

Gowan Pamphlet



Representative sketch

Mary Peake



Sara Bagby



Representative sketch

Joseph Newsome



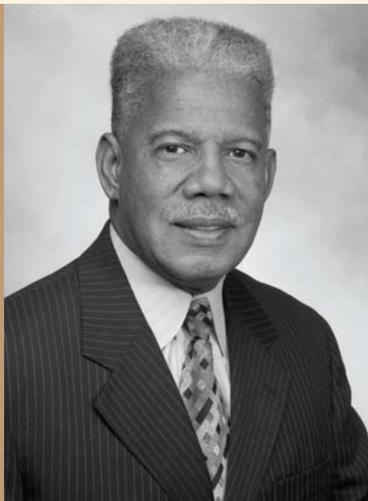
Dorothy Hamm



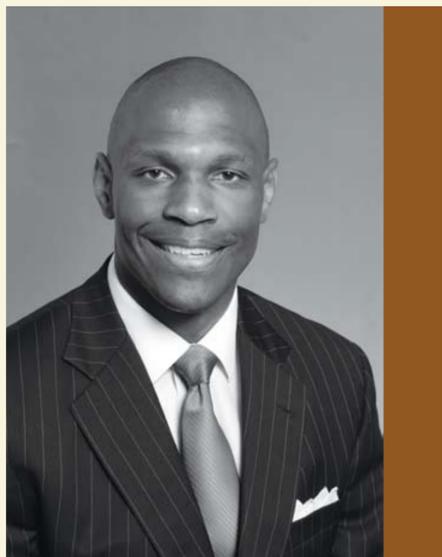
Florence Farley



Henry Marsh, III



Christopher Howard



Gowan Pamphlet (ca. 1750–1807 or 1808), Williamsburg
BAPTIST LEADER

Gowan Pamphlet was born enslaved, but persevered to become a well-known preacher, gain his freedom, and establish a Baptist church in Williamsburg that continues as an active congregation today.

Mary Smith Kelsey Peake (1823–1862), Hampton
EDUCATOR

Mary Smith Kelsey Peake was an educator of both free and enslaved African Americans prior to and during the Civil War.

Sara Lucy Bagby Johnson (ca. 1833–1906), Wheeling
PLAINTIFF IN CAUSE CÉLÈBRE

With “a decided taste for freedom,” Sara Lucy Bagby was embroiled in a celebrated legal case that tested the infamous Fugitive Slave Act during the secession crisis.

Joseph Thomas Newsome (1869–1942), Newport News
LAWYER AND EDITOR

A leading figure in Newport News, Joseph Thomas Newsome struggled to bring education and voting rights to the African American community.

Dorothy Bigelow Hamm (1919–2004), Caroline and
Arlington Counties

CIVIL RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST
Through legal and political actions, civil rights activist Dorothy Bigelow Hamm fought for African American equality.

Florence Saunders Farley (1928–), Roanoke and Petersburg

PSYCHOLOGIST, EDUCATOR, ELECTED OFFICIAL, ARTIST
Florence Saunders Farley has fought against racism and bias to open doors in science and politics for African American women in Virginia.

Henry L. Marsh, III (1933–), Richmond

CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY AND ELECTED OFFICIAL
Throughout his law career and the public offices he has held, Henry L. Marsh has committed his life to bringing equal rights and opportunities to African Americans.

Christopher Bernard Howard (1969–), Hampden-Sydney

24TH PRESIDENT OF HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE
Christopher Bernard Howard sets an example for Hampden-Sydney students—and for everyone—through his impressive résumé of service to the country and youth-enrichment efforts in Africa and the United States.

Image Credits—Bagby: Image courtesy of the Library of Virginia [unidentified woman by David Hunter Strother, *Contrabands in Virginia* (1862)]; Farley: Image courtesy of Florence Farley; Hamm: Image courtesy of Carmela Hamm; Howard: Image courtesy of Christopher Howard; Marsh: Image courtesy of the Senate of Virginia; Newsome: Image courtesy of the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center; Pamphlet: Image courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress [detail from broadside, American sketches: A Negro congregation at Washington (1876)]; Peake: Image courtesy of Hampton University Archives.

2010 African American TRAILBLAZERS in Virginia History



People of African descent have been a part of Virginia’s—and America’s—story since European colonization of the continent began. Yet the contributions of African Americans have often been ignored, obscured, or underappreciated by those who recorded history. In observance of African American History Month, the Library of Virginia is pleased to honor eight distinguished Virginians as African American Trailblazers for their contributions to the state and nation.

The men and women featured as Trailblazers offer powerful examples of individuals who refused to be defined by their circumstances. Their biographies are a testament to the determination and perseverance displayed by extraordinary people during challenging times. Through education and advocacy, these individuals demonstrate how African Americans have actively campaigned for better lives for themselves and their people. It is these many contributions that the African American Trailblazers program seeks to share.

To learn more about these individuals, all of whom have used their unique talents and creativity to push for equality and inclusion in American society, visit our Web site at:

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Gowan Pamphlet

(ca. 1750–1807 or 1808), Williamsburg
BAPTIST LEADER

Gowan Pamphlet (ca. 1750–1807 or 1808) was born enslaved. While the details of his personal life are unknown, when he began preaching in the 1770s he was the property of a Williamsburg tavern keeper. At that time Pamphlet probably led a congregation of free and enslaved African Americans meeting in secret on the outskirts of the city. While he evidently avoided the more violent abuses sometimes meted out to black preachers then, Pamphlet was



not immune to discrimination. Prejudice may have fueled accusations that he stole a horse in 1779 and that he participated in a slave revolt plot in 1793. Early in his career, the leading association of Baptist congregations in Virginia banned all preachers of color. Pamphlet ignored the decree.

Pamphlet moved with his owner nearer to Richmond, the new capital, in 1786, but in a few years returned to Williamsburg with a new owner. In 1793 Pamphlet was freed. His deed of manumission was the first document to record his surname, and he probably chose the name Pamphlet at that time. That same year Pamphlet's Williamsburg congregation was received into the Dover Baptist Association, giving them a full endorsement as an active church. By 1805, Pamphlet owned land in Williamsburg and several acres outside the city. He continued to minister to his congregation, which at times numbered approximately 500 members, until his death.

Dorothy Hamm

(1919–2004), Caroline and Arlington Counties
CIVIL RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Dorothy Bigelow Hamm (1919–2004) was born in Caroline County. Allowed only limited educational opportunities in her own community, she attended schools in the Washington, D.C., area. Later she lived in Fairfax and then Arlington, before eventually returning to Caroline County.

Hamm and her son, Edward Leslie Hamm Jr., joined a civil action case in 1956 that sought to end segregation in Arlington schools. In 1958, a U.S. District Court judge ordered that four African American children be admitted to the all-white Stratford Junior High School the following year, making it the first white public school in Virginia to admit African Americans students. In the intervening years, Hamm participated in a successful challenge to the Pupil Placement Act, which was designed to delay school integration while giving the appearance of compliance.

In 1963 Hamm and her husband, Edward Leslie Hamm Sr., participated in a challenge to Virginia's poll tax. That same year, she took part in a court action resulting in the desegregation of Arlington theaters, and was arrested for publicly protesting their white-only admittance policies. Hamm was politically active, serving as delegate to Arlington County and state conventions in 1964. She was later appointed assistant registrar and a chief election officer in the Woodlawn precinct in Arlington. She worked with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) as they organized in Arlington, and participated in the 1968 "Poor People's March on Washington."

In 1982 Hamm received the first Arlington County Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service. In 2002 the Virginia House of Delegates honored her lifelong contributions in a joint resolution.

Mary Peake

(1823–1862), Hampton
EDUCATOR

Mary Smith Kelsey Peake (1823–1862) was born in Norfolk, the daughter of a free black woman and a prominent Englishman. When she was six, Mary was sent to live with her aunt and uncle to attend a school for African Americans in Alexandria, which was then a part of the District of Columbia. During her schooling, she probably learned mathematics, reading, writing, and sewing skills. Peake returned to Norfolk in 1839.

In 1847 Peake moved with her family to Hampton. While supporting herself as a dressmaker, she secretly began teaching from her home, instructing African Americans of all ages. She also founded the Daughters of Zion to provide aid to the poor and the sick. In 1851 she married Thomas Peake, a former slave.

Early in the Civil War, the Peake family home was destroyed when Confederate forces torched Hampton. Many of the displaced African American families from Hampton were forced to seek refuge at nearby Fort Monroe. In September 1861, Peake started a school near the fortress, within the present grounds of Hampton University. Her enrollment grew from six to more than fifty students in a matter of days.

Peake was a dedicated instructor, creating a school for adults in the evenings and continuing to teach despite failing health, even when she was bedridden. She died of tuberculosis in February 1862. Her school was one of the first of its kind and served as a model for a number of other schools that taught African Americans throughout the South in Union-occupied territory. Today, the city of Hampton honors Peake with a school, a street, and a park.



Nominated by Nancy Westphal and Tina Roberts, Mary Peake Center, Hampton, Virginia.

Sara Bagby

(ca. 1833–1906), Wheeling
PLANTIFF IN CAUSE CÉLÈBRE

Nothing is known of the early life of **Sara Lucy Bagby Johnson** (ca. 1833–1906). In 1852 she was sold in Richmond to William S. Goshorn of Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia). She escaped from her owner in October 1860 and eventually made her way to Cleveland. The Western Reserve area of Ohio was known for abolitionism. Bagby worked as a domestic servant for A. G. Riddle, a Republican Congressman-elect, who would later serve as a member of her defense council. At the time of her arrest under the Fugitive Slave Act on 19 January 1861, Bagby was a domestic worker in the household of jeweler L. A. Benton.

Republicans viewed Bagby's case in the context of the sectional crisis. They did not want to give proslavery secessionists a pretext to brand their party as radical and lawless. Bagby's admission that she was indeed Goshorn's slave, a lack of any mitigating evidence, and the surprising acquiescence of Ohio's white abolition community sealed her fate. Black abolitionists, however, gathered at a station along the rail line carrying Bagby back to bondage, hoping to liberate her by force, but the train's engineer sensed the danger and did not stop.



Bagby returned to slavery in Wheeling, but when Union forces took control of northwestern Virginia in June 1861, she was freed and her former master jailed. Bagby returned to Ohio, and abolition leaders in Cleveland held a Grand Jubilee for her on 6 May 1863. She married a former Union soldier, F. George Johnson, and lived in Pittsburgh until returning to Cleveland for the last years of her life.

Henry Marsh, III

(1933–), Richmond
CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY AND
ELECTED OFFICIAL

Born in Richmond, **Henry L. Marsh, III** (1933–), attended racially segregated schools as a child, including a one-room school near Smithfield. He graduated with honors from Maggie L. Walker High School in Richmond in 1952. Marsh received his AB in sociology from Virginia Union University and his law degree from Howard University. He also holds honorary degrees from Virginia Union University and from Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville.



Even before graduating from high school, Marsh was active in civil rights. As a college student, he testified before

the Virginia General Assembly as it deliberated the United States Supreme Court's decision ordering school desegregation. With leading civil rights attorney Oliver W. Hill's encouragement, Marsh attended law school. In 1961 Marsh joined the firm that would become the partnership of Hill, Tucker & Marsh with Samuel W. Tucker and Oliver W. Hill. Specializing in civil rights work, Marsh led more than fifty cases involving desegregation as well as other important cases, including *Quarles v. Philip Morris* (1967), which established that minorities have access to equal employment opportunities, and *Gravelly v. Robb* (1981), which led to single-member districts for the General Assembly. Today he is considered one of the leading trial and appellate attorneys in Virginia.

In 1966 Marsh was elected to Richmond City Council, where he served as vice mayor from 1970 until his election in 1977 as the first African American mayor of Richmond. Marsh was a cofounder of the Metropolitan Economic Development Council (1978) and Richmond Renaissance (1981). In 1991 Marsh was elected from the newly formed Sixteenth Senatorial District to the Virginia General Assembly, where he continues to serve.

Joseph Thomas Newsome

(1869–1942), Newport News
LAWYER AND EDITOR

Joseph Thomas Newsome (1869–1942) was born in Sussex County. The son of former slaves, Newsome graduated from Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (later Virginia State University) in 1894 and earned a law degree from Howard University Law School. "Lawyer Newsome," as he was known in Newport News, was involved with several high-profile criminal cases in eastern Virginia, and was one of two African American attorneys who made a successful appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals (later the Supreme Court of Virginia) in 1931 in *Davis v. Allen* in which black residents of Hampton were routinely prevented from registering to vote.



Politically active, in 1921 Newsome opposed the "lily-white" direction of the Republican Party, and he ran for attorney general on a "Lily Black" Virginia Republican ticket. Newsome helped found and lead the Warwick County Colored Voters League, an organization that lobbied for schools, community improvement, and voter registration. He advocated for and helped secure the first high school for African American residents of Newport News. Newsome remained active in public affairs and at the time of his death was serving as president of the Old Dominion Bar Association, a black counterpart to the Virginia State Bar Association.

Newsome edited the *Newport News Star* from late in the 1920s to late in the 1930s until its purchase by the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. Very active in community churches, he also opened his home as a community center, even hosting Booker T. Washington on occasion. Although the Newsome house fell into disrepair after his death, it was renovated late in the 1980s and converted into a community center and a museum for black history.

Christopher Howard

(1969–), Hampden-Sydney
24TH PRESIDENT OF HAMPDEN-SYDNEY
COLLEGE

Born in Mount Pleasant, Texas, **Christopher Bernard Howard** (1969–) was an active student at Plano Senior High School. At the United States Air Force Academy, Howard was a starting running back, received First Team Academic All-American Honors, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science in 1991. Named a Rhodes Scholar, he went on to complete his PhD in politics at Oxford University in England in 1994.

A lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force Reserves, Howard serves as a part of a defense attaché to Monrovia, Liberia. He was named Company Grade "Intelligence Officer of the Year" in 2001. While on active duty in 2003, Howard received the Bronze Star for Distinguished Service in Combat in Afghanistan. In 1998 Secretary of Defense William Cohen selected him to serve as an advisor on a trip to Cape Town, South Africa. Howard also earned the Joint Service Commendation Medal and NATO medals for service in Bosnia.

Howard has worked for two Fortune 500 companies, including Bristol-Myers-Squibb, where he managed the Secure the Future Initiative, a \$100 million effort to combat HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. In 2000, he founded the Impact Young Lives Foundation to provide scholarships and mentorship opportunities to disadvantaged South African youths. In 2003, Howard earned his master of business administration degree with distinction from Harvard Business School.

In 2005, Howard became associate vice president for Strategic and Leadership Initiatives at the University of Oklahoma, and was promoted to vice president a year later. In July 2009, Howard took office as president of Hampden-Sydney College, making him the first African American president in the school's 234-year history.



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Learn more about African Americans in the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1998–) and on the Library of Virginia's Web site at www.lva.virginia.gov. Instructional materials, classroom activities, and nomination forms for the 2011 project are available at www.lva.virginia.gov/trailblazers.

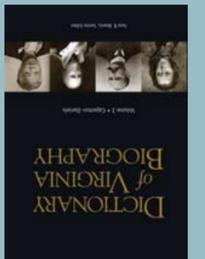


Image Credits: Bagby—image shows "Slave Auction at Richmond, Virginia." Illustration from the *Illustrated London News*, 27 September 1856. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress; Farley—image shows a 1973 Petersburg City Council meeting. Courtesy of Florence Farley; Hamm—*Washington Post and Times Herald City Life* page, 19 August 1958; Howard—image courtesy of Christopher Howard; Marsh—image shows Mrs. A. L. Mitchell introducing Mayor Henry L. Marsh, III, to Mrs. En Sook Hong in Richmond, Virginia, on December 2, 1979. Photo is by Masaaki Okada. Courtesy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch Collection at the Valentine Richmond History Center; Newsome—image courtesy of the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center; Pamphlet—image is a broadside, *American sketches: A Negro congregation at Washington* (1876). Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress; Peake—image shows an early photograph of students outside a female dormitory on the Hampton Institute campus. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia.

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