

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Virginia (Preferred)

and/or common 1 North Fifth Street

2. Location

street & number 1 North Fifth Street N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county (in city) code 760

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name One North Fifth Associates, a Virginia General Partnership

street & number 1 North Fifth Street

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of (city) state Virginia 23219

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richmond City Hall

street & number 900 East Broad Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Downtown Richmond Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 22, 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		_____ N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Virginia is a five-story brick building which entirely occupies its site in the heart of downtown Richmond. The composition of the structure is classical with the elevations divided into three zones: a one-level base, a three-story shaft, and a one-story cap. The corners are marked by brick quoins. Within the orderly framework there is considerable variety. The Virginia was an office-apartment located in a historic residential neighborhood. The exterior treatment is subtly varied to express the functions within as well as surrounding conditions. The building is constructed of white brick, with limestone, granite, and pressed metal used for decorative elements.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The Virginia housed the offices of a major insurance company and a number of apartments and professional offices. The insurance office was located in the rusticated base of the building and was entered through a dramatic curved bay at the corner of 5th and Main Streets. The bay is rusticated the full height of the building, and the entrance itself is made of rusticated columns in which fluted drums alternate with sculpted drums, and is crowned by a limestone relief of the Virginia State seal. The windows of the first floor are double-hung.

The apartments and offices were entered through 5th Street through a simpler entrance. It uses the same motifs but replaces the sculpted relief with a simple shallow pediment. The northern corner of the building is marked by broad brick quoins which turn the corner so that they can be seen from the adjacent Second Presbyterian Church yard.

The Main Street facade is subdivided by two rusticated brick features which include three small windows. These indicate the position of the bathrooms and kitchens in the apartments. The top floor is treated as a deep cornice. The cornice and balustrade are metal. The first-floor windows have rusticated brick jack arches, middle floors have limestone lintels, and the top floor has molded brick surrounds. There is no systematic subdivision into bays in the building.

The entrance lobby and stairhall remain little changed. The wrought iron and stone stair are particularly notable. The building had an Otis elevator when it was built and an elevator remains in its original location. The interiors of the apartments have all been converted into offices, but the subdivision into apartments can still be noted.

The exterior is unchanged except for the installation of aluminum entrances in the 1960s. Early photographs indicate that the Virginia had awnings on the Main street front.

(See Continuation Sheet No. 1)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1906 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Virginia was erected in 1906 as the headquarters of Richmond's second largest fire insurance company. In addition to housing the Virginia State Insurance Company, it accommodated high quality apartments and professional offices. This combination of uses was unique in Richmond at that time, and was never attempted again. Located in the old and prestigious 5th Street residential area, the design of the structure was carefully contrived to blend with the commercial character of 5th Street. The split nature of the building is subtly expressed in the restrained yet inventive treatment of the exterior. While it is much newer and larger than its historic neighbors, the Virginia contributes greatly to the harmonious character of the street which still preserves and suggests the ambience of the 19th century.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fifth Street was developed at the turn of the 19th century as a prestigious residential district. At that time a series of important houses were built of which only the Hancock Caskie House (1808-1810), one of the finest neo-classical mansions in Virginia, survives.

This nucleus of fine houses was augmented in the 1840s by the construction of a number of Greek Revival houses, namely the present Scott-Clarke (1841) and the Barret houses. The street's only church, Second Presbyterian, was erected in 1847 and was designed by the noted Brooklyn architect Minard Lafever. This, the first major example of the Gothic Revival in Richmond, stands immediately adjacent to the Virginia.

Fifth Street remained a preferred residential district throughout the later 19th century. (In 1890, Major Lewis Ginter erected the first high quality apartment house in Richmond.) A Richmond guidebook of 1906 stated "The apartment house fad has come to Richmond to stay and the City can now boast of several very handsome flats."

The Virginia State Insurance Company was established in 1865 by businessmen who were active in Richmond's post-war recovery. In 1891, it had sixty-three agents scattered over Virginia and noted that its business had doubled during the preceding year. In 1902-03, it was larger than the Mutual Assurance Company. The president of the company from 1902 onward was Judge George L. Christian, a colorful and prominent leader in post-war Richmond.

(See Continuation Sheet No. 1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Christian, W. Asbury. Richmond, Her Past and Present. Richmond:
L. H. Jenkins, 1912.

(See Continuation Sheet No. 2)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .133

Quadrangle name Richmond

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

18	284440	4157400
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification The property occupies a city lot at the north-east corner of Main and 5th Streets. The site is 54.29' X 107.37'. The boundaries have been drawn to incorporate the city lot on which the building is located.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert P. Winthrop

organization Robert Winthrop Architect date November 2, 1982

street & number 417 North Boulevard telephone 804/353-8828

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23220

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date DEC 14 1982

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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THE VIRGINIA, RICHMOND, VA

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Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7,8

Page 1, 1

7. DESCRIPTION--Architectural Analysis

The brickwork, which is one of the most notable decorative features of the Virginia, is rendered in low relief. This permits bold and strong detail, like the rustication, quoins, and the Greek key in the cornice, without disrupting the basic design coherence of the structure.

The combination of a conventional design parti with inventive detail and a free composition of elements is rare in Classical buildings. Facing a neo-classical mansion of 1809 and adjacent to a Gothic Revival church, the Virginia makes an architectural contribution of its own without disrupting or injuring the qualities of its neighbors.

8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

Born in 1841, George Christian was at one time president of the Richmond Common Council, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, National Bank of Richmond, Virginia Trust Company, as well as the insurance company. He was a noted public speaker.

In 1902, the Virginia State Company acquired a house adjacent to Second Presbyterian to provide a site for their new headquarters; the house was demolished. The new building was occupied in 1906. The architect is not known; the contractor was N. W. Ancarrow, a member of the company's board and a well-known builder.

The Virginia was the only office building in the city to include apartments. All of the other offices in Richmond at this time were entirely devoted to office or retail uses.

It is possible that George Christian's long relationship with the Second Presbyterian Church played a role in this unusual arrangement. An Elder of the Church, he had an interest in maintaining the residential character of the area, and in creating a new building which would harmoniously relate to his historic church. While substantially larger than the church or the houses on the street, the simplicity of the Virginia's massing and the reticent detail keep it from competing with its more architecturally significant neighbors.

The composition and detailing of the facades is original and inventive. While there are an unusual number of irregularities in the facades, they give the facade a vitality often lacking in classical designs rather than appearing disorderly. The designer of the building was able to create entirely different facades on Main and on 5th Streets without discord.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8, 9

Page 2, 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

The first residents of the building in 1906 were the managers of several businesses, two doctors, two lawyers, and a dentist. The doctors were the first of many to establish offices in the Virginia. In 1910, they were permitted the use of the building to fluctuate between residential and office use. After the construction of several professional office buildings in the 1920s, the Virginia became more purely residential. The Virginia State Insurance Company went out of business in 1914, and the Virginia became a rental property.

The building is now used for professional offices and no longer accommodates apartments. The exterior of the structure has been unchanged; the interior is little changed; partitions have been added or removed, but the entrance hall and stairway remain and the basic subdivision into apartments can still be seen.

Fifth Street today, with its mixture of 19th and early-20th-century buildings, is a pleasant, urban oasis on the edge of Richmond's high-rise financial district. The handsome mass and interesting detail of the Virginia are an important part of this district. The Virginia is a handsome monument to the inventive architectural thinking in turn-of-the-century Richmond.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Engelhardt, George W. Richmond and the New South. Richmond: G. W. Engelhardt, 1888.
- Engelhardt, George W. Richmond, Virginia: The City on the James. Richmond: G. W. Engelhardt, 1902-1903.
- Morrison, Andrew, ed. The City on the James: Richmond, Virginia. Richmond: G. W. Engelhardt, 1893.
- Poindexter, Charles. Snapshots of Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A. Richmond: G. W. Engelhardt, 1905.
- The Official Encyclopaedic Guide to Richmond and Vicinity, including Battlefields. Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Press, 1906.
- Scott, Mary Wingfield. Houses of Old Richmond. Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1941.
- Scott, Mary Wingfield. Old Richmond Neighborhoods. Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1950.
- Richmond City Directories, 1905-1930.

RICHMOND

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

USGS 7.5' quadrangle scale: 1:24000
Richmond, VA 1964 (PR 1981)

THE VIRGINIA
Richmond, VA
UTM References:
18/284440/4157400