

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

VLR 6/8/06
NRHP 6/20/08

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
other names/site number State Finance Building; (VDHR File #127-6048)

2. Location

street & number 102 Governor Street (Capitol Square) not for publication N/A
city or town Richmond (Independent City) vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA county N/A code 760 zip code 23219

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 4/25/05
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- 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)

- private
public-local
[X] public-State
public-Federal

- [X] building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings (1, 0), sites (0, 0), structures (0, 0), objects (0, 0), Total (1, 0).

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Education Sub: Government Office Library

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Beaux Arts Classicism (American Renaissance)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Limestone
roof Metal: Steel
walls Brick
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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.
X 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.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1892-1939

Significant Dates 1892, 1910;1929, 1939

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder 1892: William Munday Poindexter; 1910: Marion Johnson Dimmock;
1929: Carneal, Johnston and Wright

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building

Richmond, Virginia

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; Drawings at Library of Virginia

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property Approximately 2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	285600	4	157100	2

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian; Edited: Marc Wagner, Resource Information Division Director; Kelly Spradley-Kurowski, Register Historian; and Jean McRae, Register Coordinator

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date May 2006; April 2008

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

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

=====

Additional Documentation

=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

=====

Property Owner

=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Commonwealth of Virginia/Department of General Services

street & number 202 North 9th Street telephone 804-786-3311

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

=====

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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions,

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description

Prominently situated on Capitol Square across the ravine just east of Jefferson's Capitol, the Oliver Hill building has been an important architectural component of Virginia's seat of government for over a century. The building has had a complicated evolution and has suffered years of neglect as well as threat of demolition. A recent renovation and expansion, however, has secured its future. In its present form, the building is a monumental classical-style work fronted by an Ionic portico echoing the State Capitol's portico. The wide façade, terminated by narrow projecting pavilions, is built of buff brick with terra cotta detailing. The current appearance of the façade is the result of a remodeling of the 1892 William Poindexter design, undertaken in 1929 by the firm of Carneal, Johnston and Wright. The remodeling was a simplification of the more elaborate Poindexter façade and carried out in order to have the building better harmonize with the State Capitol.

Detailed Description

The original portion of the Oliver Hill building was commissioned in 1892 and completed in 1894. It was built to house the Virginia State Library collections, the Virginia Supreme Court, and office of the Attorney General. Poindexter departed from his signature Queen Anne style and produced a dignified classical work, one characteristic of the American Renaissance movement begun at the end of the 19th century. Copies of Poindexter's architectural drawings, including plans and elevations, are preserved in the architectural drawings archives of the Library of Virginia.

The building's main wall surface material is in a buff brick veneer, a material popular at the time as it gave the impression of stone. Most of the trim: the window frames, cornices, and parapet ornaments, are of terra cotta. The original configuration of the west facade consisted of a porticoed center section and a north wing. The main floor of the wing housed the Supreme Court's courtroom. The hexastyle portico was set on an open arcade of rusticated brick approached by steps leading up the steep bank from the walk below. The portico columns were originally set on pedestals and employed the Greek Ionic order of the Erectheion. Highlighting the center of the north wing's west front was a large Palladian window set in a shallow arched recess. Flanking it were lower pedimented windows with a small round window above each. Terminating the north wing's façade was a narrow projecting pavilion with corner pilasters also in the Erectheion Ionic order. The pilasters framed a niche with a semi-dome ornamented with a ribbed shell. Crowning the building was a full Ionic entablature of terra cotta, above which was a balustrade. The balustrade was on the façade and south elevation only; a solid parapet topped the north and east elevations.

The building's asymmetrical façade was meant to be temporary. It was expected that a matching south wing would be constructed as soon as funds and need materialized.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 2

Not until 1908, however, was the south wing commissioned, a project that gave the building a symmetrical west front. Designed by Richmond architect M. J. Dimmock, it was completed in 1910, and included a low wing faced with gray granite extending along the south base of the building and against the south wall of the original rear wing. The low wing was built to serve as a natural history museum, housing mineral and timber exhibits from the 1907 Jamestown Exposition along with a large collection of stuffed native Virginia animals and various objects of memorabilia. The wing's interior, a handsome galleried space, functioned as the State Museum of Natural History until closed in 1964. The space was then partitioned into two levels of offices.

The original library stacks were located in the east wing of the building's third floor. The main reading room was situated on the first floor of the south wing. The rest of the building was mainly offices or other work areas, serving either the library or the Attorney General's Office. A 1916 fire in the building prompted another addition in 1921, a concrete storehouse attached to the rear of the east wing to house the state's more important archives.

In 1929, the west elevation, the main façade (west elevation), underwent extensive remodeling. A newspaper account in the Richmond Times-Dispatch for August 29, 1929, details the motives for this work as well as what was to be done. The remodeling was driven primarily by aesthetics. As noted in the article, the Poindexter façade was "said by experts to be out of harmony with the Georgian period, particularly in its interpretation by Thomas Jefferson, an example of which is the center portion of the State Capitol."

The remodeling project was the work of the Richmond architectural firm of Carneal, Johnston, and Wright, and mainly involved simplifying the façade. The August 29 newspaper article quoted architect W.L. Carneal's view of the work: "The attack of the problem has been largely one of elimination and simplification, reaching a conclusion of orderliness and simplicity, such a design as would harmonize with the State Office Building [Washington Building], which is on one side, and the State Capitol, which is on the other." Copies of Carneal, Johnston, and Wright's drawings and specifications documenting the various changes are also preserved in the Library of Virginia archives.

The most conspicuous part of the project involved the removal of Poindexter's columns and pedestals and replacing them with full-length limestone columns with monolithic shafts. The architects changed the order of the columns from the Greek Ionic to the Roman Ionic of Scamozzi, the same version of the Ionic order used by Jefferson on the State Capitol. The Palladian windows, pedimented windows, and round windows on the west front were removed and replaced with double hung sash in plain frames. The parapet balusters were removed and replaced with a solid parapet. The basement windows were reconfigured to make them align with the windows above. The open arcade supporting the portico was enclosed to make additional office space. Added to the center bay of the arcade was a cornice held by consoles and supporting a cartouche embellished with the Virginia state seal. The Greek-style stereobate framing the arcade base was removed and replaced by a narrow set of steps leading to the entrance. Lastly, the niches in the end pavilions were simplified by removing the terra cotta shells and replacing them with smooth semi-domes.

The specifications state that all the material was to become the property of the contractor and taken away from the site.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 7 **Page** 3

Viewing this project with the mindset of the time, the architects accomplished their mission of making the building blend with the character with the more restrained buildings on Capitol Square, particularly Jefferson's Capitol and the Executive Mansion. To their eyes, Poindexter's work was fussy and overly detailed, and competed with its more historic neighbors. As stated by Carneal in his newspaper interview: "The ideals of the South controlling design forty-five years ago were different from what they are today. . ." It might be noted that Carneal's firm had designed the high-rise state office building, now named the Washington Building, just to the south of the library building. Begun in 1922, it was in the same restrained classicism that Carneal later imposed on the library.

Except for closing in the arcade for extra office space, the 1929 remodeling was limited to the west elevation only. One of Poindexter's shell-topped niches was left untouched on the south wall of the east wing. Also left intact was the elaborately treated Palladian window on the same wall, a window similar to those removed from the façade. The architectural drawings for the project indicate no changes to the interior.

In 1939, the functions of the State Library and Supreme Court were transferred to the new Art-Deco structure, completed that same year on the corner of Capitol and Governor streets. The old building was re-christened the State Finance Building, and housed the Department of Accounts, the State Treasurer's Office and related agencies. Over the next thirty years most of the interior spaces were cut up into offices of no architectural merit. Most of Poindexter's handsome classical detailing was shaved off or hidden behind hung ceilings and dry-wall partitions. Only the elaborate cast-iron main stair and some of the corridors were left without significant alteration. The stair hall, however, was compromised with a modern elevator shaft. A richly detailed pierced iron railing and iron-supporting columns distinguish the intact stair.

Beginning in the 1970s state offices started to be moved out of the building. By the end of the decade the building stood largely vacant and remained that way for a quarter century. Proposals for its demolition were considered. One scheme called for retaining the columns as a landscape folly. By 2004, however, the decision was made to rehabilitate the structure and place a large extension on the rear, fronting on Governor Street. The rehabilitation involved an extensive restoration of the exterior, including replacing damaged and missing sections of terra cotta ornament. Most of the original (1929) windows were retained. The low, 1921 concrete addition was removed along with all other structures between the building and Governor Street. Designed by Ballou Justice Upton architectural firm of Richmond, with Kenneth Bunch principal designer, the five-story addition was carefully sited and massed so that it is all but invisible from Capitol Square. The exterior is sheathed in pre-cast elements matching the buff brick of the original building. It is connected to the rear wing of the original structure at the second-floor level so that the original east parapet was not compromised. Cornice lines, window size and placement, and other features were replicated in the addition to have it harmonize with the original structure. The addition's Governor Street façade was given prominence by the use of a two-story curved projection and a broken pediment terminating the roof. Because it would be very visible from the Executive Mansion garden, the addition's north elevation was given interest by the use of arched windows framed with pilasters on the three floors of

the slightly recessed center section.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 7 **Page** 4

The demolition of the many later partitions and other insertions in the original building exposed some of Poindexter's classical decorations in the principal spaces. Unfortunately, many of the decorations were either too damaged to be left exposed, or the spaces they occupied did not fit the programmatic needs of the rehabilitation. Hence, of the original interior's treatments, the iron main stair and the principal corridors with their mosaic paving and doorcases were retained. The rest was covered over with new materials or removed with the reconfiguration of the spaces. The handsome stair railing in the museum wing was retained, but museum space itself was re-partitioned into offices. Most of the museum's other features had either been destroyed or were too damaged to reuse. The modern office installations are generally in quiet taste and respect the dignity of the building. The majority of the building, including the addition, is occupied by the state Department of Agriculture. The north wing contains the office of the Lieutenant Governor. Preserved in the Lieutenant Governor's conference room is an impressive walk-in vault.

The Oliver Hill building is situated on a promontory separated by a ravine from the State Capitol, which stands perpendicular to it on a higher point to the west. A wide brick walk leads through the ravine to a fountain in front of the Washington Building. To the north of the Hill building, on a slightly higher elevation is the Executive Mansion. With its newly restored façade, the Hill Building is a distinguished element in the architectural assemblage of the state's Seat of Government.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 5

Statement of Significance

The Oliver Hill Building stands as an important component of the seat of government and the work of a distinguished architect. It is the first purpose-built home of one of the nation's foremost archives and research institutions, whose origins date to the 1820s. The building symbolizes the Commonwealth's first effort towards the recognition of the significance of its state library and archives and the need to have these collections housed in an appropriately dignified facility. Its construction marked the beginning of an important architectural tradition that has culminated in the recent completion of the present Library of Virginia, a world-class work of library architecture by Architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. The Oliver Hill Building, designed and built in 1892 as the Virginia State Library, was one of William Poindexter's most important commissions. The building is nominated at the state level of significance because it was built to serve all the citizens of the Commonwealth as the State Library. It is nominated under Criterion C for Architecture as the important work of a master architect William Poindexter. The period of significance extends from 1892, the date of construction, to 1939, when the Library was moved to a new facility at the northern edge of Capitol Square. Important dates include the initial construction: 1892; completion of the south wing: 1910; significant elevation redesign in 1929; and the relocation of the State Library in 1939.¹

Historic Narrative

The Oliver Hill Building stands in the shadow of Jefferson's famed capitol, and is a little-known but distinguished neoclassical structure that until recently was prosaically named the Finance Building. With such a prominent presence on Capitol Square it is difficult to believe that the building has stood essentially abandoned for nearly a quarter century. Few people are aware of its history; moreover, prominent officials have even called for its demolition. Before recent rehabilitation efforts got underway, a tree grew out of its cornice, bits of ornamental masonry had fallen to the ground, the interior was dark and neglected. Despite its unloved appearance, interest mounted within circles of state government to give the building a chance, to determine how it might once again be a viable component of Capitol Square.

The former designation of Finance Building was for many years a misleading label. The building has been known thusly only during its more recent past. By contrast, the edifice had a proud beginning as the Commonwealth's first purpose-built state library. The commonwealth has maintained a state library since 1823 when the first appropriations for books for a Virginia state library were made. From that time, until the new building was erected the library was housed in the attic of the state capitol. The location was hardly ideal. Much of the collection was drenched in 1841 when the capitol's roof was being replaced. Further depredation occurred during the period the capitol was occupied by Federal authorities. The collection grew, however, and by the end of the century the weight of the books on the capitol's structural system was causing concern. Finally, in 1892, the General Assembly, fearing the capitol "may collapse from this extraordinary weight and is in daily danger of destruction by fire," resolved "a building supplemental of the capitol is imperatively demanded." An act thus was passed providing for the erection of a state library,

stipulating that the "said building shall contain sufficient accommodations for the state library, including historical paintings and statuary, the supreme court of appeals, its offices and library, the auditor of public accounts, the second auditor, the treasurer, the commissioner of agriculture, the railroad commissioner,

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 8 **Page** 6

the superintendent of public instruction, the adjutant-general, and the superintendent to public printing."

The task to design such an architectural panacea was awarded to the highly capable William M. Poindexter, a Richmond native who began his career as a draughtsman in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury in Washington, D.C. Poindexter began his own architectural practice in Washington in 1874 and maintained an office there with various partners for the balance of his career. Among his more conspicuous Virginia projects were the Brandon Hotel in Waynesboro, later to become Fairfax Hall School for Girls, and Main Hall at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, a prodigious Queen Anne style work. Perhaps the most fanciful of his surviving residential works is the eclectic Millhiser House of 1896, now part of the complex of historic West Franklin Street dwellings owned by Virginia Commonwealth University.

Poindexter was among the several architects invited to submit designs in 1902 for alterations and additions to the Virginia State Capitol. His proposal was not selected. Interestingly, Poindexter had demonstrated an informed understanding of the capitol's architectural character, with his design for the state library accepted a decade earlier. Though thoroughly proficient in the more romantic Queen Anne style, Poindexter switched gears completely for the library commission, recognizing that his building had to be sympathetic to Jefferson's capitol looming over it. Instead of the red brick with which Poindexter normally worked, the library was faced with buff-colored pressed brick and white terra cotta trim to harmonize with the light colored stucco of the capitol. Buff brick gained great favor in the late 19th century, as it was free of soot and gave the impression of stone.

Poindexter emulated if not imitated the Capitol's most conspicuous feature by fronting the library with a hexastyle portico using the Ionic of Scamozzi, that is columns with Ionic capitals with angled volutes, similar to those on Jefferson's capitol. The column shafts resembled the capitols with their lack of fluting, but were set on pedestals rather than directly on the portico floor. Like the capitol (before its front steps were added), the portico was placed on a high basement and thus served more as a large balcony than an entrance. The main entrance was through a basement level arcade. Poindexter used a more delicate cornice than the capitol's, employing dentils and egg-and-dart moldings rather than the bold modillions found in the capitol's cornice.

As originally built, the library had only the porticoed center section and the north wing. While it was planned to be a symmetrical structure the south wing was not commissioned until 1908. The project was completed in 1910. The project included a low wing extending from the new south wing to house the mineral and timber exhibits from the Virginia pavilion of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. Long known as the State Museum of Natural History, the collections of this interesting, but nearly forgotten institution grew to include many cases of stuffed native Virginia animals, regimental flags from both the Civil War and World War I, German war trophies, miniature replicas of McCormick reapers, and various oddities. Administered by the Conservation and Development Commission, the museum was dissolved in 1964 and its collections

dispersed to various institutions. The elegant galleried space was partitioned into offices.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 8 **Page** 7

A 1916 fire in the building prompted another addition in 1921, a concrete storehouse in the rear to hold the state's more important archives. In 1928 the Richmond architectural firm of Carneal, Johnston and Wright was commissioned to undertake alterations to the State Library costing \$38,000. It is believed that this was the project that resulted in significant changes to façade. Photographs taken prior to these changes, but after the 1910 additions, show a large Palladian window in each wing, the portico columns set on pedestals, and a roof balustrade. They also show a different window configuration in the basement. Photos taken after the changes reveal that the Palladian windows were removed and replaced with four regular spaced bays on the first and second floors of each wing. A parapet replaced the balustrade. The columns and their pedestals were replaced with the present sandstone monoliths that rise directly from the portico floor. The same Ionic order was maintained in the replacement columns.

The accelerated growth of the library's collections, both in books and archives, caused the building to become inadequate by 1930. The effects of the Depression prevented any action being taken until 1936 when discussions began for providing an entirely new building for the several agencies occupying the old building, including the Supreme Court of Appeals and the State Law Library. In 1938 the General Assembly provided funds for the erecting of a new library at Broad and Twelfth streets, fronting on Capitol Square.

Upon completion of the new library in 1939, the former library building was converted to serve as the State Treasurer's Office and was renamed the Finance Building. It served the state treasurer as well as various other state offices until the 1970s when the building gradually was emptied of occupants. The building has been all but vacant for the past twenty-five years. The various remodelings have left little interior architectural trim of any interest except for the main stair, an impressive composition with an elaborate iron railing. A later elevator shaft, however, disfigures the stairwell. The Finance Building's strategic location on Capitol Square, with unparallel views of Jefferson's capitol, offers a special opportunity for adaptation into prestigious office and meeting space. The recent Secretary of Administration, Sandra Bowen, set in motion the first steps towards seeking a future for the Finance Building by calling for a major initiative to develop a plan for rehabilitation and stewardship of all state-owned buildings in and around Capitol Square, including the Finance Building.

On October 28th, 2005, the building was officially renamed the Oliver Hill Building.

In a ceremony attended by many dignitaries, Oliver Hill, Virginia's renowned Civil Rights lawyer was celebrated. Oliver Hill Jr. read a statement for his 98 year old father, who was in attendance. In the statement, Hill recalled visiting the old Finance Building after starting his Richmond law practice in 1939. The building then housed the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. Hill said the court's clerk often let him borrow volumes from the court's law library for the weekends.

"Who would have thought back in 1939, given the racial climate that existed in Richmond at the time, that 66 years later that Supreme Court building would be named after me," Hill said.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 8

State Senator Henry Marsh, a Civil Rights veteran as well, stated: "Today will vindicate the faith of a lot of African-Americans in their government," Marsh said.

After a \$26.3 million renovation, the Oliver W. Hill Building now houses offices for the lieutenant governor, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Compensation Board. The project is part of a Capitol Square revitalization effort that also includes the renovation and restoration of the Capitol building.²

Dr. Oliver White Hill

"Oliver was born Oliver White in Richmond on May 1, 1907. His father left when he was a baby and his mother remarried, thus he attained his stepfather's legal name of Hill. He grew up in Roanoke and Washington then attended Howard University graduating with a law degree in 1933. Oliver married Beresenia Walker in 1934 and has one son, Oliver White, Jr. He has received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from St. Paul's College, Virginia State University and Virginia Union University. Hill practiced law until 1939 in Richmond and won his first civil rights case in Norfolk in 1940. He was one of the trail lawyers in the Davis vs. County School Board of Prince Edward County lawsuit, which would become one of the five cases decided under Brown vs. the Board of Education. From 1943 to 1945, Oliver Hill served in the United States Army as a Staff Sergeant. He ran unsuccessfully for the Virginia House of Delegates in 1947 then was elected to the Richmond City Council in 1948. Hill served on the Federal Housing Administration from 1961 until 1966 and has received several distinguished African-American awards during his life. Dr. Oliver W. Hill is a partner in the Hill, Tucker, and Marsh law firm located in Richmond, VA."³

As of the final editing of this nomination, Dr. Oliver White Hill died on August 5, 2007.

Endnotes

1 Section 8 is largely derived from Calder Loth's "In the Shadow," Notes on Virginia, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Fall/Winter 2002, Number 46

2 The information on the rededication is derived from several newspaper articles in the VDHR file, and the quotes above are from Michael Sluss's article "Historic Building renamed for civil rights lawyer," The Roanoke Times, October 29, 2005.

3 This section was taken, with permission, verbatim from a January 1999 thesis by Jean McRae entitled "Sculpture on Monument Avenue: An interpretation of the old and a proposal for the new." The following were referenced in the paragraph: Robert E. Smithson, Register of Prominent Black Americans, Virginia (Virginia Beach: Hilltop Press, 1990), s.v. "Hill, Dr. Oliver White;" and Shirelle Phelps, Who's Who Among African Americans, 11th edition (Detroit: Gale, 1998), s.v. "Hill, Oliver W.;" and "Oliver Hill" available at <http://www.gateway-va.com/pages/bhistory/1997/hill.htm>. Internet.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 9 Page 9

Bibliographical References

Carneal, Johnston, and Wright, Architects and Engineers, "Alterations and Additions-State Library Building," drawings dated August 10, 1929, Architectural Records, Library of Virginia. Drawings for the period 1894 to 1940 are on file at LVA.

Finance Building, City of Richmond, Virginia Department of Historic Resources File Number 127-6048.

"Historical Sketch," Bulletin of the Virginia State Library, January, 1921, vol. XIV, no. 1.

Land and Community Associates, "Survey of State-Owned Properties: Department of General Services. May, 1991, Unpublished ms in archives of Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Lazarus, Jeremy M., "6 historic city sites on 'most endangered' list," The Richmond Free Press, June 5-7, 2003.

Loth, Calder C., "In the Shadow: Built to complement Mr. Jefferson's masterpiece, the Finance Building is Capitol Square's elegant bookend," Notes on Virginia, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Fall/Winter 2002, Number 46.

McRae, Jean Olstad, "Sculpture on Monument Avenue: An interpretation of the old and a proposal for the new," a thesis presented to Professor Robert Hodder of the College of Humanities and Sciences in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on Historic Preservation, January 1999.

"Oliver Hill" available at <http://www.gateway-va.com/pages/bhistory/1997/hill.htm>. Internet.

Phelps, Shirelle, ed., Who's Who Among African Americans, 11th edition, Detroit: Gale, 1998, s.v. "Hill, Oliver W."

Pristin, Terry, "Public Buildings, Private Management," Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sunday, December 21, 2003.

Sluss, Michael, "Historic Building renamed for civil rights lawyer," The Roanoke Times, October 29th, 2005.

Smithson, Robert E., Register of Prominent Black Americans, Virginia. Virginia Beach: Hilltop Press, 1990, s.v. "Hill, Dr. Oliver White."

"State Library Renovation Plans Forwarded to Governor Byrd," Richmond Times-Dispatch, August 29, 1929.

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton. The Virginia Architects 1835-1955. New South Architectural Press; Richmond, Virginia, 1997.

White, III, Joseph Senter, "Neo-Classical Origins of the Old State Library/Old Finance Building, Richmond, Virginia," unpublished paper, Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section 10 Page 10

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries are selected to conform to area delineated on the attached Capitol Square plat.

The Hill building occupies a relatively small parcel of land on the eastern side of Capitol Square. The building's primary historic elevation (visible from the Capitol) faces west. The northern boundary is defined by the inner edge of the sidewalk and wall that separates the Hill Building from the Executive Mansion. The Eastern boundary is defined by the inner edge of the sidewalk (sidewalk excluded) that runs along Governor Street. The southern boundary follows the inner edge of the brick sidewalk that separates the Hill Building from the Jefferson Building, Parking Garage, and Washington Building. The western boundary follows the inner edge of the sidewalk that runs from Washington Building fountain, north to the steps that are installed on the hillside to access the Capitol drive (stairs and sidewalk are not included). Attached is a Capitol Area Site Plan revised in 2005 at a scale of 1" = 400', and an enlarged copy of a portion of the site plan to shown the boundary lines in detail.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are selected to conform to the area where the Hill Building has been historically located since 1894. The boundary only includes areas of lawn and property setting that are immediately adjacent to the building, not any of the general land that is more closely associated with neighboring buildings: Virginia State Capitol, Executive Mansion, Jefferson Building, Parking Garage, and the Washington Building. The decorative fountain in front of the Washington Building is associated with the Washington Building so it was not included in this boundary.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Section Photographic Data **Page** 11

The following information is the same for all photographs:
Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building, Richmond, Virginia, #127-6048
Taken by Calder Loth of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) in March 2006
Negatives stored at VDHR in Richmond, Virginia

Photo 1 of 6:
Exterior, Western Elevation, primary entry
Negative #22610
Frame #10

Photo 2 of 6:
Exterior, Western Elevation, detail of main entry and stairs
Negative #22610
Frame #21

Photo 3 of 6:
Exterior, Western Elevation, view from northwest with Washington Building in the background
Negative #22610
Frame #9

Photo 4 of 6:
Exterior, Governor Street (modern addition) elevation
Negative #22610
Frame#23

Photo 5 of 6:
Interior, Second Floor Front Corridor, looking north
Negative #22610
Frame#1

Photo 6 of 6:
Interior, Second Floor Front Conference Room
Negative #22610
Frame#2

