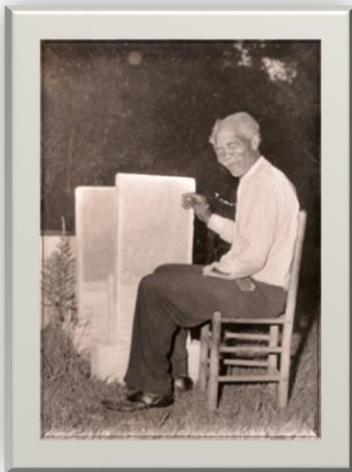


**STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER**  
**“PATRICK ROBERT ‘PARKER’ SYDNOR (1854-1950)”**  
**DEDICATED IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY, VIRGINIA**  
**OCTOBER 16, 2015**

*—Historical Marker highlights life and occupation of Parker Sydnor, born enslaved; he became a literate freedman after the Civil War and achieved renown as an expert stonecutter and engraver—*

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources will be dedicated on October 16, 2015 to honor the life and occupation of Patrick Robert “Parker” Sydnor, who was born into slavery and earned renown as a skilled stonecutter and engraver of grave markers by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The historical marker will be dedicated beginning 11 a.m., Friday, October 16 at the marker’s location near St. Matthew Baptist Church, 30 Wilbourne Road, Clarksville. The sign also is near the Parker Sydnor log cabin site, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the

National Register of Historic Places.

Speakers during the ceremony will include Clarksville Mayor Kevin S. Allgood; Senator Frank Ruff, Jr., (15<sup>th</sup> District, Virginia General Assembly); Dr. Peter Bergstrom, an independent historian; The Rev. Michael Jackson of St. Matthew Baptist Church; Glenn E. Reyes, a great-grandson of Parker Sydnor; and Jim Hare of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Distinguished guests at the ceremony will include John Ross, Jr, the last surviving grandson of Parker Sydnor; Hayden Saunier whose father, Paul Saunier, Jr. interviewed Parker Sydnor in 1946; and Douglas B. Sydnor of Phoenix, AZ, a direct male descendent of Fortunatus Sydnor, a white Englishman who started the Sydnor lineage in colonial Virginia, according to Dr. Angelita Reyes, founder and CEO of Literacy InterActives, the nonprofit group sponsoring the marker and dedication ceremony.

Parker Sydnor was born in 1854 enslaved on one of the Halifax County (VA) plantations that William Sydnor

owned. Attending a Freedmen’s Bureau school, Parker Sydnor gained literacy after the Civil War. “A preacher and farmer in his youth, he began crafting grave markers in the 1890s and remained active until the 1940s,” the marker states. Sydnor’s literacy enabled his craft to thrive as a business.

Achieving renown “as a skilled stonecutter and engraver,” Mr. Sydnor “memorialized the lives of African Americans across Southside Virginia” through his designs and inscriptions, according to the highway marker. The Sydnor marker was authorized in 2014 by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. Numerous private individuals and public organizations have contributed to the research that documented the significance of Parker Sydnor and his home place in Virginia history. Literacy InterActives, the sponsoring organization, covered the costs of manufacturing the historical marker.

Virginia’s historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,500 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT’s authority.

**TEXT OF THE HISTORICAL MARKER**

**Patrick Robert “Parker” Sydnor (1854-1950) U-95**

Born enslaved on one of William Sydnor’s plantations in Halifax County, Patrick Robert “Parker” Sydnor became literate at a freedmen’s school after the Civil War. A preacher and farmer in his youth, he began crafting grave markers in the 1890s and remained active until the 1940s. Sydnor won renown as a skilled stonecutter and engraver who made his work widely accessible. His designs and inscriptions memorialized the lives of African Americans across Southside Virginia. His home, the nearby Patrick Robert “Parker” Sydnor log cabin, is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.