

black history month

Lavinia Marian Poe became the first black woman licensed to practice law in Virginia

In 1925, Lavinia Poe became the state's first African American woman to pass the Virginia State Bar. She practiced law for years in her hometown of Newport News. (Courtesy of Virginia State Bar)

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NEWPORT NEWS — In 1925, Lavinia Marian Poe became the first African American woman in Virginia licensed to practice law.

Poe was born in Warwick County, now part of Newport News, in August 1890.

Poe was a married mother of two and worked as a stenographer and bookkeeper in the 1910s. Around 1920, she began working with Newport News attorney J. Thomas Newsome and developed an interest in the law.

Virginia started allowing women to practice law in 1920 but its law schools didn't accept African Americans. Poe enrolled at Howard University School of Law in Washington. She graduated in June 1925 and passed the bar examination that December.

Poe worked briefly for a firm in D.C. before returning to Newport News. She also was active in the community and helped organize the Newport News branch of the NAACP in 1933 and worked with the Virginia Peninsula committee for the United Negro College Fund.

In 1941, she became a founding member — and the only woman — of the Old Dominion Bar Association for African American lawyers.

Poe practiced law for decades. She died in 1974. A room in the Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center in Newport News is named in her honor.

— Denise M. Watson, staff writer

Calendar

A sampling of Black History Month events this week around Hampton Roads:

TODAY

Black History Through Song

4 to 6 p.m. at Chandler Recital Hall, ODU, 1339 W. 49th St., Norfolk. 757-683-4406. Free

MONDAY

“Reclaiming Our Art” Art Gallery

6 to 9 p.m. at Hampton University’s student center, 135 Marshall Ave., Hampton. hamptonu.edu.

TUESDAY

Young Blacks in Politics

7 p.m. at Norfolk State University’s Student Center 149, Norfolk. nsu.edu/blackhistory.

WEDNESDAY

Movie Night: Black History Month

6 to 8 p.m. at Russell Memorial Library, 2808 Taylor Road, Chesapeake. 757-410-7028.

THURSDAY

Bright Star Touring Company presents “Heroes of the Underground Railroad”

10:30 a.m. at Little Creek Branch, 7853 Tarpon Place, Norfolk. 757-441-1751.

FRIDAY

The Hurrah Players presents Black Girl Magic : A Tribute to African American Women Past and Present

7 to 9:30 p.m. at Hugh Copeland Center, 112 W. Wilson Ave., Norfolk. 757-627-5437.

SATURDAY

Neighborhood Black History Tour and Costume Parade

10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. High and Green streets, Portsmouth. Walk or ride a shuttle bus to see significant African American sites in Portsmouth, concluding at the Portsmouth Neighborhood Facility Recreation Center at 900 Elm Ave. To register, call 202-812-2804.

To add your event to our online calendar, please visit pilotonline.com/events or dailypress.com/events.

To commemorate Black History Month, The Virginian-Pilot and Daily Press will highlight a person, place or event related to local black history. Help us by suggesting an item and sending it to daily.break@pilotonline.com

or filling out the online form at www.pilotonline.com/ask