to address his historical weaknesses head-on. For example, over the course of his first month of employment, Conrad wrote that he had invested about \$150 of his own money into the job, buying a typewriter, a Kodak camera, and

¹⁵⁵ DOHR: Flippin to Conrad, Memo, 27 June 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6), 2.

¹⁵⁶ See: DOHR: Bryan Conrad, “Weekly report of field assistants ending 02 July 1927,” (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁵⁷ DOHR: Conrad to Flippin, 05 July 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

books due to “[his] very bad habit of marking them up.”¹⁶⁰ As a result of the said initiative, by the end of July, Conrad was able to begin a relentless promotional campaign in his sector, sending out correspondence and driving his new Chevrolet to visit neighboring towns.¹⁶¹ In the first month of work, Conrad drove almost 800 hundred miles, selected 36 places for marking, and prepared 29 inscriptions.¹⁶²

As work got underway, the Division encountered difficulties ferreting out the “actual” histories of specific locales. The task of centralizing Virginia’s history had never been done. Thus, there was a continual dialectic between the public and the Division, which shaped how the task of historical commemoration was conducted. One of the most prominent threads that ran throughout the early work was that of contested memory. From the outset, Conrad dealt with local history disputes. In one of his first reports to headquarters, he wrote: “To accomplish work of value, one must be able to sift facts from fable...[and] Constant strife between local myth and recorded history.”¹⁶³ Often, Conrad wrote about the issues in his correspondence. For instance, on 22 July 1927, Conrad reported trouble distinguishing between three separate “claimants” who told him they were the descendants of the family who built the first brick house west of the Blue Ridge, lamenting in a letter to Flippin that “the weighing of evidence as to disputed points is a hard job.”¹⁶⁴

Early August brought a particularly descriptive tale of a historical dispute in Paris, Virginia. Conrad was in the town attempting to locate the bivouac site where Stonewall Jackson

¹⁶⁰ DOHR: Conrad to Flippin, 18 July 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6).

¹⁶¹ Conrad also ran a newspaper add asking the public for “all possible data relating to points of historic interest in the state.” See: “Desires History of All Historic Places In State,” *Winchester Evening Star*, 14 July 1927, unnumbered.

¹⁶² DOHR: Bryan Conrad, “Weekly Report of Field Assistants,” for weeks of 1, 9, 16, 23, and 30 July 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁶³ DOHR: Bryan Conrad, “Weekly Report of Field Assistants,” weeks of 01, 09 of July 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁶⁴ DOHR: Conrad to Flippin, 22 July 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6).

had supposedly stood guard over his own men to let them sleep as they readied to face Federal troops at the first “Battle of Manassas.” While Conrad was in the town a rainstorm broke out, sending him scrambling for cover underneath a storefront veranda, cloistered amongst a large number of locals seeking shelter from the deluge. Sensing an opportunity to get in some investigative fieldwork, Conrad asked the group whether any of them had heard the story of Stonewall Jackson’s stay in the area during the Civil War. The following exchange ensued:

“Hell yes,” came the answer. “He and his friends slept in this here house we is sittin’ in front of.”

“Who told you that?” [Conrad] asked.

“Oh’ I don’t know. Most everybody that knows any thing knows that.” [He then] looked around for approval, which he received.

“I am very sorry to hear that,” [Conrad] said, “for the state was thinking of placing a marker here in Paris, to tell a very different story.”

[Conrad] then went in the store to give them a chance to arrange their facts. When [he] came out [Conrad] was asked what the story was that was told about Jackson being in Paris.

After hearing the incident of Jackson guarding the camp, the answer was “Well’he was sure wide awake two days after” and then the usual loafer laugh, at getting the better of a stranger in a contest of wits.¹⁶⁵

Conrad’s humorous account illustrates how local history plagued the Division from the outset of its work. As he would lament later on, “the story always gets twisted in the telling by word of mouth, which is most natural, as each teller wants to make it as interesting as possible.”¹⁶⁶ The Division, however, employed a methodology to combat such problems, placing great emphasis on well-written histories supported by primary sources and documentation.

Eckenrode went to great lengths to ensure that every inscription was historically accurate in order to hedge the Division’s work against the local myths. Before inscriptions were sent for vetting to the advisory committee, the Director was sure to weigh all narratives against the sources.¹⁶⁷ At times, Conrad felt the brunt of Eckenrode’s frustration for not following the rigorous standards of the Division. For example, in September the Division worked feverishly to

¹⁶⁵ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 04 August 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2), 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Of Course, it was necessary that Eckenrode not bring any embarrassment upon himself, because the advisory board was comprised of the most notable historians of Virginia, to include his friend and mentor, Douglas Freeman.

finish inscriptions so that markers could go up in time to make an impression on the next legislative meeting. Conrad wrote to Eckenrode that he was “sweating blood in digging up my data,” apologizing for “sending in matter without quoting...authorities for my statements.”¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the colonel’s inscriptions were still not up to Eckenrode’s standards. The Director, nearing the edge of his patience, asked Conrad, “Please look out for your military details,” further stating, “It may be necessary for you to come down here and fight out these inscriptions with me before we send in the order for markers.”¹⁶⁹ Following multiple rounds of rejections, frustrations reached a crescendo. Eckenrode castigated Conrad for relying too much on Frederick Phisterer’s historical accounts with the following admonishment: “I think it almost essential in doing military work to go to the official records of the War of Rebellion in 1,250 Volumes...I find no satisfactory substitutes of these bulky volumes.”¹⁷⁰ A couple of days later, Eckenrode was at his wits end. Having receiving Conrad’s inscriptions for battles at Luray and Sperryville without sources, Eckenrode wrote the following scathing reply: “If you would always send me your authorities when you send an inscription, you would save me an enormous amount of work, for I spent the last two weeks in verifying your inscriptions. This means a waste of time.”¹⁷¹ Conrad, with hurt feelings, responded with promises to improve, claiming that he had “the interest of the state at heart,” and, furthermore, offered to “resign at once” if he was delaying work.¹⁷² Luckily, frustrations between Eckenrode and Conrad were always short lived. Eckenrode wrote back, apologizing profusely. He even made sure to further accommodate

¹⁶⁸ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 15 September 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁶⁹ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 29 September 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁷⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 22 November 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁷¹ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 25 November 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

¹⁷² DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 26 November 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2).

Conrad by asking Carson, “Please soothe Conrad’s ruffled feelings.”¹⁷³ The net result was that Conrad became adept at making proper inscriptions.

The growing pains of the Division were only temporary problems, worked out as the field workers gained more experience. Eckenrode, aware of the contestations that historical markers would inevitably produce, wanted to ensure that the inscriptions had “evidence of their rightness,” proof for if they were called into question.¹⁷⁴ For the Director, the battle was with what he dubbed as “the army of IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE,” that would require the “use of historic methods to defeat it.”¹⁷⁵

Aside from issues of contested memories were those of contested spaces. At some points, the Division was faced with individuals who did not want markers in their vicinities. For example, the owner of Carter Hall eschewed a proposal to place a marker near his house, arguing that calling attention to his property would only add to the “continual stream of tourists, sightseers and idly curious.”¹⁷⁶ Eckenrode, was unmoved by the owner’s entreaty. When asked what should be done by Conrad, Eckenrode replied that, “I don’t think we can do much for him.”¹⁷⁷ Eckenrode then went on a diatribe in which he tried to justify the placing of historical markers against the will of a particular person:

We need tourists in our business. I am aware that many are ill-bred and obtrusive, but in any large number of human beings such persons will always be found...Owners of historical houses in this state might as well become reconciled to tourists, as there are going to be thousands and thousands of them in the next few years...If the owner of the house puts up signs warning trespassers to keep off, I think that our marker will do little harm. In fact...I judge that the marker might do more than good than harm, as it would give inquirers salient facts about Carter Hall without the need of many inquiries...The knowledge of history strengthens patriotism, and the thousands of tourists that come to Virginia from the north and west will have a new feeling of friendship for the state when they gain an adequate idea of its mighty past.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 29 November 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8).

¹⁷⁴ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 28 November 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2), 1.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁷⁶ DOHR: Burwell to Conrad, 27 August 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2), 2.

¹⁷⁷ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 30 August 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 1-2.

Hence, another example of Eckenrode's confidence that his project would, in a sense, establish his Division histories as a right for the public to enjoy.

As the Division's techniques and procedures improved, other decisions of the wider Commission also assisted the historical marker program. One such directive was the resolution to use iron markers. Originally, the Commission opted for granite markers to mark sites, planning to use Virginia stone in the spirit of localized economic development.¹⁷⁹ But debate quickly ensued as to the feasibility of stone and the time involved in its construction. Some of the strongest opposition to granite markers came from within the Division of Archeology and History. Conrad opted for two types: one of stone for basic monument purposes, and another of cast iron "to bring to the eye of the way-fareing many points of general interest as he passes along our highways."¹⁸⁰ It was believed by Conrad that "perpetual monuments" were futile in light of the "changes now going on in the road structure."¹⁸¹ Conrad felt so strongly about his conviction that he tried to intercede directly with Carson. He wrote to Eckenrode that he had gone to Carson's house one morning and "talked to him for hours...[attacking] from every possible angle," but, despite the efforts, he was unable to "make a dent in his hide."¹⁸² But as the Division ramped-up its efforts, questions began to arise regarding the practicality of stone markers. Namely, it was becoming imperative that they produce as many markers as possible in order that some of the Division's work could be on display before the end of the year. Stone simply did not fit such a purpose, because it was difficult to transport. Thus, in August the Commission agreed to switch to aluminum alloy markers, utilizing the services of the Niles

¹⁷⁹ CCM: Vol. 1, "Minutes of Meeting," (05 May 1927), 10-11.

¹⁸⁰ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 11 July 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2). Also see: Conrad to Flippin, 05 July 1927, (Box 59, Folder 6).

¹⁸¹ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 04 July 1927, (Box 57, Folder 2), 3.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Machine Company in Lebanon, New Hampshire—the cost being \$60 per 24” and \$75 for 36” tablets.¹⁸³ But by September, as additional pressure mounted to get markers erected, and to cut further costs, the committee switched one final time to iron, a material that Niles would produce at about half the cost of aluminum.¹⁸⁴ Thus, in the end, Conrad’s highway marker proposal was adopted; and it was this basic idea of informational markers on posts that would endure as the backbone of the overall program.

With the Division’s internal affairs finally in order, the vetting process worked out, and the type of material agreed upon, markers finally began to go up. The first lots of markers were delivered and installed in the latter part of October and almost immediately began drawing attention on both the local and national levels. The *New York Times* ran an article on the Division’s activities, proclaiming the aims of the Division to the entire nation: “Three thousand markers are to be placed, about 500 of them to be set up before the beginning of next year.”¹⁸⁵ As markers were displayed, the most conspicuous thoroughfares received immediate attention. In early December, Fredericksburg’s *Free Lance-Star* described the markers along Route One as “attractive and easy to read,” while, at the same time, lamenting that, “they are not as numerous as could be wished.”¹⁸⁶ Prominent figures in the community began to take notice as well. Judge John Barton Payne, Chairman of the National Executive Officers of the American Red Cross, wrote to the Division inquiring about getting a monument for the location at which Col. John S. Mosby disbanded the 43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry.¹⁸⁷ Almost overnight, the Division acquired legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

¹⁸³ CCM: Vol. 1, (16 August 1927), 10-11.

¹⁸⁴ CCM: Vol. 1, (16 September 1927), 9; CCM: Vol. 1, (22 November 1927), 4.

¹⁸⁵ “Road Markers Relate History of Virginia,” *New York Times*, 11 September 1927, pp. x12.

¹⁸⁶ “Dr. Eckenrode’s Good Work,” *The Free Lance Star*, 03 December 1927, 1.

¹⁸⁷ DOHR: Payne to Carson, 21 December 1927, Box 55, Folder 8.

Progress in other areas relating to the Division was also working to ensure its longevity. In the Commission meeting of November, an aggressive spring advertising campaign was approved. Tourist advertising space was to be purchased in multiple newspapers in neighboring states; including newspapers of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington.¹⁸⁸ The Division began to take part in battlefield commemoration, lending expertise to assist in the marking of Manassas Battlefield Confederate Park.¹⁸⁹ There was even an inquiry to the Division from Germany, forwarded through Secretary of State Frank Billings Kellog, concerning the settlement at Germanna and the Spotswood Furnace.¹⁹⁰ Slowly, the Division was evolving into the historical storehouse for the Commonwealth. Optimism flourished. At one point Carson had become so giddy that he issued the following hyperbolic statement to Eckenrode:

When our markers blossom out all over the state, you are going to find such an awakened interest in the state's history that you will find yourself the most sought after man, not alone by the women in the state, but also the men, and I will not be surprised to be saying "Governor Eckenrode" some day.¹⁹¹

Although he never became Governor, by the end of 1927, his success was almost assured. Yet, new conflicts over historical memory and authority were on the horizon for the Division. The placement of iron historical markers resulted in copious amounts of both public praise and excoriations, testing the soundness of the Division's methodology.

¹⁸⁸ CCM: Vol. 1, (22 November 1927), 20-21.

¹⁸⁹ See: DOHR: Ewing to Byrd, 29 September 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8); Eckenrode to Carson, 21 October 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8).

¹⁹⁰ PMB: Vol. 2, "June Report of the Division of Archeology and History," (17 June 1927), 43.

¹⁹¹ DOHR: W.E. Carson to H.J. Eckenrode, 12 December 1927, (Box 55, Folder 8).

Chapter III:
The Dotted Landscape: Formulating a Lasting Definition of Virginia's Historical Topography

Once the Division of Archeology and History began placing markers, it became necessary to secure the consent of the public for the program of state-sanctioned historical work. In many ways, the Division's strategy resembled Eric Davis's model for a "hegemonic project," employed by those who "strive to enhance their power and material interests" through the aid of "soft power."¹⁹² Naturally, the Division was incapable of moving into an area and imposing its histories through violence. Hence, it was necessary to shape public perception to obtain implicit acceptance of the commemorative acts. As it turned out, the ensuing conflicts between the Division and the community served as the primary means for Eckenrode to gain an authoritative mandate.¹⁹³ In some instances, local citizens outright rejected the official state narratives, viewing them as antithetical to their locally accepted oral traditions. In others, citizens who owned dwellings or property that were defined as historic by the Division rebuffed the entire practice of commemoration, not wanting to attract the attention of tourists who might encroach on their land. In response to both, Eckenrode took a series of steps to strengthen its authority to offset the possibility of future contestations. First, the Division engaged the public while strictly adhering to its scientific methodology. Second, it established punitive penalties for anyone who defaced or tampered with its historical markers. Lastly, and most important, was the publication of a tourist guide that included a map giving the location of every extant historical marker in the Commonwealth. The combination of measures taken by the Division exerted a profound effect

¹⁹² Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 271. Although the work is a contribution to the broad historiography of nation states, his theoretical framework, supported with the Gramscian notions of hegemony, serves as a useful metaphysical model for discerning how collective memory is sometimes shaped. See: Ch. 1 and Ch. 7, especially the notes on pages 291-296.

¹⁹³ The work pace of the Division was steady in the early months of 1928, with markers going up at the rate of approximately 25 per month. See: PMB: Vol. 4, "Monthly Statistical Report," (21 December 1928), 39.

on the consciousness of the public. New standards for public behavior toward the historical work emerged, as acceptance of markers was mandated by force of law. Hence, the Division emerged from its first year of intensive work as a dynamic entity, its labors validated by an increasing number of tourists visiting the Old Dominion—their vacation memories and perceptions of Virginia history molded by the Division’s narratives.

One must keep in mind, however, that the Division was not interested in promoting a nefarious ideological program to subdue the citizens of the Commonwealth. Terms such as “hegemony” are employed in the analysis of the Division’s public relations program to present the reader with a model for understanding. Indeed, it would be a mistake to grab hold of a theoretical model and portray the Division’s work through the lens of oppression. One must examine the Division within its context to get at the causes affecting its actions. The quandary invokes the words of Nietzsche, who provided historians with invaluable advice regarding such questions:

There is no set of maxims more important for an historian than this: that the actual cause of a thing’s origin and its eventual uses, the manner of its incorporation into a system of purposes, are worlds apart; that everything that exists, no matter its origin, is periodically reinterpreted by those in power in terms of fresh intentions; that processes in the organic world are processes of outstripping and overcoming, and that, in turn, all outstripping and overcoming means reinterpretation, rearrangement, in the course of which the earlier meaning and purpose are necessarily either obscured or lost.¹⁹⁴

When examined in this light, the activities of the Division prove symbolic of a more widespread “outstripping and overcoming.” The Division’s “reinterpretation” and “rearrangement” of Virginia’s history resulted from a newer, more scientific methodology that had gained preeminence in the field of history. Furthermore, the advancements in technology such as the automobile and the burgeoning networks of roads, in addition to the media for mass advertisement such as the radio served as catalytic effects on the “intentions” of those in power.

¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, 209.

The business-minded Commission on Conservation and Development embraced the aforementioned changes, seeking to maximize the potential for revenue in the Commonwealth.

The Confederate Ghosts and “Unreconstructed Rebels” of Upperville, Virginia

Sometimes historical markers triggered strong vituperations, especially if an inscription clashed with an emotionally charged local remembrance of the Civil War. The most illustrative example of public anger and reprisal—bordering on outright revolt—followed the Division’s emplacement of a marker in Upperville commemorating a skirmish that occurred between the Confederate Major General James Ewell Brown (J.E.B.) Stuart and the Union Brigadier General David M. Gregg. Entitled “Stuart and Gregg,” the text of the inscription ignited a firestorm of controversy: “Near here the Union cavalry General Gregg attacked Stuart and forced him to retire, June 19, 1863.”¹⁹⁵ The epigraph referred to a minor engagement that occurred when Stuart was protecting the flank of Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia as it advanced into Pennsylvania during the Gettysburg Campaign. Locals took issue with the word “retire,” a term that suggested Stuart was somehow defeated in the Cavalry engagement.

One native of Upperville wasted no time in voicing her complaints. On the same day the marker was erected Mary L. Rosser took it upon herself to act as a representative of “the qualified voters in [her] district,” sending out a letter to Governor Harry Byrd decrying the inscription.¹⁹⁶ Quoting a local account by “a Confederate soldier who took part in the battle,” Rosser posited that Stuart did not retire, but fell back only briefly, at which point “Gregg did the

¹⁹⁵ *The Virginia Highway Historical Markers: The Tourist Guide Book of Virginia Featuring the Inscriptions on the Official Markers Along the Historic and Romantic Highways of the Mother State* (Strasburg, VA: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc. 1930), 27. The marker, originally labeled B-31, was replaced in 1997. For the text of the new marker see: HMdb.org: The Historical Marker Database, “Battle of Middleburg,” Accessed 29 October 2010, <http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?MarkerID=1471&Print=1>.

¹⁹⁶ DOHR: Rosser to Byrd, 02 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

retreating.”¹⁹⁷ She was incensed, alluding to the possibility of political backlash as a means to solicit Byrd’s assistance. She warned:

The wrath and indignation of Upperville is beyond words to describe. We do not know why this insulting marker should be put on a Virginia highway unless it is to toady to northern tourists and humiliate southern people which was what the Lincoln resolution did. The qualified voters of our district want to know who is responsible for this outrage and I, as their representative, come to you, our Governor, and respectfully request that you will have the marker removed at once. This is politically a very serious matter.¹⁹⁸

Rosser’s indignant reaction revealed that local ideology was capable of usurping history based on relevant source evidence. Furthermore, it underscored the fact that the Division was erecting a competing mnemonic framework, as its histories were based on sources not passed down from local memory. An iron inscription, with its official narrative in plain sight of both locals and tourists, was a credible threat to Upperville’s established tradition, as it impressed upon visitors the perception that Stuart had retreated. Therefore, the reaction from the townsfolk presented the Division of Archeology and History with a unique problem: how to conduct objective commemoration when the historical evidence and sources was at odds with certain regional sensibilities? The answer: a refusal to “toady” to any local interest, or to historical interpretations weighted heavily on the side of ideology. Instead, the Division relied on primary source analysis to guide its assumptions. Eckenrode’s subsequent conduct regarding the Upperville matter underscores this point.

Governor Harry Byrd did not take the situation at Upperville lightly and forwarded Rosser’s complaint to Carson, who then tasked the Division to take charge of the matter and “iron it out.”¹⁹⁹ Eckenrode displayed a cavalier indifference toward Rosser’s jeremiad, spurning

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 04 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9); Carson to Conrad, 04 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

it as “a racket raised by someone who had nothing to do.”²⁰⁰ Usually prompt in his responses to Carson, Eckenrode did not write back until five days later. “I saw nothing the matter with the inscription,” he replied in an insouciant tone, while adding, “it is impossible for us always to represent the Confederates as victorious, because this would not be the truth.”²⁰¹ He did not bother to get involved in the historical altercation, insisting to the Commissioner that the matter was “pretty well fixed up.”²⁰² Then he proceeded to admonish Carson, arguing that the Division “cannot hope, of course, to please everybody,” dismissing Rosser’s “objections” as “singular.”²⁰³

Eckenrode, the scientific historian, did not want to consider objections raised over his Division’s inscriptions, even in the face of political threats resulting from transgressions upon historical sensibilities that were still thriving in the Old Dominion. Nevertheless, his nonchalance was the result of overconfidence in his method. Contrary to Eckenrode’s claim that the Upperville issue was singular, it was only the beginning of a series of objections raised by the community toward the Division’s work.

In spite of Eckenrode’s assurances to Carson, the issue at Upperville was not “fixed up.” Rather than deal with the Upperville affair in person, Eckenrode sent Conrad, primary source evidence in hand, over to “calm the anxious females.”²⁰⁴ It was assumed that the simple act of showing the material used to write the inscription would assuage the ire of locals. Alas, Conrad was unable to disabuse Rosser and the other dissenters of their regional canon. Realizing that his “evidence” was having no effect, Conrad, in an act of desperation, apparently resorted to making

²⁰⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 09 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9),1.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 1.

²⁰² Ibid, 1.

²⁰³ Ibid, 1.

²⁰⁴ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 11 April 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3).

the vain promise that he would take down the marker in “two or three weeks.”²⁰⁵ As a result, the storm at Upperville abated temporarily, for about a month. When it became apparent Conrad’s promise would never materialize, Rosser sent out another scolding note, this time to William Carson. “A woman never forgets a promise made to her,” she declared, “nor will the South forget Stuart.”²⁰⁶ Rosser then proceeded to upbraid Carson over the Stuart marker, telling him that it “makes us feel like throwing rocks at every Yankee tourist who stops to read it.”²⁰⁷ She saved her most virulent tongue lashing for the end of the letter:

I am an old lady (77) in a wheel chair and ready to go to war about your horrible old marker. I hope Stuart and his men will haunt your dreams until you remove it. We hate it more and more. Besides, whoever heard of a marker on a sidewalk? If you must put it up somewhere put it in somebody’s cellar or the Luray Cave.²⁰⁸

Approximately ten years old at the start of the Civil War, Rosser had experienced the privations of the conflict and the subsequent period of reconstruction during the formative period of her adolescence. Clearly the process of the latter had an adverse effect on her, since she signed her letter, “an unreconstructed Rebel.”²⁰⁹

There is no evidence that Carson replied to Rosser’s complaint. Perhaps he sided with Eckenrode’s assumption that the problem would go away if ignored long enough. That belief was false, however, as the marker did not last five full months. Someone uprooted it in August and placed it at the side of the main road in Upperville. The Division of Archeology and History did not fight Rosser and the band of historical insurrectionists any more on the issue. Rather

²⁰⁵ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 09 April 1928, (Box 44, Folder, 9), 1; DOHR, Rosser to Carson, 29 April 1928, (Box 40, Folder 6), 1-2.

²⁰⁶ DOHR: Rosser to Carson, 29 April 1928, (Box 40, Folder 6), 2.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 2.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 2.

than reinstall the marker in the town, Eckenrode had Conrad move it one mile east, safely out of range of the disaffected locals.²¹⁰

The Upperville incident was significant for the Division because it raised the larger issue of admissible conduct toward its work. If other communities followed the precedent, and began rejecting markers in the same fashion, it would compromise the authority of the historical marker program. What the Division needed was a means to guarantee respect for its markers.

Vandalism, Disrespect and the Creation of Permissible Behavior toward Historical Markers

The rejection of the Division's commemoration at Upperville and its subsequent uprooting at the hands of locals paralleled a disturbing trend of marker vandalism across the Commonwealth. As a result, Eckenrode became obsessed with finding a means to protect his markers which were the products of considerable research and expense. Eckenrode began to express a need for lawful protection of markers as far back as March 1928, when some of the initial reports of vandalism came in to the Division. At first, the acts of defacement were negligible, with one account describing "children or childish grown people...attemp[ing] to swing the markers around out of line with the road."²¹¹ Gradually, however, the vandalism became more pronounced, resulting in the destruction of markers. Reports began to trickle of markers "smashed to bits by automobiles," or "shot to pieces" by locals using them for target practice.²¹² In response, Eckenrode implored Carson for a "means to protect our markers," which should entail "investigating cases of vandalism and bringing prosecution in the courts."²¹³

When some soldiers from Camp Eustis apparently carried off a marker from Lee Hall,

²¹⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 27 August 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3). Also see: *Key to Inscriptions*, (1929), 10, which described the marker as being in "Loudoun County: One mile east of Upperville."

²¹¹ DOHR: Pleasants to Eckenrode, 24 March 1928, (Box 59, Folder 6).

²¹² DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 09 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9), 1-2.

²¹³ Ibid, 1.

Eckenrode, in a fit of desperation, made the outlandish suggestion that the Commission hire the Pinkerton detective agency to put all of the markers of the Commonwealth under constant surveillance.²¹⁴ The Director's complaints to Carson assumed a maudlin character, with one letter declaring that the Commission "might as well abandon the idea of putting up markers" if proper laws of protection were not adopted.²¹⁵ Flummoxed that the public as a whole did not value the Division's work, Eckenrode sought to put measures in place to ensure that it would. At first, the Commission used the press to warn the public that consequences awaited those who despoiled markers, putting an announcement in the *Free Lance Star* on 1 August 1928 that was reprinted around the Commonwealth.²¹⁶ More was needed, however, to guarantee the public's respect.

In fact, the press reporting only stirred up some of the smoldering coals of resentment toward the Division. After reading the reports of marker desecration in the newspaper, Mary Rosser took up her pen once again and wrote a harangue to Bryan Conrad. She opened with a sardonic explanation as to "why five of your Confederate [?] [sic] markers have been yanked up."²¹⁷ She then claimed the following:

The native Virginian resents any attempt to [posit] that he was conquered when he surrendered at Appomattox. He knows that not until he had been forced to retreat from nearly every inch of ground in Nov. [sic] did he give up. But to have markers by the hundreds put on the highways celebrating yankee victories over the Confederates for the benefit of yankee tourists is more than he can stand and strange things happen. Someone's car leaves the road and knocks down a marker—accident of course; or some sleep walker walks miles in his sleep and stopping to rest leans against a marker and borrows it and forgets to return it, or loses it before he gets home. But I like to think that our ancestors, who fought for Virginians are angry that such markers are allowed to remain in order "to attract Northern tourists," came back to earth and removed them.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ DOHR: Eckenrode to Dodson, 15 July 1928, (Box 59, Folder 1). There is extant correspondence from the Virginia Detective and Collection Bureau in Box 65 Folder 2. Their motto: "We Never, Never Sleep."

²¹⁵ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 27 August 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9), 2.

²¹⁶ "Detectives May Protect Markers," *The Free Lance-Star*, (1 August 1928), 8.

²¹⁷ DOHR: Rosser to Conrad, 15 August 1928, (Box 40, Folder 6), 1.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 1- 2. The handwritten note had interlineations, underlining, and illegible words, some of which were substituted above with brackets.

She closed her letter, asking that the Division ensure that any future inscription regarding Confederate military history “be written by Southern people,” while asserting: “Do not answer this. I am just writing to let you know why something happens—and will continue to happen to Dr. Eckenrode’s markers.”²¹⁹ Conrad did not respond to Rosser, instead he forwarded the letter to Eckenrode. On this occasion, unlike with the previous rash of Rosser letters months before, Eckenrode reacted. Her bold denunciations and contempt for his program had arrived just as acts of vandalism were reaching a crescendo around the Commonwealth. Hence, he crafted his response as a means to articulate his case against such acts of disrespect publicly, sending out copies to other Commission members.

Eckenrode rebutted Rosser’s claims that the markers gave undue credit to “Yankee” victories, reiterating that “the official records bear out the statements made on them.”²²⁰ He took particular offense to the septuagenarian’s claims that the writers of the inscriptions were not southern, positing: “As regards to myself I was born in Virginia, and have lived here all of my life...my only purpose in preparing the inscriptions is to tell the truth, and to tell it in a temperate way.”²²¹ Next, Eckenrode took the opportunity to outline what he perceived as underlying ideological problem with dissenters like Rosser, issuing the following proclamation:

I think that if you would lay aside war bitterness, which still remains with a few people, you will recognize the fact that our markers are proper and fitting. They are put up mainly for the purpose of preserving the history of Virginia and of making it known to the people, those inside the state, [as] well as those without. It is an educational matter, and it seems to me that bitterness is out of the place of education.²²²

Hence, Eckenrode underscored the original intent of the marker program: a means of educating the public. Here, he tried once more to show that it was impartial, objective, and more meaningful than a mere advertising scheme.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

²²⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Rosser, 27 August 1928, (Box 40, Folder 6), 1.

²²¹ Ibid, 1.

²²² Ibid, 2.

Eckenrode then sent a copy to Carson, who, in turn, lauded the missive as “fair, courteous and firm,” and an instructional piece that he “would like to have it put in pamphlet form.”²²³ Seeing an opportunity to advance his cause for lawful marker protection and to justify his personal convictions regarding the program, Eckenrode came to the September Commission meeting with the Rosser letter in hand, and read it aloud as an example of “the unreasonableness of her position on markers in that section.”²²⁴ Next, Eckenrode pointed out to the Commission that seven markers had been knocked down.²²⁵ The well-timed complaints finally swayed the Commission to take unified action regarding issues of vandalism and disrespect. Forging a relationship with the highway department, the Commission offered a reward of \$10.00 to anyone who provided “information leading to the conviction of persons of damage [sic] to markers.”²²⁶ The following month, Carson sent out a memorandum to all State Highway Policemen, thanking them for their assistance “in protecting these markers and in finding and properly disciplining those who injure...[them.]”²²⁷ With it known to the public that any act of defacement might result in punitive action, local citizens could not simply uproot a marker and leave it at the side of the road to be installed somewhere else. Now, markers were not only official state histories, they were, in essence, the only histories considered lawful.

Winning the Methodological Conflicts: How Eckenrode and the Division Reigned Supreme

Conflicts between the public and the Division of Archeology and History also emerged over methodology. At times, other scholars in the community rejected the Division’s selection of primary sources, forcing Eckenrode to justify his stance. In other cases, owners of historic

²²³ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 29 August 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²²⁴ CCM: Vol. 3, (14 September 1928), 5.

²²⁵ PMB: Vol. 4, “Eckenrode’s Monthly Report,” (14 September 1928), 67.

²²⁶ CCM: Vol. 3, (14 September 1928), 6.

²²⁷ PMB: Vol. 4, “Carson memo to State Highway Policemen, dated 25 October 1928,” (15 November 1928), 55.

“shrines” refused markers because of the unwelcome attention it would bring to their properties. Nonetheless, these conflicts, again served as a means for the Division to further its cause and address its weakness. Conflicts over methodology were easily settled because the Division had state sanction and, thus, the final word regarding commemoration. Eckenrode had argued that the Division “must expect criticism,” because “so few people see that we are doing something entirely new in the field of historical marking.”²²⁸ Indeed, it was revolutionary, creating new duties for those who owned historic properties. To have knowledge of Virginia’s historic shrines became the public’s right, despite any objections of private owners. The effort to promote every aspect of Virginia’s history fit into the Division’s grand scheme, because it was not endeavoring to mark in the older fashion that simply “tell[s] people that some event occurred on or near this spot,” but “to tell the continuous story” so that an inquirer “can get the skeleton of some development happening.”²²⁹

A particularly colorful example of a methodological disagreement occurred with the noted author on Virginia Colonial History, and leader of the Norfolk branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (A.P.V.A.), Conway Whittle Sams.²³⁰ Eckenrode picked Sams, a pillar of the preservation community, and author of books on early Virginia, to assist in marking of “principle Indian villages and points where fights with Indians occurred” near his native Norfolk.²³¹ The director would come to regret the compact, however, as Sams’s judgment was sometimes clouded by southern myth and ideological proclivities. Case in point, Sams returned his first set of inscriptions, with the comment that the “main idea” underpinning

²²⁸ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 26 April 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ See: Conway Whittle Sams, *The Conquest of Virginia: The Forest Primeval* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1916). Sams, aside from holding paternalistic views regarding Native American, was also strongly opposed to Women’s Suffrage. See: Conway Whittle Sams, *Shall Women Vote? A Book For Men* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1913).

²³¹ DOHR: Eckenrode to Sams, 02 March 1928, (Box 68, Folder 1).

his editorial remarks was “patriotism for Virginia,” a remark that undoubtedly made Eckenrode wince in his office seat.²³² Next, Sams admonished Eckenrode on how the marker program ought to go forward, contending, “If we are going to put up markers, I expect that you will agree with me, that they should honor Virginia.”²³³

Apparently, Sams took issue with an inscription that utilized colonial sources written by Captain John Smith. Sams deplored Smith’s work as “an inadequate, incorrect, degrading and contemptible account of our founding.”²³⁴ He was referring to Smith’s boastful writings in which the explorer had described the early Virginian colonialists as contemptible and “parasitic.” Sams insisted that using Smith would only perpetuate “the low and worthless account that has been given our foundation,” and help to “fasten upon Virginians for all time the ignominy and stigma which Smith has put upon the state.”²³⁵ In a statement that reflected the many race theories and their associative histories, in addition to the rampant nativism of the late 1920s, Sams argued that, contrary to Smith, Virginia’s founding was primarily “a Protestant movement on the part of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors to prevent America being [sic] monopolized by the Spaniards and the Roman Catholics.”²³⁶ The argument was particularly prescient for nativists since the previous year, 1928, Al Smith, a Catholic for the repeal of prohibition, had been candidate for President of the United States.

In spite of Sam’s scholarly preeminence and passionate zeal, Eckenrode was unmoved. He countered Sams’s critiques, pointing out that regardless of Smith’s character, “he was also a

²³² DOHR: Sams to Eckenrode, 07 April 1928, (Box 68, Folder 1).

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ DOHR: Sams to Eckenrode, 10 April 1928, (Box 68, Folder 1).

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

good literary man, and his account of the founding of Virginia is about the only one we have.”²³⁷ Aside from admonishing Sams on Smith’s literary merits, the director pointed out that Smith was a “picturesque character, and I should like to put up on the highway near Partan Bay a picture representing Pocahontas rescuing him.”²³⁸ Once again, Eckenrode had approached his task according to his brand of objectivity, determined to write from sources extant in the historical record, rather than with feeling.

Another disagreement broke out in June regarding a marker at Linden, in Warren County, erected to honor John Lederer, the supposed discoverer of the Shenandoah Valley. A Cornelius B. Hite, of Washington, D.C., wrote a long editorial in the *Washington Post* denouncing the marker as “an utter fallacy in historical fact.”²³⁹ Hite argued that the first white explorer was Alexander Spotswood, and he derided Lederer, calling him a “Munchausen,” someone prone to exaggeration.²⁴⁰ Specifically, Hite criticized the fact that the explorer did not “file a report of his expeditions” and that he claimed the weather was “intensely cold” even though it was in the middle of August, “the hottest month of the year.”²⁴¹ Eckenrode responded with his usual unconcern toward criticism from the public, commenting on the article in a letter to Bryan Conrad. He had no interest in responding to Hite, remarking “there will be no profit in such a procedure.”²⁴² Regarding the actual criticisms Eckenrode stated, “Lederer has been generally accepted by historians, and for this reason I accepted him.”²⁴³ His reasoning was simple: “You see that if you argue by probabilities you can prove anything. The probability is that Lederer was only one of many people who went to the mountains, but as he left an account of his

²³⁷ DOHR: Eckenrode to Sams, 09 April 1928, (Box 68, Folder 1).

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Cornelius B. Hite, “Discoveries in Virginia by Lederer Questioned,” *The Washington Post*, 3 June 1928, S2.

²⁴⁰ Hite, “Discoveries in Virginia by Lederer Questioned,” S2.

²⁴¹ Ibid, S2.

²⁴² DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 5 June 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3), 2.

²⁴³ Ibid, 2.

journey, and others did not, he gets credit for being an explorer.”²⁴⁴ What Eckenrode “always doubted” were assertions that Spottswood was the first discoverer of the Shenandoah Valley.

The director described the latter’s expedition as thus:

[It was]...nothing more than a big picnic...used for his advantage in England and obtained for him knighthood. It is time for this myth to be exploded. That a man without any experience in exploring, accompanied by a number of planters of even less experience, carrying with them hundreds of bottles of wine, fruit cake, cigarettes, chewing gum and all other luxuries should be seriously considered as an explorer is to me one of the greatest jokes in American history, but your friend Mr. Hite seems to take the claim seriously.²⁴⁵

Once again, Eckenrode’s illustrated his affinity for the archival sources. Fully aware that Lederer was “probably” not the first explorer, he still received credit because he had passed on a written account documenting his exploits. The director was not swayed by the romantic legend of the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe.

There is only one example on record from that year in which Eckenrode was overcome by southern subjectivity. In late August of that year, the Lynchburg Sons of Veterans wrote to the director, urging him to label a marker for the Battle of Bull Run as the Battle of Manassas. Conrad deplored the remonstrance, stating, “We must remember, my dear Doctor, that while ‘any other name may not smell as sweet’ to us of the South, the other nine tenths know it as ‘BULL RUN.’”²⁴⁶ Eckenrode was unmoved by Conrad’s appeal, telling him that, “I preferred the name of Manassas to Bull Run, and expected to use it.”²⁴⁷ Eckenrode’s reasoning was uncharacteristically unscholarly: “My principal objection to Bull Run is that it is so unladylike. Manassas has a mysterious imagination-stirring sound, this makes it more acceptable to southerners.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 2.

²⁴⁵ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 11 June 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3), 2.

²⁴⁶ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 29 August 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3), 1.

²⁴⁷ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 30 August 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3).

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

Defining New Duties for Owners of Historic Properties

As indicated above, there was no shortage of disputes between the public and the Division of Archeology and History during its first year of intensive operations. Aside from those relating to methodology and memory the Division also had to address complications relating to uncooperative owners of historic properties. To solve the problem, Eckenrode influenced the construction of new duties for the owners of historic properties to the public.

For instance, Louis Hertle, the owner of George Mason's former residence at Gunston Hall, was perturbed at the deluge of visitors to his property following the installation of a marker nearby. Seeking its removal, he wrote to his friend Walton R. Moore, the Congressional Representative from the 8th district of Virginia, to help obtain a resolution from the Conservation and Development Commission.²⁴⁹ When Eckenrode got word of the complaint, he outright refused to remove any marker relating to Gunston Hall. Dismissing Hertle as man "who desires to live a life of a hermit in a historical shrine," Eckenrode claimed that the complaint was just a good sign that "the markers are having an effect."²⁵⁰ As to the question of historic properties, Eckenrode argued that they were "shrines" and some of "Virginia's greatest assets," which "cannot well be ignored by us in our work of marking historical points."²⁵¹ Hence, the director prescribed new duties for those who owned historic "shrines," contending the following:

It seems to me that the owner of Gunston Hall should consider the fact that ownership of a historic place carries a certain responsibility with it. These shrines are public property to a certain extent, and it is useless to attempt to shut out the public, as well as selfish. What he should do is to issue a notice that the place will be open for inspection at certain times, and I think that there will be no objection to our putting such a notice on our markers. But I confess that I think it would be a bad policy for the Commission officially to warn off visitors from anything in Virginia. We are trying to sell the state, and we shall not sell it in that way.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ DOHR: Moore to Carson, 25 June 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁵⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 2 July 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9), 2.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 1.

²⁵² Ibid, 1.

Eckenrode did not want to risk removing a marker because of protest, because that would have set a precedent allowing other disaffected owners of historic shrines to do the same. Hence, it became incumbent upon owners to make their own schedules as to “inspection” times for the public.

Nevertheless, Eckenrode did not maintain total power over the placement of markers. Soon after the controversy over Gunston Hall, the Tayloe family, owners of the Mount Airy estate in Richmond County, objected to the Division’s plan to mark their colonial home. Eckenrode brought the complaint before the Conservation and Development Commission at the 14 September meeting, seeking a motion on the matter that was “representative of other objections affecting other places that have been received.”²⁵³ Although it is not known what Eckenrode said during the meeting, his influence is evident in the Commission’s proceedings. In particular, it was stated in the meeting, “[T]he public has certain vested rights in old historic places that the owners---lineal owners as well as purchasers---are under obligation to respect.”²⁵⁴ Hence, after reaching an agreement on the newly prescribed rights of the public, the Commission passed the following resolution:

[I]t was therefore agreed... that, as a general policy, markers should be put up on the highway wherever the historical interest of the place warrants, irrespective of local, personal views, but that reasonable effort should be made to get the approval of owners to the erection of markers where objections are raised.²⁵⁵

It was an ambiguous measure, employing terms such as “reasonable effort” as a means to deal with the “objections” of private owners. Furthermore, absent was a retroactive clause for those owners of historic properties that had protested in the past, only to have their houses marked anyway. Clearly, the Commission did not want to cede power over its ability to commemorate at

²⁵³ Eckenrode is on record as having “personally explained the progress with the erection of markers and some of the difficulties involved.” See: CCM: Vol. 3, (14 September 1928), 4.

²⁵⁴ CMM: Vol. 3, (14 September 1928), 4.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 5.

will, but the measure did leave open the possibility of retreat if a private citizen's objections were loud enough.

That is exactly what happened with the Tayloes. Unlike with the previous protests, Eckenrode was forced to take the Tayloes' complaints seriously because they had connections to influential persons in Richmond society. Specifically, the owners had sent an appeal to Douglas Freeman over the issue, who, in turn, took their side in the dispute.²⁵⁶ Not wanting to cross his mentor, Freeman, Eckenrode demonstrated more of a willingness to acquiesce in this case. Less than a week after the Commission passed its resolution, he wrote to Carson expressing frustration over the "rather annoying" affair while contending "we might drop the matter, on the ground that it is a place hardly worth marking."²⁵⁷ Eckenrode also wrote a letter of propitiation to Freeman, falsely claiming that he "sympthiz[ed] with the ladies at Mt. Airy."²⁵⁸ Feigning innocence, Eckenrode insisted that he had no control over the matter. As a mere "servant of the Commission" who "must carry out its orders," Eckenrode told Freeman that he had pursued the commemoration because he "was instructed by the Commission to go ahead and put up the marker."²⁵⁹ Of course, the director neglected to point out that he was the one who had brought the complaint before the Commission that resulted in the resolution outlining the responsibilities of historic shrine owners.

Furthermore, the same day that Eckenrode wrote Freeman, he sent one last entreaty to the Mt. Airy owners. In a pleading tone, Eckenrode begged the Tayloes' permission, expressing concern that "the precedent of allowing individuals to decide whether or not their homes are to

²⁵⁶ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 18 Septmeber 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ DOHR: Eckenrode to Freeman, 18 September 1928, (Box 60, Folder 1), 1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 1.

be marked” would cause the Division “a great deal of trouble carrying out the program.”²⁶⁰ He also tried to persuade the owner that the marker would actually help prevent tourists from imposing upon their family, giving visitors information at roadside that they “could not get except by being [sic] to the house themselves.”²⁶¹ Next, he made the exaggerated claim that the owner of Carter Hall had recently commented that its historical marker “had not occasioned him the slightest annoyance.”²⁶² This was a deceptive claim, because Conrad had given a different account of the situation at Carter Hall a couple of months before:

I was down in Clarke County yesterday and was tackled about the Carter Hall marker. I was told that it was too near another house and that tourists were always breaking and entering the wrong house, asking about Carter Hall. I promised all kinds of vain things but as a matter of fact nothing can be done about it.²⁶³

Despite Eckenrode’s supplication, the Tayloes remained firm in their decision to reject the marker, reiterating their desires to Carson in a letter that had their attorney as a carbon copy recipient.²⁶⁴ As a result, the Commission acquiesced, and Carson wrote Eckenrode that even though he was “sure” that “they are mistaken in their viewpoint” it would be best if the Commission would “pass it by.”²⁶⁵

Even though Eckenrode was unable to gain permission from the Tayloes, the resolution on historic shrines strengthened his mandate from the Commission. Furthermore, Eckenrode was developing a means to promote the historic shrines in print, which would allow him to “make known all these points to the public and advertise them in a literary way.”²⁶⁶ When the

²⁶⁰ DOHR: Eckenrode to Tayloe, 18 September 1928, (Box 48, Folder 3), 1.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 1.

²⁶² Ibid, 1.

²⁶³ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 4 June 1928, (Box 57, Folder 3).

²⁶⁴ DOHR: Tayloe to Carson, 19 September 1928, (Box 48, Folder 10).

²⁶⁵ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 21 September 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁶⁶ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 2 July 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9), 2.

tourist guide was first published in 1930, it included the location, and description of the Mt. Airy estate.²⁶⁷

The Surging Popularity and the Acceptance of the Division's Marker Program and its Methods

Controversies aside, 1928 witnessed a significant expansion of the Division of Archeology and History's responsibilities and influence on historical matters in the Commonwealth. Fieldwork progressed at a rapid pace in the spring and summer. At the end of March, Eckenrode reported that all of the markers from the initial order at the end of 1927 had been received, and about 326 markers had been erected.²⁶⁸ At the end of October, the Division announced that the number of markers along the roadways had ballooned to approximately 600, a figure that suggested the Division installed them at a rate of about 50 a month.²⁶⁹ The increased visibility of the program caused an expansion of public demands on the Division, with Eckenrode dividing his time between the office and "lectures and addresses on our [the Division's] historical work."²⁷⁰ Realizing the utility of the markers as a form of advertisement, the Commission expanded the scope of the Division's historical marker work to include historical markers for each county and for cities with populations over 5,000 people, in addition to labeling historic events.²⁷¹ Eckenrode also began to develop tourist literature to enshrine the marker system in text.²⁷² Although the book would be of obvious value for advertising, it would also elevate the work of the Division of Archeology and History as the premier source regarding Virginia's historical topography.

²⁶⁷ *The Virginia Historical Markers*, (Shenandoah Publishing: 1930), 98.

²⁶⁸ CCM: Vol. 3, (23 March 1928), 3-4.

²⁶⁹ PMB: Vol. 4, "Carson to State Highway Policemen, dated 25 October 1928," (16 November 1928), 55.

²⁷⁰ PMB: Vol. 4, "Division of Archeology and History Monthly Report," (23 March 1928), 26.

²⁷¹ CCM: Vol. 3, (23 March 1928), 18; PMB, Vol. 4, "Program of Meeting," (23 March 1928), 5.

²⁷² PMB: Vol. 4, "Division of Archeology and History Monthly Report," (23 March 1928), 25.

The markers were used for more than the mere promotion of historical sites. At times, they became a popular means for Carson to solidify political ties among influential, historically minded citizens. For instance, in response to the Chairman of the American Red Cross and later founder of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Judge John Barton Payne, who had inquired for a Colonel John Mosby monument, Carson was sure to promote the historical work of the Commission. He wrote Payne to underscore the unprecedented historical program, claiming that “embedding the Archeological and Historical Bureau in the Government of Virginia” will ensure that “monuments and markers will be cared for even to as great an extent as her calves, poultry and swine.”²⁷³ The Commissioner then sent a memo out to Eckenrode, advising him to “have your field man go immediately to Marshall,” since, “the way we handle this [Payne’s request] now may mean a great deal in the future.”²⁷⁴

Carson also used the markers as a means to reach out into the community, especially in cases that helped shape public perception of the Division of Archeology and History as the arbiter of historical matters in the Commonwealth. For example, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute branch of the Agricultural Society of Engineers (ASE) contacted the Division for “a marker on the farm in Rockbridge Country where Mr. Cyrus McCormick invented and perfected the reaper.”²⁷⁵ Carson, seeing an opportunity to build on the reputation of the Division’s historical work, responded with warm words of encouragement, lauding the “young fellows who want to do work of this kind,” while adding, “I feel they should have every bit of encouragement we can give them.”²⁷⁶ The Commissioner then directed Eckenrode to “let these boys have a stone,” jesting that “if it was a Girls College that was asking for such a favor that you would not

²⁷³ DOHR: Carson to Payne, 11 January 1927, (Box 55, Folder 9), 1-2.

²⁷⁴ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 11 January 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁷⁵ DOHR: Lacy to Carson, 07 March 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁷⁶ DOHR: Carson to Lacy, 09 March 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

only want to grant it, but to accompany the stone personally.”²⁷⁷ In this case, Carson’s strategy proved beneficial, as the ASE’s commemoration activities were published in the *New York Times*.²⁷⁸

The increased visibility of the Division’s work also resulted in a surge of public inquiries regarding historical information. Charles Hall Davis, a prominent Petersburg attorney, wrote Carson noting the “very effective” markers and inquiring about historical information on Fort Powhatan on the James River.²⁷⁹ Tourist inquiries for historical information started to come into the Division as well, with one on record from as far away as Arkansas for a picture of “Old Chapel” near Winchester.²⁸⁰ The Division did its best to answer all requests, knowing that the more it was relied upon as a resource, the better its chances of enduring far into the future. Toward the end of the year, evidence began to emerge that Virginia’s model of historical advertising would spread beyond the Old Dominion. In September, the New Jersey branch of the Daughters of Revolution requested a photograph of a Virginia Marker to present at its state board meeting.²⁸¹ The next month, the president of the Jefferson County, West Virginia, Historical society wrote Eckenrode to inquire about “the plan” of how “markers have been placed” around the Commonwealth, hoping to spearhead the development of a similar plan in his locale.²⁸² Opportunities for third party publications emerged as well. In October, the Shenandoah publishing house contacted Carson, wanting to “get up an advertising book” that would feature all of the markers and their locations.²⁸³ The correspondence showed that the

²⁷⁷ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 9 March 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁷⁸ “To Honor C.H. McCormick,” *New York Times*, 29 April 1928, E7

²⁷⁹ DOHR: Davis to Carson, 1 May 1928, (Box 55, Folder 9).

²⁸⁰ DOHR: Flippin to Conrad, 23 March 1928, (Box 59, Folder 6).

²⁸¹ DOHR: Platt to Eckenrode, 29 September 1928, (Box 24, Folder 1).

²⁸² DOHR: McDonald to Eckenrode, 15 October 1928, (Box 24, Folder 1).

²⁸³ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 16 October 1928, (Box 16 October 1928).

markers were making favorable impressions upon the tourists, and that word about the program was spreading.

The noticeable rise of the Division's popularity paralleled the Commission's advertising campaign to promote Virginia's tourist attractions to the nation. Between March and July, the Commission spent almost \$25,000 promoting Virginia's broad range of resources.²⁸⁴

Advertisements, including short columns and pictures, of Virginia's historical and natural resources appeared in an impressive array of newspapers and magazine, directed at audiences in the North, South, and West. Some of the more popular publications included *Harpers Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Literary Digest*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *New York Times*.²⁸⁵ At the end of the publicity campaign, in June, it was reported that the advertisements reached circulation of over 7 million with more than 29 million appearances.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the advertising campaign was only one component of the overall strategy aimed at promoting Virginia's wealth of historical resources. Because of the tourist inquiries, the Commission made plans to prepare two booklets: an "introductory booklet to be used for all tourist inquiries" and an "industrial sketch" for "industrial queries" that "will show the organization of all State offices and agencies."²⁸⁷

The tourist pamphlet, *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*, published in February the next year, was a tremendous achievement for the Division of Archeology and History.²⁸⁸ Thirty-nine pages in length, the pamphlet highlighted Virginia's most popular tourist attractions including natural wonders such as the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies, in addition to the shrines and monuments

²⁸⁴ PMB: Vol. 4, "Financial Statements," (25 March 1928), 20; PMB: Vol. 4, "Advertising Program," (20 July 1928), 125. The Program of Meeting Minutes have monthly financials appended to almost every meeting, providing the researcher with a clear snapshot of expenditures across the entire Conservation and Development Commission.

²⁸⁵ PMB: Vol. 4, "Advertising Program," (20 July 1928), 123-125.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 125.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 129

²⁸⁸ *Virginia: The Beckoning Land* (Richmond: Commission on Conservation and Development, 1928).

to the “notable and great” men relating to the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War eras.²⁸⁹

The most utile innovation, however, was the inclusion of a large tourist map. Twenty-four by forty-five and one-half, it outlined the entire commonwealth to visitors, detailing the location of every historical marker.²⁹⁰ The back of the map outlined automobile tours of Virginia ranging from one to ten days in length.

It was apparent that the historical markers had begun to serve as a cornerstone of the Conservation and Development Commission’s policies. To ensure that they would maintain a monopoly on its form of historical commemoration, the Commission had its design for the historical markers patented. Granted on 5 December 1928, the patent protected the Commission’s “new, original, and ornamental Design for Road Signs [sic].”²⁹¹ The patent served as unquestionable proof that the Commission’s program was on the cutting edge, setting the standard for roadside commemoration across the entire United States.

The accomplishments of the Division of Archeology and History in 1928 were significant and ensured its longevity. Vigorous engagement and conflict resolution helped the Division to define new standards of respect for historical monuments; duties were constructed for owners of historic shrines, while rights regarding access were guaranteed for the citizens. Most profound, however, was how the Division capitalized on the unified system of commemorative markers to create a guide for tourists. Additional innovations were on the way. In the following year, the Division became a model for multiple states developing similar programs. *The Beckoning Land* became a key means of promoting its historical work outside the Commonwealth. More texts

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ PMB: Vol. 4, “Advertising Program,” (20 July 1928), 129,

²⁹¹ Landon L. Perdue, Design for Road Sign, U.S. Patent 77,120, Filed 12 May 1928, and Issued 4 Dec 1928.

Available via Google Patents, last accessed 16 January 2011,

<http://www.google.com/patents/about?id=i79rAAAAEBAJ&dq=virginia+road+sign>.

were developed, including a *Key to Inscriptions* booklet that included every historical marker inscription in the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the Division was able to get separate appropriations from the Commission, allowing it to stand independently from the advertising fund. In the end, the combined achievements would set the national standard for roadside commemoration.

Chapter IV:
A Model for Success: The Division of Archeology and History's Lasting Impression on Public Commemoration and Historical Memory

With a burgeoning network of historical markers and a clear authoritative mandate, the Division of Archeology and History was able to see its program to fruition in 1929 as the headline of the Conservation and Development Commission's spring publicity campaign. The Commonwealth's assortment of over 500 markers was featured in two free tourist guides: *Virginia: The Beckoning Land* and *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia's Highway Historical Markers*.²⁹² Distribution of the publications spanned the United States and around the world, resulting in tens of thousands of inquiries to the offices of the Commission for copies and information on Virginia's historical marker program. As a result, tourists poured into the Commonwealth over the spring and summer months to catch a glimpse of the histories emblazoned on iron. Other states began to take notice and started probing the Division for advice on how to set up similar marker programs. The extensive publicity surrounding Eckenrode's bureau elevated its importance within the Commonwealth's governmental bureaucracy. As a result, Carson proposed that Eckenrode's Division be made a separate and independent bureau in the latter months of 1929, its budget no longer subject to the same set of appropriations given to advertising. The timing of the Division's success was propitious, allowing it to become ensconced in the state bureaucracy before the economic effects of the 1929 stock market crash became apparent. Its recognition as a distinct state agency codified the authority of the Division, as it became the only official commemorative institution in Virginia.

²⁹² The first of its kind, the "Key to Inscriptions" has gone through multiple editions, the newest published in 2007. It was a model copied by the vast majority of states that adopted a historical marker program, serving as an indispensable format for all who engage in motor tourism. See: Scott David Arnold, *A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

Promotion, Popularity, Emulation: The Significance of Virginia's 1929 Advertising Campaign

The Commission on Conservation and Development's 1929 spring advertising campaign propelled Virginia's historical marker program into the international spotlight. That year, the Commissioners offered the public free tourist guides, highlighting the Commonwealth's most popular historic destinations, in addition to a map that detailed the location of every historical marker. Entitled *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*, the booklet was touted as the authoritative guide to the Commonwealth. A pioneering innovation in automobile tourism, the booklet used the Division's network of historical markers as reference points on a large twenty-four by forty-five and one-half map of the Commonwealth.²⁹³ The back of the map outlined 18 different automobile tours of Virginia, each one highlighting a separate region. Tours ranged from a 240-mile "1 to 2 Day Trip" to a 1400-mile "10 to 12 Day Agricultural and Industrial Tour," and covered every region of the Old Dominion.²⁹⁴ Each route was dotted with red marks denoting the location of historical markers, allowing the tourists to plan their journey around the work of the Division of Archeology and History.

The theme and message of the publication was two-fold. First, it presented Virginia in a modern light, as a Commonwealth that had moved past the antipathies of the Civil War, while at the same time in step with the national trend of rapid modernization. Second, it was designed to evoke nostalgia for America's past in the face of the modernization sweeping across the entire country. The overarching advertising scheme underscored the intent of the Commission that strove to "preserve permanent records of our historic spots for the instruction of the youth of tomorrow," because, in Carson's words, "the South, on the threshold of a great industrial

²⁹³ PMB: Vol. 4, "Advertising Program," (20 July 1928), 129.

²⁹⁴ *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*, (1928), back of included Map.

movement...[was] in danger of losing sight of her great historical background.”²⁹⁵ Governor Byrd set the tone of the pamphlet’s narrative in the preface that he authored. Depicting the “internecine war” between North and South as what “forged the more perfect union that we know to-day [sic],” he focused on Virginia’s importance to the Nation as a whole.²⁹⁶ To reinforce the theme of the narrative, he enlisted the nationally renowned author, Dr. William Joseph Showalter, the assistant editor of the *National Geographic* magazine, to write the guide. Heaping praise on Showalter in the preface, Byrd described him as “my long-time friend” and “a traveler who for a quarter of a century has wandered under more than a score of flags, who has known the beauty spots and the historic scenes of many nations.”²⁹⁷ Not one to pass up an opportunity to promote his Commonwealth, Byrd closed by welcoming “everyone who would come to find inspiration in her shrines, joy in her landscapes, strength in her playgrounds, or profit in her resources.”²⁹⁸

Showalter, a native Virginian himself, detailed the impressive array of battlefields, shrines, and natural wonders of the Old Dominion over thirty-five pages.²⁹⁹ He wrote in a cosmopolitan tone, as he did not want to alienate potential tourists over the longstanding sensibilities that still lingered from the Civil War. Stressing Virginia’s historic central role to the development of the United States, Showalter proclaimed that one would appreciate the historic value of the Civil War battlefields, coming away from them “thanking God that there were no

²⁹⁵ “Urges South Keep Historical Side: William E. Carson Tells Maryland Society Danger is From Industrial Invasion,” *Peninsula Enterprise*, 30 November 1929, 1. The article was found in: William E. Carson Scrapbooks, 1928-1941. Accession 30463. Personal Papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, (1928-1929), 187.

²⁹⁶ *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*, (1928), 4.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

²⁹⁹ Showalter was born at Dale Enterprise Virginia, and was the former editor of the *Staunton Daily News* and the *Harrisburg Daily News Record*. When he passed away in 1935, he was the Chief of the Research Division of the *National Geographic*. See: Showalter Obituary, *New York Times*, 15 October 1935, 23.

cowards on either side,” while rejoicing in the “common heritage...in a united nation born in the travail of war.”³⁰⁰ To underscore his message, Showalter highlighted Virginia’s many contributions to Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War histories, in an effort to portray the Old Dominion as having played a pivotal role in every major era of American history. He illustrated his claims with over 100 pictures, highlighting monuments and historical sites, giving particular focus the Old Dominion’s pantheon of popular American “Great Men.”

Framing Virginia as the most historically relevant state served as a utile means to transcend the lingering antipathies surrounding the Civil War. What was particularly important to Byrd and the Commission was to re-brand Virginia as in line with the modernizing northern states so that it was not perceived as another “backward” southern state. The revitalized Commonwealth was to serve as a beacon to business and development, not “states rights.” In the words of Byrd, Virginia now stood “with the last trace of war obliterated” with “[m]odern highways [that] stretch from the mountains to the sea and from the Potomac to the borders of North Carolina and Tennessee.”³⁰¹ Showalter did his part to elevate Virginia by portraying the Commonwealth as having had a metamorphosis, declaring, “History records no greater recuperation of a people...[than] Virginia’s rise from the ruins of the Civil War to her present status.”³⁰²

In a way, the pamphlet served as a piece of propaganda to reshape public perception about the Commonwealth. The real genius was not the underlying theme and message presented in the pamphlet, but in actual markers that supported the entire tourist experience. In the words of Showalter:

³⁰⁰ *Virginia: The Beckoning Land*, (1928), 5.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 4.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 8.

Think not that this is a comprehensive picture of all that Virginia has to offer in beauty and scenery, in richness of history, in sacredness of shrines, in recreational opportunities or in investment advantage. It can be nothing more than a brief resume of a few of the outstanding things among the scenes that make every highway an avenue of inspiration. Gradually every historic spot by the wayside is being marked, gradually maps of every battlefield will be placed where the battles occurred, and Virginia is on the way to becoming the best marked as it is the most historic State in the Union, for a State agency is patiently and systematically searching out the history of its development—civil, political, military and industrial and erecting tablets on the highways that tell to the traveler in simple, concise, easily read language the story of these happenings that he who travels may read.³⁰³

The public not only read of Virginia's central role in its nation's history, or of its industrial turn around, but also saw it for themselves, guided by the narratives dotting the landscape of the State.

The Commission leveraged the free publication in its advertising campaign as an incentive to attract tourists to its prescribed tourist spots in the Commonwealth. Customized advertisements began appearing in popular newspapers around the country that brandished the free guide to the public. One advertisement in the *Pittsburg Post-Gazette* tempted its readers, reminding them that from Pittsburg to Monticello it was only 338 miles.³⁰⁴ Displaying a large graphic of the *The Beckoning Land*, the advertisement urged readers to write for a copy of the “profusely illustrated booklet with maps,” that would guide them “through the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, [and] over perfect roads—every mile a chapter in American History.”³⁰⁵

Similar advertisements appeared in city newspapers all over the far eastern section of the United States, such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, in addition to Columbus, Ohio, Louisville, Kentucky, and Charleston, West Virginia.³⁰⁶ Press releases also went out to all of Virginia's major newspapers telling the local citizens that the “booklet is intended to answer inquiries and follow up advertising being run by the Commission in twenty-four leading

³⁰³ Ibid, 39.

³⁰⁴ *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, 24 March 1929, society section, 11.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 11.

³⁰⁶ PMB: Vol. 6, “Inquiry Returns, Gross Cost and Individual Cost of Tourist Inquiries,” (19 September 1929), 167.

magazines and newspapers this spring.”³⁰⁷ Local press releases not only apprised Virginians of the Commission’s publicity program, but also afforded some promotion to Carson, by crediting him as the initiator of the program.

Publicity was not limited to short advertisements in newspapers. Virginia’s historical resources were also featured in some of America’s most widely circulated magazines. For instance, Virginia received a feature article in the March 1929 issue of *Timken Magazine*, a popular publication for car dealers and mechanics.³⁰⁸ Published by one of the nation’s leading manufacturers of ball bearings for automobiles, *Timken* gave the Old Dominion effusive praise. In reference to Virginia’s support of Republican Presidential candidate Al Smith, the magazine declared that the Old Dominion had achieved the “unprecedented feat of going republican,” a move that might allow it “to forge to the front again.”³⁰⁹ Replete with pictures supplied by the Commission, the article outlined a variety of historic sites along the roads of the Commonwealth.³¹⁰ Sites associated with the “Great Men” of America’s past were paramount according to *Timken*, as the magazine sought to appeal to its reader base of the emerging motor going middle-class whites:

In considering the names of states which loom large in history’s pages, do not overlook Virginia, the Old Dominion, the state of George Washington, Patrick Henry, James Monroe, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and a score or more of other of Revolutionary fame, together with later notables, making Virginia rank high in great men.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Carson Scrap Books, (1928-1929), 165, 173; also on those pages, see: “Beckoning Virginia In [sic] Described In Chamber Booklet,” *Richmond Times Dispatch* 21 March 1929; “New Tourist Book on Virginia Issued,” *Daily News Record*, 21 March 1929; “New Book For Tourists Issued by State Agency,” Unidentified; “New Book Tells of Virginia’s Charms,” Unidentified.

³⁰⁸ For a history of *Timken* see: Pruitt, Bettye H., *Timken: From Missouri to Mars—A Century of Leadership in Manufacturing*, Boston: Harvard Business School Pres, (1998), 58. The magazine article is in: PMB, Vol. 6, “Program for Meeting,” (19 April 1929), 106.

³⁰⁹ *Timken Magazine*, “Carry Me Back to Old Virginia,” March 1929, 821.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 821. It is noted on the first page of the article that, “Photographs used in this article supplied through courtesy Commission on Conservation and Development, Richmond, Virginia.”

³¹¹ *Ibid*, 821.

Historical markers were featured as well, portrayed to the readers as the primary aid to the historical tourist experience. The Division's markers were becoming synonymous with Virginia's historical tourism, implicitly understood as the authoritative means of gaining information on historical sites.

Following the March issue of *Timken* Virginia was once again thrust into the national limelight, this time in the April 1929 edition of the *National Geographic*. Dr. William Joseph Showalter used his remaining material collected for *The Beckoning Land* to produce a feature article in the magazine that spanned over one hundred pages, with seventy illustrations.³¹² He credited the Division's historical work as his inspiration for the article. In his opening paragraph, Showalter noted that his "many months of wandering amid the scenes and shrines of Virginia" had made an "outstanding impression" upon him.³¹³ Showalter went on to elucidate further on his "wanderings" among the markers and shrines of the Old Dominion, depicting his peregrinations as part of a transformative experience. In a tone tinged with sentimentalism, he gushed:

These pious pilgrimages in part led the author's feet along the pathways of the four years' struggle between the dauntless Army of the Potomac and the heroic Army of Northern Virginia. From the first assault on Bull Run to the final charge at Appomattox, for he wanted a picture of the epic era—wanted a bench mark, so to speak, by which to gauge the rise of the tide of progress and prosperity since the return of peace.³¹⁴

Lauding the progressive reforms to Virginia's business and infrastructure, Showalter argued the Commonwealth was experiencing "the dawn of another era."³¹⁵ He then portrayed the Division's work promoting the plethora of natural and historical wonders as a key part of the "new dawn." Singling out the historical marker program as an important means to illuminate

³¹² William Joseph Showalter, "Virginia—A Commonwealth that has Come Back," *The National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1929, LV, No. 4., 403- 469.

³¹³ Ibid, 403.

³¹⁴ Ibid, 403.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 409.

much of the Commonwealth's history, Showlater described it as a means to ensure "that the motorist need not roll along all unconscious of the sacredness of scenes about him."³¹⁶

Exposure in *National Geographic* was significant to the overall plan to build up the national reputation of Virginia. The favorable tone of the article, presenting the public with a revitalized Commonwealth was a utile means to pique the interest of potential tourists. The Commission paid \$5,200 dollars to advertise for the *Beckoning Land* in the back of the magazine.³¹⁷ The full-page ad, which was the most costly of that year's campaign, called attention to the "booklet of forty pages...fully illustrating the amazing number of interesting and beautiful places in the State." It also highlighted the included map that "outlines motor trips of various lengths of from one day to two week," inviting readers to request a copy of the guide, free of charge.³¹⁸

The combination of feature articles and short advertisements was resoundingly effective, spurring a demand for the Commission's publications that outstripped the supply. Even before its eventual publication in late February 1929, the secretary of the Commission reported that the 20,000 copies of the booklet on order from the press were not enough. At the February Committee meeting he warned, "We shall have to get a reprint very soon, as 10,000 copies will be distributed at once to accumulated mailing list [sic], besides returns from spring advertising."³¹⁹ The projected demands proved accurate and at the end of April, the Commission's advertising office was swamped with requests. Inquiries poured into the offices of the Commission at a rate of 150 to 500 a day, requesting amounts of *The Beckoning Land*

³¹⁶ Ibid, 453.

³¹⁷ PMB: Vol. 6, "Inquiry Returns," (19 September 1929), 167.

³¹⁸ *The National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1929, unnumbered, back of magazine.

³¹⁹ CCM: Vol. 5, (15 February 1929), 20.

ranging from one to 5,000 copies.³²⁰ Aside from tourist inquiries, the Commission started receiving requests for the booklet from other state organizations. For instance, there are records of a request for 100 copies from the Norfolk Publicity Bureau to distribute to a group of visiting Swedish Delegates.³²¹ Virginia Congressman H. Walton Moore was so impressed that he called for the Commission to send copies of the booklet “to all members of Congress.”³²² As a result, of the rampant interest in the publication, it was reported at that month’s Commission meeting that the publication “had taken much time in the office, entailing an extra clerk.”³²³ In addition, the original supply of 20,000 had dwindled to approximately 1,000, sending the Commission scrambling to get a second edition of 40,000 copies printed as soon as possible.³²⁴

Over the next couple of months, the advertising section worked at a feverish pace to keep up with demand for the coveted pamphlets, sending out 8,584 copies in April, 7,366 in May, and 1,248 in June.³²⁵ When the second printing of *The Beckoning Land* was received at the end of June, it was reported that there was already 9,000 requests on hand.³²⁶ To capitalize on the surging popularity of the pamphlet, 571 complimentary copies went out to members of the United States Congress, while additional copies went out to the Virginia Chambers of Commerce, local newspapers, and various state institutions.³²⁷ Praise for the publication poured in from multiple regions of the United States, and it even garnered compliments from other countries. In July, the *Free Lance Star* reported that “Information of Virginia as a ‘beckoning land’ is being read not only in the remote sections of the United States, but by persons in the

³²⁰ PMB: Vol. 6, “Program of Meeting,” (19 April 1929), 9. Also see: CCM: Vol. 5, “Minutes of Meeting,” (19 April 1929), 13.

³²¹ PMB: Vol. 6, “Program of Meeting,” (19 April 1929), 9.

³²² Ibid, 9.

³²³ CCM: Vol. 5, (19 April 1929), 13.

³²⁴ PMB: Vol. 6, “Program of Meeting,” (19 April 1929), 9.

³²⁵ Ibid, 83; “Monthly Statistical Report,” (21 June 1929), 77, 80; (19 September 1929), 126.

³²⁶ PMB: Vol. 6, “Monthly Statistical Report,” (19 September 1929), 130.

³²⁷ Ibid, 126, 131.

‘four corners’ of the world.”³²⁸ Quoting letters from Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Chicago, the article also noted that correspondence had come into the Commission from Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, China, India and the Philippines.³²⁹

As the demand for *The Beckoning Land* continued to surge, the Commission produced another publication entitled *Key to Inscriptions*. The booklet provided the full text of every extant historical marker in the Commonwealth so that motor-going tourists did not have to slow down or pull over, allowing them to “read as they rode.”³³⁰ Like *The Beckoning Land*, *Key to Inscriptions* was free to the public, and the Commission also used it strategically to stoke the publicity surrounding Virginia’s tourism industry. The first print run of 30,000 copies was published in June and slated for distribution “at once to hotels, newspapers and Chambers of Commerce in Virginia and Washington.”³³¹

The official booklet was also the first that acquainted readers with members of the Division of Archeology and History, listing Eckenrode and Conrad as Director and Assistant Director. The booklet also listed the names of those on the 25-member Advisory Committee, while providing readers with an authoritative statement to certify the authenticity of the Division’s work:

Historical Marker Inscriptions, prepared by the staff of the Division of History and Archeology [sic], are submitted for criticism and verification to the members of the Advisory Committee of this Division, made up of gentlemen selected for their pre-eminence in the knowledge of the history of Virginia.³³²

The introduction went on in the form of a paean, telling readers the tale of how the Commission “took up the question” of historical markers, “determined to try what had never before been

³²⁸ “Fame of State Read by the World,” *The Free Lance Star*, 3 July 1929, 3.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

³³⁰ *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers* (Richmond: State Commission on Conservation and Development, 1929).

³³¹ PMB: Vol. 6, “Program of Meeting,” (21 June 1929), 7; “Monthly Statistical Report,” (19 September 1929), 126.

³³² *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers*, (1929), 1.

attempted on a large scale.”³³³ As a result, the Division’s work necessitated a revolutionary system of historical commemoration. The book was cast as a means to enhance the overall historical experience of the tourists, telling readers that, “by viewing the markers in conjunction with this skeleton booklet, it is possible to get a good idea of the topography of Virginia history with an absolute minimum of reading.”³³⁴

Unlike the *Beckoning Land*, *Key to Inscriptions* did not have extensive commentary on particular historical sites, nor did it try to frame Virginia in a new modern light. The booklet did set a revolutionary standard on how to use the markers to present a coherent history, however, by fitting every marker with a letter and number code to make them identifiable to the reader so that one could find them in the text with ease. It gave the following example:

The Valley Pike, which extends from the West Virginia Line northeast of Winchester, Va., and runs in a southward direction through Roanoke, Va., and thence to the North Carolina line via Martinsville, Va., has the code letter “A”.³³⁵

Every code letter had a corresponding number so that travelers could identify the marker in the book and read as they drove to save time.

Of deeper significance was the fact that the Division’s marker histories were now published in a text that was distributed en masse across the United States. Before, tourists seeking a historical understanding of a particular city or event would have to stop and, in the same manner as Eckenrode’s field workers, ask locals or sift through available source material to gain an understanding of a particular local history. The oral histories of the particular regions, in many cases, would have served as the only available sources or “stories.” With the booklet, however, the Division’s histories were the most authoritative, and the most conspicuous narratives of Virginia’s landscape. The underlying historical disputes over particular sites in

³³³ Ibid, 4.

³³⁴ Ibid, 4.

³³⁵ Ibid, 3-4.

addition to many of the local histories or so called “myths” were lost, as the travelers consciousness of the Old Dominion’s historical topography was shaped by the Division’s road signs. Any lingering disputes were literally rolled over, since the thousands of tourists and readers of the text absorbed the histories as they navigated the landscape.

Statistics published by the Commission underscored the success and growing popularity of Virginia’s historical tourism initiatives that resulted from the spring advertising campaign. In June, every inquiry was tallied, which came to 19,417. The detailed log also showed the specific publications that had spurred letters from interested persons. Magazines garnered the largest response from the public, netting the Commission 15,202 inquiries, with the largest amount, 6,690, resulting from the advertisement in the *National Geographic*. Second was the *Saturday Evening Post*, at 2,818. Newspaper advertisements netted 2,088 inquiries, with the most, 689, resulting from the *New York Times*, with the second most, 374, resulting from the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*.³³⁶

Inquiries and Emulation Outside of the Commonwealth: The Exportation of Virginia’s Historical Marker Program

The resounding success of the advertising program elicited more than inquiries from interested tourists and history buffs, it also piqued the attention of other states that wanted to capitalize on local historical resources in the same manner as Virginia. For instance, one of the Commissioners of the Oregon State Highway Commission, Robert W. Sawyer, wrote to the Commission, asking for a “report relating to your work,” noting that the historical program “is something I have been trying to promote in Oregon.”³³⁷ The Texas State Highway Engineer, Gibb Gilchrist, also inquired about Virginia’s markers, asking for “a copy of your specifications

³³⁶ All of the statistics in the paragraph are contained in: PMB: Vol. 6, “Inquiry Returns,” (19 September 1928), 167.

³³⁷ DOHR: Robert W. Sawyer to the Conservation and Development Commission, 18 October 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2).

and sample plans of signs and monuments for the preservation of historical land marks [sic] over the State of Virginia.”³³⁸ There is also evidence that suggests that the tourist literature served a means to promote similar historical work in other states. For instance, F. R. Batchelder, the Vice Chairman of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary Commission wrote, “I really need about eight more copies of ‘White Pages of History’ and two or three copies of ‘The Beckoning Land’ ...I have immediate destinations for half a dozen, and all serve usefully in promoting our program.”³³⁹ The Division’s historical program quickly emerged as a model that other states sought to emulate.

Rather than keep the details of its successful program secret, the Commission was open to inquiry, willing to provide any information requested. One of the most illustrative examples of the Commission’s openness was demonstrated by the exchanges with A.D. Hosterman, President of the Ohio Revolutionary Memorial.³⁴⁰ Hosterman, having recently been appointed as the chairman of an Ohio State Commission, similar in nature to Virginia’s, asked for “all of the literature...as to what Virginia has done along these lines [of marking historic sites] and also just what scope your State Conservation and Development Commission covers.”³⁴¹ In addition, Hosterman proposed that he “visit Virginia to look personally over your plans and what has been developed.”³⁴² The Commission’s response to the entreaty was affable; with its program already established, there was more to gain if its marker served as the emulative model of historical work

³³⁸ DOHR: Gibb Gilchrist to Virginia Historical & Preservation Association, 5 November 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2).

³³⁹ DOHR: Batchelder to Flippin, 19 November 1929, (Box 65, Folder 10).

³⁴⁰ The Ohio Revolutionary Memorial’s stated purpose was thus: “In Commemoration of Ohio’s Participation in the Revolution and the Sesquicentennial of General George Rogers Clark’s victory over the Shawnee Indians and Confederates, Battle of Piqua August 8th, 1780, making possible the opening of the Northwest Territory.” The Commission never demonstrated prejudice toward the Ohio Commission, despite the fact that it sought to commemorate a victory over the Confederates. See: the letterhead of DOHR: Hosterman to Flippin, 14 November 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2).

³⁴¹ DOHR: Hosterman to Flippin, 26 September 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2).

³⁴² Ibid.

for other states. In essence, such exchanges allowed the Commission to project its authority in historical matters outside of the Commonwealth, becoming the standard bearer across the United States.

The secretary of the Commission, Elmer O. Flippin, was quick to answer Hosterman's request, sending out a copies of *The Beckoning Land* and *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers*.³⁴³ He also went into explicit detail regarding the operations of the Division of Archeology and History, sending Hosterman a copy of every law relating to the Commission, in addition to outlining all of its departments and associated duties. In November, Hosterman is on record as an attendee of the Commission on Conservation and Development Committee meeting "to study its historical program."³⁴⁴ He spent "several days in Virginia," conferred directly with Eckenrode, and was taken on tours of the Richmond Battlefield area.³⁴⁵ Upon his return home, Hosterman was given the budget outline for the History Division, which included the yearly salaries and operational costs.³⁴⁶

On 18 November 1929, William Carson addressed the Maryland Historical Society on Virginia's popular historical marker program. He had Eckenrode help him write the speech, wanting to "develop it along lines that will be of credit to your [Eckenrode's] organization."³⁴⁷ The Commissioner not only wanted to talk about the program, he also wanted to show historical markers to the Maryland Historical Society. Hence, he had Eckenrode arrange for the Division's field assistant, M. F. Pleasants, "to take to Baltimore on the eighteenth three markers with their posts; one a general historic marker, 2 a county line marker, and 3 a town or city marker, which

³⁴³ DOHR: Flippin to Hosterman, 24 October 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2), 1.

³⁴⁴ CCM: Vol. 5, (22 November 1929), 2.

³⁴⁵ PMB: Vol. 6, "Summary Report: Secretarial and Advertising," (22 November 1929), 72, back page.

³⁴⁶ DOHR: Flippin to Hosterman, 3 December 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2), enclosure.

³⁴⁷ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 2 October 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

cover the three divisions of our work.”³⁴⁸ Apparently, Carson’s exhibition of Virginia’s historical markers made a strong impression. The Eastern Shore *Peninsula Enterprise* ran a front-page story on his speech, stating, “The Maryland Society plans to inaugurate a similar work in this state.”³⁴⁹ Present at the meeting were representatives from “the Eastern Shore, South Maryland, the Frederick and the Hartford Societies.”³⁵⁰

Selling History to Virginians: Historical Markers as a Local Advertising Platform

The historical markers also served as a platform to advertise more than historical sites. When the inherent utility of the markers as a publicity tool became apparent, the Commission decided to mark every state institution to bring them into the limelight. The effort was inspired by a letter to Governor Byrd from a citizen of Petersburg, suggesting that the state advertise the Central State Hospital with a “sign to indicate to thousands of tourists...the purpose for which this institute is being used.”³⁵¹ Piqued by the idea for additional promotion in the Commonwealth, Byrd sent a copy of the letter to the Division, declaring, “I entirely approve of this suggestion,” while adding, “I wish you would mark all State institutions in such detail as may be advisable.”³⁵² Byrd’s guidance for the project was broad, calling for markers to “show the date the institution was established” in addition to “the nature of work done and any other significant historical data relating to the institution.”³⁵³ Delegating the task to Eckenrode, the Governor ordered him to “prepare...appropriate data to be placed on each marker.”³⁵⁴ It was a monumental assignment. Not only did the marking of state institutions mean a substantial

³⁴⁸ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 6 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁴⁹ “Urges South Keep Historical Side,” *Peninsula Enterprise*, 30 November 1929, 1.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁵¹ DOHR: Strailman to Byrd, 9 November 1929, (Box 65, Folder 2).

³⁵² PMB: Vol. 6, “Byrd to State Conservation and Development Commission, dated 4 December 1928,” (21 December 1928), 64.

³⁵³ DOHR: Byrd to Dodson, 31 December 1928, (Box 59, Folder 1).

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

increase in work for the Division of Archeology and History, it also required creative solutions to keep the operations within the allotted budget.

In response to the challenge, the enterprising Commission determined not only to mark institutions, but also towns and so-called “natural wonders.” To defray costs, the Commission came up with a plan to have cities and civic bodies pay for the markers they wanted to publicize local spots. The way in which the Division executed the task revealed its adaptability to new challenges and, once again, illustrated its proclivity toward its objective methodology of commemoration. From the start of the project, Eckenrode pointed out the “considerable” expense on the Division’s strained budget, arguing, “Certainly, the cities should pay for these markers.”³⁵⁵ To sway local institutions into footing the bill, the Commission sent out letters to every chamber of commerce and state institution reminding them that the “markers arouse a great deal of interest,” insisting that they “make our State very much more attractive to tourists” while also making native Virginians “proud of their home state.”³⁵⁶ To make the deal attractive, markers were offered for a discounted rate of \$50, but they were only to be erected under the supervision of someone from the Commission.³⁵⁷

The Division began its sweeping campaign to solicit cities and state institutions for markers in May and June, toward the end of the spring advertising campaign.³⁵⁸ Wanting to capitalize on the surging publicity surrounding tourism in the Old Dominion, the Division was sure to include a copy of *Key to the Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers* in

³⁵⁵ DOHR: Eckenrode to Dodson, 23 January 1929, (Box 59, Folder 1).

³⁵⁶ DOHR: Copy of letter to sent to the Mayor and Council of cities in Virginia regarding Historical Markers, (Box 59, Folder 6), 1.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 1. Also see: DOHR: Memorandum of Agreement for the Erection of State Institution Markers, 17 June 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8). The memo of agreement is also in PMB: Vol. 6, (21 June 1929), 86

³⁵⁸ See: PMB: Vol. 6, (21 June 1929), 76, 84-86 and PMB: Vol. 5, (19 September 1928), 123.

every solicitation letter to entice the prospective clients.³⁵⁹ In addition to individual letters, the Commission used the Virginia press to advertise markers for state institutions. William E. Carson sent out a letter to every newspaper in the Commonwealth along with a press release, urging editors to “publish the enclosed news article and [to] write a news article about it.”³⁶⁰ He justified his entreaty, telling editors that “We are trying to make Virginia the mecca for tourists, and as we see it, the best way to do this is to throw a glow of romance over her.”³⁶¹ Citing the fact that “[t]he tourist and outdoor camper spend three billions of dollars annually in the United States,” he argued, “a tourist...can not find elsewhere romance and history such as our towns hold.”³⁶²

The response from the press was considerable. In a note from the *Pittsylvania Courier* of Chatham, Virginia, the editor wrote, “We are very much interested in this and want specific information to go about obtaining a marker for Chatham.”³⁶³ The *Farmview Herald* published a feature article declaring that the historical markers serve as “Fine Advertising.”³⁶⁴ Using Carson’s, press release, it echoed his justification for purchasing markers for cities and institutions:

As a tourist approaches a town he naturally wants to know its name, and when he finds its name and a concise historic story on an attractive marker, he stops to spend some time and, incidentally, his money, in that town; and a few carloads of tourists daily stopping for a meal or gasoline or overnight, soon pay the cost of the marker.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ PMB: Vol. 6, “Eckenrode to Jarman, President of State Teachers College,” (21 June 1929), 85.

³⁶⁰ DOHR: Carson to Editor, 8 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ DOHR: East to Carson, 11 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁶⁴ “Historic Markers Fine Advertising,” *Farmville Herald*, 15 November 1929.

³⁶⁵ *Farmville Herald*, 15 November 1929.

Delighted in the statewide publicity surrounding the local marker proposition Carson wrote to Eckenrode that, “Practically every newspaper is running a story on it, and I think you will get some good results.”³⁶⁶

The Commission’s campaign to enlist the community to help commemorate was an immense success and resulted in elevating the Division of Archeology and History’s authority even further. Before Carson’s publicity blitz in the press, Eckenrode reported that there were eighteen markers on order from seven cities, with Charlottesville and Berryville requesting four apiece.³⁶⁷ By the next month, as the publicity campaign gained momentum, the Division was inundated with requests for markers from both cities and private organizations that were also willing to front money for the erection of a historical markers. In response, the Commission had to create mechanisms to ensure that the Division would have full control over commemoration from private entities. There was already a strict memorandum of agreement in place for the state institutions that elected to purchase a marker through the Division. Every buyer was required to sign a binding agreement, ceding control to the Commission to “prepare the inscription and arrange for its manufacture of the markers of the design of its historic highway markers.”³⁶⁸ Even the installation of the marker was to be supervised by a representative of the Commission.³⁶⁹ In response to inquiries from private organization, the Commission passed a resolution at the November staff conference stating the following:

To meet the request of some individual and private agencies that the Commission’s historical markers be erected off the state highway on county and local roads, it was agreed, on the motion of Mr. Dodson, seconded by Mr. Roberts that the Commission will erect its standard type marker off the State highway system on the rights-of-way of county and local roads when solicited so to do by private agencies, providing the inscription is prepared or approved by the staff of the History Division, at a standard charge

³⁶⁶ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 12 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁶⁷ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 22 October 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁶⁸ PMB: Vol. 6, “Memorandum of Agreement,” (21 June 1929), 86.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 86.

of \$100.00, it being also understood that the name of the Conservation and Development Commission only will appear on the marker.³⁷⁰

Opening up commemoration had two key benefits to the Commission. First, it created a means for all of Virginia's cities, institutions, and historically relevant local sites to receive a historical marker. More important, however, it gave the Division more control. If anyone wanted the added benefit of a marker included in the popular tourist literature, the narrative had to go through Eckenrode and his bureau. In essence, the Division claimed a total monopoly on the most popular form of historical commemoration at that time. The following year, Eckenrode would strengthen his authority with new legislation that stated the following:

An ACT prohibiting the posting or erection of historic markers, monuments, signs, or notices on public property or on public roads, unless and until a certificate of approval of the terms of the legend, inscription of notice thereon, shall have been issued by the division of archeology and history of the State commission on conservation and development.³⁷¹

As shown in the previous chapters, the Division's interaction with the public was limited to encounters relating to field investigation, historical conflicts, and political maneuvering. Now, with commemoration encouraged in the name of publicity, public engagements would become more numerous. The Division allowed for ample commemoration because it was secure in its ability to control the narrative. Not every community, however, had a voice in commemoration. State commemoration for the African-American community was restricted to state correctional or vocational schools and it was difficult for the Division to secure an inscriptions for them.

Records show that solicitation letters were sent to institutions for minorities such as the Virginia School for Colored Deaf and Blind Children, the Virginia Manual Labor School for

³⁷⁰ CCM: Vol. 5, (22 November 1929), 14.

³⁷¹ "Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia: Session which Commenced at the State Capitol on Wednesday, January 8, 1930," (Richmond: Davis Bottom: 1930), [Ch. 346, HB 223], 777.

Colored Boys and the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls.³⁷² The poor state of race relations in Virginia was evident in the correspondence with the Superintendent of the Virginia School for Colored Deaf and Blind Children, Dr. William C. Ritter. Unresponsive to the first memorandum sent in June, the Division sent another in September, finally garnering a reply. Ritter refused a marker, arguing the following:

Route 39 (Old Point= [sic] Newport News) passes within 3 blocks of our school. The Block next to the road (north) is being built up with nice residences for white people. The 2nd block (just across the electric car line north towards our school is for sale for white people. We own the 3rd block (back north of the white line.)

I am very much afraid the owners of the land –(Blocks 1 and 2)—would not like to see a marker on or near their property calling attention to the Negro school. (They already claim, I understand, that their property has lost some of its value since we built our school here in 1908-9)...Our back gate is on a public county road...This road (County Maintenance) is used only by farmers and residents to our north. A marker there would be of little interest.³⁷³

Jannie F. Barrett, the Superintendent of the Industrial School for Colored Girls never replied to the Division.³⁷⁴ It was not until 1931 that a marker was made for The Virginia Manual Labor School, giving scant mention to its African American founder, Dr. John E. Smythe.³⁷⁵ The lack of commemoration for African Americans was illustrative of the restrictions on black franchise and dominant class of whites in power. The government officials of Virginia, still in the grips of Jim Crow, functioned within a context that was both overtly racist and socially Darwinist. Although evidence of commemoration for African Americans in the early years is scant and ancillary at best, the entreaty to African American institutions showed the Division of Archeology and History's stance toward publicizing histories, even the less known of the time.

³⁷² See: DOHR: Eckenrode to Ritter, 20 June 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8), 1-2; Eckenrode to Barrett, 20 June 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8), 1-2.

³⁷³ DOHR: Ritter to Dietz, 23 September 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8), 1-2.

³⁷⁴ See: DOHR: Eckenrode to Barrett, 20 June 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8) and Dietz to Barrett, 10 September 1929, (Box 64, Folder 8),

³⁷⁵ The original marker is not longer extant. However, a new marker was erected in 1999 honoring Smythe and his contributions to African American education. See: HMDB, "John Henry Smythe," accessed 4 December 2011, <http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=1917>.

The wider Commission, on the other hand, did not readily entertain any such notions when dealing with African Americans.

For instance, an enterprising African American, F.P. Mac Alpine from Springfield, Massachusetts, wrote to the Commission offering his services “as real estate agent” and “as advertising agent among a certain group in this section and in fact all over.”³⁷⁶ Furthermore, he claimed:

I am in touch with many of my people who have saved money, bought homes and are substantial citizens; and they expressed a desire to return to their former home... There is a growing tendency all over not only in the North and East but in many Southern States to go to Va... The element of people with whom I come in contact for the most part are steady, thrifty and progressive. I am persuaded to believe that there are numerous manufacturing plants among the already established in this section (white) anxious to remove to your state; and with a little direct, hand to hand progressive work they would flood your section. I am sure what can be done among the colored people. I am selling some property for a colored man now – who was born in Virginia and who plans to return to the state and buy a farm as soon as the deal is completed for his dale here. I have more in view. But, I am anxious to locate them close together as is possible.³⁷⁷

Alpine’s carefully crafted letter did its best to traverse the racial sensibilities of Commission. He stressed the upstanding and “progressive” character of those who sought to bring into the Commonwealth, in addition to pointing the benefits of more cheap labor for white manufactures. Nonetheless, Virginia’s program of progress, while progressive in the realm of business and organization, still bore the hallmarks of a racial inequality. The Commission was luke warm in response to Alpine’s offer, stating in its February Committee meeting: “The opinion of the Commission, from the discussion, appeared to be the procedure with the matter should be cautious and against any promiscuous general introduction of colored land owners.”³⁷⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that the Commission followed up on Alpine’s offer.

³⁷⁶ CCM: Vol. 5, “Copy of letter: Alpine to Flippin, dated 8 February 1929,” (15 February 1929), 42.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 42.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 43.

A Key to the Commission's Success: The Establishment of the Division of Archeology and History as an Independent State Bureau

As a result of the unanticipated demand for tourist guides spurred by the publicity campaign the Commission had to use funds that were reserved for the marker program, which put the operations of Eckenrode's Division Archeology and History Division in jeopardy. As early as April, the Advertising Director warned of an impending budget deficit he described as "resulting from new projects and from the necessity of reprinting the booklet Virginia: 'The Beckoning Land' [sic]."³⁷⁹ Noting that, originally, the advertising program was allotted "\$25,000, with \$20,000 for markers," advertising expenses had almost tripled, ballooning to approximately \$14,500.³⁸⁰ By April, the unanticipated expenses of advertising in publications such as the *National Geographic* along with the reprint of *The Beckoning Land*, and the *Key to Markers* booklet had wrought a deficit in the advertising budget \$233.82.³⁸¹

The budget shortfall caused Eckenrode some considerable consternation. Apparently, he feared that the success of the advertising program would usurp his bureau. Upon learning of the budget deficit, he sent an emotionally charged missive to Conrad, declaring: "I regret very, very much to have to tell you that our pleasant intercourse as colleagues in historical work has come to an end."³⁸² "Appalled" at the state of the advertising fund, Eckenrode lamented to his friend that "no money remains for markers."³⁸³ Closing in a dramatic fashion, he claimed that Conrad was to be let go from the Division, bemoaning, "To part company with you is to sever business connections with a beloved friend and one of the most agreeable companions I have ever

³⁷⁹ CCM: Vol. 5, (19 April 1929), 40.

³⁸⁰ PMB: Vol. 6, "Program of Meeting," (19 April 1929), 10.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 10; "Status of Advertising Fund," (19 April 1929), 104.

³⁸² DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 28 March 1929, (Box 57, Folder 4).

³⁸³ Ibid.

known...I really can write no more.”³⁸⁴ Conrad, perhaps aware that Eckenrode was going to extremes, tried to soothe his friend’s feelings, positing that “such things come to all, so why should we worry.”³⁸⁵ It appears as though the Director wrote in hyperbole to spur Conrad to action, hoping that he would intercede with Carson on the Division’s behalf because there is no evidence to suggest that Conrad’s position was actually cut. Correspondence between Eckenrode and Conrad continued over the weeks leading up to the April Commission meeting, because Eckenrode worked feverishly behind the scenes to rally support for his bureau. Some of the letters boarded on subterfuge. To mask his behind the scenes dealings, Eckenrode began sending out secret letters to Conrad from the Westmoreland Club in Richmond, a move the Director justified by telling his friend, “I am writing from here for obvious reasons.”³⁸⁶ Expressing dissent toward Flippin, Eckenrode told Conrad that “F boldly declared that there would be no more money for markers and added that the committments [sic] of the advertising fund might be more than the fund...He is sure of himself now.”³⁸⁷ Skeptical regarding the future of the Division, he further stated, “Our friend now seems to think that he is completely in the saddle and can do as he pleases; I am not sure that C will not support him to the limit.”³⁸⁸ In the apparent struggle for resources in the Commission, Eckenrode believed that the Division was now viewed as an expendable office. “It would not be surprising if F. [sic] discovered at any moment that there is little money left to pay history salaries,” he hypothesized, “it is his game to discredit us and make it appear that we have been extravagant.”³⁸⁹ Reasoning, “he may make his play on April 19,” Eckenrode told Conrad, “I shall like to have you here” as the latter “may be

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ DOHR: Conrad to Eckenrode, 29 March 1929, (Box 57, Folder 4), 1.

³⁸⁶ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, 10 April 1929, (Box 59, Folder 3), 1.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 1.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 1.

³⁸⁹ Ibid, 2.

great service in a show-down.”³⁹⁰ Eckenrode also suggested that Conrad “have a talk with Roberts, and if possible, Farrar,” advising his friend to “be very discreet in what you say.”³⁹¹

The next day, Eckenrode tried once more to spur Conrad to action, this time in a cryptic handwritten note asserting, “The game seems to have begun; at least, a man has appeared.” Apparently, Eckenrode had another run in with Flippin, causing him to make the following dire speculation: “Our friend has entirely recovered himself and is in fine spirits. He must be confident of receiving full approval of his course and, as I said, is his old self again.”³⁹² That same day, Eckenrode sent out another note, this time more composed, in typed form. He recanted his previous suggestion that Conrad talk to the Roberts on the Division’s behalf, stating that, “It is necessary to be circumspect.”³⁹³ He still wanted Conrad to come to the meeting; “it would be best in my judgment,” he argued, “[t]he explosion may come then.”³⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Eckenrode’s worries were all for naught, as no one seemed to share his concern for the Division. Griffith Dodson responded to an entreaty from the Director with nonchalance, telling Eckenrode, “I feel quite certain that Mr. Carson will protect the situation,” adding “[t]he matter will be up for discussion at the next meeting of the Commission, probably the 19th [of April].”³⁹⁵ Furthermore, two days before that Commission meeting, Carson, after catching wind of the inter-office intrigue, sent Eckenrode a castigating note:

Bryan Conrad called me up yesterday evening and said that you wanted him to come to Richmond so as to be on hand for the Commission meeting, purpose in mind being to wheel into line all your forces to protect your Historic Bureau, a thing I greatly admire in you. But in view of the fact that I can take care of this proposition better than any person else, and I am in full sympathy with the safeguarding of the work of

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 2.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad, (hand written), 11 April 1929, (Box 59, Folder 3).

³⁹³ DOHR: Eckenrode to Conrad (typed), 11 April 1929, (Box 59, Folder 3).

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ DOHR: Dodson to Eckenrode, 12 April 1929, (Box 59, Folder 1).

your Bureau, I rather think the wisest thing to do would be to leave it in my hands. If I cannot take care of it nobody else can.³⁹⁶

At the Commission meeting, Carson did safeguard the Division. After conferring directly with Governor Byrd, “it was agreed...\$12,000 be transferred from the printing fund of the Geological Survey, and \$6,000 from the Special Water Resource Fund to supplement the advertising fund and permit the continuation of the publicity program as originally planned.”³⁹⁷

Carson did not stop at the mere transfer of funds to keep the operations of both programs going. Two months later, he called for a separate budget for the Division for the next biennium. The plan provided “for 225 to 250” new markers per year” with a budget of “\$30,000 per year, of which \$12,000 is for markers.”³⁹⁸ He followed up the proposal with official correspondence to the Commonwealth Budget Committee. In a sixteen-page memo, Carson called attention to “the widely appreciated work this Division has been doing under Dr. Eckenrode, to mark historic places in the State.”³⁹⁹ Noting that funds for the Division had “been borne by the Advertising Fund,” he requested that the Budget Committee “set up the History and Marker Division as a separate and independent Division.”⁴⁰⁰ Setting up the Division as a separate entity would not only shield it from competition for funds, but also allow the advertising campaign to take a new direction. In a letter to Byrd at the end of 1929, Carson admitted, “In concentrating on tourist advertising, we have not been mindful of the need for our industrial development.”⁴⁰¹ He recommended to the Governor that “Constructive publicity may well be continued in a moderate amount to focus industrial attention on Virginia and to back up and guide that interest, arising

³⁹⁶ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 17 April 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

³⁹⁷ CCM: Vol. 5, (19 April 1929), 41.

³⁹⁸ CCM: Vol. 5, (12 July 1929), 32.

³⁹⁹ PMB: Vol. 6, “The 1930-1932 Budget of the Commission on Conservation and Development,” (22 November 1923), 94.

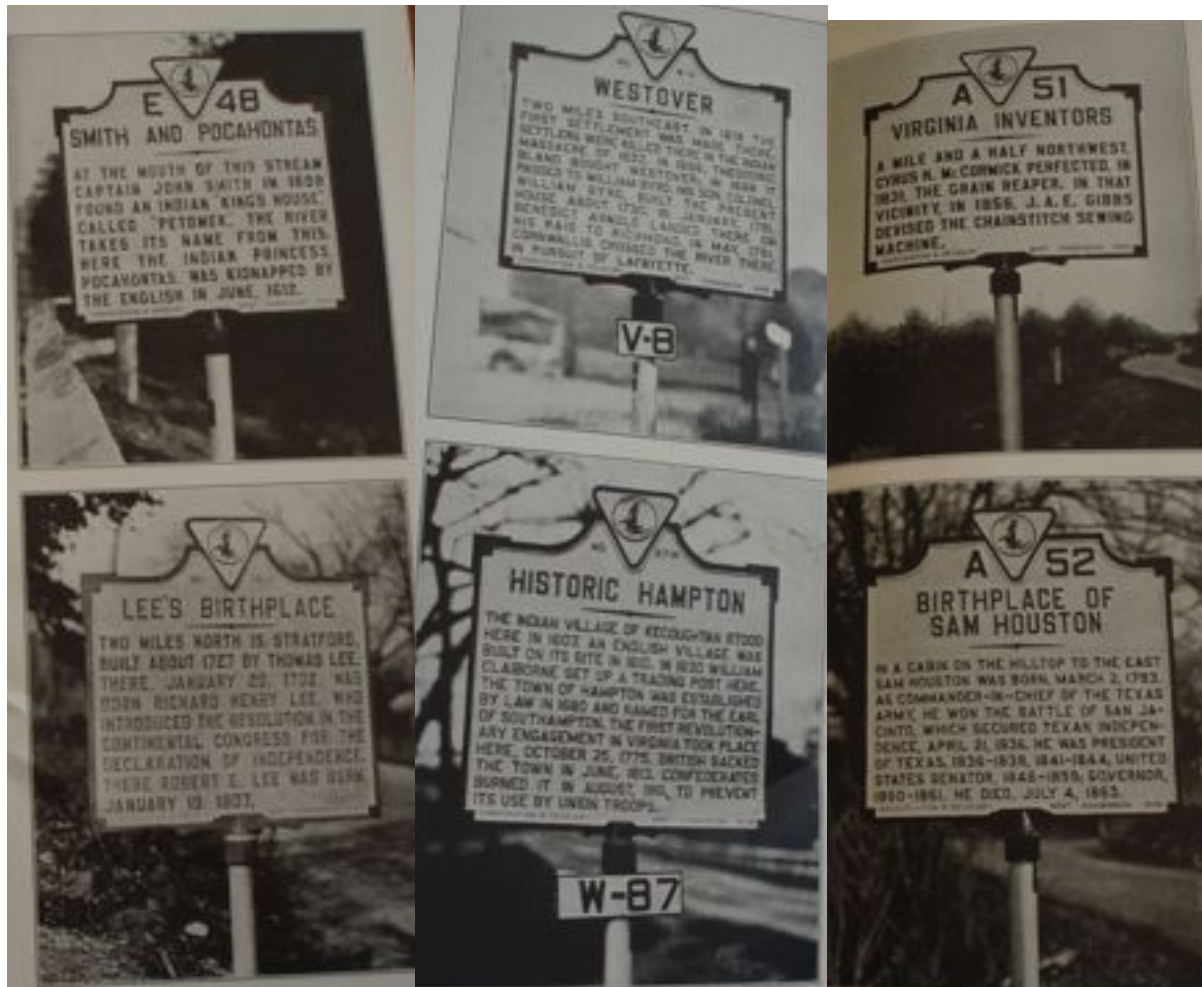
⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 94-95.

⁴⁰¹ PMB: Vol. 6, “Carson to Byrd,” (16 January 1930), 63.

from our paid space and our tourist visitors.”⁴⁰² The existing publications on Virginia’s tourist attractions and historical markers had generated enough publicity to sustain the Division of Archeology and History. Thus, the Division was granted the ability to act independently from the advertising initiatives, rather than complementary. At the beginning of the next fiscal year, February 1930, the Division received separate appropriations, officially recognized as a new and independent bureau of the Commonwealth.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² Ibid, 71.

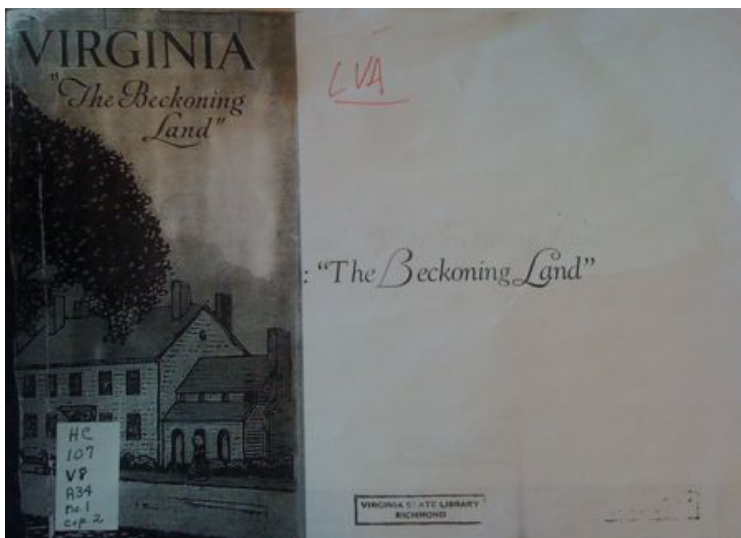
⁴⁰³ See: CCM: Vol. 5, (18 March 1930), 6.



Above are examples of the Division's Markers taken from the 1930 edition of: *Key to Inscriptions on Virginia Highway Historical Markers*, (Richmond: State Printing Office), 32, 33, 96. Notice the variety: Great Men, birthplaces, historic towns, lore, and notable achievements of Virginians are all represented.



Another example from the 1930 edition of *Key to Inscriptions*, 97. Again, here is another example of famous lore in addition to a county marker.



Cover to the first edition of *Virginia: The Beckoning Land* (1928). Notice the colonial house in the cover.



Cover to the 1929 edition of the Commission's *Key to Inscriptions* booklet.

American History

Roads are White Pages of History in VIRGINIA



YELLOW TAVERN

AN OLD TAVERN THAT STOOD
NEAR THIS SPOT GAVE ITS NAME
TO THE CAVALRY ENGAGEMENT
JUST TO THE NORTH IN WHICH
STUART WAS MORTALLY WOUND-
ED MAY 11, 1864.

To the tourist in Virginia, his car is an easy chair and the white roads are open pages in the most thrilling history of the Nation.

The State has placed 824 Historic Markers along Virginia highways. Upon these are written the story of the first colonists--the War of Independence--battles--birthplaces of famous men--and the most poignant scenes of the War between the States. In addition there have been marked the many natural wonders of the State, and also notable industrial achievements.

There could be no more delightful way of teaching American History to your children than a tour along the 4,200 miles of perfect roads in Virginia.

A profusely illustrated booklet of 28 pages with maps has been prepared to help you plan your trip. This booklet, "Virginia, The Beckoning Land," will be sent you FREE.

State Commission on Conservation
and Development
Room 167, State Office Building
Richmond, Virginia

*Write for this
FREE booklet*

Virginia

"THE BECKONING LAND"

An advertisement in the April edition of *Scribners Magazine*, LXXXV, No. 4, April 1929.



*This is your Official Welcome
to Virginia and is dedicated
to the purpose of urging you
to heed the call—and come.*

VIRGINIA INVITES YOU



LIKE a good hostess, Virginia has prepared her house to receive you. Thousands of miles of good roads now ribbon the State, running from border to border and from the mountains to the sea. Your way will be comfortable and easy.

Virginia has placed thousands of Historic Markers along these highways. Your way will be interesting.

A booklet of forty pages has been prepared fully illustrating the amazing number of interesting and beautiful places in the State. A map has been prepared showing where these places are located. This map also outlines motor trips of various lengths of from one day to two weeks. You can plan your trip to the best advantage.

The booklet has been appropriately called "Virginia, the Beckoning Land." It, together with the map, will gladly be sent FREE to all who request it.

VIRGINIA IS PERHAPS LOVELIEST
IN SPRING. WRITE FOR YOUR COPY
OF BOOKLET AND MAP NOW.

Virginia
"THE BECKONING LAND"

STATE COMMISSION ON CONSERVATION *and* DEVELOPMENT

Room 118, STATE OFFICE BUILDING - - RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Advertisement from the April edition of the *National Geographic*. See: *The National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1929, Vol. LV, No. 4.

Conclusion: Eckenrode's Enduring Legacy and His Deserved Place in the Pantheon of Public Historians

At first glance, the subject of Virginia's historical marker program evokes the response, "so what?" The markers have become part of the landscape, accepted, and, in most cases, unquestioned. As the study above shows, however, Virginia's historical markers are much more than simple histories for the public to view. In fact, Virginia's markers represent a revolutionary standard in historical commemoration that was adopted across the entire United States. After receiving countless inquiries regarding the program, Virginia finally agreed to let other states emulate the Commonwealth's coveted design for road signs in 1930:

The desire of many states and agencies to use a historical road marker similar to the Virginia pattern was discussed, and resulted in the following declaration of policy, moved by Mr. Dodson and seconded by Mr. Fishburn:

Resolved, the the State Commission on Conservation and Development will approve the simulation of the Virginia design of historical marker by properly constituted authorities of other states when used solely for historical purposes, provided that state or states simulating the Virginia design will enact or enforce a law or laws similar to the Virginia law on the subject, preventing the simulation of the Virginia design for other purposes; and that an attorney-at-law satisfactory to the Commission, at the expense of the state desiring to simulate the Virginia design, who shall prepare and/or approve such documents and laws as may to him seem necessary to protect the patent rights of the State of Virginia with its historical marker design, ect [sic].⁴⁰⁴

The resolution allowed Virginia's marker model to spread outside the borders of the Old Dominion and across the nation. At the end of 1929, it was reported in the *New York Times* that "Massachusetts, generally regarded as far ahead of Virginia in such matters, recently sent a representative into the State and decided to adopt the type of marker here."⁴⁰⁵ Soon, however, multiple states adopted Virginia's model, as evidence by the pictures below:

⁴⁰⁴ CCM: Vo. 5, (18 March 1930), 10.

⁴⁰⁵ Virginius Dabney, "Virginia Sets Pace in 'Going Historical': Old Dominion's Marking System for Places of Interest is Regarded as Model," *New York Times*, 22 December 1929, E2.



The North Carolina State Historical Marker. Image available on the HMDB Database, <http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=123833>.



The South Carolina State Historical Marker. Image available on the HMDB Database: <http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=28845>.



The Georgia State Historical Marker. Image Available on the HMDB Database, <http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=94447>.

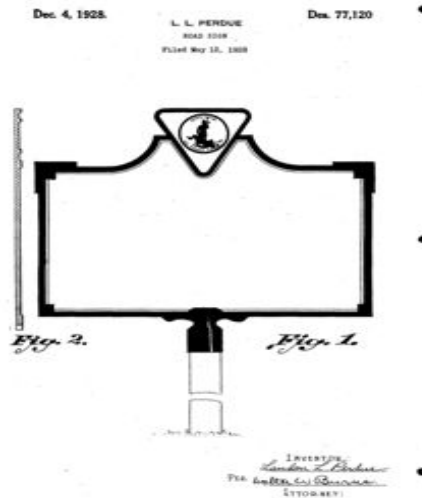


The Maryland State Historical Marker. Image Available on the HMDB Database, <http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=8100>.



Indiana State Historical Marker.
Image available on the HMDB database,
<http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=71567>.

The pictorial above gives a brief example of how Virginia's model was adopted in other states. While the coloration in most cases varies, the same basic design as articulated in the Commission on Conservation and Development's patent is followed as illustrated below:



The patent is available online through Google Patents:
<http://www.google.com/patents/about?id=i79rAAA-AEBAJ&dq=virginia+road+sign>.

Aside from the physical historical markers, Virginia also influenced the broad scheme of how other states advertised their historical marker program, as most states also have publications that adopted the format of Virginia's *Key to Inscriptions*. For instance, in 1930, the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary Commission published a historical marker booklet for its program, modeled on Virginia's. In the acknowledgements page, the Massachusetts committee singled out Eckenrode and Flippin, "who gave valuable information and advice in the early stages of the Commission's program."⁴⁰⁶ Even some of the most recent historical marker booklets recognize Virginia as the originator of the program. In the 2007 edition of *Guide to North Carolina Historical Marker*, the introduction states, "The 1935 state program, modeled after one begun in Virginia in 1926, was an effort to standardize the practice of marking broader categories of sites of statewide historical significance."⁴⁰⁷ The 2000 edition of the *Guide to the State Historical Markers of Pennsylvania* also gave credit to Virginia, declaring: "in 1927, the Commonwealth of Virginia initiated the nation's first official marker program of the modern type, utilizing large, double-faced cast-metal signs that were affixed to posts alongside the major highways."⁴⁰⁸ The extent of Virginia's cooperation with other states is an area that deserves future study. It is evident its model was emulated, but inevitable mnemonic and methodological disputes that must have occurred in other states remains unexplored and are worthy of attention.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ *Historical Markers Erected by Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary Commission* (Boston: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1930, 42).

⁴⁰⁷ Michael Hill, ed., *Guide to North Carolina Historical Markers* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2007), X.

⁴⁰⁸ George R. Beyer, *Guide to the State Historical Markers of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2000), 7.

⁴⁰⁹ A majority of the other states adopted a similar inscription guide. For a sampling of other publications see: Betty Dooley Awbrey, *Why Stop?: A Guide to Texas Historical Roadside Markers* (Houston: Lone Star Books, 1995); Howard Ford, *Sure Signs Stories Behind the Historical Markers of Central New York* (Rooftop Publishing, 2007); Alan McPherson, *Journeys to the Past: A Traveler's Guide to Indiana State Historical Markers* (Bloomington, Ind.:

Future Studies:

The study above showed the slow progression of the Division of Archeology and History from an experimental-type agency to a separate and distinct state-recognized institution. It was not an easy process. In its first three years of operations, the Division had to perfect a methodology for its innovative brand of commemoration. Laws had to be constructed to protect its work and establish proper standards of behavior for the public. Fortune played a role, too. The advertising campaign proved successful because the public bought into the program. Both tourists and the Virginia public not only accepted the program, they wanted to replicate it—the tourist, in his outside state, and the local, in his own community. Nevertheless, where the story of this thesis ends, another one beckons. The Division of Archeology and History continued to gain credibility following its momentous rise enabled by its historical marker program. In operation until 1950, the Division played a pivotal role in securing federal funding for State and National Parks in Virginia. Eckenrode would go on to become head of the Federal Writer's Project in Virginia. Later, his Division was put in charge of the World War II records collection program, similar in nature to the World War I History Commission project. In 1949, the Division published the first edition of the *Hornbook of Virginia History*, a popular reference work that has gone through four editions, most recently updated in 1996.

A study of the Division of Archeology and History in light of its subsequent accomplishments following its revolutionary marker program will add to the historiography of Virginia history, commemoration, and memory studies. It will also elevate the role of William E. Carson in the Byrd Administration and the preservation movement. More importantly, it will

Authorhouse, 2007); Melba Porter Hay and Thomas H. Appleton Jr., Ed., *Roadside History: A Guide to Kentucky Highway Markers* (Frankfort: The Kentucky Historical Society, 2002); Sara P. Rubinstein, *Minnesota History Along the Highways* (St. Paul MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2003).

shine the limelight on a historian that never should have been lost to obscurity. From the evidence above, it is clear that Eckenrode was the creative genius behind the historical marker plan. He forged ties with the scholarly community, influenced legislation, and perfected the methodology. Nonetheless, he spurned the spotlight. At times, Carson offered to put his friend, Eckenrode, in the limelight, asking on one occasion before an address, “I would also like to know something about yourself, as to where you studied and your degrees, ect., [sic] as I expect to make the talk resound to your glory, as the manner in which you have handled the historic marking of Virginia has been that of a genius.”⁴¹⁰ Eckenrode only cared to promote his projects, never himself, however. In response to Carson, he responded shyly: “I will try to give you some information about myself, but there is not enough of marked interest, and my modesty is so overwhelmed by your requests that I cannot think of anything to say at present.”⁴¹¹

Eckenrode did not leave many clues regarding his involvement in the historical marker program. In 1941, the year before Carson’s death, Eckenrode had a historical marker erected in the Commissioner’s honor, proclaiming:

WILLIAM E. CARSON
WILLIAM E. CARSON, OF RIVERTON, WAS
THE FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE VIRGINIA
CONSERVATION COMMISSION, 1926-34.
AS SUCH HE WAS A PIONEER AND LEADING
SPIRIT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK AND
SKYLINE DRIVE; THE COLONIAL NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK; THE STATE PARKS,
AND THE STATE SYSTEM OF HISTORICAL
MARKERS.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ DOHR: Carson to Eckenrode, 6 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10), 1.

⁴¹¹ DOHR: Eckenrode to Carson, 7 November 1929, (Box 55, Folder 10).

⁴¹² “William E. Carson,” *The Historical Marker Database*, last accessed 15 January 2011, <http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=3735>.

Eckenrode always gave credit to Carson for the Commission's accomplishments, despite the fact that the historical markers that he developed were instrumental to the Commissioner's overall success. The 1948 edition of Virginia's *Key to Inscriptions* booklet, published the year Eckenrode retired from the Division, again ceded all credit to Carson for the marker program. In the preface authored by Eckenrode, he stated, "The Virginia system of historical markers owed its inception to William E. Carson."⁴¹³ In fact, Eckenrode did not mention himself one time in the entire preface, preferring instead to submit that "Mr. Carson evolved the idea of covering the state with a complete system of related markers on the main highways, so placed as to be easily visible to the traveling public. This was begun in 1927."⁴¹⁴ Nowhere is there mention of Eckenrode's important contributions, his precedent-setting innovations, or his determination in the face of adversity. When he passed away in September of 1952, Eckenrode sank quietly into obscurity. Obituaries trumpeted that he "was credited with establishing Virginia's highway historical marker, which many other states now use to call attention to historic sites."⁴¹⁵ His deeds went largely unnoticed in the historical record, however. Perhaps, now, spurred on by this first extensive study, someone will take up the question of Eckenrode's legacy, and give him the credit he deserves.

⁴¹³ *State Highway Historical Markers of Virginia: Listing Inscriptions on All Such Markers on the Principal Highways of Virginia, With Supplementary Data*, 6th Edition (Richmond: Division of Publicity and Advertising, 1948), 2.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

⁴¹⁵ "Dr. Eckenrode, Ex-Historian of State, Dies," *Richmond News Leader*, 28 Septemeber 1952, Richmond Section, 11.



Image Courtesy of the Library of Virginia.
See: William E. Carson. Scrapbooks, 1928-1941. Accession 30463. Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, (1931-1934), 123.

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