

Department of Historic Resources

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STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER “LUCY DIGGS SLOWE” TO BE DEDICATED IN CLARKE COUNTY

—The marker highlights the career of tennis champion, educator, and advocate of women’s equality Lucy Diggs Slowe, a co-founder of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the first Greek letter organization for African American women—

—The marker text is reproduced below—

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that honors the career of pioneering African American educator Lucy Diggs Slowe, who was born in Clarke County’s Berryville in 1908, will be dedicated this weekend.

The dedication and unveiling ceremony for the marker begins at 12 noon, Saturday, June 17, at Clarke County High School, at 627 Mosby Boulevard. After the speakers’ portion of the ceremony, participants will travel to the marker’s location at Milton Valley Cemetery in Berryville to unveil the marker. The dedication ceremony is open to the public.

Members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, representing state, national, and international offices of the organization, will provide remarks during the ceremony, including Arlene Skinner, Adriane James, Joyce Henderson, Patricia Petty-Wilson, Dr. Dorothy Buckhanan Wilson, who is the sorority’s International President, and Dr. Colita Nichols Fairfax, who also is a member of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources, which has the authority to approve new historical markers. Other speakers will be Patricia Dickinson, Mayor, Berryville; the Reverend Delbert Hicks of Zion Baptist Church in Berryville; Shirley Thomas, a great-niece of Slowe, and the Reverend Robert Morgan, also a relative of Slowe.

Slowe was attending Howard University when she co-founded Alpha Kappa Alpha along with eight other women to establish “the first Greek letter organization for African American women, and was elected its first president,” the marker reads.

In 1917, Slowe won the national championship in women's singles at the segregated American Tennis Association's inaugural tournament, the marker relays.

During her career, she served as a public school teacher and principal, president of the National Association of College Women, and an English professor at Howard University, where she also became its first Dean of Women.

Throughout her career, "Slowe worked to combat gender inequalities and to prepare African American women for leadership," the marker's text concludes.

The marker honoring Slowe was approved for manufacture and installation by the Board of Historic Resources in 2016. Its manufacturing cost is being covered by the marker's sponsors, state Senator Mamie E. Locke and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

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 marker:

Lucy Diggs Slowe (4 Jul. 1883-21 Oct. 1937)

Lucy Slowe, educator, was born in Berryville. In 1908, while attending Howard University, she became a founding member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the first Greek letter organization for African American women, and was elected its first president. In 1917 Slowe won the national championship in women's singles at the segregated American Tennis Association's inaugural tournament. During her career as a public school teacher and principal, president of the National Association of College Women, English professor at Howard University, and Howard's first Dean of Women (1922-1937), Slowe worked to combat gender inequities and to prepare African American women for leadership.

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