

# 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR File #123-5494

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: Bounded Generally by Washington Street, Adams Street, Sycamore Street, Halifax Street, Byrne Street, and Harrison 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Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A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 X 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 X 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 x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>  <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>49</u>	<u>16</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	objects
<u>49</u>	<u>22</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 10

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Professional, Specialty Store, Department Store,

Restaurant, Warehouse\

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

RELIGION: Religious Facility

FUNERARY: Mortuary

HEALTH CARE: Medical Business/Office

LANDSCAPE: Plaza

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Department Store, Restaurant

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

RELIGION: Religious Facility

FUNERARY: Mortuary

HEALTH CARE: Medical Business/Office

VACANT/ NOT IN USE

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY: Greek Revival, Gothic Revival

LATE VICTORIAN: Gothic, Italianate, Romanesque, Second Empire

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Mission, Classical Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco, Art Moderne, International

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; STUCCO, SYNTHETICS: Vinyl

### 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.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District is a mixed commercial, industrial, and residential neighborhood immediately south of downtown Petersburg, Virginia. The triangular intersection that gives the district its name consists of South Avenue, Halifax Street, and Harrison Street. The district encompasses roughly 40 acres on portions of approximately 12 city blocks. The northern part of the district is characterized by more densely developed construction on a gridded block pattern defined by major east-west and north-south thoroughfares typical of the commercial core of Petersburg, while the less densely developed southern part of the district consists of a more irregular block and street pattern arranged around a triangle configuration created by Halifax Street. Within the district are 49 contributing buildings ranging in age from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century and reflecting a variety of styles including post-Civil War Gothic Revival and Italianate churches and commercial buildings to mid-twentieth century Moderne and Contemporary structures, interspersed with vernacular commercial and industrial buildings. Within the district also are 9 previously individually listed properties; of these, 5 are churches, 2 are houses, and 2 are commercial buildings and their architectural styles and construction date are similar in range and variety to the district as a whole. Individually listed properties are marked as such in the inventory below. Properties that are non-contributing postdate the district's period of significance and/or lack integrity to convey their historic associations. The extant buildings vary in condition and retention of historical integrity; collectively, however, they continue to convey the development and character of the Halifax Triangle neighborhood during that time period.

#### Narrative Description

The Halifax Triangle Historic District is located just south of downtown Petersburg and is bordered by contemporary and older neighborhoods on all sides. It is bounded to the north by the Petersburg Courthouse

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Historic District (NRHP 1990) which represents the primary commercial and civic center of Petersburg with densely developed row-style buildings set adjacent to the streets. To the east and south of the district are the Centre Hill (NRHP 1986) and Poplar Lawn NRHP (1980, 2006) Historic Districts which both contain large nineteenth and early-twentieth century houses set on grassy lots around shaded streets. Additional residential properties are located within the South Market Street Historic District (NRHP 1992) to the west.

The Halifax Triangle Historic District consists of two associated but distinct areas characterized by their development and transportation patterns. The northern part of the district is characterized by more densely developed construction on a gridded block pattern defined by east-west running Washington Street and Wythe Street, which collectively serve as U.S.-1, and Sycamore and Union Streets that are primary commercial corridors extending into the district from downtown Petersburg to the north. Washington Street appears on Civil War period maps as a larger primary thoroughfare. Also in this area at the time was a section of the Petersburg Railroad, which included a depot; this line was one of the first interstate railroads in the country, and had another depot at Weldon, North Carolina. Wythe Street was a small street that carried traffic east from Sycamore to Blandford and Crater Road, but did not originally connect with streets to the west as it does now. During the mid- and late-twentieth century, Wythe Street was widened and reconfigured to create a connection between Sycamore and Market streets. In 1979, Wythe Street was made a one-way street, with the parallel Washington Street also made one-way to carry traffic in the opposite direction, according to traffic engineering principles then in use. The southern part of the district is less densely developed, and consists of a more irregular block and street pattern arranged between Halifax Street, which extends from Wythe Street at an angle heading southwest, and Harrison Street. Halifax Street continues onward through Southside Virginia and ultimately to Halifax, North Carolina.

The district has a generally flat and open urban landscape. Few trees are scattered throughout the area and most buildings are set adjacent to the sidewalk with gravel or paved alleys and parking lots surrounding them. Some properties have grassy lawns to the side or rear and a number of empty lots where buildings have been demolished are covered with grass or weeds. The focal point and historic center of the neighborhood known as "The Triangle" is an area bounded by Halifax Street, Harrison Street, and South Avenue which historically had a city scale and market and is now an open paved parking lot. Several other large parking lots for churches and commercial areas are scattered throughout the district.

The district consists primarily of one- and two-story commercial buildings interspersed with a number of warehouses and industrial buildings, churches and funeral homes, and several single dwellings. Most of the buildings date from the first half of the twentieth century, although several nineteenth century and more recent buildings are located within the district as well. In the northern portion of the district between Washington and Wythe Street are several larger, Victorian-influenced commercial and industrial buildings. Oriented towards the aforementioned Washington and Wythe streets are a number of contemporary buildings that exhibit Moderne and International-style influences. Buildings in the southern portion of the district are generally of a smaller scale and exhibit Italianate and other early-twentieth century influences. Throughout the district are over a half-dozen churches that display a variety of high-style architecture including Gothic Revival, Romanesque, and Classical Revival designs. Rounding out the district are a number of mid-twentieth century commercial vernacular buildings.

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## Architectural Analysis

Located on the outskirts of Petersburg in the late eighteenth century when it first began to develop, all of what is now the Halifax Triangle Historic District was included in the limits of the Town of Petersburg, which incorporated as a town in 1784. Three years later, Erasmus Gill created Washington, Union, and Market streets, laid out lots along them, and sold them for development. In 1790, Gill laid out the Gillfield neighborhood on the west side of Halifax Street, and this area developed with Federal Street as its spine. In 1809, Robert Bolling extended Sycamore Street from its intersection with Halifax and laid out Jefferson, Madison, Adams, and Wythe streets in the district and several others beyond. In 1810, establishment of the New Gillfield neighborhood led to creation of Perry Street and the extension of several east-west streets.

In 1819 when the Sandy Beach Church purchased property known as “Gills Field” on Perry Street to relocate its congregation from the Pocahontas area of Petersburg. A new church was constructed and became the center of a growing community of free African American residents. This early church was eventually replaced with a new building in 1840; however that building subsequently burned in 1858. At that time, the church was replaced with a larger, brick building that remains today (Gillfield Baptist Church n.d. 1878 cornerstone).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the district was filled with a variety of houses, businesses, and other buildings, portions of which are still extant. The earliest standing building within the district is Washington Street Methodist Episcopal Church (#123-0044), a Greek Revival church built circa 1842. The building sits along East Washington Street, which forms the northern boundary of the district. This church was substantially expanded in the 1920s by the addition of a wing to each side. In the southern end of the district, the circa 1858 House of Restoration Church (originally Market Street Methodist Church) (#123-5494-0056) is another remaining mid-nineteenth century building in the district. This Gothic Revival church, designed by architect R.A. Machen, is in fair condition and retains many of its original characteristics, although the central spire has been removed. It has housed many different congregations over the years as the surrounding neighborhood has continued to evolve. At South 32 Adams Street, the ca. 1851 Cohen House (NRHP 2007) is an example of an earlier dwelling remodeled in the Second Empire style, which is comparatively rare in the area.

Limited growth and development occurred in the district in the years following the Civil War, primarily with several tobacco factories that were inserted in the Triangle area and to the west. Newly emancipated African Americans moved into the area, adding to the antebellum free black population that had already been here for several decades. By the 1880s, the district was nearly self-sufficient with industrial facilities, the largest of which were the Oak’s Tobacco warehouses and sheds, other industrial and manufacturing facilities, small commercial buildings, churches, and both single- and multiple dwellings. Most buildings lining the blocks surrounding Halifax Triangle were either one- or two-story small storefronts. Originally built in 1862, the First Baptist Church, another design by R. A. Machen, burned in 1866 but was rebuilt by 1868 and then renovated several times by 1880. Also by this time, other churches had been built in the area, including the current Gillfield Baptist Church (1878, reconstructed after a fire) and Oak Street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (circa 1879). Zion Baptist Church came soon after, circa 1880. These churches all remain as excellent examples of ecclesiastical architecture of the time period and as a testament to their devoted congregations.

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The area continued to grow through the turn of the century, with Sanborn maps reflecting the addition of even more specialized businesses, including dressmakers, several undertakers, eating houses, and a bicycle and repair shop. By 1915 two movie theaters and a hotel were located along Halifax and Harrison Streets. The lumber yard previously across the street from the Roper & Co. Wholesale Grocery building was replaced with a large auto sales and service complex, demonstrating the growing influence of automobile transportation on the district. The Roper & Co Building remains today (#123-5494-0052), and is a substantial, utilitarian brick building on the corner of West Wythe and South Union streets. The building is largely unadorned, except for a mural on its north wall. An inset loading dock is on its west side. Two Italianate-style commercial buildings from this era also remain on Halifax Street (#123-5494-0010 and 123-5494-0011). The two-story brick buildings have since been covered in stucco although their historic character remains. Each has a parapet and three windows evenly spaced on the second story front elevation. Although there are empty lots to either side of them now, their nearly windowless side elevations are a reminder of the density of building construction at the time they were built.

By the middle of the twentieth century, several large drycleaners and laundries opened in the neighborhood, replacing smaller restaurants, grocers, and cobblers. Filling stations and auto repair shops were also present within the boundaries of the district, a good example of which remains at the corner of East Wythe and South Sycamore Streets (#123-5494-0048). The one-story building has a flat roof and is a mixture of concrete block and brick that has been stuccoed over. Two one-car bays face South Sycamore Street. While the pumps have been removed, the building is still in use as an auto repair shop. Another extant mid-century example is VDHR# 123-5494-0033, a 1960 office building. The plain, one-story brick building has a flat roof and a single offset glazed entry door. Small one-over-one windows line the sides while a large plate glass window is on the front elevation.

While many buildings have been lost to demolition and neglect, those remaining within the Halifax Triangle area demonstrate the arc of architectural and commercial development of this primarily African American enclave of Petersburg from the mid-nineteenth century through today. The churches, commercial buildings, and warehouses standing within the Halifax Triangle area, and the downtown commercial area into which this enclave later expanded, represent several major periods of development the city has been through, beginning with its growth surge after the Civil War, continuing through the turn of the twentieth century, up through the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. While the area reflects the economic distress that has affected Petersburg in the recent past, the vacant and deteriorated buildings nevertheless represent an accurate and keen reminder of the architectural growth and significance of the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District.

### Inventory

The following inventory lists the buildings and structures within the historic district. The inventory of resources is arranged numerically by street address. Each resource is keyed to the attached Sketch Map by street number. The contributing status was determined based upon each resource's date of construction, retention of historic integrity, and its ability to convey its association with one or more of the districts areas of significance, Ethnic Heritage: African American, Commerce, Social History, and Architecture, during the district's two periods of

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significance, 1842 and 1851-1964. Common alterations, such as replaced doors, window sash, railings and steps, while not ideal, are not considered to detract from a building's ability to contribute to the historic district as long as the building's historic massing, form, and fenestration patterns are intact. With regard to commercial buildings, remodeled storefronts are common as well. Typical updates include new display windows with aluminum frames and metal-framed entry doors, both of which likely replaced wood-framed assemblages, as well as newer cladding materials that cover parts of the storefront and/or spaces historically used for signage or canopies between the first and second stories. The at times haphazard assortment of alterations is reflective of the economic difficulties that have beset the area in recent decades. Yet despite these, historic functions remain easily discernable and secondary elevations are often little changed, leaving a majority of historic fabric in place for most buildings in the district.

### Adams Street

**South 15 Adams Street**      **123-5494-0032**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Market (Building), Stories 1, Style: Modernist, 1950*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 18 Adams Street**      **123-5494-0030**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: International Style, 1965*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 24 Adams Street**      **123-5494-0029**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Doctors Office/Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1962*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 32 Adams Street**      **123-0115**      *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0047*  
*Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2.5, Style: Second Empire, Ca 1851*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 103 Adams Street**      **123-5494-0040**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Funeral Home (Building), Stories 2, Style: Greek Revival, 1953*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 117 Adams Street**      **123-5494-0043**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Neo-Classical Revival, 1963*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

### Byrne Street

**225 Byrne Street**      **123-0094-0376**      *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0060*



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*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Romanesque Revival/ Richardsonian, Ca 1880*

**Contributing Total: 1**

*Secondary Resource: Carport (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1*

*Secondary Resource: Meeting/Fellowship Hall (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1*

*Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1*

### Halifax Street

**32-40 Halifax Street 123-5494-0014** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Other, Ca 1930*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**42-46 Halifax Street 123-5494-0004** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Other, Ca 1930*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**101-107 Halifax Street 123-5494-0012** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italianate, Ca 1910*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**113 Halifax Street 123-5494-0011** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italianate, Ca 1920*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**117 Halifax Street 123-5494-0010** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italianate, Ca 1920*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**129 Halifax Street 123-5494-0063** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1920*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**131 Halifax Street 123-5494-0009** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1920*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**211 Halifax Street 123-5494-0037** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1955*

**Contributing Total: 1**

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**227 Halifax Street 123-5494-0038** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1973*

**Non-contributing Total: 1**

**230 Halifax Street 123-0094-0377** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0061*

*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, Ca 1912*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1**

**233 Halifax Street 123-5494-0039** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Romanesque Revival/ Richardsonian, Ca 1905*

**Contributing Total: 1**

#### **Harrison Street**

**105 Harrison Street 123-5494-0008** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1900*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**115 Harrison Street 123-5494-0007** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1919*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**123 Harrison Street 123-5494-0064** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1919*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**137 Harrison Street 123-5494-0003** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Funeral Home (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, 1962*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**201-203 Harrison Street 123-0094-0033** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0057*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1900*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**223 Harrison Street 123-0094-0035** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0058*

*Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 1, Style: Gothic Revival, Ca 1860*

**Contributing Total: 1**

**236 Harrison Street 123-5002** *Other DHR Id#: 123-0094-0148, 123-5494-0062*

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*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Romanesque Revival/ Richardsonian, 1872*  
**Contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Carport (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1*  
*Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total: 5*

### Market Street

**South 210 Market Street 123-0098** *Other DHR Id#: 123-0108-0014, 123-5494-0056*

*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 1, Style: Gothic Revival, Ca 1858*  
**Contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Playing Field (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1*

### Perry Street

**209 Perry Street 123-5001** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0051*

*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 1, Style: Romanesque Revival/ Richardsonian, 1878*  
**Contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Carport (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1*  
*Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total: 2*

### South Avenue

**102 South Avenue 123-5494-0006** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Funeral Home/Mortuary (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, 1874*  
**Contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Carport (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1*

### Sycamore Street

**South 9 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0019** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, 1955*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 22 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0022** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1940*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

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**South 23 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0018** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 24 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0021** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 26 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0065** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 27-31 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0017** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italianate, Ca 1915*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 30 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0020** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1920*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 33 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0016** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Italianate, Ca 1920*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 36 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0015** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, 1912*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 37-41 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0005** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 105 Sycamore Street 123-0118** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0048*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Other, 1949*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 108 Sycamore Street 123-0119** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0049*  
*Primary Resource: Restaurant (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1978*  
**Non-contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Menu Board (Object) Non-contributing Total: 1*  
*Secondary Resource: Sign (Object) Non-contributing Total: 1*  
*Secondary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1*

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*Secondary Resource: Storage (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1*

**South 115 Sycamore Street 123-0120** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0050*  
*Primary Resource: Meeting/Fellowship Hall (Building), Stories 2, Style: Other, Ca 1969*  
**Non-contributing Total: 1**

**South 116 Sycamore Street 123-5494-0044** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: International Style, 1957*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

### Union Street

**South 29 Union Street 123-5032** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0052*  
*Primary Resource: Warehouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Other, Ca 1910*  
**Contributing Total: 1**  
*Secondary Resource: Garage (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1*

**South 36-38 Union Street 123-5033** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0053*  
*Primary Resource: Warehouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Other, 1912*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 42 Union Street 123-5034** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0002*  
*Primary Resource: Warehouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Other, 1912*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**South 54 Union Street 123-5494-0013** *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1920*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

### Washington Street

**East 2 Washington Street 123-5463** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0054*  
*Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No Discernable Style, 1969*  
**Non-contributing Total: 1**

**East 14 Washington Street 123-0044** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0046*  
*Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Greek Revival, Ca 1842*  
**Contributing Total: 1**

**East 108 Washington Street 123-5493** *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0055*

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*Primary Resource:* **Bus Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: International Style, 1946**

**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 118-120 Washington Street 123-5494-0035** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, 1947**

**Contributing Total:** 1

*Secondary Resource:* **Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total:** 1

**East 124 Washington Street 123-5494-0036** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Factory (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1939**

**Contributing Total:** 1

**West 2-38 Washington Street 123-5494-0023** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: International Style, Ca 1955**

**Contributing Total:** 1

#### Wythe Street

**East 1-9 Wythe Street 123-5494-0026** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1955**

**Non-contributing Total:** 1

**East 10 Wythe Street 123-5494-0025** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1955**

**Contributing Total:** 1

*Secondary Resource:* **Market (Building) Non-contributing Total:** 1

**East 17 Wythe Street 123-5494-0027** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1961**

**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 24-32 Wythe Street 123-5494-0024** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1945**

**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 27 Wythe Street 123-5494-0028** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1947**

**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 101 Wythe Street 123-5494-0031** *Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1957**

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**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 115 Wythe Street**      **123-5494-0033**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource:* **Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Modernist, 1960**  
**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 129 Wythe Street**      **123-5494-0034**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1960**  
**Contributing Total:** 1  
*Secondary Resource:* **Shed (Building) Non-contributing Total:** 1

**East 130 Wythe Street**      **123-5494-0041**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1964**  
**Contributing Total:** 1

**East 134 Wythe Street**      **123-5494-0042**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1965**  
**Contributing Total:** 1  
*Secondary Resource:* **Garage (Building) Non-contributing Total:** 1

**West Wythe Street**      **123-5494-0045**      *Other DHR Id#:*  
*Primary Resource:* **Monument/Marker (Object), Stories , Style: No discernible style, 1977**  
**Non-contributing Total:** 1

**West 25 Wythe Street**      **123-0100**      *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0001*  
*Primary Resource:* **Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 1, Style: Gothic Revival, 1879**  
**Contributing Total:** 1

**142 Wythe Street**      **123-0094-0374**      *Other DHR Id#: 123-5494-0059*  
*Primary Resource:* **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Other, 1947**  
**Contributing Total:** 1

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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



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

COMMERCE

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1842

1851-1964

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Machen, R. A.

\_\_\_\_\_

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**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 Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American, Commerce, and Social History and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The district has two periods of significance, with the earliest, 1842, related to the construction of the individually-listed Greek Revival church at East 14 Washington Street (NRHP 1980), and the second period of significance beginning in 1851 with the construction of the next earliest extant building, the Cohen House (NRHP 2007), and ending in 1964, coinciding with the passage of the U.S. Civil Rights Act and the election of Halifax Triangle resident and business owner Joseph Owens as the first African American to serve on Petersburg's City Council since Reconstruction. In addition to the church at 14 Washington Street, there are 9 previously listed properties within the historic district boundaries, as follows: South 32 Adams Street, Cohen House (NRHP 2007); 225 Byrne Street, 230 Halifax Street, 201-203 Harrison Street, and 233 Harrison Street, and 236 Harrison Street, all of which also are contributing to the Poplar Lawn Historic District (NRHP 1980, 2005); South 210 Market Street, which also contributes to the South Market Street Historic District (NRHP 1992); East 108 Washington Street, the Petersburg Trailways Bus Station (NRHP 2015), and East 14 Washington Street, the Washington Street United Methodist Church (NRHP 1980).

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

The Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District consists of two distinct but interrelated areas that tell the story of African American culture, commerce, and experience in Petersburg, Virginia, from the mid-nineteenth century through the present day. The northern part of the district was historically considered part the downtown commercial district further to the north and reflects the continued evolution and relative prosperity of the city into the third quarter of the twentieth century. This area contains high-style Victorian-era commercial and industrial buildings, a Classical Revival church, and a Moderne bus station. The southern portion of the district, primarily set along Halifax Street and around Halifax Triangle, evolved after the City created the Center Market Square in 1850 into a prosperous extension of the downtown's commercial activity. The Center Market occupied a triangular square bounded by Halifax and Harrison streets and South Avenue; this later became known as Halifax Triangle. Both the market and surrounding businesses served white and African American customers who lived in surrounding areas to the east, south, and west. The Petersburg Railroad, for which the northern terminus lay in the district, was connected with the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad along Washington Street during the Civil War. After the war, reconstruction of railroads quickly expanded Petersburg shipping and passenger service to a broader area. In 1884, the City's first electrified streetcar lines were established along Washington and Halifax Streets. The area was

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electrified in 1893. The introduction of several Wythe Street trolley lines in the first decades of the twentieth century brought further prosperity to the district.

During the late nineteenth century, the growth of Gillfield and First African Baptist churches helped establish the district as a cultural center for African Americans. Prior to the Civil War, the majority of businesses in the district were owned by whites. As the local economy stabilized, more black-owned businesses were established as well, with many located along Harrison Street and South Avenue. African Americans used their growing economic clout to establish banks, lending associations, mutual aid and insurance societies, benevolent orders, funeral homes, and other organizations. Lawyers and doctors also established offices in the district. Development of this social infrastructure proved crucial as, starting in the late 1870s-1880s, political gains made by African Americans began to erode quickly after Reconstruction officially ended. With Jim Crow segregation setting in by the mid-1890s, separation of whites and African Americans in commercial, political, cultural, and other activities became rigidly enforced, which affected the district's subsequent evolution throughout the twentieth century.

With the establishment of Camp Lee during World War I, greater numbers of people came to Petersburg (Wineman 2010). The soldiers had money to spend, and the Triangle area became an entertainment district. Although the military installation closed in June 1919, jazz music continued to enrich the local cultural scene and entertained audiences in "underground" settings that thrived despite Prohibition. Nearby tobacco factories continued to offer steady employment to local residents as well. The Rialto Theater, designed by African American architect Charles T. Russell, opened in 1923. It and the Club Chatterbox became popular places for Petersburg's African Americans to socialize. Today's annual Halifax Jazz and Blues Festival recalls this important aspect of Petersburg's cultural history.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, trolley service ended in the district. In 1940, the Atlantic Coast Line diverted most of its trains to a yard west of Petersburg. These combined to curtail the number of people traveling through Halifax Triangle, which had a consequential effect on local business revenues. The same year, however, a new Camp Lee opened and during the course of World War II, trained more than 300,000 officers and enlisted soldiers for service in the European and Pacific theaters. The installation remained open after the war, with another phase of expansion that occurred during the Korean War (Wineman 2010).

By the mid-twentieth century, African Americans had launched a new civil rights movement to recover the political and civil rights previously granted to them after the Civil War. Although the movement made great strides from the early 1950s through late 1960s, simultaneously white flight from urban cores caused widespread divestment in historic inner cities while suburbs received the lion's share of investment and growth from the 1950s until the late twentieth century. The Halifax Triangle district went from being a racially mixed neighborhood to predominately African American. The aforementioned traffic engineering decisions in 1979 that turned Washington and Wythe streets into one-way corridors effectively cut the commercial area in Halifax Triangle off from the central business core. In 1955, the Atlantic Coast Line closed its

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freight and passenger depots and all service along the Washington Street corridor. Also across the twentieth century, the tobacco industry went from employing two-thirds of the city's workers to ending entirely in 1985, when Brown & Williamson closed its last tobacco factory, which had up to that point employed 4,000 workers in three daily shifts (Historic Petersburg 2017). Today, the district struggles with blight and poverty, but remains as an important center and reminder of the African American heritage of Petersburg.

### **Detailed Historical Background**

Petersburg was established as a town in 1748 at a place which had been an important center of trade among Virginia Indians and one of Virginia's most important tobacco trading posts. The town was expected to remain an important center of trade due to its location at the fall line and head of navigation of the Appomattox River. By the time of the American Revolution, Petersburg had seven tobacco inspectors and numerous tobacco merchants. The town incorporated as a town in 1784. During the nineteenth century, the city became renowned as a commercial and industrial center for processing cotton, tobacco, and metal, and shipping products out of the region. The forced labor of enslaved African Americans generated much of these commodities and the ensuing wealth enjoyed by white slave owners. However, the presence of numerous Quakers and Methodists who had freed their enslaved workers, as well as legalization of manumission, meant that free African Americans also lived in Petersburg.

A large part of the early development of the Halifax Triangle neighborhood was derived from its location adjacent to where the Boydton-Plank Road enters the City of Petersburg. Boydton-Plank Road served as an important corridor throughout the nineteenth century as it connected many of the farms and small communities of Southside Virginia with the mills, port, and commercial center in Petersburg. It was for this reason that a thriving city market evolved on the Halifax Triangle, adjacent to the municipal scales where produce and other goods being shipped into town were weighed. Meanwhile, the Plank Road itself, locally called Halifax Street, served as the primary commercial strip through the adjacent neighborhood.

As an industrial and trading center, Petersburg offered paid work in an otherwise largely agricultural region dependent on slave labor (Jackson 1927). Petersburg incorporated as a city in 1850 and, by the outbreak of the Civil War, ranked as the second-largest city in Virginia, with half of the population composed of African Americans and others of mixed racial heritage. Of the black residents, more than one-third were free, the highest percentage of free African Americans in any city in the South (Jackson 1927). The 3,500 free African Americans who lived in Petersburg were in various neighborhoods, including Pocahontas, a peninsula on the north shore of the Appomattox River (the Pocahontas Island Historic District was listed in the NRHP in 2006). In 1800, one of the first independent African American churches in Petersburg, and what would become one of the pivotal institutions for the promotion of African American culture and civil rights throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Sandy Beach Church, was established in Pocahontas. The Pocahontas community, with its numerous watermen, access to

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waterways, and a sympathetic population, served as a hotbed for Gabriel's abortive slave insurrection in 1800 and as an important stop on the Underground Railroad throughout the antebellum era.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, an African American community had been established in the vicinity of Gill and Federal streets, just south of the present Farmer Street. This community expanded about a block northward along Perry Street up to Washington Avenue. Free African Americans were permitted to enter business and own property (Jackson 1927). Due to problems with flooding at its Pocahontas location, in 1818, the Sandy Beach Church purchased a lot on the east side of the southernmost block of Perry Street, just west of present-day Halifax Street in what later became the Halifax Triangle area (Gillfield Baptist Church n.d.). The First African Baptist Church moved to Petersburg from a site in Prince George County where the congregation first began meeting during the 1750s. The congregation organized in 1774 as a Baptist church and included free persons of color as well as enslaved African Americans in its membership. During the 1830s, they built their first church in Petersburg on the east side of Harrison Street just north of Fillmore. Despite state laws requiring all African American churches to be led by a white pastor and/or have a white person present for all gatherings and activities (Jackson 1927), both of these churches were effectively led by African American pastors. They stood at the center of African American cultural life in Petersburg. By the eve of the Civil War, the two churches had more than 1,700 members (Worsham n.d.).

An important member of the Gillfield Baptist Church and resident of the Halifax Triangle neighborhood during its early growth was Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who worked in his family's boating and shipping business. Roberts also apprenticed as a barber to William Colson, who owned a barber shop on Oak Street, just north of what became Halifax Triangle. Using Roberts' knowledge of shipping and Colson's business acumen, the two built a business as import-export merchants. In furtherance of his business, Roberts moved to Liberia in 1829 and, when it became an independent country in 1847, he was the first African American to be elected a nation's president (Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.).

### **Civil War in Petersburg**

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, Petersburg played a prominent role in the Confederate cause. As the city was initially set far behind the primary lines of battle and connected to Richmond and the rest of the state and region by railroads, the city served as a strategic supply center. The Army of Southern Virginia made its headquarters here for most of the war. The city also provided several infantry companies and artillery units to the Confederate Army, along with three troops of cavalry. Thousands of Confederate troops passed through the Halifax Triangle area on railroads and on foot, as did massive amounts of supplies. Troops and supplies had to be moved off the railroad at the depot along Washington Street and moved along city streets to the Pocahontas Depot, where there were reloaded for Richmond and beyond. Beginning in June 1864, Petersburg was slowly cut off from the rest of Virginia in what became known as the Siege of Petersburg.

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Petersburg's free African American community faced numerous challenges, including accusations of fomenting rebellion among enslaved people, being threatened with enslavement themselves, and otherwise being targeted for violence and harassment. In this environment, more than 300 free African American residents of the city volunteered to work on fortifications at Norfolk, Virginia, in April 1861 under the agreement they would work under their own leader (Jackson 1927). Later in the war, free people of color were forced to provide similar work at Norfolk.

During the Civil War, the park in the Poplar Lawn neighborhood, just to the east of the Gillfield/Halifax/Ravenscroft neighborhood was the location of a temporary hospital that first served Confederate soldiers and, later, Federal prisoners from the siege of the city. Following the Battle of the Crater on July 10, 1864, the former park became a retention camp for captured African American soldiers.

### **Reconstruction and the Growth of Halifax Triangle**

Emancipation of enslaved African Americans during the Civil War resulted in the growth of the city's already established African American neighborhoods. In the years immediately after the war, many freedmen from elsewhere throughout Virginia migrated to Petersburg for rebuilding, work on the river, and to escape the white control prevalent in more rural areas. They found a long-established African American community with numerous churches, businesses and institutions owned and run by free African Americans.

At the Gillfield Church, the newly appointed pastor, the Reverend Henry Williams, was the first to serve officially in this post since the abolition of 1830s laws that had required white oversight of African American congregations. Williams sought opportunities for improvement of not only his church, but the community at large. During his tenure as pastor beginning in 1865, Williams organized the Sabbath School, began "the agitation of colored teachers for the colored schools" in Petersburg, organized the Gillfield Baptist Beneficial Society to pay small sums in sick and death benefits, and was elected as a member of the Council of the City of Petersburg in 1870. In 1871 he raised funds to purchase additional adjoining property for the church, and between 1874 and 1878, oversaw the construction of a new, \$26,200 church building which remains in place today. When completed the new church and congregation were renamed the Gillfield Baptist Church (Gillfield Baptist Church n.d.).

Additional resources and services for the newly emancipated African American community were provided by the newly formed Freedmen's Bureau, established by the U.S. government as part of its agenda to implement Reconstruction policies. The Freedmen's Bureau helped to establish a variety of new facilities for freedmen in Petersburg, including a mental health hospital in December 1869, at Howard's Grove Hospital, a former Confederate unit.

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Access to formal education was a top priority among African Americans. Prior to the Civil War, Virginia had no statewide system of public schools. Literacy was forbidden for African Americans, and only families who could afford to pay tuition at private academies or private tutors had the ability to see their children education. Missionary and freedmen's aid societies subsidized building construction and teacher salaries throughout Virginia the state. The Freedmen's Bureau also provided limited school organization assistance from 1865 until 1870 (Butchart 2015). The Virginia General Assembly, mandated by the state's 1869 constitution to provide free public education for all children, enacted in July 1870 a uniform education law that established a statewide school system headed by a superintendent of public instruction and state and county boards of education. State funding based on population was not sufficient to cover costs, requiring municipalities to assess supplementary taxes. The 1869 constitution required that public schools be racially segregated, and black students typically received inferior buildings and supplies, shorter terms, and fewer instructors (Buck 1952) Despite these challenges, African American leaders promoted education as a means of realizing individual potential and strengthening communities.

In the 1870s, after Reconstruction formally ended, conservative whites retook power in the state and began to legislate racial segregation, prompting African Americans to continue to create their own businesses and community organizations in Petersburg. Dozens of new businesses were opened in the vicinity of the Gillfield and First Baptist Church neighborhood, resulting in the growth of an African American commercial district focused along Halifax Street (Beers 1877, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1885). A new market building was constructed at the location of Center Market (later called Halifax Triangle).

The neighborhood soon evolved into the regional center of African American commerce and culture. During this period, many new black-owned businesses were established, including grocers, fish and oyster dealers, restaurants, barbers, cobblers, attorneys, and funeral homes among others (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1885, City Directory 1888-89). In the local city directory these businesses were listed by the owner's name such as Peter Vaughan, the shoemaker, and J.A. Stillwell, the physician. The James M. Wilkerson & Co. was one of the earliest businesses to open in Halifax Triangle, opened by James M. Wilkerson Sr. in 1874. It continues to operate as the James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, Inc. and is one of the oldest black-owned firms in the United States.

While Halifax Triangle evolved into the African American civic center of Petersburg, the city as a whole remained a nexus of African American culture in the region. During the 1880s, a coalition of black and white Republicans and white Populists held power in the state legislature for several years that resulted in several major public institutions in Petersburg for the education and welfare of African Americans. One of these was Virginia State University, founded in 1882 in nearby Ettrick as the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, one of the first public and fully state-supported four-year historically black colleges and universities in the Mid-Atlantic. John Mercer Langston, a national political leader and former dean of Howard University's law department, was selected as the college's first president. In 1888, Langston was elected from

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Petersburg to the U.S. Congress on the Republican ticket, making him the first African American to be elected to Congress from Virginia.

### **Jim Crow Laws**

By the 1890s, whites' resistance to the growth of African American civil rights, businesses, institutions, and other developments escalated along with a continuing desire to maintain rigid separation of whites and African Americans in all aspects of life. The Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which recognized the "separate but equal doctrine" as legitimate under the Constitution, provided the legal basis for passage of a series of laws designed to restrict the rights of African Americans all across the U.S., and most notably in former Confederate states. "Jim Crow laws" as they were called, were state and local laws that mandated *de jure* racial segregation in all public facilities and accommodations. Many of these laws continued in force into the mid-twentieth century, when various landmark Supreme Court decisions, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, began to undermine their constitutionality, and were finally rendered moot in 1964 when the U. S. Civil Rights Act was passed.

The origin of the phrase "Jim Crow" has often been attributed to "Jump Jim Crow," a song-and-dance caricature of blacks performed by white actor Thomas D. Rice in blackface, which first surfaced in 1832 and was used to satirize President Andrew Jackson's populist policies. As a result of Rice's fame, "Jim Crow" by 1838 had become a pejorative expression meaning "Negro." Thus when southern legislatures passed laws of racial segregation directed against African Americans at the end of the nineteenth century, they became known as Jim Crow laws. As during the antebellum era, churches served as a center of refuge for African Americans during the Jim Crow era and were places where social connections were formed, and where acts of cultural and civic pride and community service were nourished and promoted (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

### **Twentieth Century Expansion**

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Halifax Triangle district continued to evolve with additional businesses, houses, churches, and other institutions (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1903, 1908, 1915). Halifax Triangle claimed the largest concentrations of black-owned businesses in Petersburg during this time. The district was home to black-owned restaurants, clubs, doctor's offices, schools, and a variety of other businesses. For example, near the triangle alone were approximately four pool rooms and three black-owned halls including the Masonic Hall, Mosaic Templar Hall, and Wilkerson's Hall (City Directory 1924).

The Petersburg New Market (formerly the Center Market) continued to serve as the focal point of the district where merchants, customers, and residents of the area would exchange goods and services, mingle, and socialize. Some prominent establishments in the district included the Club Chatterbox, Wyche's Confectionary, Wyche's School of Childhood Kindergarten and Daycare,



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J&B's Confectionary, A&P Bakery, Becky's Coffee Shop, Owen's Cleaning and Tailoring, O.P. Hare Drug Store, Farley's Restaurant, Halo Grace Dramatic Club, and Idle Hour Theatre (Luqman-Dawson 2008; City Directories 1924, 1937, 1941; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1915). One of the most prominent establishments was the Rialto Theatre (no longer extant), designed by African-American architect Charles T. Russell and completed in 1923. The Rialto operated as a movie theatre and music hall and over the years, hosted a number of famous acts, and it was said that "all of the greatest black performers played there" (Willoughby 2010).

In 1936, Professor Luther P. Jackson of Virginia State College began the Petersburg Negro Business Association to encourage the patronage of Petersburg's black-owned businesses and to promote good and effective business practices among black storeowners (Luqman-Dawson 2008). The association led to and fostered additional growth of commerce in Halifax Triangle over the ensuing decades (City Directory 1937, 1941).

During the mid-twentieth century, U.S. Route 1, a major north-south highway at the time that connected Miami, Florida, to Fort Kent, Maine, was configured along the district's northern edge. Through Virginia, the route connected the major cities located along the fall line including Richmond, Fredericksburg, Alexandria, and Petersburg. Within Petersburg, the route follows Washington Street, which therefore became a primary commercial corridor during the 1950s and a number of new commercial buildings and shopping centers, serving both the white and African American communities, developed along its course.

In 1955, the narrow row-style commercial buildings that had characterized much of the district's storefronts until this point were supplemented with a large, modern commercial building. That year, a large Atlantic Coast Line Railroad freight depot that stretched along the south side of Sycamore Street from Union just north of the Halifax Triangle was torn down to make room for a new, \$1.5 million multi-tenant shopping center. Early occupants included J.C. Penny, Colonial Stores, W.T. Grant Co. Department Store, and Three Sisters' women's clothier; some of these companies moved from previous locations further north on Sycamore Street (Willoughby 2010; City Directory 1960).

### **Civil Rights Movement**

Although businesses, churches, and other organizations within the African American community were thriving in the mid-twentieth century, Petersburg and much of the nation continued to be segregated. With many African Americans having served the nation in both World War I and World War II, in the postwar years they pressed for social justice, an end to segregation and restoration of voting power. Even after the Great Migration that started in the early twentieth century and continued for decades as blacks moved from rural southern states to jobs and cities in northern states, Petersburg's population was 47 percent African American in 1960; however those citizens were barred from free use of public spaces and facilities. Major black churches, such as First Baptist and Gillfield Baptist, both in the Halifax Triangle area, formed the moral

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center of the growing Civil Rights movement in Petersburg, which gained strength and prominence in the 1950s.

When Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker arrived in Petersburg in 1953 to become the new pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church, he described Petersburg as “the most segregated town in Virginia, with inequality in poll taxes, unfair testing, and intimidation all used to keep blacks from registering to vote.” A native of Massachusetts, Walker grew up in New Jersey, and came to Richmond, Virginia, as a young adult. He completed a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and physics at Virginia Union University, a historic African American school with roots that extended back to Reconstruction. Walker next earned a master’s degree at this school and during this time, he befriended Martin Luther King Jr., who also was in divinity school in Pennsylvania at the time (Hylton 2017; Lawing 2010).

Once in Petersburg, Walker became a close friend to Vernon Johns, who had preceded King as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. A native of Prince Edward County, Virginia, Johns had moved to Petersburg because his wife, Altona Trent Johns, had begun to teach music at Virginia State University. A polymath and autodidact, Johns had graduated from Oberlin Seminary in 1918 then attended the University of Chicago’s Graduate School of Theology. Johns’ peripatetic career took him to West Virginia, Alabama, Maryland, and Lynchburg, Virginia. Known for his fiery rhetoric, John was invited to speak at colleges and churches across the country. Although he did not hold a leadership role in any of the civil rights organizations of the 1950s-1960s, Johns served as a mentor to Walker, King, and Ralph D. Abernathy. From 1955-1960, Johns served as the director of the Maryland Baptist Center and was active in Farm and City Enterprises, Inc., a cooperative that enabled farmers to sell their goods directly to consumers (Momodu 2017). In Petersburg, Johns preached and sold produce raised at his family’s Prince Edward County farm from a location at the corner of Liberty and Halifax streets, just south of the Halifax Triangle, where he did not hesitate to speak his views

In 1957, Walker participated in the founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an important force for leadership of the Civil Rights movement. Walker also served as President of the local branch of the NAACP and founded the Petersburg Improvement Association (PIA), modeled on the Montgomery Improvement Association in Alabama (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

In 1960 Walker helped to organize one of Petersburg’s most recognized and pivotal protests when he, the Rev. Milton Reid of First Baptist Church, and the Rev. R. G. Williams of Zion Baptist, along with 140 others, mostly students from Peabody High School and Virginia State University, entered the city public library through the main entrance that was reserved for whites only, and occupied all of the available seats. As a result, the library was closed for four days, and city council, despite pleas to end segregation at the library, passed a strict anti-trespassing ordinance to discourage further protests. A week later, a smaller group of African American protestors returned to the library, resulting in eleven of them being taken to jail for several days. On the evening of March 9, 1960, over 1,400 people gathered at Zion Baptist Church to honor

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the protestors who were just released and to hear a telegram from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. about the event. That night, over \$1,115 was raised in support of the library protestors and plans were made for further protests. Although it was not announced until the meeting's end, the church received six bomb threats during the course of the night (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

In June 1960, King met with Walker at the latter's office in Gillfield Church to ask Walker to take the position of Executive Director of the SCLC. Walker accepted and, with the Civil Rights movement in full swing in Petersburg, he left the city to become a national civil rights leader and serve as the chief of staff for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Following the library sit-in and the departure of Dr. Walker, the PIA became the primary mechanism for organized protests in Petersburg, including at sites such as the Blue Bird Theatre, Spiro's Department Store, The Century Theatre, Trailways Bus Station (NRHP 2015), and area lunch counters. Walker went on to plan the Albany and Birmingham, Alabama, campaigns, as well as the Children's March in Birmingham and the 1963 March on Washington. He visited King, who had been jailed in Birmingham, and secreted out King's hand-scrawled essay, typed it, and saw it published as the landmark "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

Back in Petersburg, on February 23, 1960, 20 African American students, mostly from Peabody High School (documented as the first public black high school in Virginia), took seats and asked for service at the lunch counter of S.S. Kresge Company, a popular Petersburg store. Smaller groups took part in similar lunch counter sit-ins at McClellans and W.T. Grant Store in town. None were arrested; however all three stores temporarily closed their lunch counters and the event received widespread attention (Luqman-Dawson 2008). An additional lunch counter sit-in in the Petersburg bus terminal in 1960 led to an agreement by the president of the Bus Terminal Restaurants with the PIA to desegregate lunch counters in Petersburg and several other cities. In 1964, the Petersburg Trailways bus station (NRHP 2015) was the third stop for Freedom Riders, who had left Washington D.C. that morning and pledged to travel by bus through all the southern states in a demonstration for integration of both bus stations and the buses themselves. Although met with violent counter demonstrations farther south, the Freedom Rides continued through the summer of 1964. In response, many privately owned bus companies ceased enforcing segregation regardless of local or state laws to the contrary. Meanwhile, Petersburg's City Council accepted the recommendation of a biracial committee to end segregation in all of Petersburg's retail establishments.

Another point of protest was to desegregate public schools and the educational system. Virginia officials at the top levels resisted school integration and initiated the program of so-called "Massive Resistance," in resistance to the Supreme Court's 1954 landmark decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1959, the most extreme example of Massive Resistance came with the school board of Prince Edward County choosing to close public schools rather than integrate; for five years, there were no public schools operating anywhere in the county (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

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Through the prolonged and concerted efforts of activists, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the U.S. Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964. The act outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and by facilities that served the general public.

The law had a profound effect from the national level down to the local level. That same year, Halifax Triangle business owner Joseph Owens became the first African American elected to Petersburg City Council since the Reconstruction era (Luqman-Dawson 2008). Less than a decade later, under a newly implemented ward voting system, Petersburg elected its first majority black city council on June 12, 1973. That night, many of the community's African American residents held a victory celebration at First Baptist Church in Halifax Triangle.

### **Economic Downturn in the Second Half of the 20th Century**

Although in 1958 Petersburg was named an "All American City" for its quality of life, the ensuing decades brought a period of economic decline and struggles for much of the city of Petersburg, particularly in urban neighborhoods such as Halifax Triangle. The limitations of Petersburg's small geographic area and proximity to Richmond were structural problems which hampered it in adapting to major economic changes in the second half of the twentieth century. Suburban expansion and "white-flight" exacerbated by racial tensions acted to further pull people and jobs from the city throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970, the percentage of Petersburg's population made up of African Americans increased to 55.2 percent, reached 61 percent in 1980 and 72 percent in 1990.

Many middle-class families moved to newer housing in the suburbs and to nearby Richmond, where the economy was expanding with jobs in fields of financial and retail services. Some companies moved industrial jobs to states further south, where wages were lower, or out of the country altogether. With an insufficient number of jobs and decreasing middle-class population, city progress slowed.

The declining economy increased the pressure of competition and racial tensions. These flared from 1968 to 1980. Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, Petersburg was the first city to designate his birthday as a holiday, an observance that is now a national holiday. Regional tensions were heightened by the city's two large annexations of adjacent portions of Dinwiddie and Prince George counties in the early 1970s that increased the city's white population, whose voting block then became dominant. Despite the large addition of suburban school-age children, a downward trend in public school enrollment continued.

Throughout the period, the Halifax Triangle neighborhood fell on hard financial times. Many of the businesses that formerly operated shuttered their shops and many buildings were demolished out of neglect or through condemnation. Local city directories clearly depict the closing of

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businesses and exodus of individuals; in 1960 there were 26 vacant buildings, by 1971 there were 33.

During the late 1970s transportation planners decided to widen and reconfigure portions of Wythe Street to serve as part of U.S. 1 to avoid construction of a bypass. Washington Street could no longer handle the traffic volume alone, so it was transitioned to serve strictly as south-bound lanes while Wythe Street, a block to the south, was to serve north-bound traffic. In 1978, the Virginia Department of Transportation constructed the Washington Street bridge over I-95 and converted Washington and Wythe streets into one-way corridors. Wythe was extended west from Sycamore Street to connect with a series of streets west of Market Street. The project also included demolition of a densely-built commercial block that dated to before the Civil War. Two sections of Wythe Street did not connect within the district, so the Halifax Triangle area and the historically African American commercial district south of Washington and Wythe streets were cut off from the main body of Petersburg's downtown. The planning process for the road system was indicative of the continued strain in race relations at the time and the failure to consult with minority residents in transportation decisions. The loss of building fabric is illustrated through comparison of historic aerials. By the early 1990s, buildings that once lined the bustling streets of The Avenue had been replaced with empty lots.

Struggles have continued for the neighborhood through the present-day, at which time there remain only a handful of operating businesses in the district. Despite the continued downward spiral, residents' awareness of the history and significance of the neighborhood remains strong and a variety of efforts have been undertaken to recognize its importance to the African American community and Petersburg in general.

Since 2006, the Triangle/Petersburg Center for Development and Downtown Petersburg, Inc., have held several events in Halifax Triangle to raise awareness of the Triangle and its historic importance, including a tree lighting, a flag raising and a series of summer music festivals. One of the most recognized is the *Petersburg Music Festival On The Avenue*, at first known as the Halifax Jazz and Blues Festival, put on to re-create a vibrant public space which showcases amazing local talent and brings music and life back to the neighborhood (Petersburg Center for Development Inc. 2015).

In 2016, the city approved a proposed redevelopment plan for the Halifax Triangle area which would include a 36-unit apartment complex, 1,500 square feet of retail space and a redesigned triangle complete with a public park. Some of the proposed redevelopment plans to utilize tax credits through the historic rehabilitation of the neighborhood's buildings and it is hoped that listing the district in the National Register will lead to further reuse and preservation of the district's historic buildings.

**Significance: Ethnic Heritage: African American**

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The significance of the Halifax Triangle Historic District for its role in the African American heritage of Petersburg is intrinsic and well recognized. As early as the eighteenth century, Petersburg had one of the largest urban populations of free African Americans not just in Virginia, but in the nation. At first, free African Americans lived all over Petersburg. But by the second decade of the nineteenth century, what would become the Halifax Triangle neighborhood began to evolve as a center of African American population and culture. During this time and up through the Civil War, the neighborhood and the church played an important role in the Underground Railroad network through activists such as Reverend Henry Williams, the pastor of Gillfield Church (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

It was in the years following emancipation, however, that the Halifax Triangle gained prominence as a center of African American culture and commerce, much as a result of whites' rejection of Reconstruction, and the disjointed society it created. Because opportunities for dining, shopping, and going about everyday commerce in white-owned businesses was largely restricted or even banned, black residents formed a parallel society with their own businesses, institutions, and social networks. While Petersburg's black community remained dispersed around the city in such residential neighborhoods as Pocahontas Island, Gillfield, and Delectable Heights; Halifax Triangle was the one neighborhood that was collective and cohesive with not just houses, but businesses, churches, schools, and other institutions.

Halifax Triangle continued to evolve through the first half of the twentieth century, and grew stronger and more unified as a result of restrictive policies created by Jim Crow laws and "separate but equal" ordinances. As such, the neighborhood assumed a pivotal role during the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Overall, Petersburg played an important role in the national civil rights fight as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spent time in the city on several occasions and the large and organized African American population of the city was able to stage a number of planned protests. The Halifax Triangle neighborhood in particular played a significant role in the movement as several prominent local organizers lived, worked, or preached there. One of the most prominent was Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, the pastor of Gillfield Church whom King personally coordinated with and eventually recruited for the national Civil Rights movement (Luqman-Dawson 2008). Other pastors and leaders of churches in the Halifax Triangle area were also active and instrumental in the Civil Rights drive, including Rev. Robert G Williams, pastor of Zion Baptist Church, who became the President of the PIA after Dr. Walker left Petersburg to join Dr. King. Dr. Milton A. Reid, who came to Petersburg in 1957 to serve as pastor of the First Baptist Church, co-founded the statewide branch of the SCLC and started SCLC branches in 22 counties and cities throughout Virginia. Additionally, the Bland Funeral Home in Halifax Triangle served as a meeting place for the SCLC throughout the Civil Rights movement (Luqman-Dawson 2008). There is no one place or neighborhood in Petersburg with stronger ties to the Civil Rights movement than Halifax Triangle; thus it remains one of the most culturally important sites in the city today.

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### **Significance: Commerce**

The Halifax Triangle Historic District also represents a significant aspect of commercial history in the City of Petersburg, particularly in the area of African American commerce. For roughly a century from emancipation following the Civil War through the 1960s, Petersburg's largest concentration of black-owned businesses was located within Halifax Triangle. The district was home to African American-owned groceries and markets, restaurants, clubs, doctors' offices, tradesmen, and a variety of other endeavors. The "New" Petersburg Market located on the Triangle that served Southside farmers traveling up the Boydton Plank Road (Halifax Street locally), in conjunction with the many other groceries, bakeries, restaurants, and stores set on the surrounding blocks, served as an important place for residents to exchange goods and services, mingle, socialize, and keep up with the news and current events. One of the most notable businesses in Halifax Triangle that began in the early years of emancipation and Reconstruction, is the J.M. Wilkerson Funeral home. Established in 1874, it remains today as the oldest continuously operating black-owned business in Virginia (Luqman-Dawson 2008).

The district also included a variety of entertainment venues, one of the most prominent of which was the Rialto Theatre designed by Chares T. Russel, a noted African American architect, and completed in 1923. The Rialto hosted many African American celebrities and legends including James Brown, Sam Cooke, Jerry Butler, Chuck Berry, Chubby Checker, The Shirelles, The Mills Brothers, Jack Johnson (the first black boxing champion), and many others. Representative of its reputation, a number of contemporary white Hollywood celebrities such as John Wayne and Joseph Cotton were also visitors to the Rialto Theater (Cinema Treasures n.d.). The long-vacant Rialto Theatre was declared structurally unsafe and demolished in January 2015.

Growth of commerce in the district and across Petersburg was further supported in 1936, when Professor Luther P. Jackson of Virginia State College began the Petersburg Negro Business Association to encourage the patronage of Petersburg's black-owned businesses and to promote good and effective business practices among black storeowners (Luqman-Dawson 2008). The association led to and fostered growth of commerce in Halifax Triangle throughout the 1940s and 1950s, when the district was at its peak of development.

Unfortunately the district fell on hard times in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of a number of economic and social factors, which lead to many of the businesses closing or moving elsewhere. Despite the downturn, the district continues to represent this significant period of African American commerce through its buildings, thoroughfares, and remaining businesses.

### **Significance: Social History**

The Halifax Triangle is significant in the area of Social History for its association with institutions, particularly churches, that played pivotal roles in the improvement of daily life within the district. During the antebellum era, such places primarily consisted of churches, although these places had limited autonomy prior to the Civil War. Many of the African

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American churches within the district were established well over a century ago, with some congregations tracing their history back more than 200 years. One church attests to having the earliest black congregation in the nation. Many of the congregations within the district were tested over time, particularly following the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831, which resulted in the passage of state laws prohibiting the religious gathering of African Americans, free or slave, without the presence of a white person. For nearly all black churches in Virginia, this meant relinquishing their own religious leaders for white pastors. However, amidst these restrictions, African American churches continued to meet and to form. Churches provided opportunities for cultural, social, and religious expression in a time and place where such opportunities were painfully few. “Negro spirituals” are just one example of the considerable and enduring cultural contributions associated with antebellum African American religious practices. Interpretations of scripture also allowed African Americans to believe in a time and place where justice would reign and even provided guidance for how a road to freedom could be traveled. For this reason, African Americans frequently commingled political and spiritual symbols, such as celebrating the end of slavery as a day of Jubilee (Montgomery 2016).

Following the Civil War, the religious restrictions against African Americans were discontinued and the return to leadership of black pastors brought about a resurgence and emboldening of the African American churches (Luqman-Dawson 2008). Cultural expressions that may have been cloaked in ambiguity during the antebellum era now were freely expressed as African Americans developed their own distinctive worship practices without being subject to whites’ interference or observation, including incorporation of music and dance in services, scriptural interpretations, delivery of sermons, and approaches to educational or training requirements for pastors and ministers. During Reconstruction, black churches also were centers for voter registration drives and other forms of political activism. From these efforts sprang “Union Leagues,” which were dedicated to mobilizing black voters during Reconstruction. Whites’ opposition to such activism often resulted in violent reprisals and, with the legitimizing of Jim Crow laws in the 1890s, rolled back many of the advances made by African Americans in the post-Civil War years. African American churches, however, remained both cultural and moral centers during segregation and provided fertile ground for new generations of activists during the twentieth century (Montgomery 2016). When the Civil Rights movement gained momentum in the 1950s, many of Petersburg’s African American churches and pastors were centers of activism and leadership in the community and at large. During Sunday service, updates and information on protests and other events were disseminated, and members received direction, strength, and inspiration (Luqman-Dawson 2008). Today, these churches continue to be focal points of community pride and spirit. Their congregations help to provide community service such as child care, school, and other youth programs to neighborhood residents.

The first church established in the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Historic District, and the second-oldest African American church in Petersburg, was the Gillfield Baptist Church, which moved to the neighborhood from Pocahontas Island in 1819 (Willoughby 2010). The church began in Prince George in 1788 as an integrated church known as the Davenport Church. The congregation separated and moved to the Pocahontas neighborhood of Petersburg in 1800. The



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congregation took the name “the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of Petersburg.” In 1818-1819, the church purchased property in the suburb of Gillfield and the congregation moved to its present location in what would become Halifax Triangle. That church later formed the moral center for the Civil Rights movement in Petersburg under then-pastor Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker. Walker was a personal friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and together, they co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). During his tenure at Gillfield Baptist Church, Walker helped organize and took part in a number of civil rights protests around the city.

Another early church in the district, which claims the status as being the earliest black congregation in the United States, is the First African Baptist Church. Formed on a plantation in Prince George County in 1774, the members of the congregation who were free relocated the church to Petersburg in 1820 where there was a large free black population. The church operated at several locations in town, but by 1863, was at its present location in Halifax Triangle on Harrison Street (Willoughby 2010). In 1865 there were as many as 1,700 congregants and membership grew to 3,600 by 1883. The First Baptist Church was also active during the Civil Rights movement, hosting meetings, helping to coordinate and organize protests, and providing support and relief for activists.

Other prominent African American churches located within the Halifax Triangle Historic District include the Second Baptist Church, which began in 1854. At first the church was located on Byrne Street and called Byrne Street Baptist Church; however it was renamed the Second Baptist Church when the church moved to the corner of Sycamore and Halifax in the late nineteenth century. The Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, located on the north side of Halifax between Sycamore and South Union Street, was present by 1885. The Tabernacle Baptist church was founded “as a ‘holy hill’ of God” in 1890 and the First Ebenezer Baptist Church, which opened in the first decade of the twentieth century on the northwest side of Halifax Street between Liberty and Gill Streets, later served (beginning in 1945) as the location of the newly founded Holy Family Catholic Church, organized for the black Catholic citizens of Petersburg.

Also located within the Halifax Triangle Historic District is the Washington Street Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP 1980), now the Washington Street United Methodist Church, which was built in 1842 and at first served a white congregation.

### **Significance: Architecture**

The Halifax Triangle Historic District is significant for its buildings and architecture that represent the various periods of development and prosperity in the district, as well as the types of houses, businesses, and institutions that have been historically located there. Overall, the district does not contain the highest concentration of architecturally stunning properties or the best examples of particular styles; however it retains a good and diverse representative sampling of

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the form, type, and style of buildings that characterized the neighborhood as a distinct African American enclave from the mid-nineteenth century through the present day.

While many of the extant buildings reflect simpler vernacular forms and styles prevalent during their period of construction, the district also retains a number of more architecturally distinct buildings. These include architect-designed “high-style” commercial and industrial buildings in addition to the neighborhood’s churches, which remain as some of the most ornate and diverse architectural works in the district. Several of the district’s churches also remain as the earliest extant buildings within the district.

The earliest church in the district, the individually listed Washington Street Methodist Church, completed in 1842, has been recognized as one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the city, with a massive Greek Doric pedimented tetrastyle portico and complementing pedimented wings attached in 1922. Another early church, the Market Street Methodist Episcopal Church, was completed in 1858 and exhibits another popular mid-nineteenth century style, the Gothic Revival. Designed by Petersburg architect R. A. Machen (who later moved to Raleigh, North Carolina), the building is an excellent example of the style through both its exterior and interior details. It originally had a pointed steeple, removed after 1903, but it retains its metal pinnacles as well as a rectilinear cast-iron fence. Several of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century churches exhibit the popular Romanesque Revival style, or a hybrid of it with Gothic details, such as the Gillfield Baptist Church. When completed in 1878, Gillfield was the largest church in the city, seating 1,600. The architecturally unusual church makes use of the Romanesque round-arched style and was the city’s first to feature two asymmetrical towers, one of which is octagonal and provided with Gothic battlements. Also representing this style is the Trinity Missionary Baptist Church, built in 1905. The building’s three-bay façade consists of a central bay flanked by two slightly projecting bays, one of which is topped by a belfry. A molded brick cornice above a corbeled frieze and rusticated concrete trim on the belfry ornament the building. Additional Romanesque Revival churches include the Zion Baptist Church, which features a central nave plan with a front gable flanked by corner towers with a crenellated parapet; as well as the First Baptist Church with a central belfry, octagonal corner turrets, and crenellated cornice.

Interestingly, one private dwelling in the district, built circa 1870, also reflects the popular Gothic influence through a Carpenter Gothic palette. The house is an excellent example of the style with its board-and-batten covered exterior, a crenellated frieze, roof brackets, diamond vents, and molded cornice (223 South Harrison Street/ VDHR# 123-0094-0035).

Numerous Italianate style buildings ranging from high-style to subtly influenced. Commercial buildings are located along the north side of Halifax Street. Particularly the building at the corner of Halifax and Wythe Street is an excellent example of Italianate architecture as applied to commercial buildings with a heavy, compound bracketed cornice, arched bays, and decorative window hoods. Other more vernacular commercial buildings from this time also reflect Italianate influences with simple arched windows and molded cornices.

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The Mission style is a popular early-twentieth-century style represented in the district with two row-style commercial buildings on the south side of Halifax Street featuring tiled pent roofs and stepped parapets.

The mid-twentieth century is represented in the district with several excellent examples of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and later International style as applied to commercial buildings. An Art Deco-influenced filling station at the corner of Wythe and Sycamore Streets retains its characteristic clipped corner with plate glass storefront windows and horizontal banding, while the Art Moderne Petersburg Trailways Bus Station (NRHP 2015) on Washington Street is one of the finest examples of the style in Petersburg. The building exhibits a recessed entry with curved brick corners, sheltered by a bowed aluminum hood topped by a neon-illuminated sign. Another slightly more subdued Moderne building is the adjacent grocery store with a characteristic tall entry fin over the front door. Several International style buildings remain in the district including the Washington Street shopping center with buff brick exterior, plate glass storefronts, terrazzo entry stoops, and geometric embellishments. A medical office building on Sycamore Street exhibits the style with a gray brick exterior, full-height windows, and a geometric brise-soleil on the façade.

Through these buildings, as well as the numerous other more vernacular buildings, the district's architectural resources continue to evoke the commercial, industrial, residential, and institutional history of the Halifax Triangle neighborhood and the role it played in the African American heritage of Petersburg from the mid-nineteenth century through the present day.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- 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: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA; City of Petersburg, VA

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** VDHR File #123-5494

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ~40

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

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**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

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

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.134150  | Longitude: -77.24196  |
| 2. Latitude: 37.133726  | Longitude: -77.24025  |
| 3. Latitude: 37.133766  | Longitude: -77.235789 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.133492  | Longitude: -77.235722 |
| 5. Latitude: 37.133181  | Longitude: -77.241373 |
| 6. Latitude: 37.132598  | Longitude: -77.241111 |
| 7. Latitude: 37.132543  | Longitude: -77.241347 |
| 8. Latitude: 37.132227  | Longitude: -77.241242 |
| 9. Latitude: 37.132196  | Longitude: -77.241407 |
| 10. Latitude: 37.132373 | Longitude: -77.241479 |
| 11. Latitude: 37.132165 | Longitude: -77.242252 |
| 12. Latitude: 37.132229 | Longitude: -77.242870 |
| 13. Latitude: 37.132531 | Longitude: -77.242974 |
| 14. Latitude: 37.132638 | Longitude: -77.242018 |
| 15. Latitude: 37.132931 | Longitude: -77.241809 |
| 16. Latitude: 37.133502 | Longitude: -77.241585 |
| 17. Latitude: 37.133879 | Longitude: -77.241683 |

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

The Halifax Triangle Historic District is composed of portions of approximately 12 city blocks in Petersburg, Virginia. Beginning at the intersection of West Washington Street and South Union Street, the boundary follows the south side of Washington Street for approximately two-and-a-half blocks to 140 East Washington Street and then follows the edge of that property line and extends for two blocks to East Wythe Street. It then follows the south side of East Wythe Street east to South Jefferson Street and follows the west side of that street for one block. The boundary then follows the north side of Surry Lane for two blocks until the intersection with South Sycamore Street. It then continues in a generally straight path along the southern property line of 116 South Sycamore Street until it turns south along the rear property line of 105 Harrison Street. From there it follows the rear property lines of those parcels on the east side of Harrison Street for roughly a block and-a-half to 223 Harrison Street where it turns back towards Harrison Street itself and continues along the west side of the road to Liberty Street. It then extends along the north side of Liberty Street to include the First Baptist Church property at 236 Harrison Street before cutting back into the block and extending along the rear property lines of the remaining parcels along the north side of Liberty Street. It continues along this line for two blocks before crossing Halifax Street and extending around the property line of the Trinity Baptist Church at 233 Halifax Street. It then extends around the property line of the House of Restoration Church at 210 South Market Street before extending north along the northern edge of Halifax Street. At 131 Halifax Street, the boundary cuts into the block and extends

Halifax Triangle and Downtown  
Commercial Historic District

Petersburg, Virginia

Name of Property

County and State

along the rear property line of those parcels facing Halifax Street and continues along the south side of West Wythe Street before turning north along the rear property lines of 42 and 38 South Union Street. From there, it extends along the east side of South Union Street to the beginning. The true and correct historic boundaries are shown on the attached Sketch Map.

This boundary includes roughly 40 acres of land and the following tax parcels as recorded by the City of Petersburg: 022210006, 022220003, 022230016, 022220001, 022200001, 022240020, 022200002, 022240001, 022240022, 022230033, 022150016, 022160001, 022170002, 022180026, 022170003, 022180027, 022150027, 022180036, 022150029, 022060006, 022140002, 022130019, 022060011, 022060012, 022050010, 022060013, 022060009, 022130001, 022130017, 022070006, 022060016, 022100003, 022060017, 022070800, 022070003, 022060001, 022090001, 022080002, 011340001, 022100004, 022100006, 022130022, 022130002, 022130800, 022130020, 022140003, 022140016, 022140001, 022070007, 022070802, 022070008, 022070002, 022070001, 022070015, 022070014, 022070009, 022070011, 022070013, 022070801, 022080004, 022080005, 022080006, 022080003, 022080007, 022080001, 022080010, 022060004, 022060003, 022060005, 022150001, 022150002, 022150018, 022150017, 022150020, 022150022, 022150801, 022150026, 022150023, 022150025, 022150028, 022240003, 022240021, 022230014, 022230013, 022230001, 022230002, 022230003, 022230004, 022230005, 022230006, 022230007, 022230008, 022230009, 022230010, 022230011, 022230012, 022220007, 022220003, 022220003, 022220005, 022220004, 022220800, 022220002, 022050011, 022180025, 022180022, 022180028, 022180034, 022180033, 022180032, 022180030, 022180035, 022180023, 022200004, 022200005, 022200003, 022210004, 022210002, 022210003, 022210005, 022060015, 011340002, 011340003, 022060014, 022180029, 022230800, 022130021, 022150009, 023340002, 023340001.

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

The boundaries of the historic district are drawn to include the commercial and cultural areas of the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial neighborhoods that retain the highest concentration of intact resources associated with the district's areas of significance and that remain visually cohesive. Areas of extensive demolition and nonhistoric infill have been excluded from the district boundaries. A limited number of resources that were already included in another district were found to have clear and intrinsic historical ties and associations to the evolution of the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial areas and were therefore included in this district as well.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Robert J. Taylor, Jr.

organization: Dutton & Associates, LLC

street & number: 1115 Crowder Drive

city or town: Midlothian state: Virginia zip code: 23313



Halifax Triangle and Downtown  
Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

Petersburg, Virginia

County and State

telephone: 804-897-1960

date: July 2018

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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.)

### Photograph Log

Name of Property: Halifax Triangle Historic District

City or Vicinity: Petersburg

County: Independent City

State: Virginia

Photographer: Dara Friedberg (unless otherwise noted)

Photographs taken December 2015 through September 2016

Photo 1 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Commercial Buildings on North Side of Halifax Street, Facing Southwest

Photo 2 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Triangle Area, Facing North

Photo 3 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Commercial Buildings on South Side of Halifax Street, Facing Northeast

Photo 4 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Churches along Halifax Street, Facing Southwest

Photo 5 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Commercial Buildings on East Side of Sycamore Street, Facing Northeast

Photo 6 of 12: Representative Streetscape

Commercial Buildings on South Side of Washington Street, Facing Southwest

Photo 7 of 12: Commercial Building

105 Harrison Street, Facing East

Halifax Triangle and Downtown  
Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

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Photo 8 of 12: Representative Commercial Building  
203 Harrison Street, Facing Southeast

Photo 9 of 12: Representative Industrial Building  
29 Union Street, Facing Southeast

Photo 10 of 12: Representative Commercial Building  
Trailways Bus Station, Facing South

Photo 11 of 12: Representative Commercial Building  
105 Sycamore Street, Facing South

Photo 12 of 12: Representative Office Building  
116 Sycamore Street, Facing West/Southwest

**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.

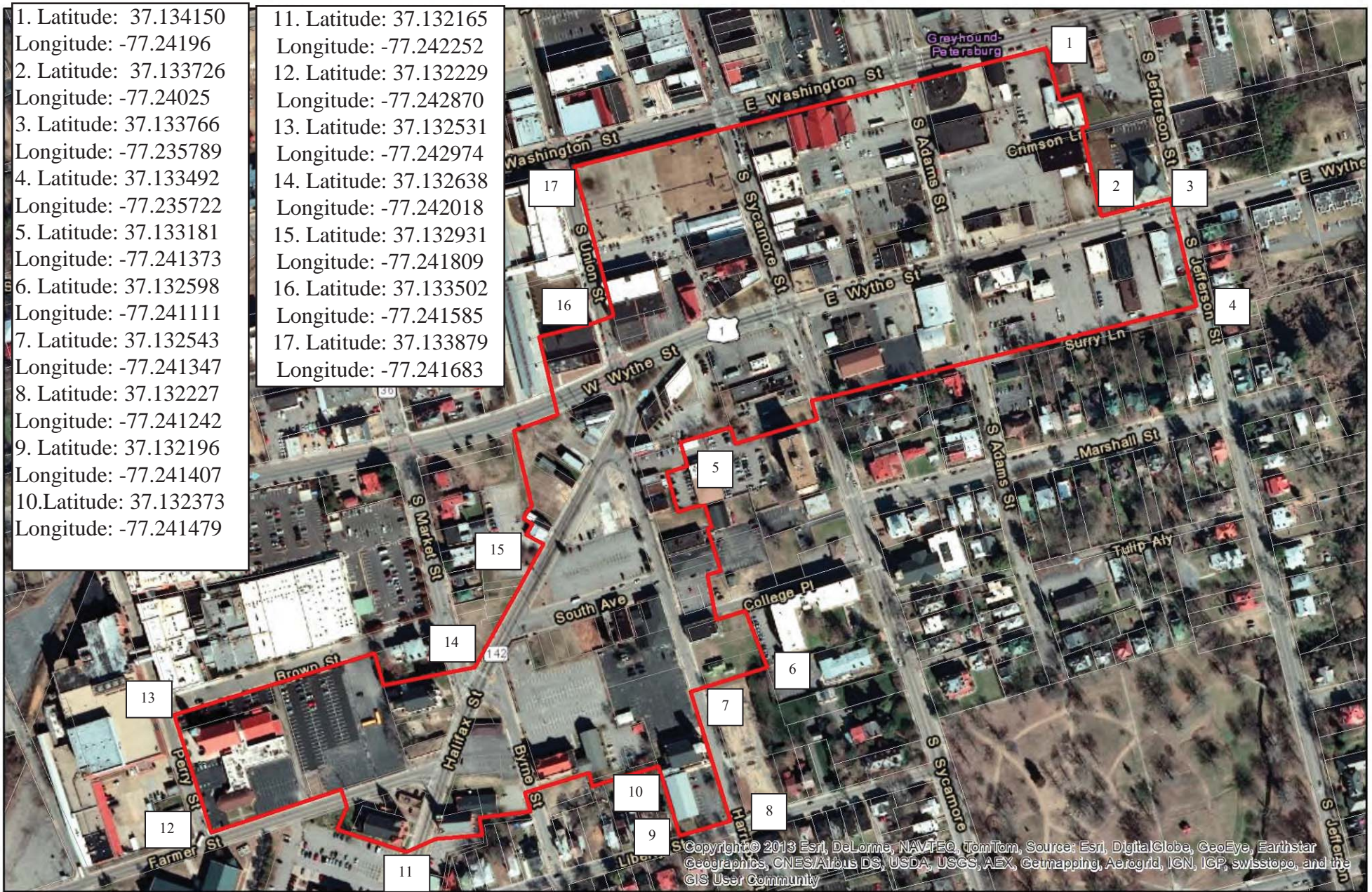
Halifax Triangle and Downtown  
Commercial Historic District  
Name of Property

Petersburg, Virginia  
County and State

### Historic Photograph



Rendition Streetscape of Halifax Street at The Triangle, Facing Northeast, Circa 1920  
Unknown Artist. Source: [African Americans of Petersburg](#). Amina Luqman-Dawson






1. Latitude: 37.134150  
Longitude: -77.24196  
2. Latitude: 37.133726  
Longitude: -77.24025  
3. Latitude: 37.133766  
Longitude: -77.235789  
4. Latitude: 37.133492  
Longitude: -77.235722  
5. Latitude: 37.133181  
Longitude: -77.241373  
6. Latitude: 37.132598  
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7. Latitude: 37.132543  
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8. Latitude: 37.132227  
Longitude: -77.241242  
9. Latitude: 37.132196  
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10. Latitude: 37.132373  
Longitude: -77.241479

11. Latitude: 37.132165  
Longitude: -77.242252  
12. Latitude: 37.132229  
Longitude: -77.242870  
13. Latitude: 37.132531  
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14. Latitude: 37.132638  
Longitude: -77.242018  
15. Latitude: 37.132931  
Longitude: -77.241809  
16. Latitude: 37.133502  
Longitude: -77.241585  
17. Latitude: 37.133879  
Longitude: -77.241683

**LOCATION MAP**

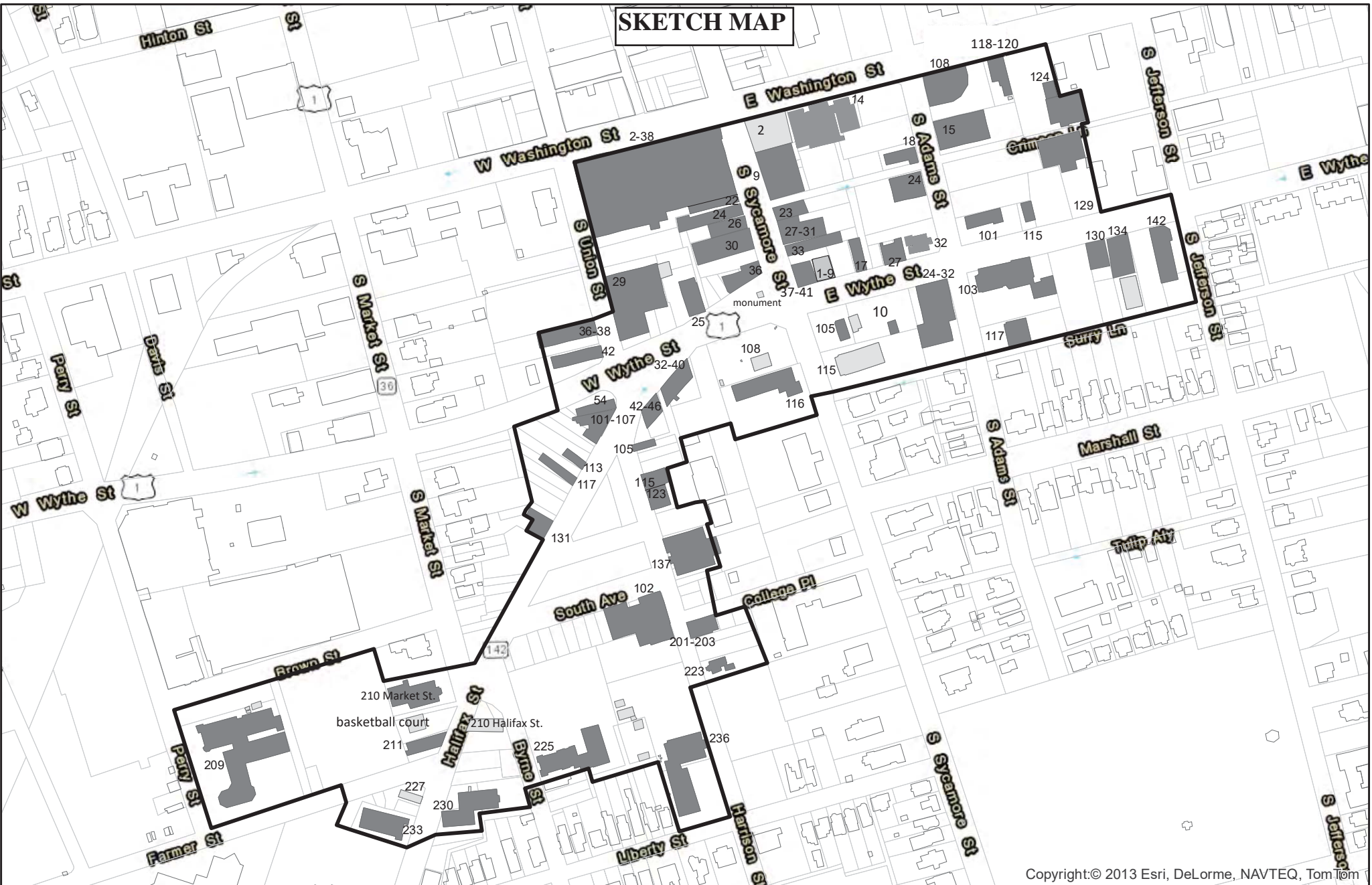
Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District  
City of Petersburg, VA  
DHR No. 123-5494

-  Historic District Boundary
-  District\_Parcels
-  District Boundary Vertices  
(Match Coordinates provided in Section 10)



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
**SKETCH MAP**

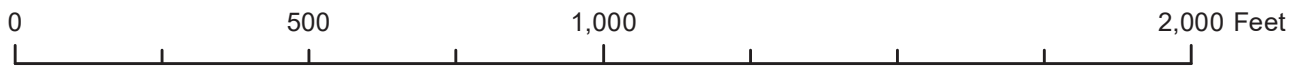


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**Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial  
Historic District, City of Petersburg, VA  
VDHR # 123-5494**


Resources are keyed to  
map by street number

-  Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing
-  Noncontributing
-  Property Parcels





 Historic District Boundary

 Photo Location and Direction

**Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial  
Historic District  
VDHR # 123-5494  
City of Petersburg, VA**

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 100002886

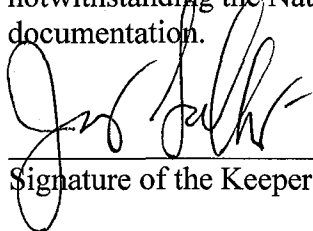
Date Listed: 2/12/2019

Property Name: Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District

County: Petersburg (Independent City)

State: VA

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

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

2-12-2019

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

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

#### Section 5: Resource Count

The resource count is amended to include 50 Contributing Buildings/50 Total Contributing Resources and 14 noncontributing Buildings/20 total noncontributing resources

#### Section 7: Inventory

The property at **115 S. Sycamore, the Masonic Hall, Contributes** to the district. Despite it being constructed after the period of significance, the building and more importantly the organization have a direct association with the areas of significance.

The single dwelling at **108 S. Sycamore**, a noncontributing resource, is not extant and is dropped from the resource count.

\_\_\_\_\_  
The Virginia State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

#### **DISTRIBUTION:**

**National Register property file**  
**Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**