

## **Harrisonburg Community Remembrance Project Committee**

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### **Charlotte Harris Historical Marker to be unveiled at dedication ceremony**

The Harrisonburg Community Remembrance Project Committee will host the unveiling and dedication of an historic marker Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. honoring the memory of Charlotte Harris, a local resident and only African-American woman lynched in Virginia. Due to the current COVID-19 health emergency, attendance will be limited and the event will be livestreamed on the City of Harrisonburg's Facebook page for the public at <https://www.facebook.com/HarrisonburgVA/>. A larger public ceremony at Court Square may be considered next year, contingent upon current COVID-19 prevention guidance.

The marker text reads:

Charlotte Harris Lynched, 6 March 1878

About a dozen disguised people took Charlotte Harris from the custody of jailers in eastern Rockingham County on the night of 6 March 1878 and hanged her from a tree approximately 13 miles southeast of here. This is the only documented lynching of an African American woman in Virginia, and it received nationwide attention. A grand jury that met here failed to identify any of the lynchers. Harris had been accused of inciting a young African American man to burn the barn of a white farmer. This man was later acquitted on all charges. More than 4,000 lynchings took place in the United States between 1877 and 1950; more than 100 people, primarily African American men, were lynched in Virginia.

Commissioned by the Department of Historic Resources upon approval June 18, 2020, the marker installation is the culmination of the research and coordinating efforts begun in 2017 by Steven Thomas of the Northeast Neighborhood Association, and Dr. Gianluca De Fazio, associate professor of justice studies at James Madison University. Their efforts led to the formation of a community partnership of City, County, and university representatives in the form of the Community Remembrance Project Committee, which also includes Vice Mayor Sal Romero, City of Harrisonburg; Amy Snider, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Harrisonburg; Bradford Dyjak, Director of Planning, Rockingham County; and Susan Zurbrigg, Professor of Art, James Madison University.

Joining the committee members and local elected officials for the dedication ceremony will be Dr. Colita Fairfax, chair of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. During the summer and fall of 2019, the City Council and County Board of Supervisors approved the application and location of the historic marker in the sidewalk along Court Square, installed and maintained by the City Department of Public Works.

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