

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:	
VLR	06/17/2010
NRHP	08/30/2010

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Crenshaw House

other names/site number Younger House; Clay House; DHR # 127-0228-0029

### 2. Location

street & number 919 West Franklin Street  not for publication

city or town Richmond  vicinity

state Virginia code VA county N/A code 760 zip code 23220

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

7/12/10  
Date

SIAPO  
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
0	0	buildings
0	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: Education-related

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: brick

walls: brick

roof: unknown

other: N/A

Crenshaw House

Name of Property

Richmond, VA

County and State

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

See Continuation Sheets

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**Narrative Description**

See Continuation Sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1909

**Significant Dates**

November 20, 1909

November 27, 1909

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance encompasses only one year, 1909. This is the year in which the organizational meetings of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia were held at 919 West Franklin Street.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See Continuation Sheet

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See Continuation Sheet

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheet

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR # 127-0228-0029

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** Less than one  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>283214</u> Easting	<u>4158472</u> Northing	3	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing
2	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing	4	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundaries of the property correspond to City of Richmond tax parcel number W0000403003.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

These boundaries reflect the property historically associated with the Crenshaw house as well as the current tax parcel.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Kristin Kitchen, Architectural Historian, and Kelly Spradley-Kurowski, Historian, with selections from a paper by Jean O. Mcrae, Historic Preservationist

organization Department of Historic Resources date                     

street & number 2801 Kensington Ave telephone 804-367-2323

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

e-mail kelly.spradley-kurowski@dhr.virginia.gov

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#### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Crenshaw House

**City or Vicinity:** Richmond

**County:** Independent City

**State:** Virginia

**Photographer:** Kristin Kirchen, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**Date Photographed:** March 2010

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

**Photo 1 of 8: Façade**

**Photo 2 of 8: Front porch**

**Photo 3 of 8: Front hall**

**Photo 4 of 8: Parlor mantel**

**Photo 5 of 8: Library pocket doors and bookcase**

**Photo 6 of 8: Dining room closed arch**

**Photo 7 of 8: Dining room, detail of woodwork**

**Photo 8 of 8: Smoking room skylight**

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Crenshaw House

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Richmond City, Virginia

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N/A

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### Summary Description

The Crenshaw House, at 919 West Franklin Street in Richmond, is located along what was a very fashionable residential street in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now the heart of Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Monroe Campus. The three-story brick town house was built in 1891 and altered by the architectural firm of Noland and Baskerville in 1904; the plans for this renovation survive. The house was built in the Victorian Italianate style, while the 1904 alterations have a more Beaux Arts feel. The tall and narrow detached two-bay house rests on a small urban lot and is flanked on both sides by similar masonry townhouses. Character-defining features of the exterior of the house include the flat roof decorated with a Doric entablature and copper cresting, the full height three-sided bay window that extends from the ground through the cornice, and the entry porch supported by paired Doric columns.

### Narrative Description

The façade of the house is constructed of pressed brick that is currently painted yellow. Rusticated granite belt courses separate the floors and remain unpainted. The prominent Doric entablature with cresting is made of copper which has weathered to a green color. The frieze is decorated with triglyphs and metopes with paterae. This entablature and cresting date to the 1904 renovations; the plans indicate that the original entablature was granite with finials at the corners and a more delicate metal cresting. The full-height three-sided bay window features a 1/1 double hung sash on each side of the bay; those on the first story are full-height windows that extend floor to ceiling. The front door is currently a fully glazed single leaf door and it is capped with a leaded transom and flanked on one side by a narrow 1/1 window. The front door and transom also date to the 1904 alterations; the specifications indicate that the original entrance was a double door with a transom. This entrance bay is sheltered by a one-story stone entry porch with a flat roof supported by paired Doric columns resting on low stone pedestals. The porch roof is capped by a low massive stone balustrade and features a copper Doric entablature that matches the one on the house. This porch is also a product of the 1904 building campaign; it replaced a slightly smaller entry porch with more delicate wooden decoration typical of the late Victorian style.

Because the house is on a small urban lot with closely neighboring houses on either side, the side elevations are not detailed in any way. Modern fire escapes have been added. The rear elevation is also utilitarian. The one-story smoking room addition is visible from the rear, as is an enclosed first story porch. The house takes up most of the lot so there is minimal landscaping. A stone retaining wall lines the front of the lot along the public sidewalk and a wide walkway and stone steps lead to the front porch. Ivy takes up the remainder of the small front yard. The small rear yard is occupied mostly by concrete and parking with a couple of boxwoods and small trees located close to the house.

On the interior, the floor plan of the house has been altered by VCU for use as academic offices, but the original side-hall plan is still readable. The first floor features an entry foyer and side hall, a front parlor, a library, and a dining room, all connected with pocket doors, a smoking room (added in 1904), a series of small secondary spaces at the rear of the house with modern partitions, a former kitchen, and an enclosed porch. The parlor, library, and the smoking room are now used for offices while the former dining room is a conference room. The entire house is carpeted.

The spacious entry hall is dominated by beautiful woodwork with a dark stained finish. A fireplace featuring a typical decorative wooden mantel with columns supporting console brackets and a molded mantel shelf, elaborate blue and brown tile work, and an intricate cast iron fireback is located in the foyer. The tiles on this fireplace, along with those in the library and the two front bedrooms, are from the American Encaustic Tiling Co., Limited.<sup>1</sup> The main stair exhibits



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massive square carved newel posts and turned balusters. A very large rectangular mirror is located on the wall opposite the stairs and accented by a wide molded wood frame with a carved foliage motif. This dark woodwork dates to the 1904 renovations. Unfortunately, a partition wall and minimally trimmed doorway have been inserted about halfway down the hall interrupting the space. A private office has also been created by closing the wide opening that led from the foyer into the front parlor. Drywall has been used to reduce the size of the opening to fit a standard flush door. The original trim remains in place so the size of the original opening is obvious.

The three primary rooms on the first floor arranged back to back are the front parlor, the library, and the dining room (as noted on the 1904 plans). All are connected with tall double pocket doors in addition to being accessible from the side hall. The hall entrance to the library has been treated in the same manner as the hall entrance to the front parlor. The most noteworthy feature of the front parlor is the Rococo mantel and marble surround added in 1904. This mantle and surround are notably different from the tiled surrounds and Victorian mantels found throughout the rest of the house. The library features a high paneled wainscoting, a built in bookcase with glass doors, and an elaborate Victorian mantel with foliage carvings and a large mirrored overmantel. The corner blocks of the door and window trim in these two front rooms are a mix of the typical bulls eye motif and a more unusual flower motif.

Noland and Baskerville did alter the floor plan in the dining room. They actually closed off the side hall by installing a bookcase and routed all traffic through the dining room. They turned the space that was formerly the side hall into an alcove off of the dining room featuring a large three-part leaded and stained glass window. The dining room itself was also altered extensively by Noland and Baskerville and features the most elaborate woodwork in the house with Classical-inspired moldings; it is fully paneled with raised paneling and fluted pilasters. Gouge work decorates the cornice and crown molding. A flattened arch with a keystone decorates the hall end of the room and originally framed the large window found on the exterior wall of the hall. Unfortunately, this arch has been closed with drywall, essentially re-creating the side hall plan, and creating a narrow dark hall in which it is impossible to appreciate, or even fully view, the large window.

The other major post-1904 alteration to the floor plan was the removal of a rear stair that rose to the second and third floors. It was located in front of the kitchen and beside the smoking room in an area that is now a warren of small storage areas and passageways.

The only addition to the house that Noland and Baskerville made in 1904 was the small smoking room (so labeled on the original 1904 architectural plans) off of the dining room. Like the dining room, the smoking room is fully paneled. Two elaborate windows light the space. A four-part leaded window with transom takes up most of the rear wall of the room. A stunning leaded skylight with a stained glass crest in the center lights the room from above. VCU recently repaired this skylight and covered it with a clear plexi-glass type material to resolve some chronic leaks.

The second floor is overall simpler in detail than the first floor. An interesting remnant of pressed tin ceiling remains in the second floor hall, though it is found nowhere else. The front room on the second floor features a heavy wooden mantel with fluted pilasters, console brackets and a molded mantel shelf with a foliage motif carving in the center of the frieze. The fireplace surround is a green tile with flowers while the hearth is a green and black checkerboard. According to the specifications from Noland and Baskerville, this mantel and the tile came from the dining room (which lost its fireplace in the 1904 renovation). The mantel found in the second bedroom is a much simpler Victorian style with round columns. These rooms lack any wainscoting or crown molding; they do feature the floral motif in the corner blocks of the window and door trim. The rooms at the back of the house on both the second and third floors are labeled "servants room" on the 1904 plans.

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An enclosed winder stair provides access to the third floor where the level of detail is simpler yet. The 1904 plans indicate that the main stair originally continued up to the third floor. This appears to have been altered when the front part of the hall was turned into a storage room necessitating a new approach to the stair. The third floor features simple molded door and window trim with no corner blocks. There is, however, another elaborate mantel with decorative tilework in the front bedroom. According to the specifications from the 1904 renovation, this mantel was originally set in the library and the tile is from the parlor fireplace. The 1904 plans indicate that there was a billiard room on the third floor. It was the third room back in the house and it has now been partitioned to create a private office and a hallway.

On both the second and third floors, Noland and Baskerville added bathrooms at the front of the house beside the front bedrooms in 1904. All of the fixtures and most of the tile work have been removed by 2010. The subway tile and a few remnants of decorative tile and a couple of sconces are all that remain.

There are no secondary resources associated with this property.

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

The Crenshaw House, built in 1891, is a representative example of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century fashionable Richmond homes of West Franklin Street. From the time of its construction until 1941, the residence had been associated with three main families: the Youngers, Clays, and Crenshaws. For its architectural character, it was listed as a contributing resource in the West Franklin Street Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Its individual significance, however, lies in its association with seminal events in women's history in Virginia. At two meetings in November 1909, a group of women met at the home of Anne Clay and S. Dabney Crenshaw to form what would become the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL), an influential body that dedicated itself to obtaining the vote for women, but also encouraged women to expand their traditional roles into politics and progressive reform. The meetings' attendants included some of Richmond's most socially influential women, Mrs. Anne Clay Crenshaw among them. Despite some minor interior alterations, the Crenshaw House retains its historic character and integrity to this period. The Crenshaw House played a significant role in the Virginia Suffrage movement, and consequently in the ushering in of a new generation of Virginia women who sought leadership roles in public life, and therefore is individually eligible for listing with statewide significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History, with a period of significance of 1909.

#### Ownership History

The following is taken from "Youngers, Clays, Crenshaws and 919 West Franklin Street Richmond, Virginia" by Jean McRae, prepared in 1999 for the Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University:

Lawson Carter Younger was the son of a farmer named John M. Younger (1819-1901) and his wife, Mary R. Carter (1823-1879).<sup>2</sup> He was born in Pittsylvania County where the birth record reads "Larson C. Younger", on November 23, 1852.<sup>3</sup> He moved to Richmond in the early 1800s where he shows up in the City Directory in 1881, boarding at the St. James Hotel and being a partner in the Heitman & Younger wholesale grocer business.<sup>4</sup> In 1883, A.M. Heitman withdrew from the firm and turned over his portion of ownership to L.C. Younger and the Millhisers' of which the grocery was a subsidiary.<sup>5</sup> In 1888, the directories show Lawson sharing a house at 216 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street with some of the Tanner family.<sup>6</sup> He had married Helen L. Tanner (1861-1944), daughter of Richmond's William E. Tanner, in 1884.<sup>7</sup> ...In November of 1885, Cora W. Younger was born to Lawson and Helen, and they continued to reside with Helen's family, now at 220 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, until the house at 919 West Franklin Street was built.<sup>8</sup> According to deeds, L.C. Younger had purchased the land in 1888 but the address was not listed in the City Directory until 1891. In February of 1899, the Youngers sold the property, with "brick residence no.919" to Mrs. S. Dabney Crenshaw and moved back in with the Tanners at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street address. Two years later, Mrs. Crenshaw turned the property over to her husband, with the agreement of his paying her back for the initial down payment on the house and taking over the mortgage.<sup>9</sup> ...

...The Crenshaw family continued to reside at 919 West Franklin Street until 1941, when the property was turned into five apartments. In 1962, Richmond Professional Institute bought the building for its Engineering, Psychology, Nursing, Biology, and Chemistry Departments. RPI used the house for classrooms in 1966, then faculty offices and classrooms in 1967-1968. Then in 1969, the City Directory shows Virginia Commonwealth University as owner and the building housed classrooms and the School of Music. Finally in 1984, the house

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falls under its current status as offices for the School of Community and Public Affairs and the Center for Public Affairs for VCU.<sup>10</sup>

**The Suffrage Movement before 1909**

The Suffrage Movement Nationwide

The first organized attempts at suffrage for women occurred in 1848 at the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Many attendees were abolitionists whose work to end slavery had inspired them to re-examine their own social status, though this did not necessarily extend to acquiring the vote. In somewhat of a break from the topics of education and work opportunities focused on by most delegates, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the conference organizer, advocated suffrage as a tool to address the problems women faced. Though Stanton's call to action was at first considered radical and impracticable, it slowly gained traction, especially following the Civil War when male abolitionists generally abandoned the women's cause. Eventually, the vote became perceived as a "gateway" right, one that presumably would lead to the acquiring of other rights and enable women to work within their traditional arena of social welfare more effectively.

By 1869, two national women's groups had formed: the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Though the organizations' goals were conceptually similar, their methods and approaches differed dramatically. The NWSA, led by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, sought what was considered the more radical solution, a federal constitutional amendment securing women the right to vote. The AWSA took a more conservative line, working on a state by state basis. Understanding that their cause would benefit from joining forces, the groups merged in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). The NAWSA assisted with state campaigns to win suffrage, but made federal efforts its focus, and eventually helped pass the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution in 1920.<sup>11</sup>

Suffrage Efforts in Virginia prior to 1909

Virginia's earliest known attempts to win the vote for women occurred in the 1870s, no doubt inspired by the work of the NWSA and AWSA. Richmonder Anna Whitehead Bodeker's invitation to NWSA member Paula Wright Davis to her house for dinner and to speak on suffrage in January 1870 drew over 12 attendees and was covered by local newspapers, further inspiring Bodeker, who founded and became president of the Virginia State Woman Suffrage Association (VSWSA).<sup>12</sup> Though the organization was small, Bodeker's efforts secured organizing visits and speeches from NWSA leaders including Susan B. Anthony.

Operating within a context of similar circumstances from 1870-1875 when several women throughout the country attempted to use the Equal Protection Clause of the recently passed 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution as proof of enfranchisement, Bodeker attempted to vote in 1871, asserting that the amendment enfranchised her. The same year, the cases of *Sara Spencer v. Board of Registration* and *Sarah E. Webster v. Judges of Election*, which argued the women were eligible to vote under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, were each appealed before the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia. Caroline County native (then living in St. Louis, Missouri), Virginia Louisa Minor and her husband Francis, appealed a similar case to the United States Supreme Court in 1875 in the *Minor v. Happersett* decision. Others who promoted use of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment included Ohio's Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to declare herself as a candidate for President of the United States, and Illinois' first woman admitted to the bar, Myra Bradwell. All women who attempted to use the Equal Protection Clause were unsuccessful.<sup>13</sup>

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N/A

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Despite Bodeker's efforts, the VSWSA failed to gain many followers as the pressure on women to conform to traditional behavior in post-Civil War Virginia was immense. Nineteenth century laws concerning equal division of marital property had been slow to gain a foothold in the state, and as late as 1913, Virginia lawyer Conway Whittle Sams referred to the suffrage movement as a "craze".<sup>14</sup> Convincing both women and men to support suffrage was an uphill battle, as the ESL would later discover. Bodeker submitted a suffrage petition to the General Assembly in 1872, but this also failed. Many conservative politicians not only used traditional gender roles as opposition, but also associated the issue of a potential federal or state amendment with the reviled politics of Reconstruction. The early Virginia equal suffrage movement was operating in volatile historical circumstances. Bodeker gave up public efforts in 1872.<sup>15</sup>

Lynchburg's Orra Gray Langhorne led a short-lived effort to revive the Virginia suffrage movement in the 1890s. After attending national suffrage conventions and becoming familiar with the national movement's leaders, she founded and became president of the Virginia Suffrage Association in 1892. However, upon Langhorne's move to Kentucky after her husband's death, the organization failed. Suffrage attempts in Virginia did little more than sputter along until 1909, when Anne Clay Crenshaw, the sister of Langhorne's Kentucky associate Laura Clay, founder and leader of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, hosted a gathering of women at her home that changed the complexion of the movement.

The extent of early suffrage organizations in Virginia may not be fully understood, as evidenced by the recent discovery of a journal entry in the Adèle Clark Papers in the Special Collections and Archives of the Virginia Commonwealth University Library. The entry mentions the organization of the apparently short-lived Richmond Equal Rights Association, which seems to have been organized between 1892 and 1899 at the Crenshaws' former home on East Grace Street. Though six individuals were present at the meeting and it was attended by Orra Gray Langhorne, much more is not known about the association's activities and membership. The writing of ESL member and prominent suffragist Ellen Glasgow has led to confusion about exactly where and when the ESL was formed, leading some to believe it was organized earlier in 1909; however, the papers of the ESL at the State Library of Virginia clearly indicate that its formation took place at the Crenshaw House in November 1909.<sup>16</sup>

### **Formation and Activities of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia**

Raised in Richmond, Kentucky, Anne Clay had married successful Richmond, Virginia businessman Spottswood Dabney Crenshaw in 1886. Her sister, Laura Clay, was a prominent suffragist in Kentucky, and Anne became involved in the movement by writing a regular column on women's issues in the *Kentucky Gazette*. Anne's move to Virginia and beginning a family decreased her public suffrage activity, but patently did not end it. In addition to hosting the two organizational meetings of the ESL, Anne served as the league's informal but important liaison with the national suffrage organizations by securing national suffrage activists to visit and speak in Richmond.<sup>17</sup> At the first ESL meeting, she told the other attendees that she adopted her views on the rights of women in girlhood, that she married to be her husband's helpmate and co-equal, and that she was bringing up her children in an atmosphere of freedom and distinct individuality.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, despite being less of a public figure, Anne Clay Crenshaw was one of the hearts of the current state movement. Her husband was one of several notable alumni of the University of Virginia who publicly supported the idea of admitting women in 1913, indicating that her progressive attitudes may have influenced her husband, or at least had a like mind in her husband's. She also encouraged her daughters' involvement in the cause, providing a link between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century activities in Virginia. The signatures of Anne and her daughters Fanny G. Crenshaw and Warfield Crenshaw appear on suffrage petitions in 1915, and once the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment passed in 1920, Anne registered to vote immediately.<sup>19</sup>

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The first meeting, on November 20, 1909, was an organizational one. The meeting minutes, kept by Mrs. A.M. Tyler, record “a representative and enthusiastic meeting of women interested in the formation of the Virginia Suffrage League” including Anne Clay Crenshaw, reformer Lila Meade Valentine, artists Adèle Goodman Clark and Nora Houston, and writer Ellen Glasgow. A committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws, next steps were discussed, and the women agreed to meet the following week at the Crenshaw house. Nora Houston reported in her history of the league that the women left in groups of two and three to avoid suspicion. The following week, on November 27, Lila Meade Valentine was elected president, Ellen Glasgow was elected third vice-president, Adèle Clark was elected recording secretary, and Anne Clay Crenshaw was elected to a six-member board of directors. The members adopted a constitution and by-laws, and selected the home of a supporter at 307 East Franklin Street as a headquarters (that property is now occupied by a modern building). According to league letterhead, another headquarters would later be settled on in a “commercial building on Second Street between Broad and Grace Streets”.<sup>20</sup> City of Richmond tax records and Department of Historic Resources survey files do not indicate the survival of a historic building on this block with the appropriate construction date or historic use that would fit the description on the letterhead.

Upon its formation, the ESL was already operating behind the national suffrage movement. By 1909, the NAWSA had moved beyond the suffrage education phase and into direct political pressure and lobbying, with a public relations bureau, large campaign fund, and a professional congressional lobby. In the South, however, suffrage organizations were weak or non-existent until the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so when the ESL formed it had to start its suffrage education phase (even among its own members) fully 20 years after the national organization. This meant Virginia was essentially out of step with the national movement. Coupled with the prevailing political infrastructure in Virginia that did not support a true opposition party for the ESL to align itself with, this slow start made it extraordinarily difficult for the league to make real inroads.<sup>21</sup>

Despite taking a methodological shift in 1916 (see below), the league’s watchword from its Richmond base from start to finish was Respectability. Its early members, particularly, such as Lila Meade Valentine, physician Kate Waller Barrett, Adèle Goodman Clark, and Ellen Glasgow belonged to families with social prominence or had achieved it on their own, and were believed to bring publicity and propriety to the cause. Interestingly, the name was originally proposed as the Equal Suffrage League of Richmond, but members voted to change it to the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, hoping from the start to have a statewide impact. This certainly helped with recruitment efforts: within the first month of existence, 61 new members were enrolled. In the first year 120 members were enrolled, and in 1911 Lila Meade Valentine convinced an influential group of Richmond businessmen to form the Men’s Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, and 4 local chapters were formed.<sup>22</sup>

Their opponents’ arguments, which began in earnest in 1912 with the formation of the Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (VAOWS—a women’s group), focused on misogynistic sentiments, but also capitalized on political, racial, and class fears still raw in the era of Lost Cause ideology. Biological and functional differences between men and women were the first line of attack, but anti-suffrage activists often combined tactics as well. In answer to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the US Constitution, suffrage opponents employed methods designed to stir fears of federal interference in states’ rights. They frequently argued that provisions passed in the 1901-1902 state constitution to prevent blacks from voting, such as a poll tax, and literacy and residency requirements, would be at risk. Suffrage opponents further argued that allowing women the vote would lead to a flood of black votes, upsetting the white supremacy currently in place in the courts and legislature.<sup>23</sup>

Racial issues clearly complicated the suffrage movement. Early in its history, the ESL dealt with racial tactics publicly by ignoring them. The league was, after all, an all-white organization, though there were differences among members on this issue in private. Some ESL members, such as Mary Johnston in a 1913 letter to Valentine, clearly favored votes for

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African Americans and warned against ignoring their cause. However, to address their lack of public support in later years, the leadership of the ESL publicly argued for the enfranchisement of some women while simultaneously attempting to disenfranchise others, in step with the racist sentiment of the period. By 1917, Valentine began to counter arguments that a suffrage amendment would lead to a flood of African-American votes. An ESL pamphlet was released explaining that all literary, residency, and poll tax requirements passed in the 1901-1902 state constitution would apply to women as well as men, and therefore would prevent African-American women as well as men from voting. With sentiment like this, African-American women, in addition to many poor and lower class white women, became essentially silenced in the public debate. Despite this, black women actively worked to enfranchise themselves particularly after the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. Registration drives led to 2,410 African-American women registering in Richmond alone for the 1920 elections. Activists such as Maggie Walker and Ora Brown Stokes petitioned City Hall and the registrar of voters to provide more employees, some of them African American, to assist the black women registering. When excluded in 1920 from the all-white League of Women Voters of Virginia (a league decision for which Adèle Goodman Clark later expressed regret), black women established the Virginia Negro Women's League of Voters, and continued to work for increased registration.<sup>24</sup>

When dealing with misogynistic anti-suffrage arguments, the ESL tried to turn them on their heads, arguing that women's traditional sphere of influence in the home was not mutually exclusive from the world outside, necessitating women's ability to enact change through voting in order to preserve home life.<sup>25</sup> It was argued that what affects the welfare of citizens naturally also affects the welfare of the state, and women, as wives and mothers, were particularly implicated. Notably, this did not argue for sexual equality (though over time, their expanding *raison d'être* would lead to this). Overall, their approach was measured, but persistent and meticulous nonetheless. Valentine encouraged her Richmond members to remember their position in society. Members wrote articles, gave speeches and held rallies; artists Adèle Goodman Clark and Nora Houston often painted outside buildings where rallies were being held to attract passers by and lure them to the meeting.<sup>26</sup> The ESL often kept booths at the State Fair in October and at many county fairs, distributed mailings, gave out pro-suffrage buttons and literature, and collected signatures for petitions.

In a development that proved fundamental to the league's evolution and influence, among their own members, they held weekly meetings beginning December 2, 1909, to discuss topics that could be influenced by the vote including labor conditions, public health, and city planning. The ESL formed a Legislative Committee whose job was to track General Assembly social welfare bills that the league would want to support or oppose, such as those impacting the inspection of the milk supply.<sup>27</sup> Political involvement came to be seen as a necessary and natural complement to their cause. In 1913, the ESL expanded its official slate to include working for passage of progressive reforms as well as suffrage. That year, they passed resolutions endorsing equal pay for equal work, university education for women, equal guardianship of women, an 8-hour work day, and the abolition of child labor.<sup>28</sup> Through this education of its own members, the ESL moved to promote women's status *and* public welfare, and in this way encouraged Virginia women to extend their sphere into politics, progressive reform, and eventually feminism.

Despite continued resistance from the conservative establishment that held the power to change the law, the ESL and its supporters continued to grow and to seek various ways to have an impact on society. Education and recruitment paid off. As intended, the ESL expanded statewide with league chapters in nearly every, if not all Virginia counties and independent cities, allowing it to affiliate itself formally with the national organization and send delegates to national suffrage conventions. By 1919, particularly large member lists were recorded in chapters in Accomack, Clarke, Frederick, Gloucester, Mecklenburg, and Pittsylvania Counties and in the City of Petersburg—localities from the Eastern Shore and Tidewater area, to Southside Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley. The member and chapter lists held at the Library of Virginia demonstrate the geographic diversity of the ESL's reach and influence. Its geographical and philosophical center, of course, was the Richmond chapter. However, the league was clearly not a monolithic entity—despite sharing

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the same end goal, different chapters often adopted very different means to achieve it. The gentler, ladylike approach favored by Lila Meade Valentine did not always take hold outside the capital. The Norfolk chapter, for instance, was known to be more militant under their leader Pauline Adams, who endorsed picketing in the streets as part of a brazen approach. After 1915, Adams became a member of the more confrontational Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage and the National Women's Party, groups that often were at odds with the ESL. In 1916, Adams and 12 others were arrested for demonstrating in front of President Wilson at a selective service parade, and sent to the Occoquan Workhouse for 60 days.<sup>29</sup>

After state suffrage resolutions were defeated in the General Assembly in 1914 and 1916, Valentine advocated a complete re-organization, shifting the ESL's focus from state resolutions to passage of the federal amendment. This put the ESL in line with the national movement and membership increased from 9,662 in 1916 to 16,000 in 1917, reaching 30,000 by 1920. However, it placed the league squarely at odds with the states' rights advocates and opponents of racial equality in Virginia. The ESL found it very hard to gain local public support so that it could have real political impact in Richmond. Very few of their members were able to vote for suffrage, and their funding was relatively low.<sup>30</sup> It would take a federal amendment, ratified by the required three-quarters of all states, to secure the vote. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920 passed without ratification in Virginia and eight other southern states, but Virginia women nonetheless registered to vote in large numbers (over 13,000 white and African American women registered for the 1920 elections in Richmond alone).<sup>31</sup> No doubt, even without General Assembly support, the previous decade's work of the ESL had served to educate many women (and men) on the importance of the vote.

The ESL disbanded soon after the amendment passed and re-formed as the League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWV), with Adèle Clark elected as president. The league refocused its efforts on ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which Virginia did not enact until 1952, and progressive reforms. By the 1970s and 1980s, the league focused much of its energy on passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>32</sup> In the face of the extraordinarily conservative Virginia political system and the embedded racial tensions gripping the state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ESL failed to turn public opinion far enough to win the right to vote—that was ensured only by the passage of the federal amendment. However, its influence on its own members and supporters to broaden their traditional roles and horizons by engaging in the political system and campaigning for progressive reform proved significant. Women were encouraged to seek and accept leadership roles in many areas from which they had previously been rejected. Only three years after the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, two women, Helen Timmons Henderson of Buchanan County and Sarah Lee Fain of Norfolk were elected to the General Assembly (Fain was a member of the Norfolk Chapter of the LWV). As the descendant of the ESL, the LWV remains an active, non-partisan organization today, and in 2010, the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia passed joint resolutions commending the LWV on 90 years of service and the "tireless efforts" of the ESL and the LWV to win women the vote.<sup>33</sup>



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Ibid, *1880 Census Index of Pittsylvania County and Danville, Virginia*, Microfilm Reels 1384-5 (Danville: VA-NC Piedmont Genealogical Society, 1880) and Marion Dodson Chiarito, *Marriages of Pittsylvania County, Virginia, 1831-1861* (Nathalie, Virginia: Clarkton Press, 1982).

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<sup>1</sup> Jean McRae, "Youngers, Clays, and Crenshaws and 919 West Franklin Street Richmond Virginia", 1999. On file at the Department of Historic Resources. According to McRae, the plates for the tiles used in the Crenshaw House can be seen in the company's catalog.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia and North Carolina Piedmont Genealogical Society, *Cemetery Records of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Danville: VA-NC Piedmont Genealogical Society, 1982) and Virginia and North Carolina Piedmont Genealogical Society, *1880 Census Index of Pittsylvania County and Danville, Virginia*, Microfilm Reels 1384-5 (Danville: VA-NC Piedmont Genealogical Society, 1880) and Marion Dodson Chiarito, *Marriages of Pittsylvania County, Virginia, 1831-1861* (Nathalie, Virginia: Clarkton Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Library of Virginia, Pittsylvania County of Virginia. Birth Records, microfilm reel #35 (Library of Virginia, 1853).

<sup>4</sup> Richmond City Directories (Richmond: Hill Directories, 1877-1999).

<sup>5</sup> City of Richmond Courthouse, deed record, #123-C 25 dated 30 March 1883.

<sup>6</sup> Richmond City Directories.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Richmond City Directories and Library of Virginia, Richmond City of Virginia, Birth Records, microfilm reel #59 (Library of Virginia, 1885).

<sup>9</sup> City of Richmond Courthouse, deed records, #141 B2/4 dated 27 June 1888, #165 B58 dated 1 February 1899, #171 A473/474 dated 24 July 1901 and Richmond City Directories.

<sup>10</sup> Richmond City Directories and Richmond *Times Dispatch*, 10 October 1944.

<sup>11</sup> Ray Bonis, "100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia". Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives staff paper, Online Exhibits, 1998. Accessed at:

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<sup>12</sup> Sandra Gioia Treadway, "A Most Brilliant Woman": Anna Whitehead Bodeker and the First Woman Suffrage Association in Virginia", *Virginia Cavalcade*, Vol. 43, no. 4 (Spring 1994), p. 168-169.

<sup>13</sup> *Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1848-1921*. Library of Congress Primary Documents in American History Website: 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. Accessed at: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawshome.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Woman Suffrage in Virginia*, Encyclopedia Virginia, exhibit published online by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Accessed at:

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<sup>15</sup> Emily J. Salmon and Edward D.C. Campbell, Jr., *The Hornbook of Virginia History*, (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1994), p. 64-5.

<sup>16</sup> Adèle Clark Papers, Virginia Commonwealth University Special Collections and Archives, Box 50; and Equal Suffrage League, *Records, 1909-1935*, State Library of Virginia, Archives and Manuscripts number 22002, Box 4.

<sup>17</sup> Bonis, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Equal Suffrage League, *Records, 1909-1935*, Box 4.

<sup>19</sup> Bonis, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Equal Suffrage League, *Records*, Box 4.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Hunter Graham, "Woman Suffrage in Virginia: The Equal Suffrage League and Pressure-Group Politics, 1909-1920", *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 101, no. 2 (April 1993), p. 228-9; p. 242.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 232.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 234-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Woman Suffrage in Virginia*, online exhibit.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 237. This approach is obvious in Mary Johnston's 1910 article "The Status of Woman", in which she used historical perspective and discussin of the evolution of women's roles through time to show that home and family did not erode as women gained rights.

<sup>26</sup> See also Adèle Clark, "Facts versus Fallacies: anti-suffrage allegations refuted, a reply to Miss Molly Elliott Seawell" in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 11, 1912, in which she used statistics and an examiation of current laws to deconstruct, point by point, anti-suffrage arguments made by Seawell, the founder of the VAOWS.

<sup>27</sup> The Equal Suffrage League papers contain several folders of meeting minutes, agendas, resolutions, and other documents detailing their work toward such reforms. Equal Suffrage League, *Records, 1909-1935*.

<sup>28</sup> Graham, p. 237

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer McDaid, "All Kinds of Revolutionaries: Pauline Adams, Jessie Townsend, and the Norfolk Equal Suffrage League", *Virginia Cavalcade*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Spring 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Graham, p. 242-244.

<sup>31</sup> *Woman Suffrage in Virginia*, online exhibit.

<sup>32</sup> Bonis, p. 7-8.

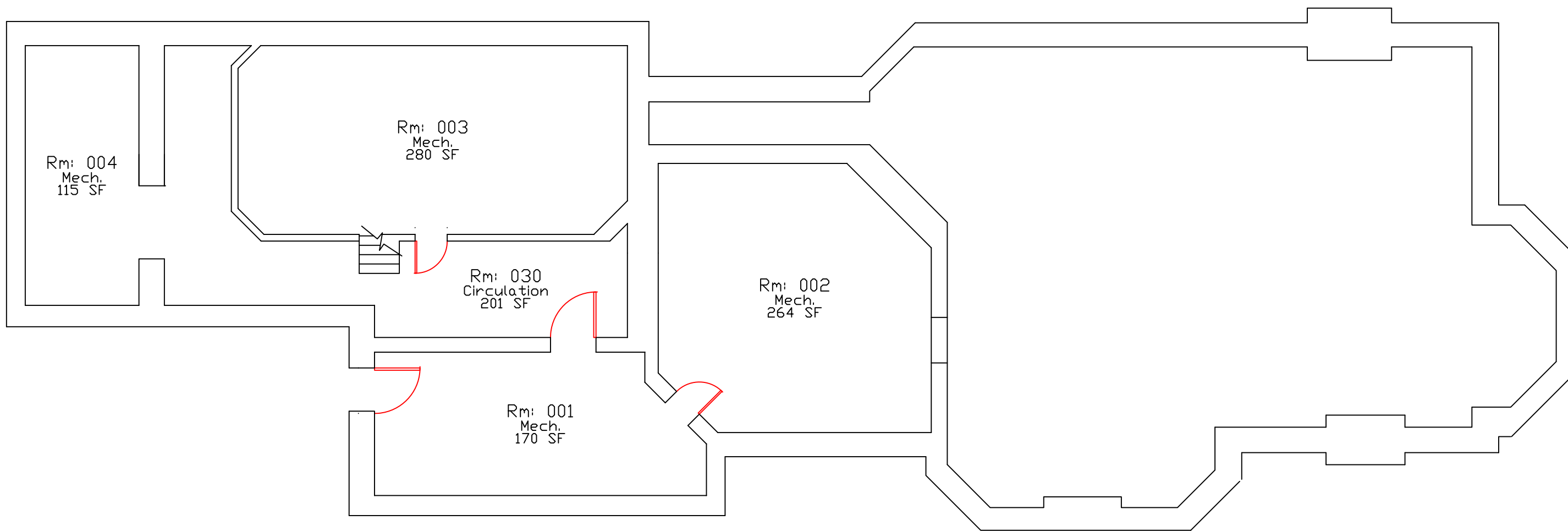
<sup>33</sup> Virginia General Assembly, House Joint Resolution 210 offered January 29, 2010, and Senate Joint Resolution 44 offered January 13, 2010.

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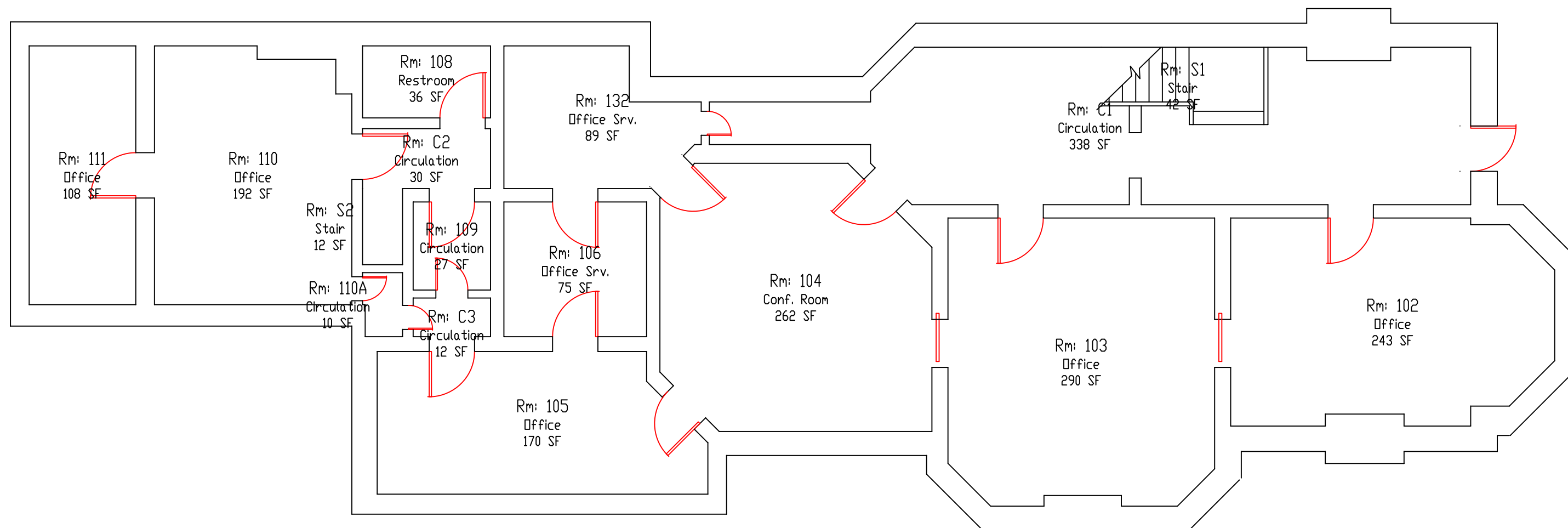
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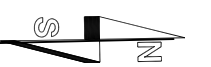
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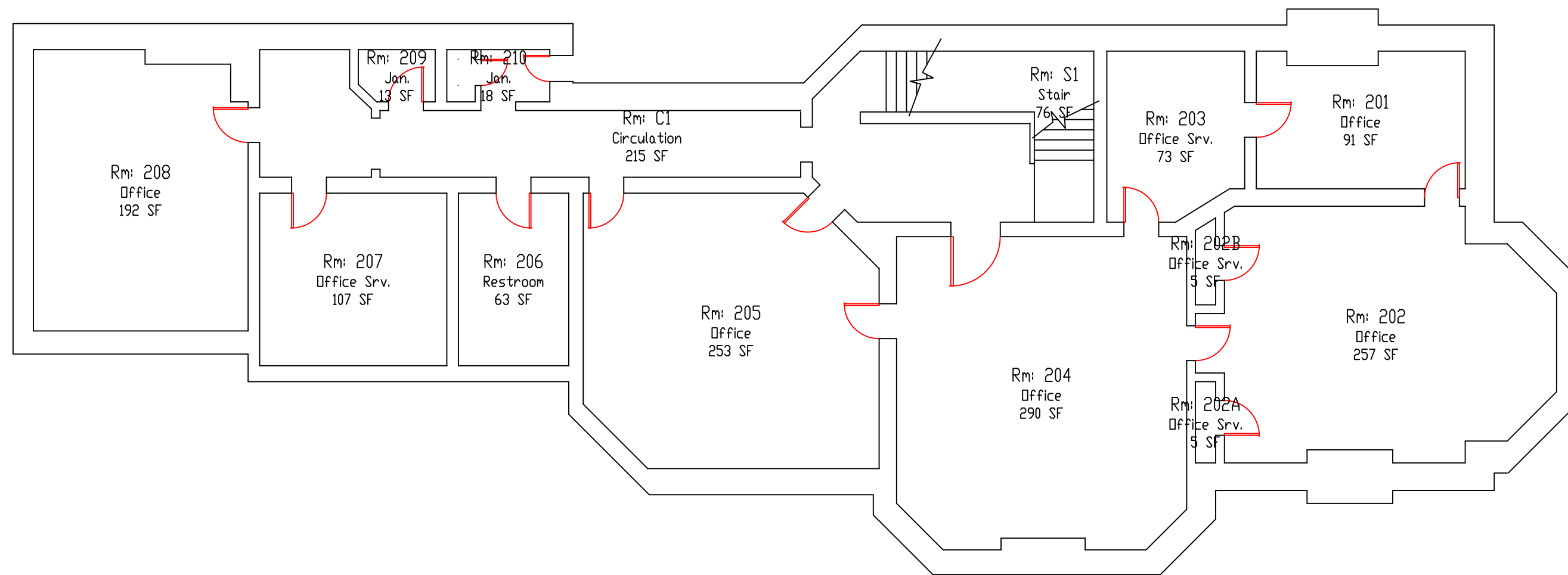
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Building Name:  
**Younger House**

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**01**





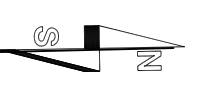
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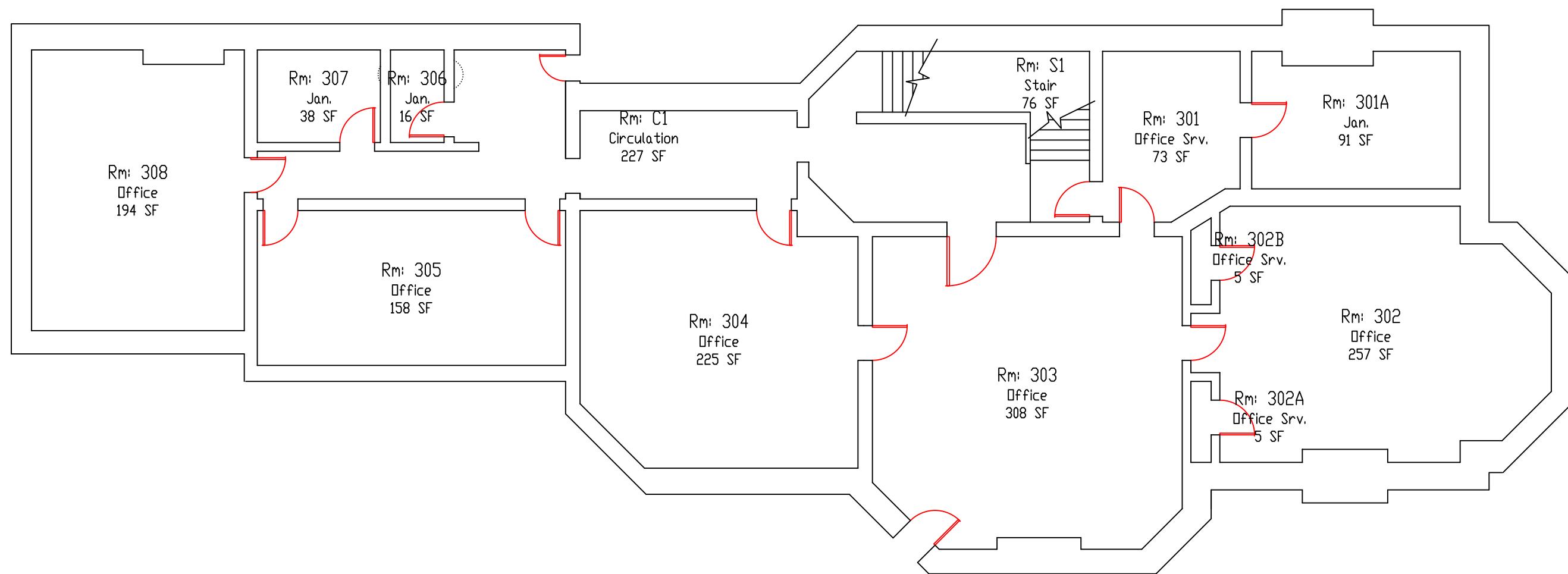
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Building Name: Younger House

Floor Number: 02





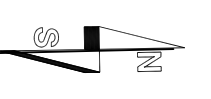
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Building Name:	Younger House
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	Floor Number: 03
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City of Richmond, Virginia  
127-0228-0029  
Richmond, VA Quad  
NAD 27  
Zone 18  
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