

Pending Virginia Place Name Proposal before the Domestic Names Committee, USBGN

Change Mary Bird Branch to Mary Byrd Branch

**Proposal Information**

Proposed name

**Mary Byrd Branch**

Proposal type

change name to recognize family name

Current official name

Mary Bird Branch

GNIS ID

in oral histories from persons that lived in the community, and is buried at Neabsco Baptist Church Cemetery. Her death certificate lists her name as Mary Madeline Byrd.

The proposal was submitted by an NPS employee at PRWI, who states that “Prince William Forest Park has multiple references to the correct spelling. The park currently has signs in place showing the spelling BYRD. . . . To not properly spell her name is an affront to the local community with the knowledge of the area.” NPS webpages and documents report Mary Byrd’s prominence and importance in the Hickory Ridge Community; a webpage about the Hickory Ridge, Joplin & Batestown communities states: “Among the notable residents of Hickory Ridge was Mary Byrd, an African American midwife. People recognized Byrd throughout the Cabin Branch area for her skill and expertise. . . .”

The proponent specifically referenced two NPS documents, “Prince William Forest Park: the African American Experience” (2000) and “Conserving Place: Prince William Forest Park, 1900-1945” (2008). These included recollections of several long-time residents of the area who recalled Mary Byrd’s generosity, whether “helping to raise other people’s kids”; canning and donating food; “holding parties and dinners to raise a little money”; “If you got sick they [Mary and her sisters] would give you two or three dollars; and “. . . all of the people around Dumfries knew her good work habits.”

The PRWI webpage for Parking: Lot E states:

The Mary Byrd Branch Trail . . . heads down through the woods to Mary Byrd Branch, a tributary of Quantico Creek [sic]. The trail and stream are named for a highly respected, strong-willed woman who lived in this area in the 1800s.

#### **Stakeholder Input**

Local government                      Prince William County

State Names Authority   Virginia

Federal Agency                      National Park Service Support

Federally Recognized Tribes      All federally recognized Tribes contacted under Policy X

Other

Source: Quarterly Review List 452, Released July 24, 2023 (<https://www.usgs.gov/us-board-on-geographic-names/dnc-review-lists>)