



Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History

News Release

Embargoed for release today at 10 a.m.



Contact: Elsabé Dixon
Executive Director
Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History
975 Main Street
O - 434.793.5648
elsabe@danvillemuseum.org

Contact: Lisa K. Meriwether
Tourism Manager
City of Danville
427 Patton Street, Suite 203
O – 434.793.1753 M- 434.770.3882
lisa.meriwether@discoverdanville.com

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

Danville museum receives designation as a civil rights site

The Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History today announced that it has received designation as a site on the historic [U.S. Civil Rights Trail](#), which debuted in 2018 and includes more than 120 sites — churches, schools, courthouses, museums — across 15 states, mostly in the South.

The sites are places where activists challenged segregation and inequality in the 1950s and 1960s to advance social justice.

“Danville played a critical role in the civil rights movement, so we are extremely proud to be added to the U.S. Civil Rights Trail,” said Elsabé Dixon, the museum’s executive director. “Inclusion and diversity are cornerstones of the Danville museum’s experience. We invite everyone to visit the museum and discover the many remarkable stories.”

Danville is one of three locations in Virginia with sites on the trail. The other sites are in Farmville and Richmond.

The museum applied last summer for inclusion as a site on the trail.

Mayor Alonzo Jones, in a letter of support for the application, stated, “Danville has made great strides, and I am excited about our future, but we must not forget that our city’s heritage also is rich with struggle — a struggle that I believe is significant to the civil rights movement.”

U.S. Civil Rights Trail sites must:

- Be associated with events that made a significant contribution to the civil rights movement during its height (1950s and 1960s); or

- Be associated with the life of a person(s) who was significant in the civil rights movement; or
- Embody the distinctive characteristics of a tourism site, including but not limited to being open to the public or public view as a tourist attraction, providing guided or self-guided experiential activities, or displaying a series of commemorative markers that communicate context for the history of the civil rights movement.

Located at 975 Main St. in downtown Danville, the main part of the museum is in what was the Sutherlin Mansion and then the Danville Public Library. The museum started in 1974 and grew to include the Swanson Studio located in the firehouse behind the museum.

In August 2019, the museum installed the first long-term civil rights timeline available to the public. [“The Movement: Danville’s Civil Rights”](#) is an exhibition that details the events that took place in Danville during the 1960s, the work done by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1958 to establish support, and Martin Luther King Jr.’s visits to Danville. It also outlines the role the Sutherlin Mansion played in 1960 as a then, “Whites Only” library.

Also, the museum features the [Camilla Williams exhibition](#), which highlights the relationship this New York City Opera diva had with her hometown, Danville, and explores the difficult path to fame in a racially divided South during the civil rights protests.

For more information about the Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History and its exhibits, visit [DanvilleMuseum.org](#).

For more information about the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, visit [CivilRightsTrail.com](#).

###