

The News from Historic Polegreen Church Foundation

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Preserving Virginia's contributions to America's religious freedom

Site Enhancements On the Way

The film *Field of Dreams* made the phrase "If you build it they will come" famous. Polegreen now has its own "field of dreams" upon which construction of designated visitor parking, welcome center kiosk, and timeline of religious freedom will begin in mid-September.



Board Members & County Officials Break Ground

News from The Road to Revolution Trail

During the 2007 session the General Assembly enacted a driving trail for tourists to trace the life of Patrick Henry, orator of the Revolution. Recently the representatives of the Trail's sites met with Governor Kaine for a ceremonial bill signing to put the project on its way to fulfilling its purpose as "an educational and heritage tourism trail linking historic sites that highlight and commemorate the American Revolution and Patrick Henry's leading role in liberating Virginia from Colonial rule, creating an independent nation, and shaping American ideals and institutions." This exciting venture is part of a greater effort to promote the Commonwealth's historic value but more especially to spark economic development and tourism opportunities in central Virginia. Our very own Historic Polegreen Church is a central component of the Trail.



Composed of representatives from the various sites, including but not limited to St. John's Foundation, Hanover Tavern, Red Hill-Patrick Henry National Memorial and Scotchtown/APVA, a Trail working group convened this month for its sixth formal meeting since December. This group will be responsible for marketing and program related activities, such as signage, brochures and a web site. RoadtoRevolution, its web name, was recently reserved with the suffix of the address (.com, .org,) to be determined. This internet site will feature the legislation which created the Trail, a driving itinerary, and links to other sites of interest. A common logo was designed by Patrick Henry descendant Clay Hamner and will be reviewed by the Department of Historic Resources at its September

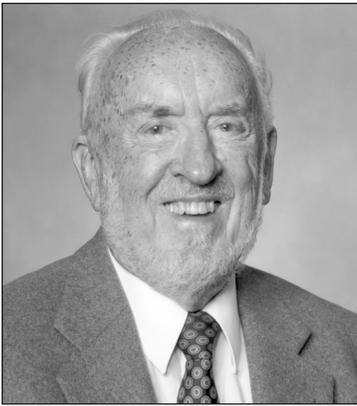
Board meeting. Ultimately, the Virginia Department of Transportation will erect the directional signage for the motoring public. Signs will be funded by the partnered organizations. While this important marketing work will continue, your interest and support is encouraged. If you would like to contribute to the project, please make your checks payable to Hanover County (Memo: Road to Revolution Trail) and mail to Mrs. Marilyn Blake, Assistant County Administrator, Hanover County, P.O. Box 470, 7497 County Complex Rd., Hanover, VA 23069. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Polegreen wishes to salute and thank the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Hanover County Historical Commission, Hanover's County Administration, the Patrick Henry Center for Individual Liberty, and the Greater Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau for efforts making this project a reality. Historic Polegreen Church Foundation will continue to play a significant role in the Trail development. We will keep you informed on our progress and hope to see you soon on The Road!



Gov. Kaine, Hanover Supervisor Bob Settiff, Del. Chris Peace and Trail Partners Celebrate Trail Bill Signing

From the President



Rev. Robert Bluford, Jr.

As friends of Polegreen and of our mission to preserve and interpret the historical site where Rev. Samuel Davies and the Hanover dissenters engaged in the successful struggle for religious freedom, please let me first thank you for your continued support.

Polegreen continues to attract an enlarging audience. Recently the news media, both newspapers and TV, published numerous reports on our latest activities. In the Foundation's early years, we relied exclusively on personal contacts with friends and congregations in Central Virginia who shared an interest in the story of Polegreen. While there is more wide-spread interest in Polegreen because of our internet presence and news articles, the Board will continue to embrace our relationship with our longtime friends. Your support has helped us become this successful and I am so very grateful.



House on wheels!

Early in August, we moved another home out of the small subdivision next to the historic site. The Foundation will continue to remove the visual intrusions and return the 110 preserved acreage to its colonial look and feel. This move is another great step forward. This now vacant lot will be the location of our educational visitor center that we hope to have under construction in 2008-2009.

With gratitude to each of you who have supported us with your prayers, your labors and your gifts.

From the Executive Director



Christopher K. Peace, Esq.

As a result of your continued support, the Polegreen Foundation experienced tremendous success during the first half of this fiscal year 2007. We are refining and expanding programming, both on- and off-site, as well as embarking on a course for archaeological site enhancement. These initiatives are growing Polegreen's presence in the metro Richmond historical community and elsewhere. Please tell your friends about our exciting news!



Dr. Bluford addressing Trail riders

In May, we hosted three exciting visitor events which set records for attendance in one month. Tourists tracing the life of Virginia's first governor Patrick Henry by riding the newly enacted "Road to Revolution" state heritage trail visited our site. Trail riders were welcomed by Rev. Bluford who offered a personal tour. A living history group portraying soldiers who would have been encamped at the church site during the 1864 campaign when the church was destroyed also brought a healthy audience. Children gathered to learn



more about drilling and camp life.

Last but not least, our ceremonial groundbreaking event brought a

crowd of supporters from near and far to the site to hear supportive remarks from Henry District Supervisor Chuck McGhee as well as world-renown architect Carlton Abbott. As a result of the flurry of activity at Polegreen, local media started to pay more attention. In one instance, this interest in Polegreen culminated in two editorial pieces located on the front page of Commentary Section of the Richmond Times Dispatch ([America's First Freedom Inspired in Hanover & The Apostle of Virginia: Davies Led A Spiritual Awakening](#), May 20, 2007). Please visit our web site at www.historicpolegreen.org to read these editorials.

For those who thought we might be through for the year Polegreen plans to host a Fall Symposium in October in the Old House Chamber of the State Capitol and we anticipate hosting a community Christmas Illumination. I hope you will join us!

Please Contact Foundation Staff
P.O. Box 2111
Mechanicsville, VA 23116
(804) 261-3837
director@historicpolegreen.org

Fall Symposium Will Debate Origins of Religious Pluralism in Virginia

This fall Polegreen plans to continue its series of annual lectures by hosting a panel discussion on the topic of the beginnings of religious pluralism in Virginia, its legacy and the challenges of maintaining that religious freedom that protects religious diversity in today's society. This ambitious event is tentatively titled: *Preserving the First Freedom in Virginia: the State of Religious Liberty*. Polegreen will go off-site to host this program on the recently renovated Capitol Grounds in the historic Old House Chamber the last week of October.

Attendees will have an opportunity to affix their signatures to a reprint of the 1786 Statute for Religious Freedom, a public affairs project of the Consortium that seeks to collect the signatures of over 15,000 Virginians during 2007 as a reaffirmation of that landmark legislation that guaranteed religious liberty in Virginia and became the basis for the First Amendment in the US Bill of Rights. The signatures will be presented to the state next January 16, 2008, the anniversary of the bill. The Statute Project and panel discussion are supported by a generous grant from the Ukrops Foundation.

Our format will be a 90-minute panel discussion for the general public to include a historian who will offer an expository introduction into the genesis of religious freedom in Virginia, the debates it spurred and ramifications the Founding Fathers anticipated. Next, members of the panel will offer their own unique perspective on the state of religious freedom in Virginia: where we are succeeding and where the challenges

remain. The panel will be comprised of scholars, politicians, theologians and our own Dr. Bluford. Polegreen's partners in the Consortium for Richmond's Religious History will also be invited. Historic Polegreen Church Foundation partners include A More Perfect Union, Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, The Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond, The Museum of Virginia Catholic History, St. John's Church, Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Soka Gakkai, Richmond Chapter, The Virginia Baptist Historical Society and The Council for America's First Freedom. Speaking for these organizations, Mark Howell said: "Virginia took a leadership role in the 1780s to guarantee citizens the freedom to worship—or not—as they see fit. Protestant denominations, Jews and Catholics all benefited from the legislation. We want to explore how religions that have been establishing themselves in the region over the past couple of generations are progressing and whether they feel the spirit of the freedom guaranteed in 1786 is still as strong as it was at its inception."

To conclude, Polegreen's evening program a special guest moderator will invite questions from the audience and final thoughts from the panel. We hope that this free program is of interest to you! For more information, please email us at director@historicpolegreen.org or call at (804) 261-3837 and leave a message.

Your Support is Needed

As the articles and letters in this newsletter attest, there is much happening at Polegreen these days. It is all the result of a committed staff, board and small band of volunteers. As our efforts continue we will need even more support, both in time, talent and treasure.

Please help us get the Polegreen story out in the metro Richmond community.

Your tax-deductible contribution will help us preserve and enhance the site as well as develop educational programs recounting the evolution of religious freedom in America.

Yes, please accept my gift to preserve Polegreen and to help develop educational programs celebrating its significance in the history of religious freedom in America.

- I would like to help Polegreen as a volunteer. Please contact me with the possibilities!
- My gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.
- Please contact me regarding a tax-wise gift of securities or estate planning.

Those participating in the Patrick Henry and Polegreen Societies will receive an autographed copy of Dr. Bluford's Davies biography *Living on the Borders of Eternity* in addition to special recognition at this year's events. Samuel Davies Society gift members received the same plus an opportunity for a personal tour of the site with Dr. Bluford.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Samuel Davies Society | \$2,501 + | <input type="checkbox"/> Samuel Morris Society | \$501 - \$750 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polegreen Church Society | \$1,001 - \$2,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sarah Henry Society | \$101 - \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patrick Henry Society | \$751 - \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Contributor | up to \$100 |

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contact information _____

Revolutionary War Memorial Fencing Project

The Central Virginia Historic Preservation Foundation, Inc., founded by Rev. Bob Bluford, seeks support for the erection of an 18th century Virginia "snake" or stacked rail fence along 1,000 linear feet of U.S. Route 301 as it approaches Hanover Court House. The stacked-rail, split oak and locust fence, as approved by the County Parks and Recreation and Planning Commission, will be an attractive feature leading into the Historic District. The Foundation asks for your friendly participation to help build the fence one rail at a time through a tax deductible gift of \$20 for the installation of the rail and its support. Checks can be made payable to CVHPE, marked Fence Project and mailed to Dr. Robert Bluford, Jr., at 2109 Buckeye Drive, Richmond, VA 23228. Questions: jdz@forts.org.

Historic Polegreen Church Foundation
Post Office Box 2111
Mechanicsville, Virginia 23116



Polegreen Applies for State Highway Marker

Many of you are undoubtedly familiar with Virginia's black lettered, silver background historic highway markers dotting Virginia's rich landscape. One of the oldest such programs in the nation at 80 years old, this state sign program educates travelers within the Commonwealth. Believe it or not according to the Department of Historic Resources there are now more than 2,200 signs throughout the Commonwealth highlighting important people, places, or events of regional, statewide or national significance. In 2006, more than 45 individuals, historical societies and organizations, civic groups, businesses, and local governments sponsored the creation of new historical highway markers for Virginia roadways. Polegreen has recently applied for a historic marker as part of our on-going educational programming and outreach.

On September 5th, the Department will consider language for a historical marker to be located at the Polegreen archeological site. The governing board must approve markers at this meeting. Once a marker is approved, a district representative from the Virginia Department of Transportation will meet with the sponsor to determine a suitable roadside site for placing the marker in the public right-of-way.

Since 1976, the Commonwealth of Virginia has required that a sponsor pay for the manufacture of an approved highway marker. Today that cost is \$1,350. As a sponsor we are responsible for payment of expenses associated with installation of the sign in addition to this flat fee. At this point Polegreen is its own sponsor but if you would like to contribute to this program please contact Chris Peace at (804) 261-3837 or by email at director@historicpolegreen.org.

The Virginia Department of Transportation retains primary responsibility for installing new markers and maintaining existing ones. In this capacity, VDOT is a vital partner with this agency in managing the marker program. In celebration of the 80th anniversary of the marker program, a newly updated edition of A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers, compiled by Scott Arnold, was released in January 2007. The book published by the University of Virginia Press in association with DHR retails for \$19.95 and is available at most bookstores or can be ordered directly from the University of Virginia Press (800-831-3406) or DHR. The guidebook is an ideal resource, especially when traveling the state's highways. It's wonderful to browse for armchair travelers as well.

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/>

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