



**APPOMATTOX COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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July 31, 2020

Secretary David L. Bernhardt  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW, MS 5311  
Washington, DC 20240

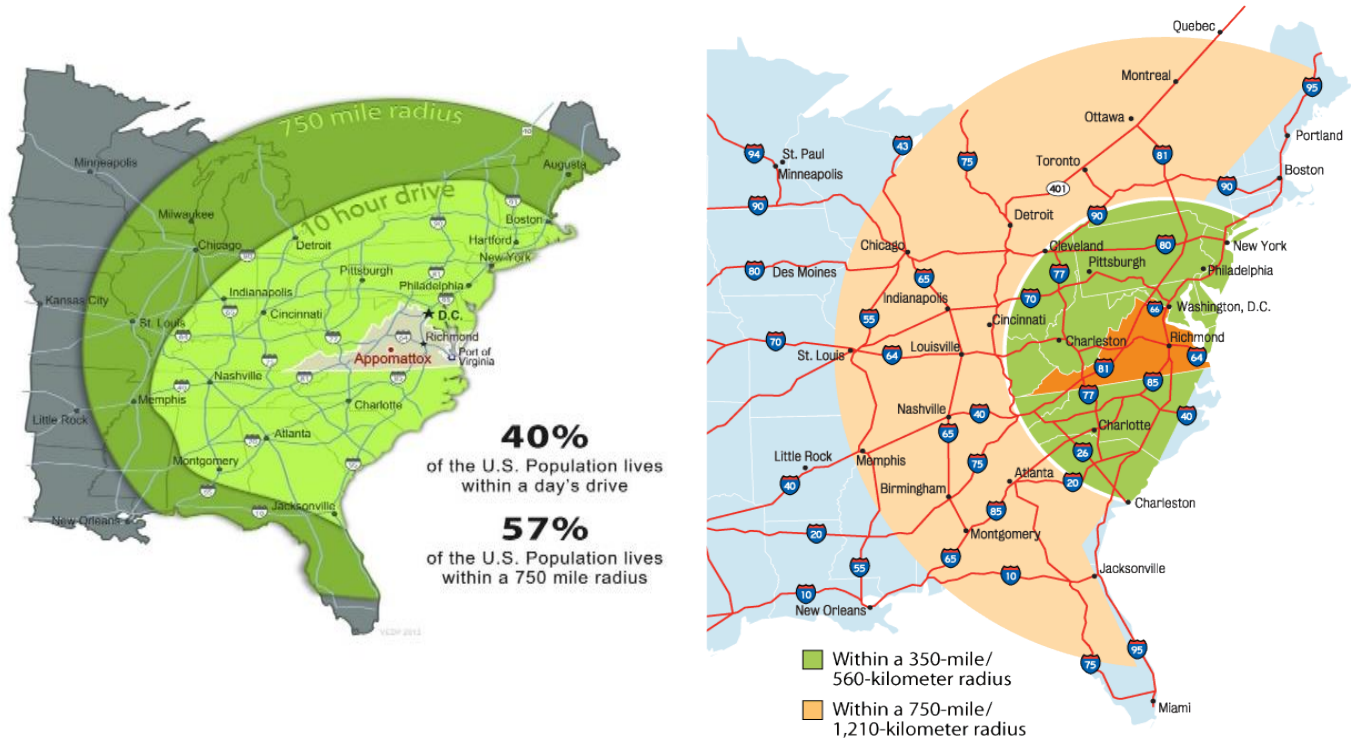
The Honorable Bernhardt:

First and foremost, on behalf of Appomattox County, I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation for your July 23<sup>rd</sup> correspondence relative to President Trump's Executive Order on Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the preservation of history. Your letter is of ironic nature because of recent conversations that we have had with Congressman Rigglesman's office and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources communicating a desire to develop a park of American Heroes. Our vision is diversified in nature and to accept contributions of statues, monuments, etc. with a goal of honoring all known and perceived American heroes. Not only are the statues and monuments are of utmost importance but also the history of their development with inclusions of the associated art and cultural aspects. As most Americans are aware, Appomattox is, "Where Our Nation Reunited", and played a pivotal role in the history of the United States generating peace and unity for all Americans. During a time of National, State and Local turmoil and indifferences, we feel as if this is an opportune time to reflect on the many attributes of American Hero history in a diverse and complimentary manner. Ideally, Appomattox would be the appropriate home for the National Garden of American Heroes as we receive daily inquiries related to acceptance of the statues/monuments from Virginia localities who are deciding to remove their statues and monuments. New Virginia laws require a 30-day wait period and identification of a home for the monument prior to removal.

To provide a quick overview of who we are, where we are located, and why we feel it beneficial to locate the Garden of American Heroes in Appomattox, I offer the following:

Appomattox, founded in 1611, is located near the geographic center of Virginia, nestled between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the Tidewater region to the east, Appomattox County lies in the rolling hills of Virginia's Piedmont. The entire region surrounding Appomattox represents many of the historical and cultural events that affected a change in American History. Appomattox is located within a 2.5 hour driving radius that includes diverse opportunities for experiencing history, outdoor hiking trails, State Parks, amusement parks, college life, urban shopping experiences, youth recreational parks, cultural/arts education, theatre youth recreational parks, beaches, scenic mountains, and many other tourist activities for families. Additionally, the County's location offers a temperate climate with four distinct seasons.

Finding Appomattox is so easy to do! With a convenient mid-Atlantic location, Appomattox is within a day's drive of **over half the Nation's population**. (See map)



Keeping the aforementioned in mind, we appreciate your consideration for an Appomattox location for the National Garden of American Heroes throughout your planning process. To address your questions, I offer the following:

*I - Are there locations of natural beauty within your unit of local government that would serve as a reputable location for these monuments, statues, and the National Garden of American Heroes ?*

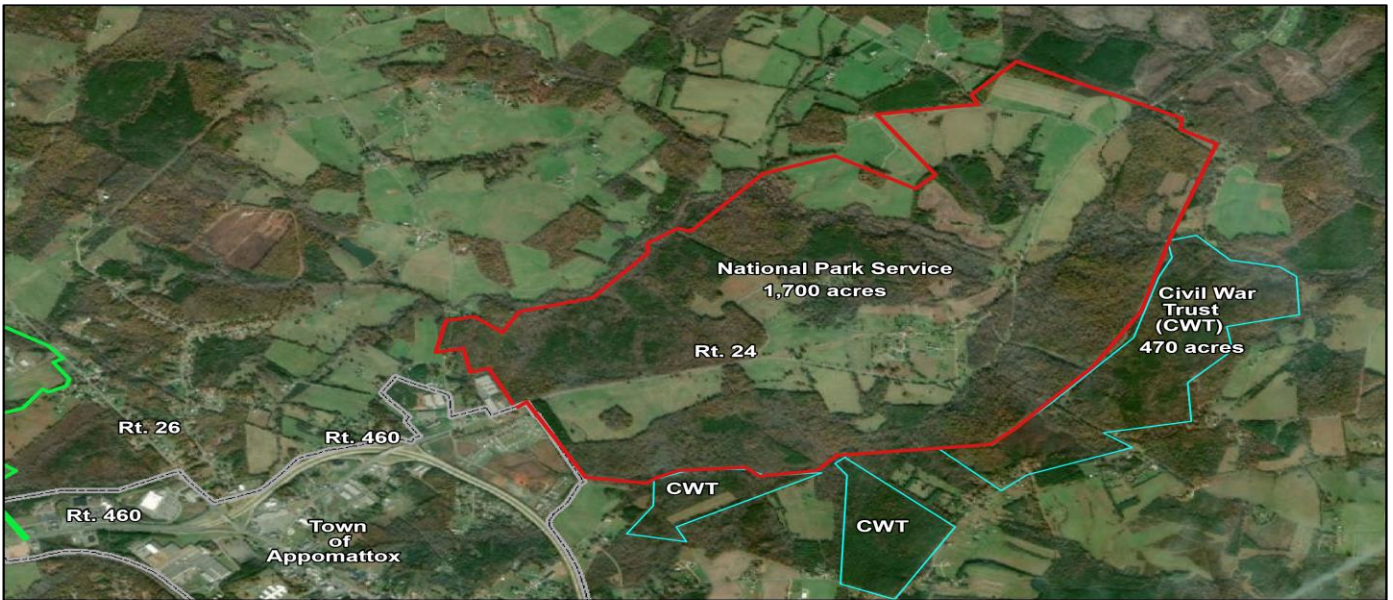
*Please list and describe any such locations consistent with the EO. **Yes, I would like to offer two (2) separate locations in Appomattox County, Virginia for consideration by the Task Force.***

**The first location** is in the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park (currently owned by the National Park Service) covering 1,700 acres of natural landscape beauty. The broader park landscape includes the nineteenth century village surrounded by an agricultural matrix of open pastures and forested woodlands.

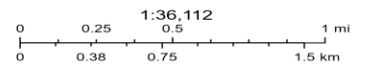
Appomattox Court House village offers a cohesive experience of a late nineteenth century rural Virginia community, characterized by narrow lanes surfaced with crushed stone that lead visitors between buildings, outbuildings, fenced yards, orchards, and small family burial plots. Sweeping views are well preserved by adjoining pasture and woodland, ensuring a landscape setting reminiscent of the late nineteenth century. Monuments mark the places associated with the events of April 1865, while the focal point of the village remains the reconstructed courthouse.

Adjacent to the National Historical Park is an additional 469 acres of land owned by the American Battlefield Trust and the Civil War Trust, an extension of the same rural landscape that surrounds the National Park.

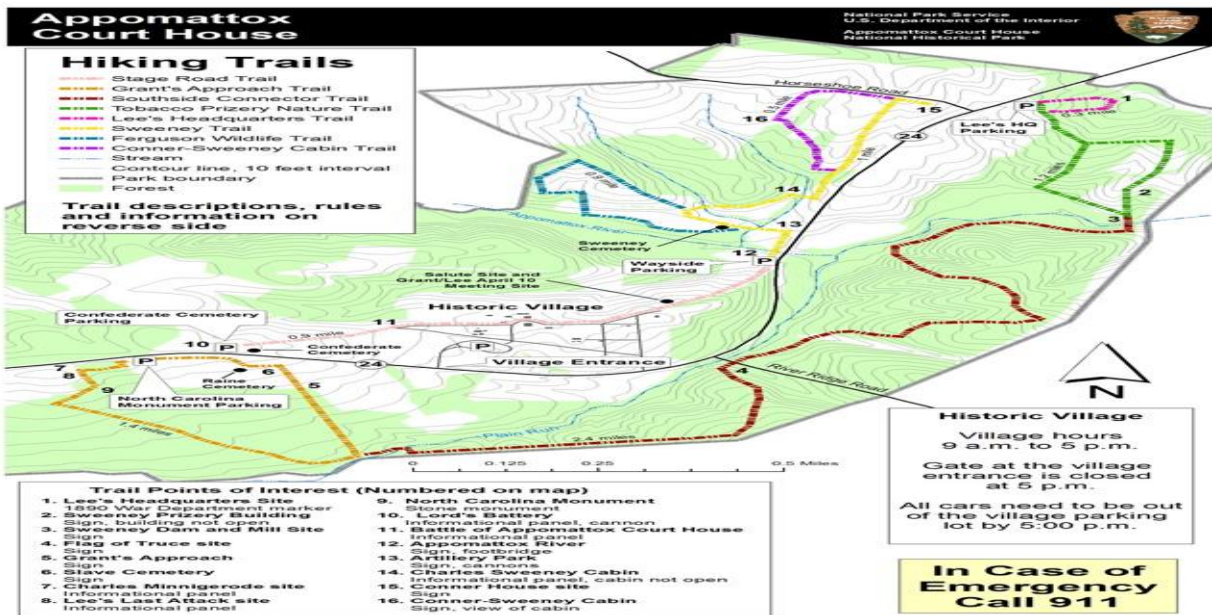
Currently, existing around the approximate **2,100-acre perimeter of the village** are open fields and walking/hiking trails that would allow for mobility and placement of American Hero statues and monuments. (Images are included for your viewing).



July 31, 2020



Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar, Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



**A second location**, owned by the Appomattox County Economic Development Authority, is located on the 460 Corridor, approximately 1-mile from the National Historical Park. The property is composed of **585 acres** of majestic, gentle rolling landscape, streams, walking trails, youth recreational parks surrounded by panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. (See images)

The Appomattox Business Park is located in the heart of beautiful and historic Virginia, about 20 miles southwest of the state's geographic center. It is in the central Atlantic Seaboard, with easy access to major East Coast and Midwestern markets. Within a day's drive are Atlanta, Charlotte, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. Appomattox is also strategically located along long haul natural gas and fiber transmission lines, including the Mid-Atlantic Broadband fiber backbone, one of the most advanced fiber networks in the world.

Currently, we have approximately 350 acres of undeveloped, natural and scenic area that could be utilized for a walking/driving tour area. The area has gently rolling open fields, walking trails, an adjacent youth recreational park, dirt roads for travel throughout the park, scenic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, natural water sources, and open space of grassy areas. This would serve as an ideal location for ample spacing for the statues, monuments, kiosks, etc. placement.



*2 - Are there any statues or monuments your locality can donate or loan to this effort that will honor our nation's heroes? Please list and describe any such statues or monuments consistent with the EO.*

Appomattox County does not own any statues. A memorial Confederate statue is located on the Courthouse square in the Town of Appomattox and is owned by the Daughters of the Confederacy. Several Virginia localities have recently voted for removal of their Confederate statues and contacted Appomattox to identify a home to place their statues. The Board of Supervisors is in the process of reviewing and discussing the requests.

*3 - In addition to the 31 individuals listed in the EO, are there any other American heroes who should be recognized in the National Garden of American Heroes? Please list and describe any such individuals consistent with the EO.*

Appomattox County identifies the following and suggest consideration for location in the National Garden.

**1 - Joel Sweeney (1810-1860)** known as Joe Sweeney, was born in a log cabin in 1810, near the site where the Civil War ended in Appomattox, Virginia. Mr. Sweeney was a musician and minstrel performer. He is known for popularizing and advancing the physical development of the modern five-string banjo. Sweeney performed around the Commonwealth of Virginia, New York and then overseas to Europe, where he is said to have performed for Queen Victoria. The National Park Service restored Mr. Sweeney's log cabin that can be seen adjacent to the NPS village, **the final resting place of a controversial man who was instrumental in plucking the banjo from obscurity.**

**2 - Desmond Doss (1919-2006), native of nearby Lynchburg, Virginia,** was a United States Army corporal who served as a combat medic with an infantry company in World War II. He was twice awarded the Bronze Star Medal for actions in Guam and the Philippines and became the first conscientious objector to receive the Medal of Honor on Oct. 12, 1945. He saved 75 soldiers without ever carrying a gun, making him a World War II hero during one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific. "Hacksaw Ridge" a movie filmed depicting Doss' life was released in November 2016. It is based on the documentary, "The Conscientious Objector", by Terry Benedict and won 2 Oscars, received six Oscar nominations at the 89th Academy Awards.

**3 - Patrick Henry (1736-1799) resided in nearby, Red Hill, near Brookneal, Virginia.** Henry was an American attorney, planter, politician, and was a participant in virtually every aspect of the founding of America, leveraging his eloquence as a Patriot and became the American Revolution's most renowned orator. He is best known for his words delivered in 1775, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" A Founding Father, he served as the first and sixth post-colonial Governor of Virginia, from 1776 to 1779 and from 1784 to 1786, gifted orator and major figure in the American Revolution.

**4- Law Enforcement, Fire Fighters and EMS First Responders** – A tribute to all men and women who provide public service to all Americans.

If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me at (434) 352-3899. I look forward to hearing from you and hopefully, collaborating on the development of the National Garden.

Best Regards and In Respect,

*Susan M. Adams*

Susan M. Adams, County Administrator  
Appomattox County  
(434) 352-3899

