The Martin Luther King Jr. and Hampton Heroes Memorial Plaza pays tribute to the national civil rights leader, as well as to people who worked for civil rights and social justice in Hampton. This is a living monument, and new chapters will be added. These are among the most influential individuals documented during these pivotal times in Hampton’s history.

2019 HAMPTON HEROES

CONTRABANDS: ENSLAVED JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Frank Baker
Shepard Mallory
James Townsend
Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler
James A. Fields
George Washington Fields
Mary S. Peake
William Roscoe Davis
Gerri L. Hollins

HIDDEN FIGURES

Katherine G. Johnson
Mary W. Jackson
Dr. Christine M. Darden
Dorothy J. Vaughan
Miriam D. Mann
T. Melvin Butler
Margot Lee Shetterly

PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Senator Hunter B. Andrews
C. Alton Lindsay
Dr. Jerome H. Holland
Robert A. Rice
Delegate Dr. Mary T. Christian
Mary E. Johnson
William M. Cooper

FOUNDING HAMPTON INSTITUTE

Gen. Samuel C. Armstrong
Rev. George Whipple
Rev. Lewis C. Lockwood
Booker T. Washington
Robert Russa Moton
CONTRABANDS: ENSLAVED JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

In the earliest weeks of the Civil War, three enslaved men escaped from Norfolk to Fort Monroe in a small boat and asked for the protection of the Union Army. When Fort Monroe’s commander declared them “contraband of war” and allowed them to remain, thousands more followed their example and fled to Fort Monroe, which soon became known as “Freedom’s Fort.” This new Contraband doctrine changed the face of the Civil War, making emancipation a core part of the United States’ war effort. Thousands of Contrabands also fought for the Union, helping to abolish slavery in the United States. Many families remained in Hampton, establishing communities that are part of the city today.

Early in the Civil War, Col. Charles King Mallory, a prominent Hampton landowner and militia officer, had leased Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory and James Townsend to the state of Virginia, which had just seceded from the United States. After helping construct Confederate defenses at Craney Island, the three learned they were going to be transferred even farther south and away from their families. On May 23, 1861, they rowed a small boat across the Hampton Roads harbor from Norfolk to Fort Monroe, which remained in Union control. Their act of resistance encouraged thousands of others to escape to freedom and began to shift the United States toward a policy of abolition.
CONTRABANDS: ENSLAVED JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler
Just two days before Baker, Mallory and Townsend escaped, Butler arrived to command Fort Monroe. Butler was a lawyer, and he devised a legal strategy that allowed the three men to remain at Fort Monroe despite orders not to interfere with slavery. He reasoned that, as property being used by the enemy in the war effort, the three men could be confiscated as “contraband of war.” Butler’s Contraband doctrine became an official Union policy. In 1861 and 1862, Congress passed Confiscation Acts allowing the U.S. Army to harbor fugitive slaves. These laws laid the groundwork for the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect Jan. 1, 1863.

James A. Fields
James A. Fields was born into slavery in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1844. As a teenager, he escaped to Hampton during the Civil War and worked for the U.S. Army and the Freedmen’s Bureau. In 1869, he enrolled in the first class at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, and in 1882 he completed a law degree at Howard University. Fields was an influential community leader who worked for education and equality. He was active in politics, served as captain of a Hampton militia unit, trained young lawyers, and held numerous public offices in Hampton and Newport News.

George Washington Fields
The younger brother of James Fields, George Washington Fields escaped from Hanover to Hampton with his family in 1863. In 1878, Fields graduated from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, and in 1890 he became the first African-American to graduate from Cornell Law School. Fields returned to Hampton and, like his brother, became a prominent local attorney and wealthy landowner. He was a civic and church leader, philanthropist, and civil rights activist, especially in championing black voting rights.
Mary S. Peake
Mary S. Peake was a prominent free black woman in antebellum Hampton who taught enslaved children to read in her family’s home near Hampton Academy. Peake and her husband remained in Hampton after it was abandoned by some white families during the Civil War, but their home was destroyed when Hampton was burned by Confederate troops on Aug. 7, 1861. They moved to a makeshift cottage near Fort Monroe, where Peake resumed her lessons and sometimes taught in the shadow of what is now known as the Emancipation Oak. Her school dramatically expanded to include Contraband children and adults. She also befriended Northern missionaries who used her story to raise money for schools for freed people throughout the South. Peake suffered from consumption – or tuberculosis – but continued to teach at her bedside until she died in the spring of 1862. Peake is one of four female educators for whom Mary’s Park at Peninsula Town Center is named.

William Roscoe Davis
An enslaved plantation manager and pleasure boat operator, William Roscoe Davis was living near Hampton when the Civil War began. When their enslavers fled the area in May of 1861, Davis persuaded many enslaved people to stay. He was one of the earliest Contrabands and was put in charge of distributing supplies to the Contraband community. A powerful speaker, he traveled throughout the North in 1862 with the American Missionary Association, helping to raise money for supplies and schools for freed people. After the Civil War, he was a Baptist preacher and was active in political issues and the fight for civil rights during Reconstruction. Davis opened a school on Lincoln Street and operated the Old Point Comfort lighthouse.

Gerri L. Hollins
A lifelong musician, educator, and activist, Gerri L. Hollins was dedicated to preserving and telling the story of Hampton’s Contrabands to a broad modern audience. The great-great-granddaughter of Contraband Emma Ann, Hollins advocated for a museum for Contraband history, founded the Contraband Historical Society in 1997, and later served as vice president of Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park. Her community events were part workshop, part celebration and part reunion, designed to educate people about their heritage and build pride. She also composed and directed “Prelude to Freedom,” an opera exploring the Contraband movement in Hampton, founded Apple Tree Club House, an arts education program for children, and taught at Hampton University.
HIDDEN FIGURES

The African-American women who worked in Langley Research Center’s West Computing group were human computers, completing mathematical calculations using slide rules, pencils and adding machines. The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, forerunner of NASA, needed staff to increase research and airplane technology during World War II and quietly opened the doors to black women. The calculations performed by these “computers who wore skirts” were instrumental to U.S. aeronautics advances. Although they were expected to be temporary employees during the war, many of these women stayed and served during another kind of war, the Cold War, and made the shift to aerospace. They served their country, broke stereotypes and changed society, most while raising families and serving their community.

Katherine Coleman Goble Johnson
A math prodigy, Katherine Coleman Goble Johnson graduated from high school at 14 and college at 18. After teaching, she joined NACA in 1953. Originally assigned to the West Computing pool, Johnson was temporarily assigned to help the all-male flight research team – and she stayed. She calculated the first space flight trajectories and launch windows. And while electronic computers calculated astronaut John Glenn's groundbreaking orbit around the Earth, he refused to fly unless Johnson herself verified the calculations. Johnson remained at NASA until 1986, working on Mercury and Apollo missions and the space shuttle program. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014 and Hampton's Distinguished Citizen Medal in 2016. Also in 2016, NASA opened a new computational research facility named for Johnson.

Dorothy Johnson Vaughan
After years as a teacher in Farmville, Virginia, Dorothy Johnson Vaughan arrived at Langley Research Center in 1943, renting a room in Newport News because the dorm at Langley was only for white women. She later became supervisor of the West Computers and the first black supervisor at the center. Her temporary wartime employment grew into a 28-year career, during which she taught herself the coding language FORTRAN and then taught those she supervised.

Mary Winston Jackson
Born and raised in Hampton, Mary Winston Jackson went to Phenix High School and Hampton Institute (later Hampton University). She was a teacher, bookkeeper and clerk before being recruited to work at Langley Research Center in 1951. After two years in the West Computing pool, she began working with an aeronautics engineer on wind-tunnel research. He encouraged Jackson to become an engineer, but she had to petition the Hampton School Board to attend graduate-level night courses offered by the University of Virginia at all-white Hampton High School. Jackson became NASA’s first black female engineer, studying air flow, drag and thrust. After more than 25 years as an engineer, she decided to take a demotion to become a manager in Langley’s Equal Opportunities office, working to further the careers of all women at NASA.
Dr. Christine Mann Darden
Christine Mann Darden graduated from Hampton Institute and became a research assistant at Virginia State College, studying aerosol physics. After earning her master's degree, she was hired by NASA in 1967. Darden started in the now-integrated computer pool but moved into aeronautical research. She earned a Ph.D. in engineering and became leader of the Sonic Boom Team, conducting research into lowering the negative effects of sonic booms. Darden was the first African-American woman at Langley promoted into the senior executive service. She held the title of director of the Office of Strategic Communication and Education when she retired after 40 years.

Miriam D. Mann
A graduate of Talladega College with a degree in chemistry and a minor in mathematics, Miriam Mann began working as a human computer at Langley Research Center in 1943. One of the first 11 women hired, she had to take a 10-week chemistry course at Hampton Institute. In a quiet yet persistent manner, Mann protested one of the most visible and demeaning aspects of their status: the lunchroom sign designating a section for “Colored Computers.” The sign disappeared into her purse. Whenever a new sign appeared, that sign would also disappear, until, finally, the sign was not replaced. Mann worked for NASA until 1966, helping to calculate how two vehicles could dock or rendezvous in space, among other projects.

T. Melvin Butler
T. Melvin Butler was the personnel officer at Langley who hired the human computers and many, many others. At first, it appeared to be a passive process, as applications came in from graduates of colleges that identified them as African-Americans. Then it became an active process, with recruiters visiting black college campuses and advertising in black newspapers. Butler and his bosses balanced a federal order against discrimination in the defense industry with Virginia's strict segregation laws by creating separate offices. Butler remained at Langley in various capacities for more than 35 years. He was later elected to Hampton City Council, became Hampton's vice mayor and was the first chairman of the Thomas Nelson Community College board. He is a recipient of Hampton's Distinguished Citizen Medal.

Margot Lee Shetterly
Margot Lee Shetterly grew up knowing many of the women of the West Computing group as neighbors, church members, and family friends, and it took time and distance to recognize how extraordinary their story was. Her award-winning non-fiction book, “Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped,” published in 2016, put a spotlight on these brilliant women who defied gender and racial stereotypes of the time. The movie adapted from her book achieved both critical and box-office success, using award-winning Hollywood actors and fictionalized scenes to dramatize the women's stories and reach millions of viewers worldwide. Shetterly is a recipient of Hampton's Distinguished Citizen Medal.
PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION

When the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the integration of all public schools in 1954, Virginia refused to comply. For Hampton, it was a shift that allowed the beginning of integration without losing state funding. In most of Virginia, prolonged legal battles kept desegregation at bay. Finally, in 1961, the General Assembly created a “freedom of choice” provision, a legal maneuver that gave students the right to apply to another school. For most school systems, this was a way to further stall integration, as it provided an official legal option but did not require localities to approve applications from black students to attend white schools. For Hampton, it was the shift in state policy that would allow the beginning of integration without losing state funding. Public schools remained open, and Hampton avoided the unrest experienced by other localities, though progress was slower than many wanted. First one black student, then small groups of students and teachers were shifted to desegregate schools until full integration was achieved.

Senator Hunter B. Andrews
As chairman of Hampton's school board in 1961, Hunter B. Andrews asked board members whether they wanted to spend taxpayers' money fighting integration or educating students. They created a plan to integrate. A Hampton native whose family traced its history back to the 17th century, Andrews graduated from Hampton High School in 1938 and from the College of William & Mary in 1942. He served in the Navy in the Pacific during World War II and graduated from the University of Virginia Law School in 1948. Andrews was chairman of the Hampton School Board for five years, leading the effort to integrate city schools. He was elected to the Virginia Senate in 1962 and served until 1996, becoming the longest-serving senator in state history. He is a recipient of Hampton's Distinguished Citizen Medal.

C. Alton Lindsay
Hampton schools Superintendent C. Alton Lindsay wanted to avoid the closures seen in other districts and worked with School Board Chairman Hunter B. Andrews to integrate city schools. When he retired in 1968, schools were fully integrated. Lindsay was a Gloucester County native who graduated from Botetourt High School in 1921. He received his bachelor's degree from the College of William & Mary and a master's degree from the University of Virginia. Lindsay served as a teacher and principal in Warsaw, Virginia, before coming to Hampton to be principal of Armstrong School. In 1942 he became superintendent of schools in Elizabeth City County, Hampton and Phoebus, which merged to become the City of Hampton in 1952. C. Alton Lindsay Middle School is named in his honor.

Dr. Jerome H. Holland
A key community partner in pushing for public school integration, Jerome H. Holland was president of Hampton Institute from 1960–1970. The college had a direct interest, as the public high school for black students, George P. Phenix High, was located on its campus until the city built a new school on LaSalle Avenue, which opened in 1962. A New York native, Holland was the first African-American football player at Cornell University. After earning a Ph.D. in sociology, he became a sociology teacher, football coach, social research consultant, president of Delaware State College, and in 1960 the ninth president of Hampton Institute. Later, Holland became the United States' ambassador to Sweden and the first African-American to chair the American Red Cross and to sit on the board of the New York Stock Exchange.
Robert A. Rice Jr.
A key moment in Hampton’s school integration came in 1961, when Hampton received the first application from a black student to attend an all-white high school. Fifteen-year-old Robert A. Rice Jr. was the son of a faculty member at Hampton Institute, now Hampton University. On Sept. 5, 1961, Rice entered Hampton High School accompanied by his father, two white Hampton Institute faculty members, and their teenage sons. There was nervousness and tension, but there was no outright hostility, and Rice was reported to have taken it all in stride. He didn’t attend Hampton High School for long. His father, an associate professor and assistant dean of faculty at Hampton Institute, later moved to Sierra Leone for a new position.

Delegate Dr. Mary T. Christian
Although she was a teacher in the early years of school integration, Mary T. Christian had her greatest impact through community activism. In 1968, she helped organize a voter registration drive in Hampton that resulted in more than 1,000 people registering to vote, and she was the first African-American woman elected to Virginia’s General Assembly since Reconstruction. A 1941 graduate of Phenix High School, Christian earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Hampton Institute and was a public school teacher from 1955-1960. She went on to earn a master’s degree from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. She retired as professor emeritus at Hampton Institute after serving as dean of the School of Liberal Arts. Christian later served seven terms in the General Assembly, championing legislation on education and healthcare and receiving numerous awards for community and humanitarian service. She is a recipient of Hampton’s Distinguished Citizen Medal and one of four female educators for whom Mary’s Park at Peninsula Town Center is named.

Mary E. Johnson
As supervisor of the public black elementary schools in Hampton, Mary E. Johnson chose the teachers who would be reassigned to new schools, an important role during school integration. Johnson was one of the first black principals in Hampton and retired as principal of Langley Elementary School in 1979. She was also a dedicated community leader and activist. She led the effort to restore Little England Chapel in Hampton – Virginia’s only known African-American missionary chapel – and over the years has received numerous awards, including Hampton’s Distinguished Citizen Medal, The Daily Press Citizen of the Year Award, and the Award for Lifetime Achievement from Hampton Roads Black Media Professionals. Johnson is one of four female educators for whom Mary’s Park at Peninsula Town Center is named.

William Mason Cooper
As the first African-American on Hampton’s school board, beginning in 1962, William Mason Cooper played a vital role in school integration. Born in Hampton, he attended Hampton Institute and received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Columbia University. He was principal of Johnson County, North Carolina Training School from 1916-1923, served as extension director of Elizabeth City Teachers College from 1925-28, and was dean of instruction there from 1928-29. A specialist in adult education, Cooper wore a number of hats at Hampton Institute from 1929-1950, including director of extension, director of summer school, research and public relations, professor of education, and registrar. He also held leadership positions in various national organizations, including the Virginia Interracial Commission, American Teachers Association, and Conference on Adult Education.
FOUNDING HAMPTON INSTITUTE

After the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, many of those who escaped enslavement rallied to Union-held Hampton. There they found people willing to educate them and to help them gain the skills they would need as a free people. Founded in 1868, Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute (now Hampton University) had a noble calling: “to train selected Negro youth who should go out and teach and lead their people first by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and in this way to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character.” Supporters and graduates worked tirelessly to ensure the school’s survival and success and to “teach and lead” here in Hampton and in communities across the country.

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**Gen. Samuel C. Armstrong**
The son of missionaries, and a successful Union officer during the Civil War, Samuel C. Armstrong rose to the rank of brigadier general. After the war, he joined the Freedmen’s Bureau assigned to the district that included Hampton and championed the need for a school to educate newly freed men and women. With the support of the American Missionary Society, Armstrong founded Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute, and served as principal until his death in 1893. He supported the abolition movement and devoted his life to the education and improvement of the lives of African-Americans. Armstrong died at the Institute on May 11, 1893, and is buried in the university cemetery.

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**Rev. George Whipple**
From an early age, George Whipple was strong in his beliefs of right and wrong. He was born in 1805 in Albany, N.Y., and graduated in 1836 from the seminary at Oberlin College, where he was a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy and a member of the Presidential Committee. In 1846, he helped found the American Missionary Association, an abolitionist group that played a prominent part in the founding of schools and churches for freed men and women throughout the South. Whipple helped establish Hampton Institute in 1868 and helped secure its charter from the state of Virginia in 1872. Whipple was president of the Board of Trustees of Hampton Institute from 1870–1877.

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**Rev. Lewis C. Lockwood**
Lewis C. Lockwood arrived at Fort Monroe on Sept. 4, 1861, and his early work in education for the American Missionary Association helped lay the foundation for Hampton Institute. Lockwood quickly supported Mary Peake’s school for free and enslaved blacks, and by Sept. 24, 1861, he was sponsoring a similar school at Fort Monroe. In time, Lockwood was operating multiple schools in the city. Described as an organizer and planner with an evangelical zeal, his main job was to discover the freedmen’s needs and to do his best to meet them. Lockwood was an unsung hero in the conventional sense. His name seldom appears in history books, but he played a key role in early education efforts for both enslaved and free black men and women.
Booker T. Washington
Among the earliest students at the Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute was an energetic West Virginian named Booker T. Washington. He arrived at Hampton Institute in 1872, at age 16, to begin a lifelong career as an educator and advocate for black progress. After completing his studies at Hampton and attending Wayland Seminary (now Virginia Union University in Washington, D.C.), Washington was encouraged to help establish another, like-minded institution at Tuskegee, Alabama. In 1881 he became the first principal of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). Washington became nationally well-known as an educator, orator, and advocate for black progress through education and entrepreneurship.

Robert Russa Moton
A few years after Booker T. Washington left Hampton Institute, another young man arrived to continue in his footsteps. Robert Russa Moton enrolled in Hampton in 1885 and graduated in 1890. Moton passed the bar exam soon after graduation, while serving as an administrator at his alma mater. In 1891 he was appointed commandant of men, essentially dean of men, a position he held for 25 years, earning the nickname “The Major.” Moton was a close friend of Booker T. Washington, and they shared the philosophy of black progress through education. He succeeded Washington as principal at Tuskegee Institute in 1915. Moton is buried on the Hampton University campus.
BIOGRAPHIES

Historical information provided by the Hampton History Museum. For additional stories or to learn more about Hampton’s rich history, please visit the museum at 120 Old Hampton Lane, Hampton, Va., 23669, or visit www.hamptonhistorymuseum.org

PHOTO CREDITS

Dr. Jerome H. Holland and Mary S. Peake, Courtesy of Hampton University Archives
Hidden Figures photos courtesy of NASA; Margot Lee Shetterly photo courtesy of Aran Shetterly

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MEMORIAL INFORMATION

The Memorial Plaza was designed by Work Program Architects of Norfolk. They used the elements already at the site – cascading water, concrete and earth – and added a fourth, weathering steel. The common thread of those honored is that they have made significant contributions to their environment, often despite an adversarial social climate. Weathering steel – the material that forms the panels, plaques, and hardware – is as strong as carbon steel to symbolize the strength of those who are honored; however, it will stand the test of time. Weathering steel will react with salt and humidity to create a protective oxide coating that will begin as orange, then transition to a brown hue over several decades. It is safe to touch, but the coating may stain clothing.

Landscape Architect: WPL Site Design of Virginia Beach
Contractor: Kerrick Construction of Hampton