

Oct. 1990)

VLR-6/14/00 NRHP-7/5/01

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in HOW to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**I. Name of Property**

historic name **CARY STREET PARK AND SHOP CENTER**  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ **VDHR File No. 127-0438**  
(Common name: **cary Court Shopping Center**)

**2. Location**

street & number **3120- 3158 West Cary Street**  
city or town **City of Richmond** vicinity **N/A** state **Virginia**  
code **VA** county (**Independent city**) city code **760** zip code **23223**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*[Signature]* \_\_\_\_\_ *[Date]* \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	buildings
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	objects
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

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

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **COMMERCE** Sub: **DEPARTMENT STORES**  
**COMMERCE** Sub: **SPECIALITY STORES**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **COMMERCE** Sub: **SPECIALITY STORES**

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

**Art Deco**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **granite; brick**  
walls **brick; limestone/ marble veneer**  
roof **asphalt; EDPM**  
other

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**ARCHITECTURE**  
**COMMERCE**

- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of 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.

**Period of Significance**

1938-1951

**Significant Dates**

1938; 1949

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder**

**Julian H. Dillon, builder**

**Henry Carl Messerschmidt, architect**

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

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

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

**Name of repository:** The Virginia State Library; Virginia Historical Society

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property**                      **approximately 2.14 acres**

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	1	18	280760	4158990		2
	3			4		

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title                      **Nancy Kraus, architectural historian, and Robert S. Mills, A.I.A.**  
organization **Commonwealth Architects**                      date                      **March 10, 2000**  
street & number      **101 Shockoe Slip**                      telephone      **(804) 648-5040 x115**  
city or town **Richmond**                      state **VA**                      zip code      **23219**

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

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**Property Owner**

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

name/title                      **Sauer Properties, Inc.**                      (Contact: **Bradford G. Sauer**)  
street & number      **2000 West Broad Street**                      telephone      **(804) 288-1407**  
city or town **Richmond**                      state      **VA**                      zip code      **23220**

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia**

### **SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

**Cary Street Park and Shop Center** at 3120-3158 West Cary Street in Richmond, Virginia, is a benchmark in the development of planned retail complexes. The two-acre shopping complex is in the shape of an elongated "U." The original 1938 rectangular units form the base of the "U," and two later wings on the west and east form the sides. A prominent parking area fills the open space in front of the shopping center along Cary Street. Now encompassing seventeen storefront units, the shopping center is constructed of brick, granite, limestone and marble veneer. Essentially one-story, the low horizontal plane of the shopping center is dominated visually by an uninterrupted string of large modern aluminum and glass doors and commercial storefront windows. A stepped limestone parapet visually demarcates the storefront units at the center of the complex. Further vertical expression is created by raised piers that extend upward from the central parapet wall. A low, projecting stucco canopy, which hides an historic stepped Art Deco canopy and pressed-tin cornice, is a salient street-side feature of the center.

The architecture displays a refined level of design reflected in handsome masonry and ornamentation combining elements of both the International and Art Deco styles. The complex retains a remarkable degree of the original fabric although modifications made in 1960 and 1977 have obscured, but not destroyed, the original work. In spite of the alterations and modifications to the interiors of the stores, the shopping center is a fine example of the "Park and Shop" paradigm for suburban retail complexes that first appeared in the 1930s. The asphalt parking lot in front of the complex is an important part of the "park and shop" design and it is considered a contributing resource.

### **ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS**

#### Exterior Description

**Cary Street Park and Shop Center**, which occupies a level two-acre lot on West Cary Street between South Belmont and South Auburn Avenues, is in the retail commercial area of Richmond, Virginia, known as "Carytown". Carytown is situated several miles west of the downtown business district in proximity to Richmond's sprawling West End residential area. In form, the complex consists of the original 1938 rectangular anchor units in the center, and two rectangular wings to the west and east, completed in 1949 and 1951, respectively. Rear additions were constructed in the mid-1950s. Designed by Richmond architect Henry Carl Messerschmidt (1891-1994) and developed and built by coal merchant Julian H. Dillon, the design of Cary Street Park and Shop Center was inspired by the "shop and park" model for planned retail complexes that first appeared ca. 1930.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting a dramatic shift in the location, form, and appearance of retail commercial architecture, the "shop and park" center manifests "one of the most radical changes in architecture to have occurred during the twentieth century"<sup>2</sup>

Although several exterior remodelings occurred in recent decades, the original limestone and granite facade is essentially as it was in 1938. The original stepped Art Deco canopy with a pressed tin ceiling and cornice surrounding the storefronts is also intact although it is hidden by stucco panels that were installed in 1977. A curious original organic-shaped coffered ceiling, designed by the architect Messerschmidt in 1951, still exists in the east corner alcove at the entrance of unit #3122. Recessed fixtures shed soft light into the alcove, and the terrazzo floor mirrors the organic shape in the alcove above.

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**Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia**

Consistent with other "shop and park" prototypes of early twentieth century American commercial design, Cary Street Park and Shop Center is, on the south elevation (front), essentially a one story horizontal, U-shaped structure with a flat composition roof that is hidden behind a low projecting parapet wall. The low horizontal plane of the shopping center is moderately interrupted by the two-story addition at the northeast rear corner. Constructed of limestone blocks, the central parapet is alternately stepped and beveled, divided by raised pilasters that extend vertically approximately one foot above the wall. The base section is faced with handsome black-and-peach-colored marble veneer panels approximately three feet high that contrast pleasantly with the smooth off-white limestone of the upper facade. The marble veneer is distinctively separated from the granite by a multi-dimensional horizontal band of shiny chrome trim work. The commercial facade on the south elevation is distinguished by a regular rhythm of alternating commercial storefront doors and windows. Several units appear to retain their historic chrome and glass storefronts. Of particular note is the elegant curved-glass window in the southwest corner of the shopping center in front of unit #3158. Only unit #3150 retains its original handsome wood and glass transom window with gold and black lettering. This window appears to reflect the original recessed plane of the entrance door and transom units, later altered with the installation of the modern aluminum and glass units.

The walls of the east and west elevations, partially obscured by adjacent buildings, are solidly constructed of red and cobalt-glazed brick in seven-course American bond. The parapets of both the east and west wings have brown terra cotta tiles at the roofline.

The older segments of the north elevation (rear) walls are constructed of red brick in seven-course American bond. The large one-story rectangular brick segment located in the center of the north elevation along the rear alleyway is obscured by two nondescript, utilitarian one-story concrete block additions with flat roofs. The wing to the east on the north elevation is three stories high with eleven structural bays. Masonry openings retain their original brick sills. The fenestration consists of a variety of original commercial metal multi-light windows, three-over-three horizontal light double-hung replacement windows, and two-light aluminum casement windows with a white baked enamel finish. Three secondary commercial steel entrance doors, evenly spaced along this facade, are located at ground level along the rear alley. The wing to the west on the north elevation is two stories high with nine structural bays. Two large brick chimneys with limestone caps project out from and above this facade. Although the original masonry openings retain their brick sills, the windows have been covered over with galvanized metal sheathing. Three additional secondary doors are located in the wing to the west of the north elevation. These doors are accessible from small wood entry porches.

The whole U-shaped composition is visually dominated by a black asphalt parking lot with lined diagonal spaces. Approximately one hundred parking spaces are located along the sidewalks that border the buildings. Additional parking is evenly and diagonally spaced in the center of lot. At one time, a gas station was situated to the east side of the parking lot. Historic photographs show a small rectangular shaped building with a slate roof that sheltered the gas station attendant. The parking lot is considered to be a contributing resource.

Interior Description

The shopping center now contains seventeen individual storefront units. Inside, most of the retail specialty shops have been modernized. The interiors typically feature modern floor coverings such as vinyl or ceramic tile and carpeting, dropped ceilings with acoustical tile and fluorescent lights, and modern drywall partitions and walls. There

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City of Richmond, Virginia

are, however, vestiges of the historic interiors. Several units retain at least some of the original baseboards and door casings. Jean-Jacques bakery (formerly Dot's Pastry Shop), Unit #3136, possesses the most intact interior finish including high ceilings, painted plaster walls and terrazzo floors in the retail space, and ceramic tile floors and walls in the bakery at the rear of the building. The bakery's owner also proudly pointed out the still functional ca. 1938 regulator clock and dual-compressor walk-in freezer. Other representative historic interior details are notable. Most of the original storefront units retain their pressed tin ceilings and cornices with geometric Art Deco-style motifs beneath the modern acoustical tile dropped ceilings. However, the historic pressed tin ceilings are exposed in Units #3136 and #3132. Original raised display areas in the storefront windows have been retained in Units # 3136; #3150; and #3128. A well-preserved pink marble staircase with wainscot, located in the alcove in front of Unit #3122, provides access to the offices in the two-story addition in the northeast corner of the shopping center.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Situated among numerous other specialty shops in the six-block retail commercial district known as Carytown in Richmond, Virginia, the Cary Court Park and Shop Center is well suited to its function and site. The well-preserved shopping district, located west of the principal business district of the City of Richmond, is symbolic of the extraordinary transformation of retail commerce in the twentieth century American life. Indeed, shopping centers, and by extension shopping malls, manifest "one of the most radical changes in architecture to have occurred during the twentieth century, as well as perhaps the most profound reconfiguration of business centers ever to have occurred in so short a period of time."<sup>3</sup> Cary Street Park and Shop Center, prominently situated in the heart of Carytown, stands as a visual, commercial, and architectural landmark with a period of significance ranging from 1938-1951.

Designed by Richmond architect Henry Carl Messerschmidt in 1938, and developed and built by forward-thinking Richmond coal merchant Julian H. Dillon, the park and shop was the first shopping center built in Richmond and one of the first in the South. The modern Art Deco movement, widely popular in urban areas in the 1920's and 1930's, features typically angular architecture that relies on strong geometric forms and motifs often accompanied by elements of vertical expression. In continuity with the International style, the Cary Street Park and Shop Center has a distinctive down-to-earth horizontality combined with Art Deco decorative elements including carved geometric patterns in the limestone, patterned terrazzo floors, and an organic shaped ceiling cove. Its architecture is comparable in design and function to the historically significant Washington Park and Shop (1930) and the Silver Spring Shopping Center (1938) recognized as major forces in shaping the twentieth century commercial landscape.<sup>4</sup> Cary Street Park and Shop Center, a predecessor of the modern shopping mall, is symbolic of a dramatic change in the architecture of retail business typifying profound differences in the location, form and appearance of business structures.

The building qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance according to Criterion A in the area of Commerce/Trade. The building also meets National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture because the building is a unique prototype among the city's commercial Art Deco architectural design. The Cary Street Park and Shop Center represents excellent design, craftsmanship and period detailing. The building, a landmark design, was immediately commercially successful, but, more importantly, established a radically different model for the future of retail trade. It is, therefore, especially significant in the commercial history of the City of Richmond.

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Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia

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## **HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

Cary Street Park and Shop Center is sited on West Cary Street between Auburn and Belmont Avenues west of downtown Richmond. Originally built in 1938 in a very simplified combination of the Art Deco and International styles, the shopping center was a landmark design. Its success proved to be the harbinger of new urban design for retail shopping. The population of Richmond was growing rapidly, and a new retail commercial area was needed to accommodate the growing number of residents moving into the near west end. Cary Street Park and Shop Center is symbolic of "modernization", the changing functional and cultural forces in the day-to-day fabric of suburban life in Richmond and, in a larger context, of American life. For nearly two centuries, retail commerce was concentrated in city centers. Establishments were most often independently owned and operated storefront units that occupied an urban lot fronted by a sidewalk, "adhering to an urban configuration that was centuries old in its basic structure."<sup>5</sup> By comparison, contemporary shopping plazas and malls present a radical change in the commercial landscape.

Julian H. Dillon, a prosperous Richmond coal merchant, decided to develop Cary Street Park and Shop Center after seeing a similar shopping center in Chicago. Ignoring the advice of others, Dillon proceeded with his visionary plans and constructed a grouping of stores in a vacant field on Cary Street. The shopping center, the first of its kind in Richmond and one of the first in the South, opened for business on November 1, 1938, with two grocery stores and a variety store.<sup>6</sup> Although Dillon was criticized by associates for "wasting space", he situated the center back from the road to provide space for off-street parking, an unusual decision in the 1930's.<sup>7</sup>

Richmond was enjoying a building and retail boom, and the units at the Cary Street Park and Shop Center were in demand. In fact, the 1939 Business Census rated Richmond seventh among the South's retail centers. As soon as the initial anchor stores opened, Dillon expanded the center to incorporate other shops including the Royal Laundry and Dot's Pastry Shop. Although the outbreak of World War II temporarily arrested further development, construction was resumed following the war's end with wing additions being completed in 1949 and 1951.<sup>8</sup> Fourteen units were in operation in 1949. Construction documents dated 1950 and 1951 illustrate the final storefronts at the east end of the center (3120-3126). Through the years, nationally prominent tenants included A&P Tea Company, Safeway, High's Ice Cream Co., and S.S. Kresge. Historic photographs show a gas station in an island in the shopping center's front parking lot, which provided space for 102 cars. Two men were employed to help customers park their cars and also to make sure that customers did not leave their cars in the lot while they road the bus downtown.<sup>9</sup>

In 1960, the center was renovated, and the name was changed to Cary Court Shopping Center.

Cary Court Shopping Center commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a weeklong celebration that began on Sunday, October 14, 1963. The celebration included a hospitality night with merchants staying open until 9 P.M., a sidewalk art show, and a performance by the local singing group known as The Villagers.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the shopping center was owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Cole Gayle, the daughter and son-in-law of J.H. Dillon, and managed by Mrs. Cora B. Gow, a former housekeeper and governess of the Dillon family. Mrs. Gow became the secretary of the center when it opened in 1938 and subsequently served as vice-president (1945) and president (1953) when Dillon died. At the time of the anniversary in 1963, Cary Court was fully occupied with 15 retail tenants and one office tenant. Mrs. Gow occupied the office of the president, completed in 1951, at 3122 West Cary Street. She was responsible, in part, for locating tenants for vacant stores units. "We



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**Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia**

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have too much competition to let our standards down...We have specialty shops here, one of a kind, and we must see the type of business before we can admit it."<sup>11</sup>

The shopping center was altered in 1977 as the area's merchants cultivated a new image for the shopping district.<sup>12</sup> Carytown, Inc., a merchants association formed in 1976, had a membership of 110 and an advertising budget of approximately \$4000 to promote a new image for the retail shops on Cary Street including Cary Court. The Cary Court buildings were steam cleaned, and the stucco panel facade was constructed. Refurbishment also included the addition of new awnings, pavement, signage, and 24-hour lighting.<sup>13</sup>

Cary Street Park and Shop Center is a unique surviving example of the architectural design of Richmond architect Henry Carl Messerschmidt (1891-1994). Representative work of Messerschmidt in Richmond includes, among others, the gymnasium and academic building at the Collegiate School for Girls, the Virginia Home and Industrial School for Girls, Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Swansboro Furniture Company Building, Christadelphian Chapel at Ellwood and S. Sheppard Streets, Investment Realty Company Store Building at 111 E. Grace Street, and the Scherer Memorial Building of the First English Lutheran Church.<sup>14</sup> By comparison to the many surviving examples of the architect's work in Richmond, the shopping center may be viewed as an unusual representative of Messerschmidt's commercial designs.

Cary Street Park and Shop Center is in an excellent state of preservation having survived without significant alteration. Although the retail units have undergone considerable interior alteration, most of the exterior historic fabric remains intact beneath the more recent modifications. Plans are being developed for a comprehensive exterior rehabilitation that will suitably enhance the shopping center's historic appearance.

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Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia

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**Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia**

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Cary Street Park and Shop Center is identified as **Parcel #W000-1406-0059**, are indicated on the tax parcel maps of the City of Richmond, Virginia.

The boundaries of the building occupy an area of approximately 2.14 acres bounded by West Cary Street on the south, an alleyway at the rear of the building on the north; Belmont Avenue on the east; and by Auburn Avenue to the west at the rear. The shopping complex faces West Cary Street and is visually and physically adjoined to adjacent commercial retail buildings on West Cary Street.

**Boundary Justification**

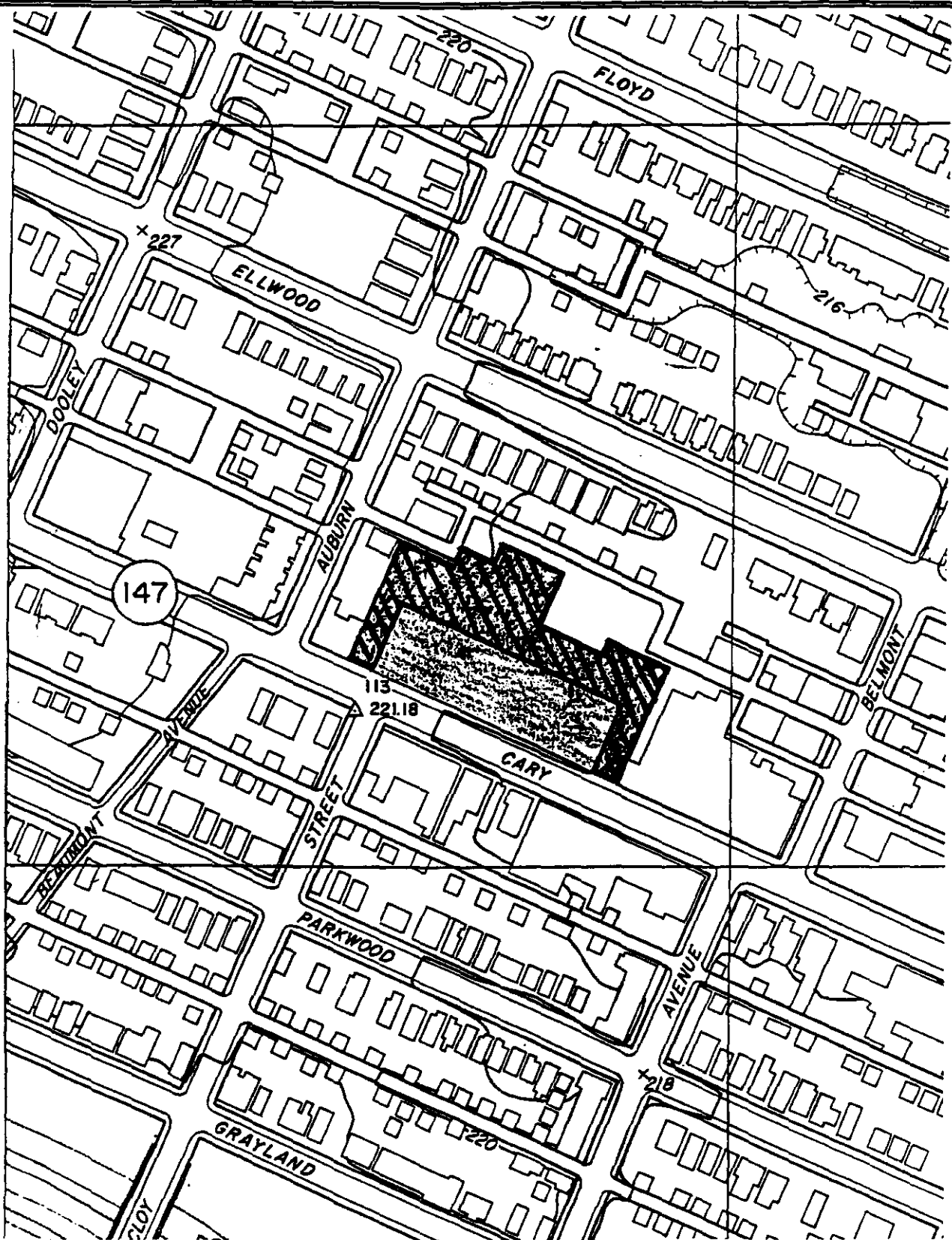
The boundaries include all that acreage originally and historically associated with the development and operation of **Cary Street Park and Shop Center** constructed and owned by Julian H. Dillon and heirs between 1938 and 1992. Since 1992, the property has been owned by Sauer Properties, Inc.

The building has been continuously owned and operated as a public commercial retail establishment, consistent with its original and historical usage since 1938. The building is geographically related to numerous other commercial retail businesses in the six-block length of West Cary Street.

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Cary Street Park and Shop Center  
City of Richmond, Virginia



Cary Court Park  
and Shopping Center,  
Richmond, Va  
Zone E N  
18 280760 4158770

