



1919 Commerce
Drive
Suite 290
Hampton, VA 23666



757-722-1222
800-487-4600
fax:
757-896-4600

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 1, 2026

Contact: Taylor Henderson, 757/728-5316

taylor.henderson@hampton.gov

Seamus McGrann, Promotions Director (Hampton History Museum)

757-759-1771

mmcgrann@hampton.gov

Hampton History Museum Joins the Virginia Museum of History & Culture for Historic Investment in Virginia History Museums

As part of the celebration of America's 250th, the Virginia History Affiliates program aims to strengthen history engagement in Virginia through connections and shared resources.

Hampton, VA – The Hampton History Museum announces it has joined the newly launched Virginia History Affiliates program. Organized and funded by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC), the professional museum collective is designed to connect historical sites, history museums and related organizations of all sizes from across the Commonwealth. The initial group of 24 affiliates will collaborate in four key areas: education and engagement; professional connection; collections and preservation; and sustainability.

“The Hampton History Museum and hundreds of other history organizations are doing essential work in their communities throughout Virginia. Until the creation of Virginia History Affiliates there has been little organized, collaborative effort to bring us together statewide,” said Jamie Bosket, president & CEO of the VMHC. “As we approach America’s 250th, we see an opportunity to create a lasting legacy by expanding our role as Virginia’s state history museum, and by investing—in a major and lasting way—in the outstanding local and regional history organizations like the Hampton History Museum serving our Commonwealth.”

By building purposeful connections among institutions statewide, the Virginia History Affiliates program will expand access to robust educational tools and programming, create stronger professional connections among institutions, support broad collections stewardship and preservation work, and provide for timely sustainability efforts. As the program grows, the cohort will be able to reciprocate and share opportunities with each other and the VMHC.

“Hampton’s story is central to understanding the broader American journey, particularly along the arc of freedom and the shaping of our nation as it exists today.

Participation in the Virginia History Affiliate program allows us to deepen how we interpret and share these stories while connecting our work to a larger statewide network. It is an important step in ensuring these histories continue to inform and inspire future generations of Hamptonians and visitors alike,” said Will Bane, Hampton History Museum Associate Board President.

Representing a multi-million-dollar, long-term commitment from the VMHC to strengthening history work happening throughout Virginia, the program is offered at no cost to participating organizations, and aims to add more than 100 affiliates within just a few years. Specific benefits under development include use of VMHC exhibitions and education resources, professional convenings and gatherings, and support for collections consultation and sharing. Participating organizations will also have preferred pathways to hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants and project support, along with shared promotional opportunities.

Liz Williams, Deputy Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, added, “There is power in sharing history together across the Commonwealth. There is no limit to the impact of elevating our collective stories to help us all understand the history of Virginia—ultimately informing where we are headed in the future.”

The inaugural cohort of Virginia History Affiliates participants includes:

Tidewater

- Shore History
- Gloucester County Museum of History
- Hampton History Museum
- Pamunkey Indian Museum & Cultural Center

Central Virginia

- Fredericksburg Area Museum
- Lynchburg Museum System
- Preservation Virginia
- Robert Russa Moton Museum
- The Valentine
- The Virginia Museum of History & Culture

Shenandoah Valley

- Clarke County Historical Society
- Rocktown History
- Museum of the Shenandoah Valley
- Rockbridge Historical Society

Southwest Virginia

- Blue Ridge Institute & Museum

- Christiansburg Institute
- Harrison Museum of African American Culture
- Historic Smithfield
- Historical Society of Western Virginia
- Montgomery Museum of Art & History

Northern Virginia

- Arlington Historical Society
- Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center
- Manassas Museum
- Office of Historic Alexandria

“Participation in this program helps us stand a little taller in our state and national museum community,” said Rockbridge Historical Society Executive Director, Eric Wilson. “The readier access for object loans, grant funding and programmatic collaborations will clearly signal our particular capacities, and broader purpose, in leading the current and next generations of Virginians to new appreciations of—and advocacy for—our Commonwealth’s significance.”

The Virginia History Affiliates program is made possible through private support from numerous donors to VMHC, including Dominion Energy and the Anne and Gene Worrell Foundation. Most recently, the VMHC received a major investment from the Anne Mullen Orrell Charitable Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee to form a permanent endowment supporting the program’s continued growth and success.

“We are thrilled to provide leadership support of this timely and far-reaching program,” said George Thorn, SVP, philanthropic client manager at Bank of America. “Investing in our local and regional history organizations has never been more important—they are the keepers of our story and key contributors in building strong communities.”

The VMHC, along with leaders from its inaugural affiliates, celebrated the program’s public launch on March 16, 2026, in Williamsburg.

“A legacy of America’s 200th anniversary in 1976 was the creation of nearly one-third of our country’s history organizations. Fifty years later, we aim to establish a new legacy, not by adding new institutions, but by connecting our existing and invaluable museums across the state for greater sustainability and vibrancy,” said Bosket.

###

Images attached:

- Exterior of the Hampton History Museum. Courtesy of the Hampton History Museum.
- Visitors in the Hampton History Museum’s Kikotan Gallery. Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History & Culture and Hampton History Museum.

About the Hampton History Museum

The Hampton History Museum seeks to deepen the understanding of past choices, present circumstances, and future possibilities' as well as strengthen the bonds between us through understanding. We reached over 1,500,000 people in FY25 and expect to reach similar numbers as we finish tracking our reach in FY26 throughout the state and across the country. Since 2011, the museum's reach has gone from 11,000 to approximately 1.5 million annually—an increase of 13, 536% in 15 years. Through swift adaptation to the digital landscape in 2011, our team achieved potential growth by delivering in-person, online, and traveling programs. Significant exhibits cover the transformative impact of the 1619 Landing, the trailblazing NASA trio of Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, and Mary Jackson, and Hampton's significance in the American Revolution. Our reach extends beyond Hampton Roads and touches the Commonwealth of Virginia, East Coast states, and Midwest territories with the city's stories.

About the Virginia Museum of History & Culture

Founded in 1831 as the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, a private, non-profit organization, is the oldest museum and cultural organization in Virginia and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the United States. The Museum cares for a renowned collection of more than nine million items representing the far-reaching story in Virginia.

About Hampton, Virginia

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first arrival of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Science Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.