

TINNER HILL
Intersection of Tinner Hill Road and Washington Street/Lee Highway
Falls Church
Virginia

HALS VA-54
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

TINNER HILL

HALS NO. VA-54

Location: Tinner Hill is a historic area located at the intersection of Tinner Hill Road and Washington Street/Lee Highway on Tinner Hill, one of several small hills on the southern edge of the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Virginia.

Lat: 38.87921, Long: -77.17655 (North corner of the Tinner Hill Foundation trailer, 108 Tinner Hill Road, Falls Church, Virginia, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: Tinner Hill is the site of the first rural branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States. It was led by two of its residents, Dr. E.B. Henderson and Joseph Tinner. Three significant events happened here. The first was the 1890 gerrymandering of the Town boundaries to exclude the existing African American communities, the second event was the successful attempt to repeal the proposed 1916 segregation ordinance that would have prohibited blacks from purchasing land and property in Falls Church and the third was the construction of Lee Highway and Hillwood Avenue which further segregated the black and white communities. These events transformed an ordinary community into a historically significant site, and in doing so, Tinner Hill has become a quiet symbol of an African American community that fought to maintain its identity and its place within the city, despite institutional efforts at separation and segregation.

Description: Tinner Hill is one of several small hills on the Southern edge of Falls Church and there are three significant sites there.

The first is located at 106-108 Tinner Hill Road, and it has a Virginia State Historic Marker. The homes are under a single deed, the Charles Tinner Estate. Members of the Tinner family live in all the vernacular homes located on the gentle hilltop. The houses line both sides of a straight road ending downhill at a cul-de-sac towards the woods. The area is unremarkable and appears to be in decline due to the condition of some of the homes. The site of Joseph Tinner's former home is a grass lawn, except for a trailer, that sits at the top of the hill. Tinner Hill stands secluded and seems isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods of Falls Church.

The second site is 307 Maple Avenue, and it also has a Virginia State Historic Marker. This is a Sears kit home built by E.B. Henderson in the early 1900s. Its current location is the result of having moved twice since 1922. Currently the property, which now faces Maple Avenue, is surrounded by perennial flower gardens and mature trees. This home shows its age, and is occupied by family

descendants.

The third site is the Tinner Hill Monument, a 15 foot pink granite arch, erected on the corner of Tinner Hill Road and the northwest corner of Lee Highway. It was erected to commemorate the men and women who formed the first rural branch of the NAACP. All three of these sites are part of the Virginia African American Heritage Trail.

History: In 1890, the Town of Falls Church retroceded nearly 20 percent of its land to Fairfax County. This effectively eliminated the predominantly black neighborhoods on its southern boundary from the town. In 1914-1918, the Town Council voted to pass an ordinance that would have prevented white landowners from selling any more property to African Americans. Joseph Tinner and E.B. Henderson organized members of the African American community to form the Colored Citizens Protective League and successively fought the Town Council's ordinance. The success of this legal battle convinced the NAACP officers to accept the group as the first rural chapter of the NAACP. In the early-1920s, not long after the victory, two roads were constructed that cut through black-owned land further segregating these communities. This three-part story includes the gerrymandering of the borders, the segregation ordinances, and the construction of Lee Highway and Hillwood Avenue, which all played a part in dividing the African American community.

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Tinner Hill in Falls Church, Virginia. (Anna Buczkowska and Basem Saah, June, 2011).



Current conditions of Tinner Hill. The dark gray surface has the highest elevations (309-332ft), the Tripps Run watershed has the lowest (262-285ft), and the area in between is 285-309ft. The circle represents Tinner Hill, and the dotted line is Lee Highway. Not to scale. (Anna Buczkowska and Basem Saah using GIS data from the City of Falls Church, June, 2011).