

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1043

Commending the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 2017
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2017

WHEREAS, for 20 years, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Falls Church, has worked to preserve the legacy of the community's contributions to the Civil Rights movement in Northern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the rise of land at the south-central border of Falls Church and Fairfax County has been known as Tinner Hill since the late 1800s, when Joseph and Mary Tinner settled in the area; the Tinner family mined pink granite from a nearby quarry and became well-known as craftsmen and stonemasons; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1997, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation works to preserve the rich cultural heritage of a community, led by two prominent African American leaders who lived in the area, Joseph Tinner and Edwin Bancroft (E. B.) Henderson, who fought racial injustice and established the first rural branch of the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation led the effort to preserve the Tinner Hill Historic Site, where once stood the home of Joseph Tinner at 106 - 108 Tinner Hill Road; Joseph Tinner was a celebrated master stonemason in the area, and was also known for his oratory and speaking ability on civic matters; and

WHEREAS, E. B. Henderson, a teacher in the Washington, D.C., "Colored" schools, was guided by his faith to fight racial injustice; when in 1915 the Falls Church Town Council voted to segregate the town and restrict the land ownership rights of African Americans, he called a meeting at the home of Joseph Tinner to discuss the matter with seven other leaders from the African American community; and

WHEREAS, these men, "The Council of Nine," established the Colored Citizen's Protective League (CCPL) and immediately began to write letters to all the town councilmen, businesses, and churches to see where they stood on the issue of creating four segregated districts and separating the races in Falls Church; E. B. Henderson wrote another letter to W. E. B. Du Bois, requesting to start a branch of the NAACP, but upon learning that there were no rural branches, asked for permission to designate the CCPL as a standing committee of the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, on June 1915, the issue was put to a referendum vote, which passed, and was quickly followed by a suit in Fairfax County Circuit Court, but the judge never ruled on the issue, because it was decided by the Supreme Court of the United States in the decision of Buchanan v. Warley that creating segregated districts within municipalities was unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, while the CCPL was not successful in having the law rescinded, it was unenforceable because of the higher court's ruling on the matter; the CCPL became the first rural branch of the NAACP in 1918, with Joseph Tinner as its first president and E. B. Henderson as secretary; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Henderson House at 307 South Maple Avenue was where the second meeting of the CCPL took place in 1915, and then it became a regular meeting place for civil rights activity in the area; a Sears kit home built by E. B. Henderson and his wife, Mary Ellen Henderson, in 1913, it is currently occupied by their grandson, and Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation founder, Edwin B. Henderson II and his wife, Nikki Graves Henderson; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his work with the CCPL and the NAACP, E. B. Henderson was a pioneer in the field of physical education and athletics; he became the first African American male to be certified to teach physical education after graduating from Harvard University, where he learned the game of basketball, which he brought to Washington, D.C., where he introduced the sport for the first time, on a wide-scale organized basis, to African Americans, organizing the first African American athletic league and an organization for officials to referee competitions, and he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Mary Ellen Henderson was also a respected leader in the Civil Rights movement; serving as principal of the Falls Church Colored School from 1919 to 1950, she began advocating for a new, modern school to ensure that African American students had a safe and equitable environment in which to learn, resulting in the construction of James Lee Elementary School in 1948, the first modern school for African Americans with indoor bathrooms, running water, and a classroom for each grade taught; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation erected the Tinner Hill Monument, a pink granite gothic arch honoring the courageous work of the members of the CCPL, which stands at the corner of South Washington Street and Tinner Hill Road; the gothic arch was Joseph Tinner's signature

architectural detail, which pays homage to his skill as a stonemason; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Tinner Hill received a Virginia State Historic Marker, becoming one of only two sites with such markers in the City of Falls Church, the other being the Virginia State Historic Marker at the Falls Church Episcopal Church, for which the town is named; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the Tinner Hill Historic Site, a collaboration between the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation, City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, dedicated this site to exist in perpetuity as a sacred place of remembrance of those who came together on January 8, 1915, to establish the first rural branch of the NAACP, as well as the civil rights legacy of the Falls Church community; and

WHEREAS, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation has also worked to preserve the history and heritage of other individuals and families in the area, including Frederick Foote, Jr., a merchant, constable, and town council member; James Lee, who donated his land to build a school; Viola Hudson, who worked to ensure that the United States Postal Service delivered mail to the Southgate neighborhood; Harriet Brice, who helped secure land for the construction of Galloway Methodist Church; John Jackson, a Piedmont blues musician and a longtime NAACP member; and many others; and

WHEREAS, in addition to maintaining archival resources pertaining to the civil rights history of the Falls Church community and its African American residents, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation strives to enrich the community by promoting understanding and respect for all races, creeds, and cultures; hosting educational activities, exhibitions, workshops, and seminars; and organizing the annual Tinner Hill Blues Festival to celebrate the ways in which dedicated individuals can change the world for the better; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation on the occasion of its 20th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the foundation's work to preserve the history and heritage of Falls Church and the Commonwealth.