



Gloucester Community Engagement & Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gloucester Added as Newest Site to the U.S. Civil Rights Trail Honoring Three Local Pioneers of Progress

Gloucester County has been officially added as one of the newest destinations on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, a prestigious national network recognizing the people, places, and stories that shaped the American civil rights movement. Gloucester is one of only six new historic sites being added in 2026 across Virginia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida.

At the heart of Gloucester's designation is the Gloucester Museum of History, which highlights the community's powerful civil rights legacy through exhibits and a 12-stop African American Heritage Trail driving tour.

"Gloucester's Civil Rights story holds national significance. The Gloucester Museum of History is honored to join the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, a recognition that underscores our mission to share our community's full history. In recent years, we've opened new exhibits, expanded our programming, and created space for a wider range of voices and experiences. This designation reaffirms our museum's commitment to preserve, interpret, and share Gloucester's history." said Robert Kelly, Gloucester County Historic Resources Supervisor.

"Every year, the U.S. Civil Rights Trail continues to grow, giving visitors new opportunities to experience the people and places that shaped history," said Mark Ezell, Chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Trail Marketing Alliance. "These new sites add unique and powerful stories that will truly deepen our understanding of the civil rights movement."

Gloucester County's Civil Rights story is rooted in the lives and achievements of trailblazers whose influence reached far beyond Virginia.

Irene Morgan, a Gloucester native, made history in 1944 when she refused to give up her seat on an interstate bus. Her courageous stand led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling that weakened segregation laws nationwide, more than a decade before similar acts gained widespread attention.

T.C. Walker, born enslaved, became Gloucester's first Black lawyer and a champion for education, economic independence, and public service, leaving an enduring impact on the community and the Commonwealth.

Robert Russa Moton, a nationally recognized leader in Black education and civil rights advocacy, transformed his Gloucester home, Holly Knoll, into a gathering place for ideas and strategies that helped shape the future of American civil rights.

"We are honored to have Holly Knoll included on the United States Civil Rights Trail. This designation affirms Holly Knoll's important role in the Civil Rights Movement. It is essential that these stories are preserved and shared, as they are integral to understanding not only Virginia's rich history, but the history of our nation," said Robert James, The Gloucester Institute Executive Director.

Together, their legacies are preserved through exhibits at the Gloucester Museum of History, historic markers, churches, schools, and the County's African American Heritage Trail. These sites tell a story of resilience, leadership, and pioneering courage that positions Gloucester County as an essential chapter in America's civil rights history.

The prestigious U.S. Civil Rights Trail designation follows a rigorous application process and reflects Gloucester's commitment to preserving and sharing these important stories. The Virginia Tourism Corporation served as a key partner, providing technical guidance and marketing support. This recognition will also serve as a powerful tool to drive heritage tourism and broaden awareness of Gloucester's historic contributions.

The Gloucester Museum of History and The Gloucester Institute at Holly Knoll welcomes residents and visitors to join in celebrating this milestone at an open house on February 28, 2026 from 11am to 3pm.

Details can be found at www.visitGloucesterva.org/civilrightstrail or by following Visit Gloucester on Facebook.

About the U.S. Civil Rights Trail

Launched in 2018, the U.S. Civil Rights Trail is a collection of more than 130 churches, courthouses, schools, museums and other landmarks primarily in the Southern states where activists challenged segregation in the 1950s and 1960s to advance social justice. The people, locations and destinations included in the Civil Rights Trail provide a way for families, travelers and educators to experience history firsthand. For details about the sites and stories from civil rights pioneers, visit CivilRightsTrail.com.

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