



# **Broad and Grace Street Retail & Theater District Tour**

**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

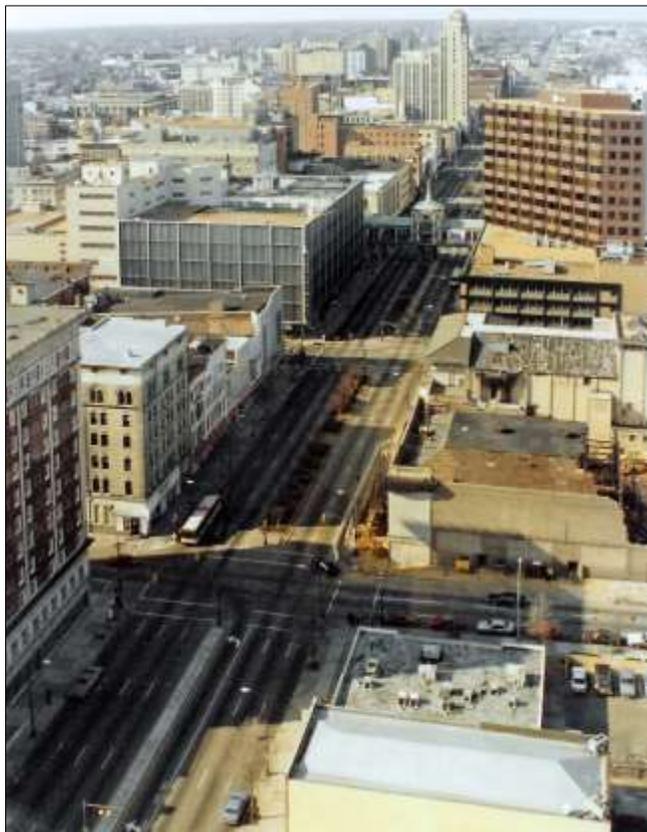
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
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## OVERLEAF

*This view of Broad Street, looking west, was taken from the City Hall observation deck around 1990. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was Richmond's retail and theater district. The line of theaters which used to extend along the north side of Broad Street (right side of the photo) was known as "Theater Row." Two of these theaters are visible in the photo – the Colonial and the National theaters.*

*The large gray box with grid lines near the center on the left-hand (south) side of Broad Street was the Thalhimers department store, one of Richmond's most upscale shopping establishments for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Sixth Street Marketplace bridge, with its central pavilion and spire, is visible extending across Broad Street. Notably, every building shown in the five-block stretch on the left-hand (south) side of Broad Street has been demolished except for the former Miller & Rhoads department store, just behind the bridge. The entire block directly below Thalhimers is now the site of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. The Broad Street frontage of Thalhimers is now a parking lot, since the Virginia Performing Arts Center that was envisioned for the site was never built.*



*On the right-hand (north) side of Broad Street, the building shaped like a tan shoebox at the bottom right is now the site of the Library of Virginia. The former Colonial Theater above it on the next block is in the process of being demolished to make way for a new State office building. Only the façade of the theater was retained. The National Theater, above it at the west end of the block, as well as the former Franklin Federal Savings & Loan building with black and brown metal cladding, above it, were both rehabilitated with State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits. The tan-colored high-rise tower in the background is the former Central National Bank, Richmond's Art Deco skyscraper, built in 1929.*

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**Text and layout by Chris Novelli, Virginia Department of Historic Resources**



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|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. HI Richmond Hostel        | 7. Residences at the John Marshall | 13. Thalhimers Department Store              |
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| 5. 306 East Grace Street     | 11. Carpenter Theatre              | 17. Woolworth's Department Store             |
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## **EARLY HISTORY OF THE AREA**

The area of downtown Richmond bordered by Broad and Main streets to the north and south, and by Capitol Square and First Street to the east and west began to develop soon after the decision was made to build the Virginia State Capitol on Shockoe Hill in the 1780s. Richmond had originally been founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a tobacco trading settlement in the valley east of Capitol Square known as Shockoe Bottom. The site was chosen as a trading center because it was the furthest point inland that boats could navigate on the James River without running onto the rocks at the James River Falls. The site of Richmond was first seen by English explorers in 1607 – just ten days after their first landing at Jamestown. The establishment of Fort Charles in 1645 on the south bank of the James River marked the beginning of continuous English settlement in the Richmond area. The original settlement was clustered around several tobacco warehouses by the river which belonged to William Byrd I. In 1675, Byrd received a land grant from King Charles II for a large tract comprising most of what is now present-day Richmond.

By the 1730s, the settlement at the James River Falls had grown to a village. Local settlers as well as the colonial legislature, the House of Burgesses in Williamsburg, began to push for the formal establishment of Richmond as a town. In 1737, Major William Mayo laid out the streets. Mayo's plan divided the settlement into a grid of thirty-two squares, with each square divided into four equal lots. The east-west streets were named "D", "E", "F", "G", and "H." F Street became Franklin Street; G Street became Grace Street, and H Street became Broad Street when contemporary names were designated in 1844.

### ***Richmond Established as a Town (1742) and the State Capital (1779)***

When Richmond was officially established as a town in 1742, it covered about two-tenths of a mile and had a population of about 250. As the 18<sup>th</sup> century progressed, Richmond grew rapidly and developed as a trading center. In 1769, it annexed a half-mile square section to the west, including Shockoe Hill, now the site of the Virginia State Capitol, and extending through the area of our tour to present-day First Street. This annexation marked the beginning of a pattern of westward development that would continue to characterize Richmond. From this point on, major growth in Richmond – both physically and culturally – would be to the west. The hilly, uneven topography to the east discouraged any significant development in that direction.

During the Revolution in 1779, the state legislature under the leadership of Governor Thomas Jefferson voted to move the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond, which was more centrally located and easier to defend from British invasion. Governor Jefferson selected the six blocks which would become Capitol Square and was in charge of the design of the Capitol building. In 1782, Richmond was incorporated as a city. Long a center of trade, Richmond developed as a financial and manufacturing center with mills for the processing of tobacco, flour, and cotton.

### ***Early Development of Broad and Grace Streets***

As construction work on Jefferson's Capitol progressed during the 1780s and 1790s, the areas to the immediate north and west began to develop as Richmond's most fashionable neighborhoods, with residents such as John Marshall and George Wythe, signer of the Declaration of Independence. During this period, the area of our tour would have been Richmond's "new West End." Richmond has always been a little

like London in that Richmond's West End has always been the fashionable side of town. Richmond has also been compared to Rome – another city built on hills.

By the mid- and late-19th century, these blocks were part of a quiet Victorian neighborhood. Broad and Main streets were primarily commercial in nature; Grace and Franklin streets were residential and comprised a cohesive neighborhood community until the turn of the 20th century. As fashionable residential development moved further west, commercial development began to infiltrate into the older residential areas. Even though suburban development and the development of Monument Avenue after 1902 ended Grace and Franklin streets' era of residential prominence, Franklin remained a center of gravity for Richmond high society until around the First World War. The first commercial development on Grace Street occurred in 1902 with the construction of the C&P telephone building. During the first two decades of the 20th century, the area rapidly commercialized, as older residences were converted into stores or demolished. On Franklin Street, some of the larger houses were converted into private clubs.

In the years between the end of World War I and the Great Depression, Richmond quickly established itself as the leading industrial, financial, and commercial center of the New South. National trends that would come to symbolize the 1920s – industrial development, technological advancement, and mass marketing – transformed Richmond from the genteel political center of the former Confederacy and the State of Virginia into a regional economic powerhouse. Richmond's leaders realized that to fulfill its potential as the leading city of the New South, Richmond had to not only capitalize on its history and cultural attractions but needed to promote a vision of the city as a retail and entertainment capital as well. The transformation of Richmond into the cultural center of the New South began in the early 1920s with the development of the city as a major tourist and shopping destination.





Almost overnight, Grace changed from a street lined with houses to one lined with shops. And in the mid-1920s, with the completion of the Miller & Rhoads addition, the Thalhimers' annex, the new 10-story American National Bank Building at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Grace and the Grace Street Bank and Trust Company's skyscraper at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Grace Street came into its own. Other modern and attractive business houses, smooth paving of all sidewalks between 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, jitneys and bus transportation and plenty of lighting gave assurance that Grace Street entered on a new period of progress and prosperity (Sanford, *Century of Commerce*, 127).

During the 1920s, Grace Street became a glamorous and chic shopping mecca sometimes compared to New York's Fifth Avenue. As was common in many cities during this era, department stores as well as small specialty shops grew in popularity. Broad Street and Main Street had traditionally been Richmond's principal commercial thoroughfares; however, after the turn of the century, Main Street became more exclusively a financial center, and Broad Street became primarily a retail and entertainment center. Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers were Grace Street's (and Richmond's) two premier anchor department stores. They had both originally fronted on Broad Street, but as the century progressed they expanded their buildings with new additions fronting on Grace Street.

**1. HI RICHMOND HOSTEL**  
**Formerly the Otis Elevator Company Building**  
7 North Second Street

Built: **1925**

**Architects:** Carneal & Johnston

The building at 7 North Second Street was built in 1925 for the Otis Elevator Company. Prior to its rehabilitation, the Richmond Department of Corrections used it as a women's detention center. With its beige Flemish-bond brickwork, Renaissance roof-top balustrade, and classical details, the design of the exterior is Late Classical Revival. The asymmetrical door provides an irregularity in an otherwise conventional design. The façade and south elevation are marked by prominent compass-head windows, which suggests the effect of an arcade of arches. A similar treatment with large compass-head windows can be seen at the former Masonic Temple (1888) at the northeast corner of Broad and North Adams streets. The back two-thirds of the Otis Elevator building is utilitarian, featuring red brick cladding. Between 2012 and 2016, the building was repurposed as a hostel, using State rehabilitation tax credits.



## **2. RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY** **Formerly the Dooley Memorial Library** 101 East Franklin Street

**Built: 1930; 1972**

**Architect: Baskervill & Son**

Entombed within the 1972 Richmond Public Library building is the austere, impressive Dooley Memorial Library of 1930. Although the exterior has disappeared completely beneath the modern stone veneer, the original skylighted entrance lobby remains. The Dooley Memorial Library was designed by the Richmond architectural firm of Baskervill & Son and was named in memory of Major James Dooley, who built the Gilded Age estate on the outskirts of Richmond known as Maymont. His wife, Sallie May Dooley, bequeathed the money for the library at the time of her death. Prior to this time, the city library had been housed in the former home of Major Lewis Ginter at 901 West Franklin Street.

The impressive original Art-Deco entrance hall and lobby still remain intact inside the current building. The walls are clad with polished travertine marble and incised with geometrical Art Deco detailing. The fluted pilasters which flank the doorways reflect the increasingly abstract and stylized handling of classical forms that characterized the 1920s and 1930s. This very restrained, streamlined treatment of classical forms is known as stripped classicism.

The firm of Baskervill & Son was again called upon to design the current Richmond Public Library building. Built in 1972, it extended east to Second Street and enveloped the original 1930 library which occupied only the western end of the block. The style of the new library was reputedly inspired by the modernism of Edward Durrell Stone, architect of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The rhythmic articulation of the monumental Franklin Street façade was intended to relate to Linden Row, directly across the street.





**TOP:** Dooley Memorial Library postcard.

**ABOVE:** Detail of geometrical Art Deco plaster decoration.

**RIGHT:** Original Art Deco lobby.



### 3. LINDEN ROW INN

Formerly Linden Row

110-114, 100-108 East Franklin Street

Built: 1847, 1853

Architect: Otis Manson

**Original Owners:** Fleming James (eastern half)  
Samuel and Alexander Rutherford (western half)

Linden Row is the finest example of Greek Revival terrace row houses in the city and perhaps in the South. The idea of connected townhouses, or a terrace, originated in Britain, and long rows of them can still be found in London's West End. Rowhouses became popular on Franklin Street during the 1840s and were often built as investment properties by landowners whose own residence was often on the same block or nearby. They typically had uniform red brick facades, rectangular stone lintels above the windows, and small entrance porticos with classical columns. Linden Row was built in two phases, in 1847 and 1853, and features ten three-story row houses with Greek Doric entrance porticos. Reflecting the fact that each of the houses was a private residence, each of the entrances has slightly different detailing.

TAX CREDIT PROJECT



Prior to the construction of Linden Row, the property had been a garden planted with Linden trees belonging to Charles Ellis. Ellis's colonial-style house stood across the street at the corner of Franklin and Second streets, now the eastern end of the Richmond Public Library. Ellis had purchased the property in 1816. In 1839, Fleming James purchased the property from the estate of Ellis's partner, John Allen. In 1847, James built a row of five houses on the eastern half of the block, which were called Linden Square, after the linden trees that had once adorned the Ellis garden. The western half was built in 1853 by sons of Thomas Rutherford, Samuel and Alexander.

There is a story about this block and the State Penitentiary. In the 1810s, the state legislature had planned to build a new state penitentiary on the block that is now occupied by Linden Row. Because the site was only two blocks east of his own house, Thomas Rutherford persuaded the legislature to build the Penitentiary further south below Canal Street on land which he donated for that purpose. The land Rutherford donated was the south end of his farm next to the river.

Three prominent girls schools were located in Linden Row. The first was called the Southern Female Institute and occupied the two westernmost houses just before and during the Civil War. The last occupied No. 112 from about 1895 until 1906 when it moved to Westhampton and became St. Catherine's.

In 1922, the two easternmost houses were demolished for the construction of the Medical Arts Building. The remaining houses of Linden Row were saved by Mary Wingfield Scott, Richmond's pioneering preservationist and most notable architectural historian. She purchased the houses between 1950 and 1957 and rented them for a number of years before giving them to the Historic Richmond Foundation in 1979. Linden Row was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

When the Historic Richmond Foundation acquired the properties, they were being used by various small businesses and as apartments. In 1986, the foundation sold Linden Row with protective covenants to Southeastern Historic Properties, Inc., based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. After a two-year renovation, Linden Row Inn was opened to the public in 1988. During the renovation, care was taken to preserve the original rooms and their detailing, including the marble mantels, molded plasterwork, and wooden staircases. The units are accessed by wide wooden porches which extend across the backs of the houses. The house on the far east end is still a private residence.

*Lobby of Linden Row Inn,  
featuring original parlor mantel.*



#### 4. THE WOMAN'S CLUB

##### Originally the Bolling Haxall House

211 East Franklin Street

Built: **1858**

**Architect:** William Percival

Built in 1858, the Bolling Haxall House is one of the finest examples of the Italianate style in the city and the state. Early examples such as this one, with boxy proportions and square cupolas, are often referred to as being in the Italian Villa style. The design of the house reflects the change in tastes that occurred during the 1850s away from the simplicity and uniformity of the Greek Revival toward the more highly-embellished styles of the Victorian period.

Bolling Haxall was a partner in the Haxall flour mills and president of the Old Dominion Iron and Nail Works. Flour milling was Richmond's second leading industry after tobacco before the Civil War.

The architect was William Percival; the builders were John and George Gibson. As was often the case in Richmond at the time, the major architectural features are made of cast-iron. Thanks to new developments in factory production, architectural ornament could now be mass-produced in cast-iron or wood.



*The Bolling Haxall House; The Woman's Club since 1900.*

Reflecting the new Italianate taste, the house was given the boxy shape and square cupola which characterize rural Italian villas near Florence. The cornice is enriched with large, decorative supporting brackets, which were a hallmark of the style. Round arches were another character-defining feature. The enormous round arch above the portico takes the traditional place of a pediment. The stucco facing is scored to resemble masonry. The elaborate cast-iron fence in front of the house was manufactured in Richmond and features a running pattern of foliated scrolls. The hitching posts were originally at the state capitol.

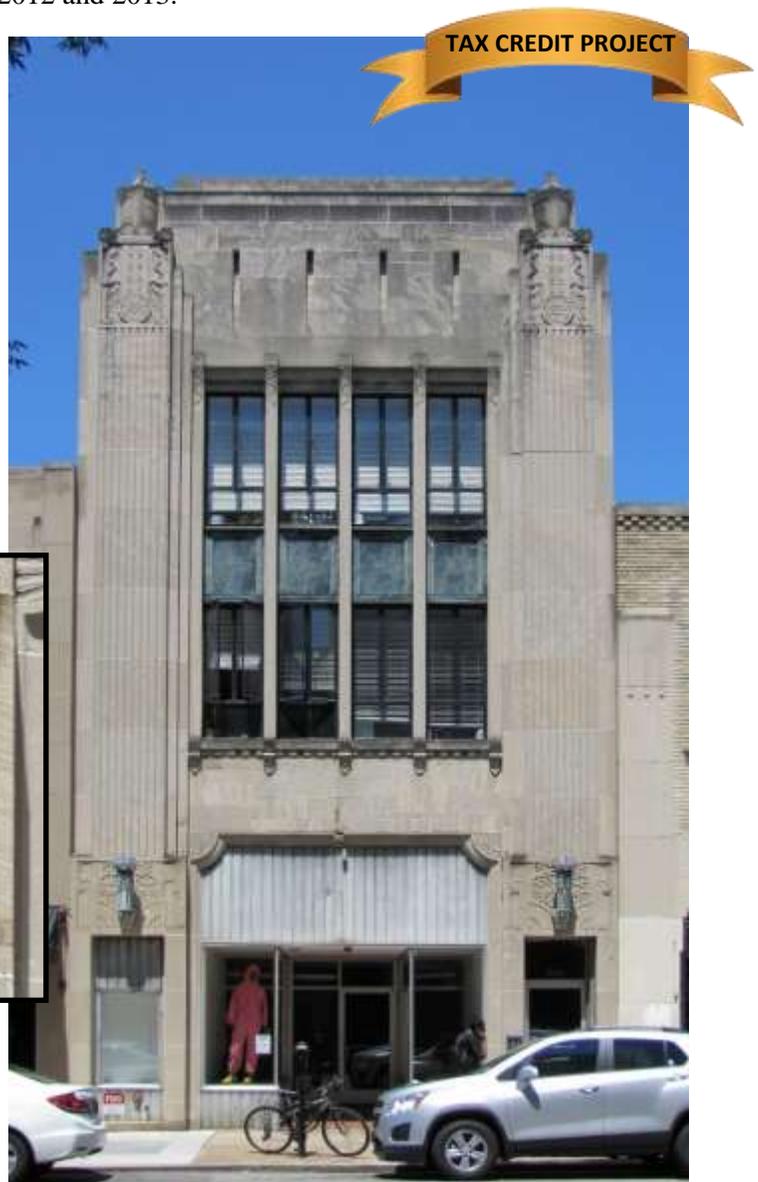
In 1869, Haxall sold the house to Dr. Francis T. Willis, who replaced the original staircase with the solid walnut spiral staircase which still exists in the house today. Starting in the late-19th century, Franklin Street became the home of Richmond's most prominent men's and women's clubs. In 1900, the Woman's Club purchased the house for use as their headquarters and it remains so today. The house has been continuously occupied and maintained since it was built and has never fallen into disrepair.

## 5. 306 EAST GRACE STREET

Built: 1928

Architect: Carl Max Lindner

The 300 block of East Grace Street has been called the “motherload” of Art Deco design in Richmond. Designed by Richmond architect Carl Max Lindner, 306 East Grace Street is one of Richmond’s finest small buildings in the Art Deco style. It won a major award at the time it was built. The emphatic verticality of the façade was typical of the Art Deco style and evocative of the skyscraper aesthetic of the 1920s. The façade is bracketed by two fluted corner pylons, or stylized columns, which instead of capitals display abstract stylized relief sculpture below urn finials. The façade is further enriched by panels of dark green marble between the windows, lush bas-relief sculpture, and Art Deco-style light fixtures. The relief sculpture of the façade is particularly interesting. Derived directly from Paris, it features abstract designs which resemble natural forms. This Art Deco masterpiece was recently rehabilitated with State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits between 2012 and 2013.



## 6. THE FORMER FOSTER STUDIOS

404 East Grace Street

Built: 1927

Architect: Henry Barnham

The former Foster Studios was one of many shops and boutiques which lined Grace Street. Many of these, like this one, are small masterpieces of the decorative arts of the 1920s. Walter Washington Foster owned Richmond's most popular photographic studio, and even though it is small, it is one of Richmond's most spectacular examples of the Mediterranean Revival style. Built at the same time as Loew's Theater, the exterior combines Spanish and Moorish motifs rendered in pale terra cotta against a contrasting heavily textured dark brick background. The triple-arched loggia was a popular design element on architect-designed houses on Richmond's Franklin Street during the 1880s and 1890s. The loggia motif was also popular on 1920s theaters, such as the front of the Colonial Theater, directly east of the National Theater, on the 700 block of East Broad Street.

TAX CREDIT PROJECT



The interior carried out the Mediterranean theme, featuring an entrance hall treated as a diminutive streetscape, and an upper-level window overlooking the space. The vaulted ceiling, round-arched doorways, stone wainscot, and fountain add to the decorative richness of the lobby. The building was repurposed for contemporary office use with State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits between 2014 and 2016, preserving its distinctive character and features.



## 7. RESIDENCES AT THE JOHN MARSHALL (Formerly the John Marshall Hotel)

Northeast corner of Fifth and East Franklin Streets

Built: 1927

Architect: Marcellus Wright

The John Marshall Hotel was Richmond's grand Art Deco hotel. Its opening on October 29, 1929 coincided with the great stockmarket crash of 1929. Fortunately for Richmond, the tobacco industry protected the city from the worst impacts of the Depression. The John Marshall hotel quickly became a downtown landmark of luxury and replaced the Jefferson Hotel, built in 1895, as Richmond's most fashionable grand hotel.

Designed by Richmond architect Marcellus Wright, the design of the hotel walks a fine line between the traditional and the modern, combining classical and Art Deco elements. The U-shaped building employs the "base, shaft, and capital" form as it rises and subtly tapers from its limestone base to the rooftop ball-

rooms which are sheathed in brilliantly colored terra cotta. The use of buff-colored brick together with the vertical limestone sheathing gives the impression at a distance that the entire edifice is stone. The refined ornamentation includes relief carving of vases filled with flowers and fruit. Moorish-style balconies at the upper levels give the design an exotic touch. The entrance is conceived as a triumphal arch and accentuated with carved relief ornament and a richly ornamented entrance canopy, which was brilliantly illuminated at night.

The interior was the last word in 1920s glamor and sophistication. The two-story lobby featured walls covered with St. Genevieve marble. A grand stair led to the mezzanine which overlooked the entire first floor and held room for an orchestra that could be heard in the lounge, dining room, and lobby all at once.

After almost 59 years, the hotel closed in 1988. Between 2004 and 2012, the building was converted into residential use through a multi-million-dollar rehabilitation which took advantage of State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits.



## **8. HILTON RICHMOND DOWNTOWN (Formerly the Miller & Rhoads Department Store)** 517 East Broad Street

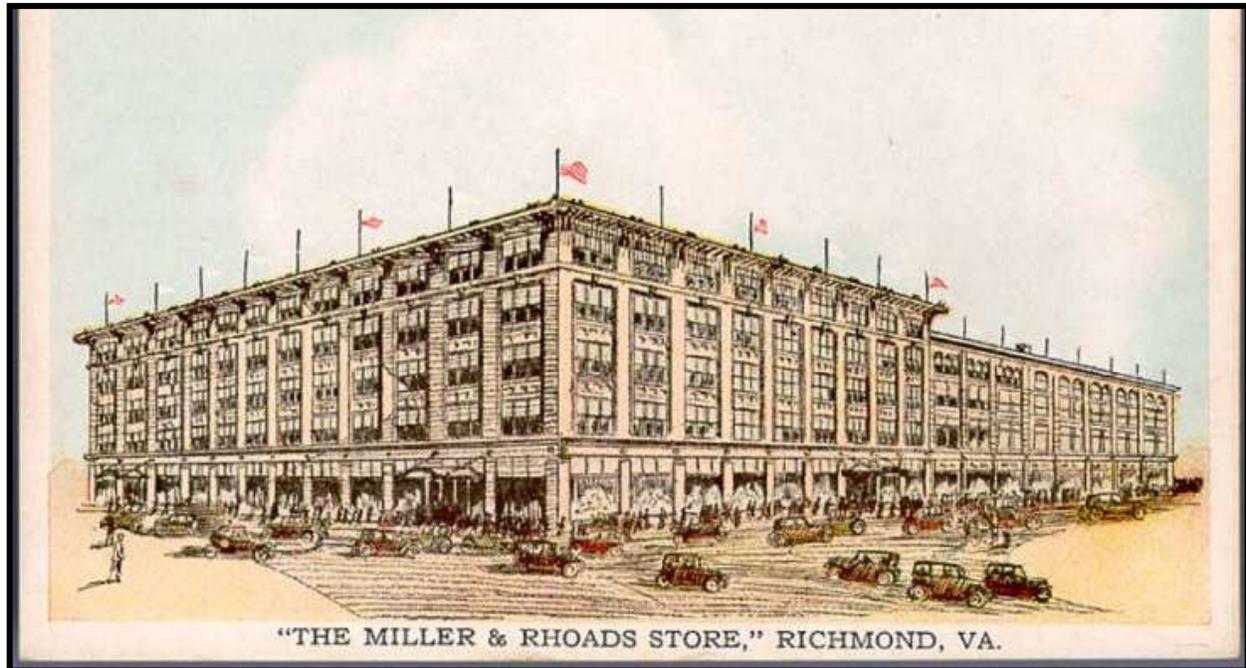
It is difficult to overstate the sense of fondness and nostalgia with which Richmonders of an older day regarded the Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers department stores. For decades, Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers reigned supreme in Richmond, both rivaling and complementing each other. The two stores anchored the downtown Broad Street shopping district and were a way of life for a century.

Miller & Rhoads began when partners Linton O. Miller and Webster S. Rhoads started a dry goods business in 1885 at 117 East Broad Street. By the 1890s they had taken their store to the 500 block of East Broad. Over the next fifty years the store gradually grew until it encompassed three quarters of the block. The original Miller & Rhoads building was a four-story brick structure built between 1913 and 1915 and designed by Richmond architect Charles M. Robinson in a commercial-classical style.

In 1922, the New York firm of Starrett & Van Vleck designed a five-story Italian palazzo-style addition across the entire southern half of the block, fronting on Grace Street. Cream-colored terra cotta trim defined the structural bays, and a broad bracketed Italian-style cornice accentuated the roofline. The addition displayed distinctive wrought-iron entrance canopies with sweeping curves and medallion crests bearing the M&R monogram.

In approximately 1933-1935 the original Broad Street front designed by Robinson was refaced with cast stone and remodeled in an Art Deco style. The window bays on the Broad Street and Seventh Street sides were treated as vertical units divided by fluted pilasters, incised into the wall surface, creating the effect of a stripped-classical colonnade along the two facades.





*Postcard image of the 1922 Italian palazzo-style Grace Street addition, designed by Carneal & Johnston.*

In the early 1940s, the original heavy Italianate cornice was removed and three additional floors designed by the Richmond firm of Carneal & Johnston were added atop the original five floors of the 1922 Grace Street addition. This 1940s addition continued the geometry and patterns of the existing building, but in a style that was a cross between a simplified Art Deco and Modern. The last major additions to the building were built in the early 1950s. These included the expansion of the eighth floor areas to house construction shops and air conditioning units.

A favorite of generations for miles around was the Miller & Rhoads Tea Room. From fashion shows to special luncheons with Eddie Weaver at the organ, the Tea room was an obligatory stop on shoppers' itineraries. Fashion events such as the Autumn Elegance showcased the highlights of Miller & Rhoads selections for the season. Most memorable was Miller & Rhoads at Christmastime, with its holiday display windows and, of course, Santa.

The 1980s brought final efforts to revitalize and reestablish the downtown department store. In 1981, Allied Stores bought Miller & Rhoads, Inc., while Richmond Renaissance tried their hand with the Sixth Street Marketplace, geared at connecting Thalheimer's and Miller & Rhoads. Unfortunately, neither new ownership nor a reinvented shopping experience helped, and in 1989, Miller & Rhoads filed for bankruptcy and started selling its branch stores. January 6, 1990 was the last regular business day.

Between 2003 and 2009, the former Miller and Rhoads Department Store was the subject of a multi-million-dollar rehabilitation tax credit project aimed at converting the building to a Hilton Hotel with rental residential units.

## 9. BERRY-BURK BUILDING

525-529 East Grace Street

Built: 1926-1928

Architects: Baskervill & Lambert

Designed by the Richmond firm of Baskervill & Lambert, the Berry-Burk store was a high-end clothing establishment. Architecturally, the building's form is essentially that of an Italian Renaissance palazzo, or town palace. The interesting limestone entrance and the superb polychromatic cornice set this building apart. The entrance displays sculptures of mythological creatures and a shield bearing a well-dressed gentleman in a top hat, proclaiming the purpose of the store. The top floor and cornice are covered with brilliantly colored terra-cotta ornament. The original bulb-lit steel sign still adorns the rooftop. The Berry Burk building was substantially rehabilitated between 2005 and 2006 as a tax credit project. According to architectural historian Robert Winthrop, "The overall effect of the building is rich, stylish, and slightly frivolous, representative of its era."



TAX CREDIT PROJECT



## 10. THE RICHMOND GARAGE

107 North Sixth Street

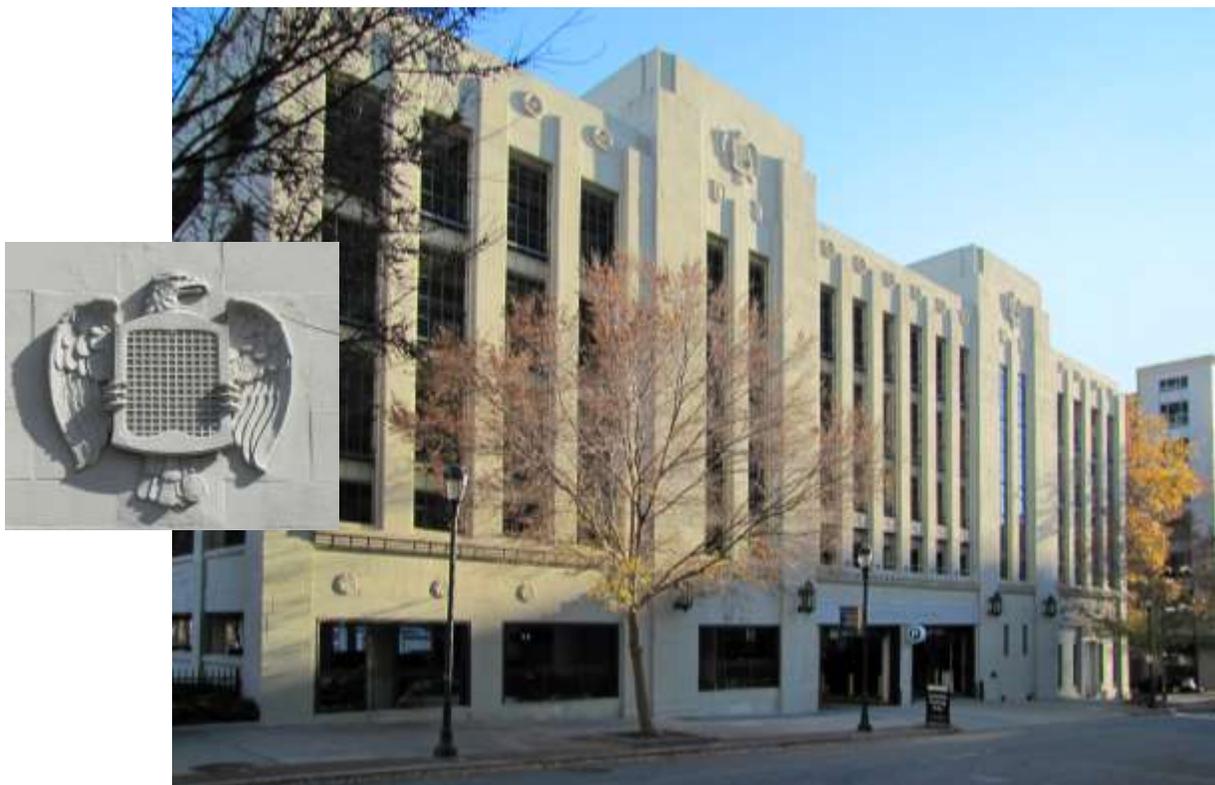
Built: **1927**

**Architects:** Lee, Smith & Van der Voort

The Art Deco-style Richmond Garage is the most notable parking deck in downtown Richmond. Designed by the Richmond architectural firm of Lee, Smith & Van der Voort, the garage was envisioned as an extension of the glamorous atmosphere of the Grace Street retail district. The garage's investors hoped to cater to the same customers who patronized Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers during the day and Loew's Theater in the evenings. The garage was built at the same time as Loew's Theater.

The vertical emphasis of the elevations was part of a trend associated with the Art Deco style and skyscraper aesthetic of the 1920s. The ornament on the building is derived from automobiles. Each bay is crowned with a wheel in formed concrete relief. Eagles holding radiators mark the tops of the major pylons and give a slightly patriotic feel. Built of brick, the exterior of the building was sheathed with a layer of pre-formed cement blocks surfaced to resemble cut stone. In keeping with the elegant, cosmopolitan setting of the retail district, decorative items were placed at street level to enhance the experience of pedestrians and customers walking to and from the shops or the theater. Wrought iron lamps flank the entrances; foliated scrolls drape over the lobby door; and a line of rosette medallions adorns the first floor. The garage's large metal entrance canopy was visually analogous to the marquee of the Loew's Theater.

The major architectural innovation of the garage was the double spiral ramp system, similar to a double spiral screw – the first of its kind anywhere. Ascending cars could travel on one thread of the screw, and the descending cars traveled on the other thread. Horace L. Smith, Jr., one of the partners of the garage's architectural firm, invented the ramp system for this project. The building is still a parking garage.



## 11. CARPENTER THEATRE

Formerly Loew's Theater

600 East Grace Street

Built: 1928

Architect: John Eberson

The former Loew's Theater illustrates the 1920s movie palace at its most spectacular. Designed by the legendary theater architect John Eberson, Loew's theater was envisioned as the capstone of Richmond's cultural expansion during the 1920s. With its mixture of Moorish and Spanish Baroque decorative elements, it was at the forefront of 1920s movie palace architecture and was considered the most up-to-date theater in the South when it opened on April 9, 1928. Even though it was built on Grace Street, one block south of Theater Row on Broad Street, its location between Richmond's two largest upscale department stores, Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads, guaranteed its success as a "high-class" theater.

Eberson's design for the exterior drew from the architecture of Spain and Mexico, evoking an exotic, romanticized image of a distant land. The imposing corner tower established the building as a major visual and cultural landmark, and the large marquee became a blazing standard by night. Reflecting the 1920s taste for exotic opulence, the theater was designed in a rich blend of Moorish and Spanish Colonial Revi-





*View of the Loew's Theater stage.*

val styles. The focal point of the building's exterior is the curved Baroque corner tower, six stories in height. The tower is set off from the main building by paired, giant order, terra-cotta pilasters; an elaborately decorated cornice with a broken scallop pediment encrusted with fanciful finials; and a large terra-cotta quatrefoil at the top, open in the center to allow views of open sky from street level. The tower is adorned with crisscrossing raised brick patterning and diamond-shaped terra-cotta tiles placed at the points of intersection.

John Eberson was an Austrian-born architect who practiced architecture in New York. He developed the concept of the "atmospheric theater" in which the interior was treated as a fantasy landscape with sky, stars, and clouds. The auditorium, with its lavishly ornamented Spanish Baroque architecture and ceiling, treated to give the illusion of a starry night sky with moving clouds, gave the effect of a Spanish plaza. Such architectural theatricality was essential to the atmospheric theater, where the viewer, seated in the proper fantasy atmosphere, would achieve the greatest enjoyment of the film.

The theater is entered through a circular corner entrance vestibule. The two-story, cross-vaulted foyer features rough stucco walls which were originally adorned with paintings and tapestries to project a romanticized image of a Baroque Spanish palace. Turned woodwork, colorful Spanish tiles, stained glass, decorative plasterwork, sculpture, antique furniture, and decorative light fixtures all enhanced the opulent, exotic effect. In the auditorium, a large proscenium arch laden with rich Baroque decoration dominates the stage. To accompany the silent films, there were twelve musicians in the pit along with a conductor and a magnificent thirteen-rank Wurlitzer organ. Although it opened as a silent film theater, it was wired for sound five months later, in September 1928.

Loew's Theater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. In 1982, it was restored by the Virginia Center for the Performing Arts and later renamed the Carpenter Theatre. The theater received a second major rehabilitation between 2005 and 2009, receiving both State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits.

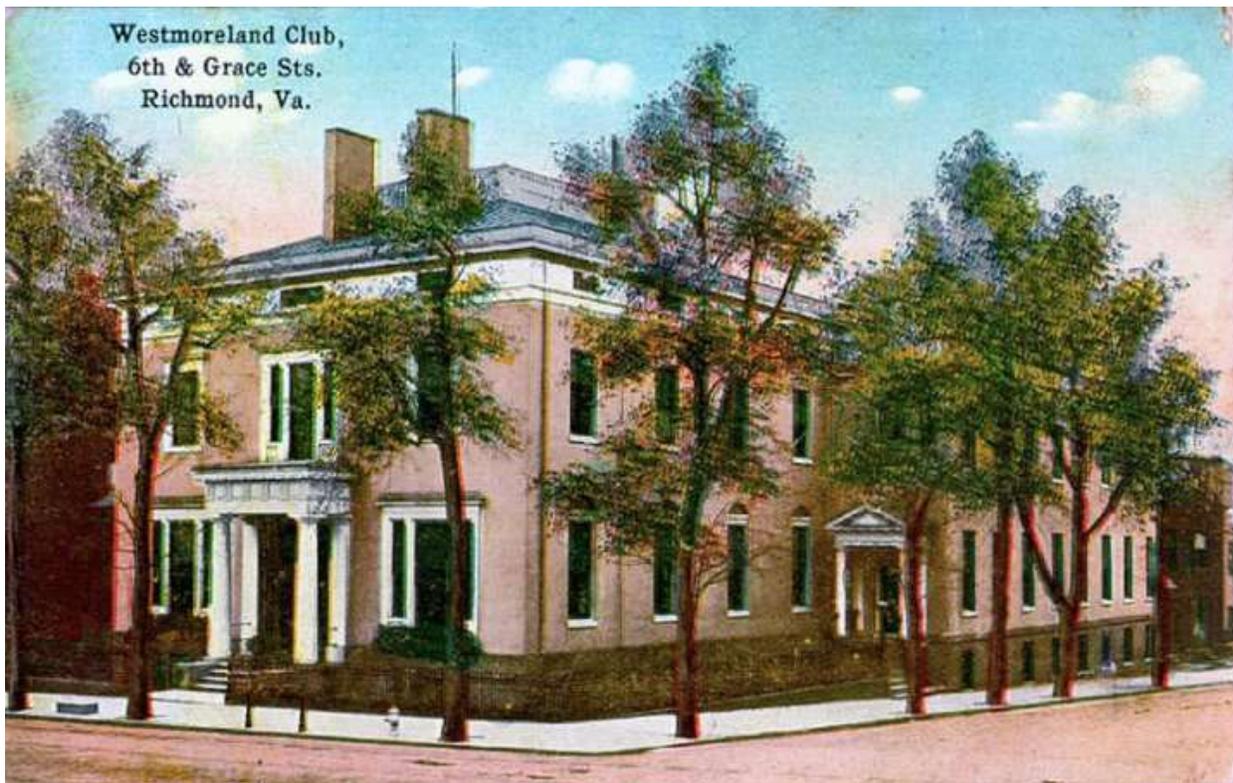
**12. WESTMORELAND CLUB**  
**Formerly the Robert Stanard House**  
 601 East Grace Street

Built: **1836-1839**; demolished: **1937**

The Westmoreland Club was one of Richmond's most prestigious men's clubs, and for most of its history it was housed in what had formerly been known as the Stanard house. Built between 1836 and 1839, the house was said to have set the type for Greek Revival mansions in Richmond in the 1840s. Typical of the style, the entrance featured a Greek Doric entrance portico with widely-proportioned columns flanked by large triple windows. The house was also stuccoed as were about half of the Greek Revival mansions in Richmond. One of the house's unique features was the use of frieze windows, intended to let air into the attic. Though popular in Baltimore, frieze windows were not customary in Richmond.

The house was begun in 1836 by James Gray, a wealthy tobacco merchant; however in 1839, financial reverses forced him to sell the nearly completed house. Judge Robert Stanard purchased the property and finished the house that same year, becoming its first occupant. The stately drawing rooms were equipped with furniture from Paris and carved marble mantels from Italy.

Judge Stanard had formerly lived in a house on Ninth Street, opposite Capitol Square. Edgar Allan Poe had been a frequent visitor there, as a friend of Stanard's son, Robert, when they were both children. It was to Mrs. Stanard that Poe is said to have addressed his verses entitled "To Helen," which helped to make Poe famous and caused her to be known as "Poe's Helen."



One of Richmond's leading lawyers, Robert Stanard was appointed to the Virginia Supreme Court in the same year that his new house was completed, in 1839. His law office was in the basement of the house. Stanard died only six years later in 1857 at the age of 43. He had served in both the State Senate and House of Delegates but was chiefly noted as a lawyer. Judge Stanard's son continued to occupy the house for a time, keeping up the tradition of hospitality associated with it. English novelist William Thackeray visited there in 1853. Another visitor, Mrs. Semmes of New Orleans wrote:

. . . do you not remember Mrs. Stanard, who had such a charming house and gave such delicious teas, alluring such men as Soule, Commodore Barrow, Henry Marshall, of Louisiana, and. . . our dear old Vice President Stephens? She boasted that she never read a book, and yet all these distinguished gentlemen gathered around her board and ate those hot muffins and broiled chicken with gusto!

(Mary Wingfield Scott, *Houses of Old Richmond*, 1941, 198-201).

Five years after Robert Stanard's death, his widow sold the house to William H. MacFarland. In 1879 the house was sold to the Westmoreland Club, which had been chartered only two years before. The club settled in the former Stanard home and continued the unbroken tradition of hospitality.

By 1937, at the height of the Great Depression, the Westmoreland Club was the oldest gentlemen's club in Virginia – having been founded sixty years before. Faced with rising taxes and operating costs, as well as the increase in the value of the property in the heart of downtown Richmond, club members reluctantly concluded that the financial burden was too great for a purely social organization to carry. The news of the Westmoreland Club's decision to sell and demolish the house sent shock waves through the city and received coverage in the local papers. The house was sold, and in May 1937 the furnishings, portraits, and library of 4,000 books were removed. The house was demolished, and the site is now a parking lot.



**13. THALHIMERS DEPARTMENT STORE,**  
600 Block, East Broad Street

Thalhimer's was Richmond's other most beloved department store. All that remains of the Thalhimer's store today is the 1939 Grace Street addition, now the Virginia Energy Center (for the performing arts). William Thalhimer, a native of Germany, opened a dry goods store in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom in 1842 and moved the business to East Broad Street in the 1870s. In 1923, Thalhimer's moved to a new five-story structure on Broad between Sixth and Seventh Streets. The store continued to expand, ultimately encompassing three-quarters of the city block. By 1940, Thalhimer's occupied an evolved cluster of buildings on the block with five- and six-story storefronts facing Broad Street.

In 1955, the storefronts facing Broad Street and Seventh Street were covered with a corrugated aluminum shell manufactured by Reynolds Aluminum, visually unifying the appearance of the store as a giant modernist gray box, and rebranding its image as a modern retail establishment. The architects were Copeland, Novak & Israel of New York. The grid-like pattern of beams on the exterior reflected the structural skeleton underneath, articulating the sides of the building vertically and horizontally into floors and bays.

The Thalhimer's clock at Sixth and Broad streets (visible in the postcard image below) was a popular rendezvous point for shoppers, and a shopping spree was incomplete without a visit to the store's bakery at the Seventh Street corner, for a piece of Thalhimer's famous six-layer chocolate cake. Richmonders recalled old-fashioned manners and service as highlights of the shopping experience.

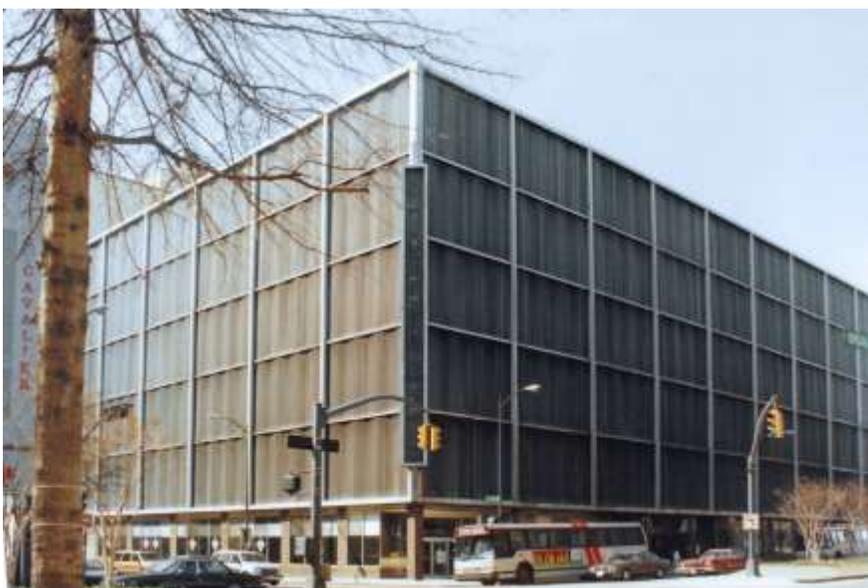


*Postcard view of Thalhimer's from Broad Street, looking southeast. Loew's Theater is on the far right.*

In 1985, the Sixth Street Marketplace opened as a downtown revitalization venture. It was an enclosed mall built on top of Sixth Street with a pedestrian bridge over Broad Street and a food court anchoring the north end. Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads were integral components, anchoring the south end of the mall with both of their Sixth Street entrances opening directly into the mall. The Marketplace was only a short-term success, however, and in January 1992, Thalhimers closed its doors forever.

The building sat empty for over a decade until finally the entire northern portion was demolished in 2004 with the idea that the site would be redeveloped as part of a new \$97 million Virginia Performing Arts Center complex, even though the Virginia Performing Arts Foundation did not yet have the funds to build anything. Just prior to demolition it was noted that the store facades beneath the aluminum cladding had historic value and could possibly be restored with rehabilitation tax credits. The press heralded the demolition as the “sign of a new and exciting chapter,” adding that “progress has to keep on,” but after the demolition, the site was for many years an empty field. It is now a paved parking lot for the Dominion Energy Center, which occupies the southern half of the block.

The International-style 1939 Grace Street addition designed by Tausig & Fleisch is the only part of the building which still survives. Its design, with its broad expanse of polished red granite panels, was inspired by Philip L. Goodwin’s and Edward Durell Stone’s 1939 design for the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Fortunately, the architects of the recent refurbishment have kept this part mostly intact.



**ABOVE:** *Broad Street and Seventh Street facades, showing the 1955 aluminum shell, c. 1992. By this time, the vertical lettering on the corner sign had been removed.*

**TOP RIGHT:** *Detail of polished red granite panels on the 1939 Grace Street addition.*

**RIGHT:** *Grace Street and Seventh Street facades, showing the International-style 1939 addition. The structure now houses the Dominion Energy Center’s Libby S. Gottwald Playhouse and Rhythm Hall.*



#### 14. THE NATIONAL (Formerly the National Theater)

704 East Broad Street

Built: 1923

Architect: Claude K. Howell

The centerpiece of Richmond's famous Theater Row was the National Theater, designed by theater architect Claude K. Howell. The sandstone-colored brick and terra-cotta façade is lavishly rendered in a lush Italian Renaissance style and crowned by a frieze of full-size nude nymphs carrying garlands. One figure is playing a lyre and another unfurling a reel of film. The front block of the building is covered by a green tile roof with extended eave overhangs supported by large decorative brackets – a hallmark of the Renaissance Revival style. The scale of the building is comparable to New York City's off-Broadway theaters of the same period.

The interior is similarly grand with elaborate Adamesque decoration. The nymphs are used repeatedly on the cornices and balconies, but on a smaller scale. Oval domes provide the interior's spatial theme, both in the two-level lobby and in the spectacular auditorium. The lobby displayed a grand marble staircase leading to the auditorium featuring a large illuminated dome. All of the plaster decoration was the work of local marble and plaster sculptor Ferruccio Legnaioli. One of Richmond's most prominent artists, Leg-



naioli was a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy. He created the statue of Columbus in Richmond's Byrd Park, and also sculpted the plaster decoration for the Lyric, Empire, Colonial, Capitol, and Byrd Theaters. The auditorium featured a balcony, boxes along the sides, and an orchestra pit which seated twenty-four musicians – touted as the largest in Virginia.

The National also featured 12,000 square feet of office space, a spacious billiard parlor in the basement, and a restaurant and retail space on the ground floor. Theater booking offices were located on the second floor which also featured a children's nursery room with painted murals (which still survive) and a ladies retiring room where tea was served every afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00.



The National Theater opened on the evening of November 11, 1923, and the Governor and the Mayor were both in attendance. The theater was large and adaptable enough to accommodate theatrical, vaudeville, and musical comedy companies as well as silent movie shows. Theater critic Roy Proctor described the National as the closest thing Richmond has ever had to a Broadway-style playhouse.



The National Theater often showed movies during the week, adding vaudeville or musical revues on the weekends.

**TOP AND BOTTOM:** Views of the auditorium after rehabilitation. The figures in the frieze on the top photo were originally painted white against a pale blue ground, like Wedgewood.

After sitting vacant for years, the National Theater was given new life as a performing arts venue after a major multi-million-dollar rehabilitation with State and Federal tax credits between 2006 and 2008.

**15. UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND DOWNTOWN (Formerly Franklin Federal Savings & Loan)**  
626 East Broad Street

**Built:** 1954

**Architect:** Edward F. Sinnott

The Franklin Federal Savings & Loan building was designed in 1954 by Edward F. Sinnott (1890-1975), one of Richmond's leading Art Deco and mid-century modern architects. With its bands of ribbon windows, the Franklin Federal building was an expression of the International style. Furthermore, with its smooth limestone cladding and polished granite trim, it appears to have been derivative of the 1939 Grace Street addition of the Thalhimers department store, located just one block south. The Franklin Federal building's steel and reinforced concrete structure was implied in the corners that extended to the ground and in the horizontal bands of windows. Sinnott clad the exterior with limestone panels to provide a smooth wall surface and used the darker pink and black granite to enhance the sense of voids and further emphasize the building's structure. Similar granite appears on the Central National Bank building.

In 1974, the exterior was clad in anodized and bronze aluminum in order to present a more modern image to the public. Part of an architectural trend, a number of buildings in Richmond were clad in aluminum between the 1950s and 1970s, including Thalhimers and the Richmond Colosseum.

Between 2008 and 2012 the building was rehabilitated to serve as the University of Richmond's Downtown Campus building. The aluminum cladding was removed, and most of the original exterior was still preserved underneath.

The interior is still largely intact. The banking lobby was located on the first floor, and the second through fourth floors were utilitarian office spaces. The terrazzo entrances and stairs on the north and south sides of the building are still intact and possess well detailed, aluminum handrails and balusters. The teller area displays a mural painted by Richmond muralist, Hans E. Gassman.

*TOP: Before rehabilitation.*

*BOTTOM: After rehabilitation.*



**16. THEN, THEN, THEN & NOW**

*These four images show the northwest corner of Broad and Seventh streets changing through time.*



*The Richmond Theater (built 1863), view c. 1870.*



*Greentree's Men's Clothing store (built 1896), view c. 1900.*



*Cavalier Men's Shop (Art Deco cladding added on Greentree's store, c. 1940), view 1992.*



*United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, view 2019.*

### 17. F. W. WOOLWORTH CO. DEPARTMENT STORE

501-509 East Broad Street

Built: **1954**; demolished: **2004**

Architect: Carneal & Johnston

Woolworth's and Murphy's were Broad Street's mid-century-modern five-and-dime department stores – alternatives to the more upscale Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers. The Woolworth building was seen to best advantage from its northwest corner. With its polished square granite panels, triple tiers of ribbon windows, and aluminum-trimmed sidewalk canopy, the store was a gleaming example of the International style. Stylistically, the design owed a debt to the 1939 Thalhimers addition, which had employed the same features fifteen years before. Instead of limestone for the exterior walls, however, the Woolworth building employed blond brick. The building was demolished in 2004 as part of the rehabilitation of the adjacent former Miller & Rhoads building. The site is now a corner drive-through entry for the Hilton Hotel.

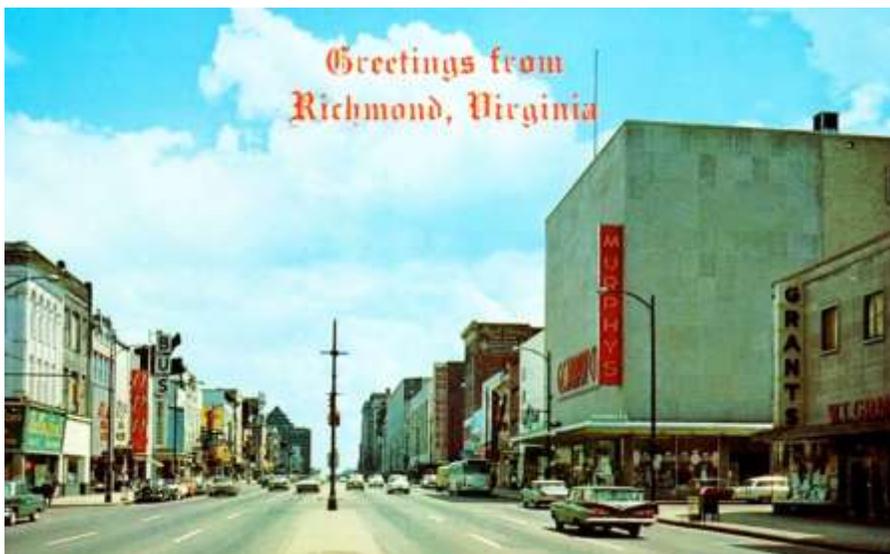


### 18. G. C. MURPHY CO. DEPARTMENT STORE

401 East Broad Street

Built: **1947**; demolished: **c. 2004**

As on the 1939 Thalhimers addition, the architect employed smooth limestone panels to convey the impression of a taut membrane enveloping space. The signage on the front reflected the stylistic preferences of the 1940s. Inside, the front counter had a movie theater-style, glass-enclosed popcorn maker.



*Murphy's was a fixture of Broad Street for over half a century. The postcard view to the left was taken looking east. Every building on the right-hand side has been demolished except for Grants in the foreground and the Miller & Rhoads building.*

## 19. CENTRAL NATIONAL BANK BUILDING

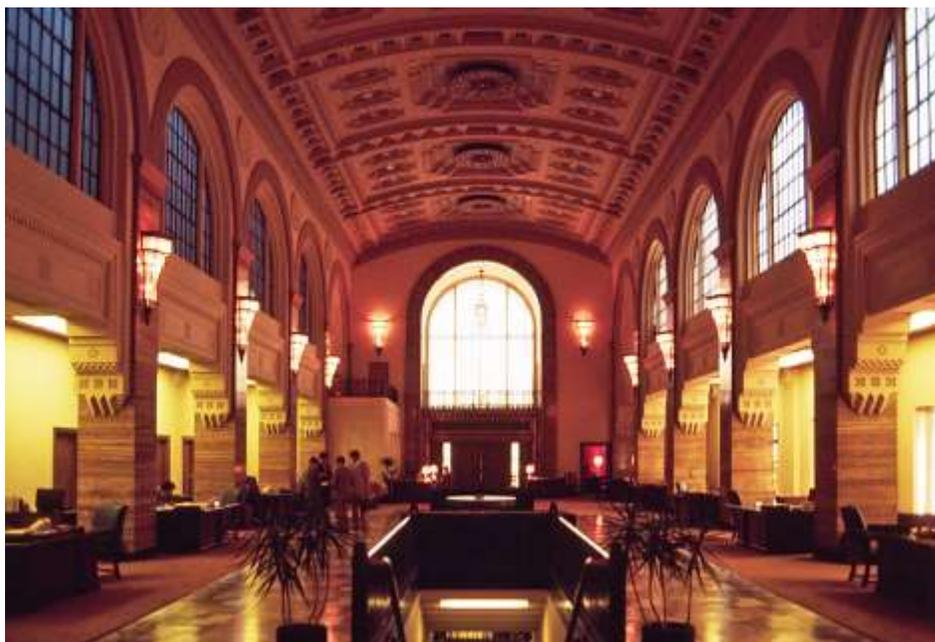
219 East Broad Street

Built: 1929

Architect: John Eberson

The Central National Bank building is Richmond's Art Deco skyscraper. It was designed by New York architect John Eberson, who also designed the Loew's Theater, completed the previous year. Eberson's design for the bank skillfully combines the architectural drama of a theater with the restraint usually associated with banks. The tower tapers as it rises, modulating from a rectangular shape to an octagonal mass at the top. The polychrome ornamentation at the top is overscaled to ensure visibility at a great distance.

The immense banking lobby is an Art Deco fantasy, with travertine marble walls, Art Deco light fixtures, and an intricately detailed polychrome vaulted ceiling featuring a line of enormous circular medallions. The design of the lobby recalls the layout of a church with a nave and side aisles. Indeed, entering the space is akin to a religious experience. The building is currently undergoing conversion for residential use with the help of State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits.



**LEFT:** View of the Art Deco banking lobby, looking north. The arched windows on the east and west sides recall Roman baths, which were built at a similar monumental scale.

The Art Deco light fixtures resemble miniature 1920s set-back skyscrapers turned upside-down.