

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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.

Listed:  
VLR 6/18/15  
NRHP 9/29/15

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Petersburg Trailways Bus Station

Other names/site number: DHR 123-5493

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 108 E. Washington Street

City or town: Petersburg State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

### 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.

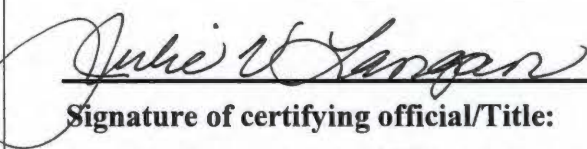
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title: 8/6/15  
Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
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

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

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**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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular)

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Streamlined Moderne

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK, CONCRETE (Concrete Block)

roof : SYNTHETICS: Rubber

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Petersburg Trailways Bus Station is in the downtown central business corridor of the City of Petersburg. Built in 1946, it is a rectangular one-story masonry building with a flat roof and below-grade basement. It is constructed in a mid-twentieth century Streamlined Moderne architectural style. The building is approximately 3,696 square feet above grade and has a T-shaped footprint, with the front (top of the T) paralleling the adjacent East Washington Street and the back (bottom of the T) paralleling South Adams Street. The front section's north (primary) façade features a slightly recessed central entrance bay with curved corners and two sets of entry doors sheltered by a curvilinear canopy that is surmounted by a historic, operable box metal neon sign that reads "Trailways Bus." Original multiple-light, metal-framed sash and metal doors are intact throughout the front and rear sections of the building. The rear section's roof extends as a streamlined canopy over the parking area stalls that were used for the buses. The property has excellent physical integrity that conveys its strong historic associations. Character-defining architectural features include the curved corners of the entrance bay, streamlined canopy over the front entrance and the rear parking area, and the original neon sign. The building also retains key features, such as separate entries and restrooms, that date to the Jim Crow segregation era. The

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

rear section once housed a lunch counter and kitchen that served only white bus passengers, but all of the counter and kitchen fixtures have been removed. Despite some loss of interior historic fabric, the building is the best remaining documented example in Virginia of a mid-twentieth century Trailways bus station that has not been demolished or unsympathetically altered.

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## Narrative Description

### Setting

The Petersburg Trailways bus station is a one-story commercial transportation facility that was constructed in 1946. The building is located at the southeast corner of East Washington Street and South Adams Street as one approaches the downtown central business district of Petersburg. It stands just a few short blocks from U.S. Interstate 95, which is the main north/south highway corridor connecting Petersburg to Richmond (to the north) and to various communities to the south. The bus station is built to the edge of the north and west lot lines, with poured concrete sidewalks separating it from the adjacent streets. South and east of the building, paved entrance drives lead to the bus stalls as well as a small parking lot. A chain link fence defines the edges of the property.

### Exterior

The bus station is essentially a horizontally massed, T-shaped with the front section (top of the T) paralleling the adjacent East Washington Street and the back section (bottom of the T) paralleling South Adams Street. This building is constructed of concrete block with a brick veneer. All windows in the building are original. The roof system consists of metal trusses and a flat metal roof with an applied synthetic rubber covering. The roof covers both rectangular sections of the property and at the rear extends as a canopy over the customer sidewalks and bus parking stalls.

The front section's north (primary) façade features a slightly recessed central entrance bay with curved corners. Within the bay, two entries flank a central window with a two-light, wood-framed, sliding sash, where ticket sales once took place. Each entry features a pair of aluminum-framed, glass doors topped with a large, rectangular, single-light, metal-framed transom. The entrance are sheltered by a projecting, curved canopy with metal trim that is surmounted by a historic, operable box metal neon sign that reads "Trailways Bus." The juxtaposition of the vertical signage with the building's overall horizontal massing, curved canopy, and curved corners on the entrance bay is a character-defining aspect of its Streamlined Moderne style. On the eastern and western elevations of the building's front section there are symmetrically spaced rectangular windows with six-light, metal framed sash, each of which lights a restroom on the interior. Entries with metal-framed, double doors lead from the front section to the rear customer platforms and bus parking stalls. Each of the doors has horizontal lights in a pattern that matches the window sash on the primary façade.

On the rear section, the east side has three large windows with multiple-light sash, including a central awning window similar to those on the façade, while the cutaway southeast corner has a

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

pair of metal doors with square glass lights, topped by a rectangular transom. The rear section's west side has two large windows with multiple-light sash and two entries with metal-framed, flush panel doors; the north entry is boarded over, while the south entry retains its rectangular transom. Across the rear section's south wall, there is one large window with multiple-light sash, three smaller windows similar to those on the front section's side walls, and one door with a multiple-light transom.

There have been no additions to the building. No remodeling or alterations have been done to the exterior of the building. With the exception of the inevitable wear and tear of time, the building's exterior has not changed since it was constructed in 1946.

### **Interior**

Constructed during the Jim Crow era of racial segregation, the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station was designed to have separate spaces for white and African American customers. When approaching the building, the east (left) set of doors was for white customers and the right (west) set of doors was for African American customers. Each opens into a waiting room with a set of men's and women's restrooms at the perimeter walls. Today the two waiting rooms are a single open space. This space and the restrooms encompass the entire front section of the building. At either end of the rear of the waiting room there are doors which lead to the bus platform area.

The rear section consists of three main spaces. Its east side consists of a large open area which was originally used as the lunch counter area to serve the bus station's white patrons. The central space appears to have been used for food preparation for the lunch counter service. The western space is believed to have been used as storage and/or office space for the bus station manager and other employees. There is a basement in the building which encompasses approximately forty percent of the building's footprint. The basement is unfinished and, historically was used to house the heating system and for storage.

There are terrazzo floors in the entire building which are in reasonably good condition. The interior walls are clad in plaster with some tile covering the lower portion of the front interior wall. The pair of restrooms at the eastern end of the waiting room are not currently functional but retain what appear to be mid-twentieth century fixtures. The pair of restrooms at the western end of the waiting room do not have any fixtures remaining.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

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## 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.)

- 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

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1946 to 1961

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

August 15, 1960

May 4, 1961

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Petersburg Trailways Bus Station is significant at the statewide level under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage: African American as the site of protests and “sit-ins” that occurred during 1960 and 1961. These events were a critical component of the Civil Rights Movement in the City of Petersburg as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia. Under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, the building is significant at the local level as an example of the architecture of racial segregation and of the Art Moderne style. Constructed in 1946 during the Jim Crow segregation era, this building was specifically designed and constructed to convey and enforce the long-held belief of white racial supremacy and the requirement that there must be strict separation of the races to the extent possible as set forth under Virginia law. More than a half-century after the Civil Rights movement, extant, unaltered examples of such architectural design is increasingly rare but warrants documentation as physical evidence of the struggles that led to their extinction. The bus station also is the only mid-twentieth century, unaltered Trailways bus station in the Streamlined Moderne style documented at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The period of significance begins in 1946 with the building’s construction and ends in 1961 when the bus station was a stop on the historic Freedom Ride civil rights demonstration.

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

**State-Sanctioned Racial Segregation in Virginia**

During the Jim Crow era of racial segregation, legally required, state-sanctioned and -maintained racial segregation was pervasive throughout Virginia and other former Confederate states. Although the Civil War had destroyed the centuries-old institution of slavery in the United States, the Reconstruction Era that followed failed to lead to lasting social change that assured African Americans equality with whites, despite that the United States Congress passed two Civil Rights Acts, one in 1866 and another in 1875, and a majority of states ratified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Opponents of social and legal equality fought Congress’s intention to assure political and civil rights of African Americans, primarily through the court system. This tactic culminated in 1896 with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, when the U.S. Supreme Court gave legal sanction to the principle of “separate but equal” facilities segregated by race. This decision led to the Jim Crow era (which is named after a fictional minstrel character), which lasted for almost 70 years.<sup>1</sup>

Although “separate but equal” was not enshrined in law until 1896, Virginia’s first public school system, established in 1870 with its Reconstruction Era state constitution, was organized on the assumption that black and white students would attend separate schools. Initially African Americans were pleased to have their own schools not subject to interference by whites. From

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Historical Society, “The World of Jim Crow,” published online at <http://www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/world-jim-crow>.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

the beginning, however, schools for African American children were inferior to those of whites in terms of funding, buildings, curriculum, books, supplies, and teacher training opportunities. While *Plessy v. Ferguson* called for “separate but equal” facilities, in practice by the time the decision was issued in 1896, a generation of Virginians had been accustomed to focusing only on the “separate” aspect of the equation. Virginia’s General Assembly began with a new constitution in 1902 that replaced a Reconstruction Era constitution. The 1902 document was carefully crafted to comply with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments while still denying the franchise to African American men (and poor white men) through poll taxes, and specified continued segregation of public schools in Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Other state laws, such as the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, were designed to assure that the races would not commingle. In 1930, the General Assembly enacted a segregation statute for buses operating in the state that required segregated seating, with African Americans required to sit at the back of the bus and to give up seats to whites if seating was limited.<sup>3</sup> The law also bestowed on bus drivers the authority to judge the race of passengers, make and change seating assignments, and remove, or even arrest, uncooperative passengers.

Until the mid-twentieth century, state and federal courts largely ignored that “separate but equal” was a fiction that permitted white supremacist attitudes to truncate opportunities for African Americans in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. In a 1910 case, *Chiles v. Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad*, the Supreme Court even ruled that private companies could enforce segregation on commercial transportation, such as railroads, streetcars, and buses. In late March 1940, an important show of resistance to Jim Crow segregation took place on a battered old bus near Petersburg. Pauli Murray and Adelene McBean, both of whom were social justice activists, had taken seats near the back of the bus, directly over a wheel. When the rough ride became too much, they moved to seats in the middle of the bus. They refused the driver’s order to return to the back of the bus, and local police were summoned. After engaging the driver and police in a lengthy debate, Murray and McBean were arrested. Recalling the event later on, Murray wrote to friends, “We did not plan our arrest intentionally. The situation developed and, having developed, we applied what we knew of *Satyagraha* on the spot.”<sup>4</sup> As historian Nico Slate notes, *Satyagraha* was a term used by Mohandas Gandhi to explain his approach to nonviolent resistance to social injustice. This early reliance on Gandhi’s nonviolent theory proved prescient, as other leaders of the emerging Civil Rights movement, notably the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would adopt similar tactics during the 1950s and 1960s. Murray herself emerged as a major legal theorist for the Civil Rights movement when in 1950 she published *States’ Laws on Race and Color*, which Thurgood Marshall called “the Bible for civil rights lawyers.” She went on to become a nationally prominent activist in the women’s rights and gay rights movements.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Memory, “Voting Requirements of the Constitution of Virginia, 1902,” retrieved April 2015 from [http://www.virginiamemory.com/online\\_classroom/shaping\\_the\\_constitution/doc/constitution\\_1902](http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/doc/constitution_1902).

<sup>3</sup> Charles E. Wynes, “The Evolution of Jim Crow Laws in Twentieth Century Virginia,” *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 4th Qtr., 1967, p. 421.

<sup>4</sup> Nico Slate, “Nonviolence without Borders,” June 10, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Durham County (NC) Library, “Pauli Murray, Civil Rights and Women’s Rights Activist.”

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

Four years after Murray and McBean's unplanned protest, in eastern Virginia Irene Morgan refused to give up her seat on a Greyhound bus bound for Maryland. The bus driver drove to the Middlesex County courthouse and asked the sheriff to arrest her. Morgan's spirited resistance to the arrest landed her in the county circuit court. Although she pleaded guilty to resisting arrest, she refused to plead guilty to violating the state's segregation law. Morgan's case was taken up by Spottswood W. Robinson III, a Richmond attorney who would go on to play a pivotal role in Virginia's civil rights movement. The Richmond and national branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) offered support as well, with Thurgood Marshall and William H. Hastie acting on behalf of the organization. Rather than challenging the "separate but equal" doctrine, Morgan's lawyers chose to focus on the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, which forbids states from interfering with interstate commerce. Morgan had been traveling on a bus from Virginia to Maryland. The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals ruled against Morgan, who then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1946, in *Morgan v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled for Morgan and struck down all state laws that mandated segregated accommodations in interstate travel by finding that such laws unconstitutionally burdened commercial carriers with establishing different rules depending on which state lines their vehicles crossed. The ruling today is considered a major early victory in the Civil Rights movement.<sup>6</sup>

Many bus companies with routes through southern states, however, claimed that racial segregation on their buses was due to their company policies, not state laws, and that private company policies could not be prohibited by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. In 1946, civil rights activists Bayard Rustin and George Houser began discussing how to test the *Morgan* decision. They conceived a plan, now known as the Journey of Reconciliation, to have groups of black and white volunteers travel together on buses through the Upper South states of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Houser was then chair of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which partnered with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) to recruit volunteers for the demonstration. Sixteen people, mostly students, members of CORE and/or FOR, and members of the Southern Workers Defense League, participated. Before setting out, they received training in nonviolent resistance and how to respond if they were challenged or arrested. One interracial group rode a Greyhound bus and another group rode a Trailways bus. Petersburg was among the stops on the demonstration, and an African American attorney was arrested for refusing to move to the back of the bus, but it is not known which bus he was on or at which station the arrest occurred. The riders were met with violence and several more arrests in North Carolina, but were able to travel peacefully through Kentucky and Tennessee. On the way back to Washington DC while traveling through Virginia, two more activists were arrested near Amherst and at Culpeper. No bus companies changed their segregation policies in the wake of the demonstration, but the event received press coverage in the African American community.

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<sup>6</sup> Derek C. Catsam and Brendan Wolfe, "*Morgan v. Virginia* (1946)," retrieved April 2015 from [http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Morgan\\_v\\_Virginia](http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Morgan_v_Virginia).

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

Rather than being forgotten, the Journey of Reconciliation served as a template for the much more famous 1961 Freedom Ride.<sup>7</sup>

### **Architectural Design of the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station**

Within this historical and legal context, the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station was constructed in 1946. It is an outstanding example of the distinctive architectural forms that were created to accommodate racial segregation. In his article “The Architecture of Racial Segregation,” historian Richard Weyeneth stated such buildings

represented an effort to design places that shaped the behavior of individuals and, thereby, managed contact between whites and blacks in general. African Americans were the group targeted by these architectural initiatives and on whom segregationist architecture was imposed, but whites were also expected to follow the rules in their use of these spaces. Racial segregation was established architecturally in two major ways: through architectural isolation and through architectural partitioning. Architectural isolation represented the enterprise of constructing and maintaining places that kept whites and blacks apart, isolated from one another. Architectural partitioning represented the effort to segregate within facilities that were shared by the races. Throughout the Jim Crow era, both isolation and partitioning remained standard architectural strategies for incorporating racial segregation into community and institutional life.<sup>8</sup>

The Petersburg Trailways bus station is a classic example of the manifestation of isolation and partitioning used to reinforce the concept of white supremacy and racial separation. The front of the building has two distinct entrances separated by just 18 feet. The east entrance opened to the large waiting room reserved for white passengers. Restrooms for men and women were located at the east end of the waiting room, and a lunch counter was located directly south of the waiting room. The west entrance opened into a smaller waiting room for African American passengers. It too featured two restrooms, although they were smaller in size (see building floor plan). A partition wall historically separated the west waiting room from the east (this wall has been removed). Directly south of the west waiting room were storage and office spaces, as no lunch counter was provided. Reportedly African American passengers could order food from the rear door of the bus station’s kitchen, but they were required to eat their meals outside. Access to and from the bus platform to board the buses also was achieved by going through separate doors, with one leading from the white waiting room and another from the African American waiting room.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Catsam and Wolfe, “*Morgan v. Virginia* (1946);” Christopher M. Richardson and Ralph E. Euker, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), “Journey of Reconciliation,” p. 257-258.

<sup>8</sup> Robert R. Weyeneth, “The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 2005), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Information about the original layout and use of interior spaces was obtained from local residents.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

Research to date has not demonstrated that Trailways used a standardized design for bus stations constructed during the Jim Crow era or if each station's design was customized to its location. Other building types associated with transportation, such as gas stations, are known to have had standardized designs adopted by corporations as part of their brand identity. Trailways began as a loosely organized association of independent operators, each operating under their own name. In 1936, fifteen operators joined to form the Trailways company to offer nationwide bus service. By the 1950s, almost 100 independent companies were part of the Trailways brand and Morgan W. Walker, Sr., of Alexandria, Louisiana, became head of the southern division of the company. During the 1950s and 1960s, consolidation among bus operators resulted in four of the five original Trailways members becoming part of a new company, Continental Trailways, which eventually operated the majority of Trailways routes.<sup>10</sup> Because of the company's decentralized nature, it is considered unlikely that a standardized station design ever was developed.

As noted above, however, buildings that were designed to accommodate racial segregation, such as hospitals, movie theaters, and government buildings, are known to have used similar treatments, such as separate entrances and partitioned interior spaces, to assure the races did not mingle. Weyeneth noted that in the decades since Jim Crow segregation ended, many of the architectural and landscape features that once clearly demarcated spaces set aside for whites from those for African Americans have disappeared. Those that remain, such as the Petersburg Trailways bus station, offer an increasingly rare opportunity to study the physical remnants of a problematic, but crucial, aspect of American history.

In 1960, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Boynton v. Virginia Supreme Court* that state laws requiring segregation, whether it occurred on interstate buses or within bus terminals, represented an unconstitutional violation of the Interstate Commerce Act, which broadly forbade discrimination in interstate passenger transportation. Such rulings occurred, however, only after decades of struggle and persistence by civil rights activists in Virginia and across the United States.

### **The Civil Rights Movement in the City of Petersburg and in Virginia, 1960-1961**

*"The buses in Petersburg were segregated. When you rode a street bus you went to the back of the bus. On one occasion, I was riding the bus to the train station and I was on the bus by myself, sitting near the front. The bus driver asked me to get in the back. I rebelled. I just sat still, didn't move, didn't give an answer either. And it shocked the bus driver, so he didn't say anything else. It was only two of us on there. And I rode in the front." - Reverend C. R. Tarrance<sup>11</sup>*

Racial segregation in the City of Petersburg covered most aspects of public life until 1960. Whether it was at the Petersburg Trailways bus station, the public library, the Petersburg Hotel,

<sup>10</sup> *The Courtland Journal* (Republic County, Kansas) "Heads Bus System," June 3, 1947 (Vol. 45, No. 18), p. 1, retrieved March 2015 from Google News; Trailways, "History of Trailways," retrieved April 2015 from <http://www.trailways.com/history-2012#hist>.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from *The Modern Civil Rights Movement in Petersburg, Virginia*, a joint project of the City of Petersburg and the Virginia State University, p. 3.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

the Bluebird Theatre, or Spiro's Department Store, local law and custom dictated that African Americans did not mix with whites. The city has been described as "one of the most segregated in the country."<sup>12</sup> Yet Petersburg also had been the first locality in Virginia to establish public schools for African Americans after the Civil War. Peabody High School, the first publicly supported black high school in Virginia, was founded in 1870 and the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (today's Virginia State University) was the first state-supported, four-year college for African Americans. In the 1930s, Virginia State professor Luther P. Jackson helped to found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and Culture.<sup>13</sup>

Such intellectual ferment meant the local African American community had the depth and strength necessary for Petersburg to play a major role in the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century. Additionally, Petersburg had several historic African American church congregations that played a major role in local civil rights activism, including the First Baptist Church, Zion Baptist Church, and Gillfield Baptist Church. From 1953 to 1960, the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker served as minister of Gillfield Baptist Church, one of the oldest African American congregations in Virginia (and hence, the nation), and founded the Petersburg Improvement Association (PIA) which was based on the Montgomery (Alabama) Improvement Association. He also was a founding member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), for which he was the Executive Secretary from 1960 to 1964, and the aforementioned Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), and worked as Chief of Staff for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The Reverend Robert G. Williams, pastor of Petersburg's Zion Baptist Church, succeeded Walker as president of the PIA. The Reverend Dr. Milton A. Reid, pastor of First Baptist Church, founded the statewide branch of the SCLC, while Herbert Coulton, a native of Petersburg, worked as Virginia's SCLC field director. Also in the 1950s, the Reverend Vernon Johns arrived in Petersburg after being forced to leave Alabama, where he had been Dr. King's predecessor at Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, due to his civil rights activism. In Petersburg, he mentored a generation of young activists, such as Charles Sherrod and Dion Diamond, who were early members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).<sup>14</sup>

Petersburg's African American residents began demonstrations to integrate public accommodations, focusing their efforts on libraries, lunch counters, theaters, and stores. On February 27, 1960, Dr. Walker and approximately 140 student activists from Peabody High School and Virginia State College (now VSU) participated in a march to the Petersburg Public Library, where several were arrested for attempting to enter the front door and use the main reading room. The Petersburg City Council offered strong resistance, as did the Virginia General Assembly, the local *Progress-Index* newspaper, and many white residents. The library was

<sup>12</sup> Petersburg Public Library, "Petersburg Voices of Civil Rights," retrieved April 2015 from <http://voicesofpetersburg.org/>.

<sup>13</sup> Virginia State University, "Petersburg and the Atlantic World: Local History in a Global Context," retrieved April 2015 from [http://www.petersburghistory.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=53](http://www.petersburghistory.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=53).

<sup>14</sup> Wesley Hogan, "Petersburg and the Civil Rights Movement," retrieved April 2015 from [http://www.petersburghistory.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=53](http://www.petersburghistory.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=53); *The Modern Civil Rights Movement in Petersburg, Virginia*, p. 4; Amina Luqman-Dawson, *African Americans of Petersburg* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), p. 51-56.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

closed for four days to all patrons. The City Council passed a new ordinance that made trespassing on city-owned property a misdemeanor, while the General Assembly made trespassing on private property a misdemeanor.<sup>15</sup> Undaunted, activists continued the demonstrations, marches, protests, and voter registration drives through the spring and summer of 1960.

The Petersburg Trailways bus station was among the public accommodations targeted for integration. Members of the local clergy, as well as students from Virginia State University and Peabody High School, “violated” local customs and newly passed anti-trespass laws by waiting in the “whites only” waiting room and sitting and requesting service at the lunch counter. After several sit-ins and a period of civil disobedience, on August 15, 1960, Bryce Wagoner, president of the Bus Terminal Restaurants, Inc., which operated lunch counters in bus stations throughout Virginia, executed a historic agreement that henceforth the company’s policy would be not to refuse service to anyone because of race.<sup>16</sup> This, in effect, desegregated the lunch counter in the Petersburg Trailways bus station, thereby making it one of the first integrated bus terminals in the Commonwealth.

In February 2015 correspondence to the Department of Historic Resources, Dr. Walker stated, This desegregation victory at the bus station was critical to the success of the civil rights movement in Petersburg and in the Commonwealth. Had we not been victorious in our struggle at the bus station it would have been a difficult blow for the movement to absorb. The victory gave strength and momentum to the civil rights movement in Petersburg and in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was the forerunner of the many civil rights achievements that would occur in the coming months and years that would result in the desegregation of public and private facilities in Petersburg.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Walker further noted that the Petersburg Public Library was not desegregated until after the bus station.

The victory at the Petersburg Trailways bus station also preceded by four months another major legal victory for the Civil Rights movement. In December 1958, Howard University law student Bruce Boynton had been traveling by bus from Washington DC to Selma, Alabama. During a stop in Richmond, Boynton asserted his right under the *Morgan v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision to service in the bus terminal’s whites-only restaurant. After being arrested and fined for trespassing, Boynton came to the attention of Martin A. Martin, a local attorney working with the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund. Martin filed a lawsuit claiming that Boynton’s conviction violated the commerce clause, the Interstate Commerce Act, and the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The case eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which in December 1960 ruled that Virginia’s law mandating segregation in the bus terminal was unconstitutional because the primary purpose of the restaurant was to provide service to bus

<sup>15</sup> Hogan, “Petersburg and the Civil Rights Movement.”

<sup>16</sup> *The Progress-Index* (Petersburg, VA), “4 Stores Here Quietly Integrate Lunch Units,” September 11, 1960, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Wyatt Tee Walker, correspondence to Department of Historic Resources, 5 February 2015

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

passengers, many of whom were involved in interstate travel. Such laws therefore violated the Interstate Commerce Act.<sup>18</sup>

The *Boynton v. Virginia* decision provided renewed emphasis on the long-standing effort to desegregate interstate commercial transportation. In 1961, just a few months after President John F. Kennedy's inauguration, CORE again recruited volunteers to test the implementation of a landmark legal case. On May 4, 1961, a group of thirteen volunteers left Washington DC for the first leg of a journey that again began in the Upper South; this time, however, the rides would continue into the heart of the Deep South as well.<sup>19</sup> The first set of Freedom Riders, as they came to be known, traveled on two buses. Stops in Virginia took place at Richmond, Petersburg, Farmville, Lynchburg, and Danville. The demonstration began with little fanfare and the riders arrived in Richmond on May 4. In the terminal, they discovered two cafeterias from which the signs had been removed, although it remained apparent that one served black travelers and the other served whites. Integrated groups received service in both cafeterias, and one of the Freedom Riders, Frances Bergman, reported that "there was surprise and much curiosity, but no incidents."<sup>20</sup> In Petersburg, the group held their first mass meeting at Bethany Baptist Church.<sup>21</sup> By that time, the Trailways bus station had been integrated for ten months and the Freedom Riders again encountered no resistance. They continued through Farmville, Lynchburg, and Danville, and on to North Carolina.

Over the subsequent weeks, additional Freedom Riders joined the demonstration, and ultimately more than 400 participated. Among them was 19-year-old Dion Tyrone Diamond, a native of Petersburg and physics student at Howard University. He participated in the Freedom Ride from Montgomery, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi, on May 24, 1961.<sup>22</sup> During the preceding three weeks, the Freedom Riders had gained substantial media and public attention and, unlike the earlier Freedom Ride through Virginia, Diamond's was met with violent opposition by Ku Klux Klan members, whose attacks were enabled by local police and government officials. After their Greyhound bus was firebombed, the Freedom Riders sought sanctuary at Montgomery's First Baptist Church, where the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had gathered with over 1,000 African American residents. While the activists sang songs and listened to testimonials inside the church, outside white protestors threw Molotov cocktails and threatened the small number of federal marshals who had been dispatched by the Kennedy administration. Recognizing that the federal marshals were outmanned, Alabama Governor John Patterson deployed National Guard

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<sup>18</sup> Bill Obrochta, "Freedom Riders," August 25, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and The Struggle For Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Obrochta, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Arsenault, "Freedom Ride Dispatch: Days 1 and 2," May 20, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and The Struggle For Racial Justice*, Appendix: Roster of Freedom Riders; American Experience, "Roster of Freedom Riders," 2010. Arsenault noted that Diamond went on to be a founding member of the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) and a field secretary in Louisiana for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1962-1963, then worked with the DC Community Action Group in 1966-1968. After completed a M.Ed. in 1970, Diamond specialized in housing, social services, and employment issues as a civil servant and consultant in Washington DC.



Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

troops to disperse the crowd, but it was not until the next day that the streets were secure enough for the Freedom Riders to leave the church.<sup>23</sup>

Undaunted, the Freedom Riders continued their journey on another bus headed for New Orleans. On the front page of the May 25, 1961, edition of the *Petersburg Progress-Index*, an AP wire photo showed their bus, along with an escort of 75 soldiers and 100 state police. An accompanying article explained the previous day's events in Montgomery, and quoted the Reverend Wyatt T. Walker, now executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who stated that the Freedom Riders would not accede to a plea from newly appointed U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy to stop the demonstrations for a "cooling-off period." The article further described related events in Jackson, Mississippi, on May 24 that ended with the arrest of 27 Freedom Riders by local police officers when the demonstrators refused to disperse.

The Freedom Rides continued through the summer of 1961. After the firebombing in Jackson, student activists from Nashville organized their own Freedom Ride. When Mississippi officials arrested more than 300 activists and confined them in the Parchman State Penitentiary, still more volunteers stepped forward to continue the rides. The Kennedy administration finally responded to the Freedom Rides when, on September 22, 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission ordered an end to segregation in and bus and rail stations. Historian Raymond Arsenault explained that, "This was the first unambiguous victory in the long history of the Civil Rights Movement. It finally said, 'We can do this.' And it raised expectations across the board for greater victories in the future."<sup>24</sup> U.S. Congressman John Lewis, himself one of the original Freedom Riders, said of the Freedom Rides:

The people that took a seat on these buses, that went to jail in Jackson, that went to Parchman, they were never the same. We had moments there to learn, to teach each other the way of nonviolence, the way of love, the way of peace. The Freedom Ride created an unbelievable sense: Yes, we will make it. Yes, we will survive. And that nothing, but nothing, was going to stop this movement.<sup>25</sup>

The Freedom Rides continue to be recognized today as a watershed moment in the Civil Rights Movement. At the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station, the first Freedom Ride demonstrated how integration could work even while much of Virginia remained caught up in the Massive Resistance against integrating public schools. In the Deep South, the Freedom Rides illustrated in stark terms the challenges that remained for civil rights activists. With their ultimate victory in desegregating interstate travel, however, the movement for racial equality gained important momentum that, within just a few years, would lead to the March on Washington in August 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Arsenault, "Raymond Arsenault on *Freedom Riders*," *Created Equal* Scholar Essays, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> American Experience, "About the Film," 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

### **Streamlined Moderne Architecture**

Bus stations built from the 1930s to 1950s utilized designs that followed the latest trends in progressive architecture. Many stations and buses featured streamlined motifs with stainless steel curvilinear forms, glass blocks and large metal neon signs. Bus station design was informed by trends in the automobile and travel industry. Bus companies showcased their buildings to create a brand image; even in smaller communities, these stations were designed in Art Deco, Moderne (or Streamlined Moderne), or International Style.

The Petersburg Trailways Bus Station serves as a superb example of Streamlined Moderne design, which is an offshoot of Art Deco. The Streamlined Moderne style incorporates elements of streamlined design originally developed for vehicles and aircraft, consequently making it a logical choice for buildings associated with transportation. As noted in the *New Dominion Virginia Style Guide* published by the Department of Historic Resources, the most notable characteristic of this style is its emphasis on smooth, rounded forms and surfaces. Corner windows and rounded corners are frequent, often accompanied by ribbon windows and steel and chrome details. Facades and plans are often symmetrical. The Petersburg Trailways Bus Station features curvilinear brickwork around the entrance, rounded corners on the entry marquee, glass blocks and a substantial neon-lit box metal sign. Interior finishes are relatively simple and the significance here is primarily derived from the spatial arrangement that continues to convey the racial separation of the building's era.

In Petersburg, few examples of the Streamlined Moderne style have been documented at the Department of Historic Resources. In the Folly Castle Historic District 2000 Boundary Increase (NRHP 2000), a contributing ca.1930-1940 one-story, metal-clad, concrete block gas station with two garage bays and an office area was noted as the only example of the style in the historic district. In the Petersburg Courthouse Historic District (NRHP 1990), the former Knights of Pythias Building is a ca. 1930-1940 multi-story building with variegated yellow brick veneer, terra cotta tile, marble cladding, vertical brick banding, and limestone parapets with terra cotta ornaments. The district nomination notes that it is the largest early twentieth century office building in downtown Petersburg and a rare property type in the city. Elsewhere in Virginia, the ca. 1947 Streamlined Moderne-style Carlin's Amoco Station in the City of Roanoke was listed in the National Register in 2012. The small-scale building was originally an "icebox" form gas station and was remodeled in the early 1960s with the additional of an entrance pylon that is a character-defining feature. Like the aforementioned gas station in Petersburg, Carlin's had two service bays and an office area. Its concrete-block walls were covered with stucco and the corners were rounded in keeping with the Streamlined Moderne style. Although other examples of Streamlined Moderne bus stations are known to have existed in Virginia, none have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register. The Petersburg Trailways Bus Station is the only unaltered mid-twentieth century bus station that has been documented.

With the exception of the inevitable wear and tear for a nearly 70-year-old building, the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station's interior and exterior are essentially the same as they were when the building was constructed in 1946; the exterior brick, the windows, the bus canopy and

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

bus sign all remain unaltered. The building thus retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association that allows it to convey its historic associations under Criteria A and C.

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

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Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

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

\_\_\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR #123-5493

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.43 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.227922 | Longitude: -77.401506 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundary is drawn to encompass all of the land historically associated with the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station, recorded as tax parcel 011-340001. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Tax Parcel Map/Sketch Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

As dedeed to Yucca Plantation Investments LLC by the City of Petersburg, the historic boundary includes the building and the land adjacent to the building which comprised the historic tax parcel. There are no other resources (contributing or non-contributing) associated with the property.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Byron Smith, Sr., Managing Partner  
organization: Yucca Plantation Investments LLC  
street & number: 2104-B Gallows Road, Suite #2  
city or town: Vienna state: VA zip code: 22182  
e-mail: reinst@cox.net  
telephone: 703-757-3880 ext. 101  
date: 31 January, 2015

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to

Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

#### **All photographs are common to:**

Name of Property: Petersburg Trailways Bus Station

City or Vicinity: Petersburg

County: Independent City State: VA

Photographer: Byron Smith, Sr.

Date Photographed: January 27, 2015

Location of negatives/digital data: DHR, Richmond, VA

#### **Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:**

Photo 1 of 20 – This is the front of the building on E. Washington Street taken from directly across the street with the camera facing south.

Photo 2 of 20 – This is an oblique view of the building's façade taken on E. Washington Street with the camera facing southwest.

Photo 3 of 20 – This is an oblique view of the building looking east on E. Washington Street taken from the corner of E. Washington Street and S. Adams Street.

Photo 4 of 20 – This is an E. Washington Street scene looking west on E. Washington Street. The photo was taken from underneath the metal marquee that covers the two entrances to the building.

Photo 5 of 20 – This is the street scene looking east on E. Washington Street. The photo was taken from underneath the metal marquee that covers the two entrances to the building.

Photo 6 of 20 – This photo shows the elevation of the building from S. Adams Street with the camera facing east.

Photo 7 of 20 – This photo shows the building's side elevation as seen from the parking lot with the camera facing west.



Petersburg Trailways Bus Station  
Name of Property

Petersburg, VA  
County and State

Photo 8 of 20 – This photo shows an oblique view of the rear of the building taken from the parking lot facing northeast.

Photo 9 of 20 – This photo shows the back of the building as seen from the rear parking lot with the camera facing northwest

Photo 10 of 20 – This photo shows the rear portion of the building with the camera facing west.

Photo 11 of 20 – This photo shows the bus station waiting room. with the camera facing east.

Photo 12 of 20 – This photo shows the bus station waiting room. with the camera facing west.

Photo 13 of 20 – This photo shows the former lunch counter area. with the camera facing south.

Photo 14 of 20 – This photo shows the lunch counter area with the camera facing north.

Photo 15 of 20 – This photo shows the interior of the former “whites only” ladies bathroom located at the northeastern corner of the building. and reflects the worst of damage in the building due to a former roof leak.

Photo 16 of 20 – This photo shows the existing urinal fixtures in the former “white’s only” men’s bathroom located at southeastern side of the building.

Photo 17 of 20 – This photo shows the existing fixtures in the former “white’s only” ladies bathroom that is located at the northeastern corner of the building.

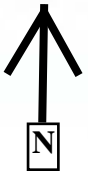
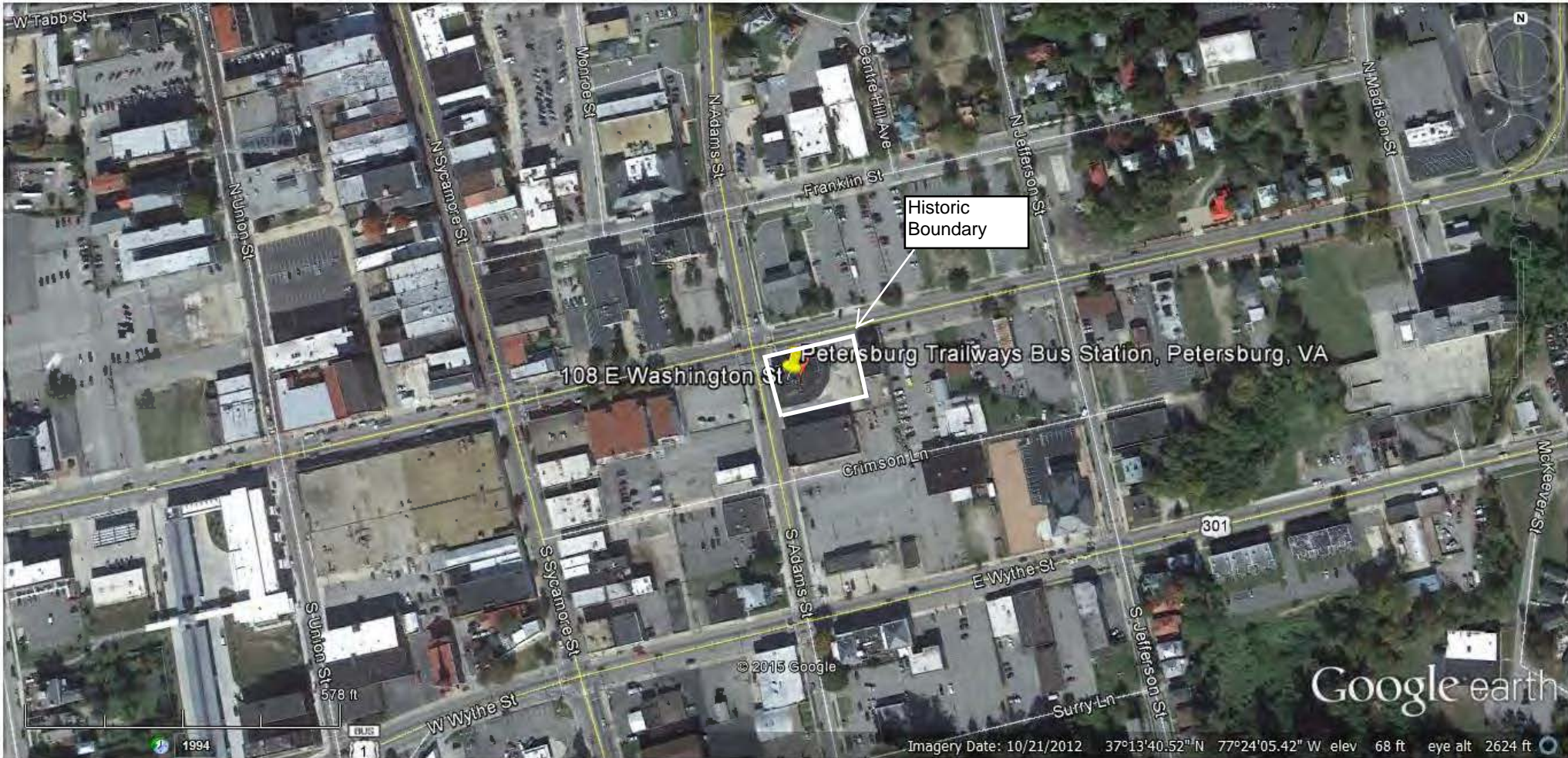
Photo 18 of 20 – This photo shows the former “colored only” bathroom with the camera facing northwest. All of the fixtures have been removed from this bathroom.

Photo 19 of 20 – This photo, taken with the camera facing south, shows an area that may have been used for food preparation and storage for the lunch counter.

Photo 20 of 20 – This photo, taken with the camera facing south, shows what appears to be an office area that was likely used for the manager and employees of the bus station.

**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 100 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.



**LOCATION MAP**  
**Petersburg Trailways Bus Station**  
**City of Petersburg, VA**  
**DHR No. 123-5493**  
**Latitude: 37.227922**  
**Longitude: -77.401506**

**TAX PARCEL MAP/SKETCH  
MAP**  
**Petersburg Trailways Bus  
Station (contributing)**  
**City of Petersburg, VA**  
**DHR No. 123-5493**  
**Parcel No. 011-340001**



022-080003

022-080002

022-080004

022-080005  
30 m

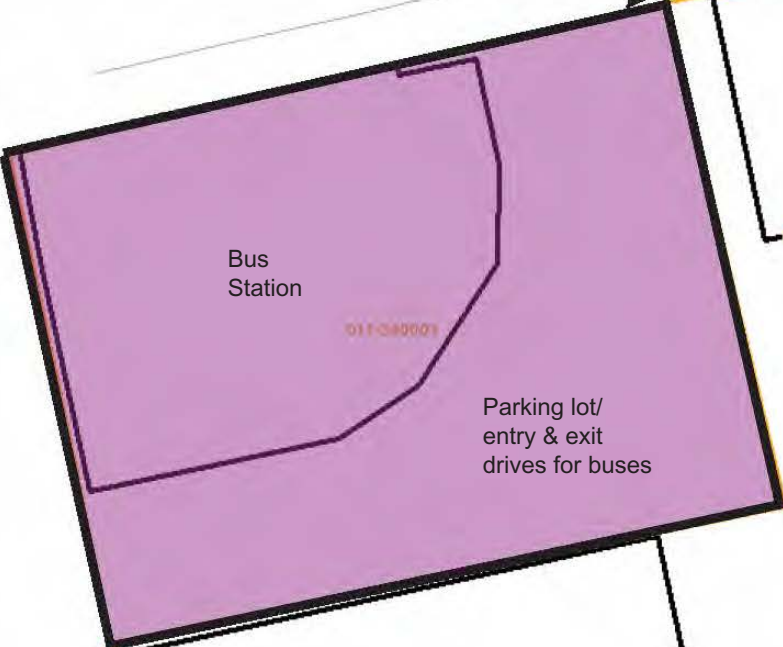
50 ft

011-290001

N Adams St

E Washington St

Historic  
Boundary



011-340002

011-340003

011-340004

S Adams St

022-090001

Crimson Ln

022-090001

022-100006

E. Washington St.



Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

1  
Photo Locations

1



3



2



4



5



13



18



17



15



12



11



7



6



S. Adams St.

16



20



19



10



14



8



9



**SKETCH MAP/PHOTO KEY**  
**Petersburg Trailways Bus Station**  
**City of Petersburg, VA**  
**DHR No. 123-5493**