



**RICHMOND'S
POST-INDUSTRIAL EAST END**

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
COMMUNITY HISTORY PROJECT 2011

INTRODUCTION

Richmond's East End is organized around dramatic contrasts of landscape, culture, and history. In this section of the city, hills drop sharply to the bottomlands along the James River. Here English colonists established their first settlements in the 17th century. On the high ground of Libby Hill and Chimborazo Hill Richmond residents built fine houses between the mid-19th and early 20th century. These buildings established the residential edge of some of the earliest and most notable public parks in the city. Park visitors and people living the East End often maintained an aesthetic appreciation for the James River, viewed from above, and sweeping views over Richmond's natural and built landscape.

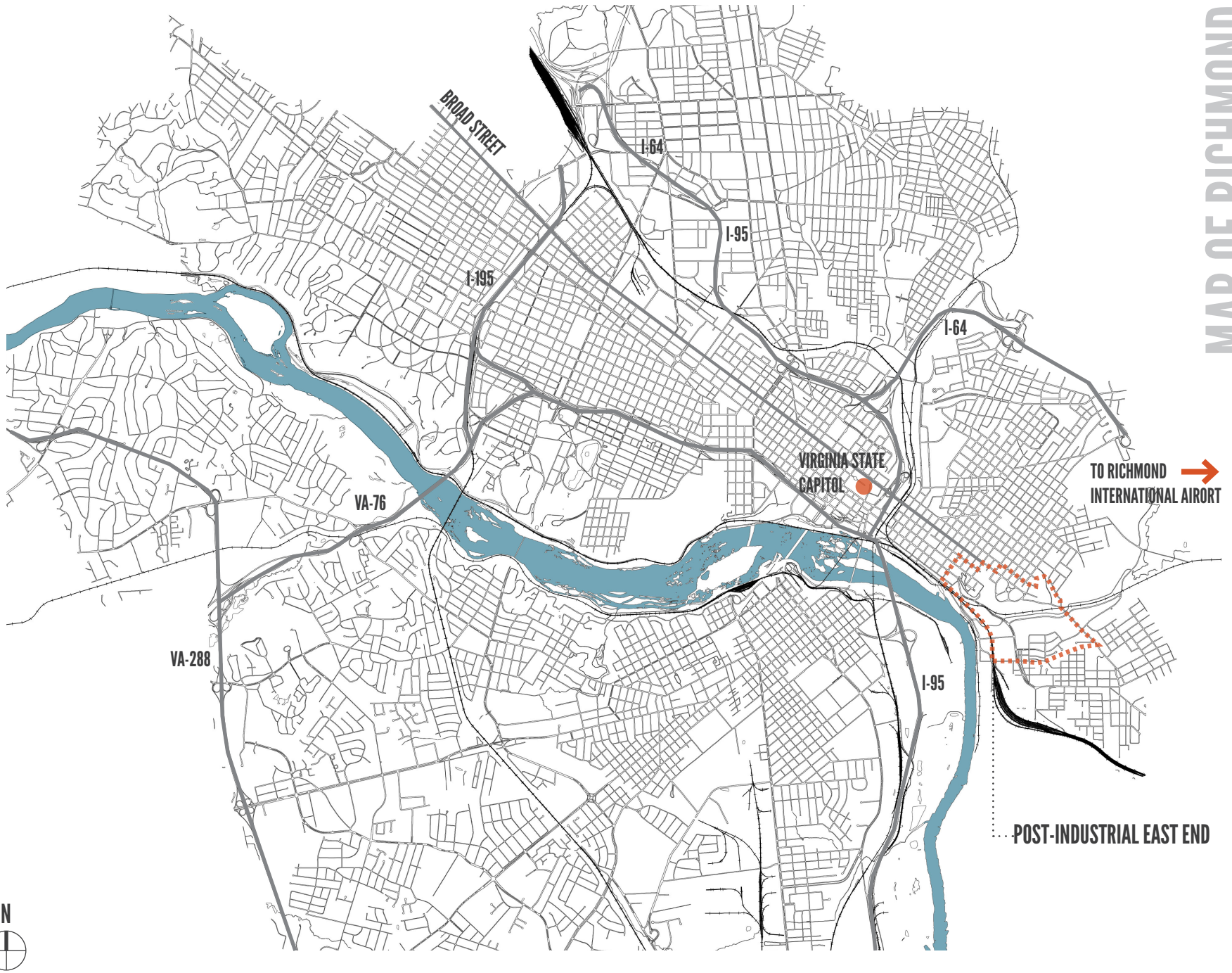
This aesthetic relationship to the East End locality stood in tense relationship with more pragmatic views of the landscape that shaped the uses and settlement of the low lands where industry and labor converted coal into gas at the Fulton Gas Works, tobacco leaves into cigarettes, along Tobacco Row, lumber into furniture, along Williamsburg Avenue, and water and steel rails into networks of commercial exchange between Richmond and national and global markets. This transport ran on the James River, along the James River and Kanawha Canal, and on railroad tracks built through tunnels, over trestles, and along industrial sidings. For these industries the James River was an object of utility and not beauty. The River brought raw materials and supplies to easily accessible industrial sites and carried away wastes and finished goods. Yet the owners and workers of industry were also residents of the adjacent neighborhoods, of Libby Hill, Chimborazo, and Fulton. In the different parts of their own lives, in their industrial work, domestic pursuits, and civic and religious life, people of the East End reflected the broader contrasts between beauty and utility captured in the organization of their landscape.

In this area, the river, canal, industrial production, businesses, residences, parks and monuments underscored the vitality and diversity of Richmond's economy. The contrasts of history also came into striking profile in this section of the city. The pervasive deindustrialization of Richmond in the second half of the 20th century helped spur a new urban landscape—of abandoned production sites at the Fulton gas works, Armitage Manufacturing, and along Tobacco Row. Some sites have been adaptively re-used, with their buildings and history extended. Other sites and buildings stand empty, hovering in a state of post-industrial suspension, with uncertain futures. Other East Ends sites and entire neighborhoods have been recycled for new uses, while others have disappeared through neglect or coordinated demolition.

This guide explores the varied topography, architecture, and landscapes of the East End. It surveys the social and economic history of the East End by analyzing urban and architectural form. The history surveyed in this guide can strengthen the understanding of the East End on the part of residents and visitors buttressing the efforts to build the future through critical engagements historic narratives and places.

Credits: The Community History Workshop at the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, directed by Professor Daniel Bluestone produced this guide in the spring of 2011. The research expanded upon the research undertaken in the fall of 2010 by Ashley Allis, Michelle Benoit, Kate Boles, Marcy Cameron, Jamie Frieling, Abby M. Chryst, Kate French, Caitlin Graham, Justin Greving, Wei He, Alex Howle, Stephanie Langton, Laura McCoy, Amy Moses, Katie Orr, Regina Pencile, Annelise Pitts, Crystal Prigmore, Adam Robinson, Kristin Rourke, Peter Sefton, James Zehmer.

MAP OF RICHMOND



WALKING TOUR 1
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LIBBY HILL

Monuments
Pathways
Park Pavilion
Libby House
Carrington House
19 N 29th Street

7 N 29th Street
11 N 29th Street
2822 E Franklin
Lucky Strike
American Furniture

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CHIMBORAZO PARK

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The Church Hill Tunnel
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Wilfred E. Cutshaw
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Park Beautification
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The Park Pathways
Playgrounds Old and New
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FULTON GAS WORKS

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WALKING TOUR 4
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FULTON

Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Admiral Gravelly
Trolley Barn
Gillies Creek Park
Remnants of Fulton's Past

Spencer Armsted House
Tract Housing
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Post-Urban Renewal





The view from Libby Hill is known as the view that named Richmond. The sight of the James River from Libby Hill reminded William Byrd, Richmond's founder, of the English city Richmond-upon-Thames. While the English namesake's viewshed remained pastoral, that of the Virginian capital developed into an industrial landscape. The James River was harnessed to ship tobacco and other goods while the low land along the James River became the site of numerous warehouses and manufacturing companies such as the American Furniture and Fixture Company, Fulton Gas Works, and the Lucky Strike Cigarette Factory.

In 1850 Captain Charles Dimmock advocated a park system for Richmond that could compete with the those in other major American cities. Libby Hill Park was one of the five new parks designed by city engineer Wilfred Cutshaw during the 1850s as "breathing places" for citizens to take in healthful air. The park was originally called Marshall Square, but assumed the popular name Libby Hill, reflecting the prominence of Luther Libby's house at 1 N. 29th Street.

In the park, Cutshaw designed picturesque carriage roads connecting the industrial areas along the James River with the residences on the hilltop. These roads were meant to be driven leisurely for recreation. Pathways and stairs provided more direct access between the top and bottom of the park.

The neighborhood surrounding Libby Hill Park was built up by wealthy merchants such as Luther Libby. These men could survey the city's natural beauty and commercial prosperity. In the early 1900s. Several middle class row houses and apartments were built near the park, including 2800-2806 E. Franklin, which replaced an earlier mansion. Many of the single-family homes in the park area were divided into apartments throughout the twentieth-century. Today, most of the homes are once again single-family residences. Homes built before the Civil War retained their slave quarters which were later rented out to African American tobacco workers or servants working in the area. Homes built after emancipation were equipped with similar dependencies for live-in servants or renters.

The park continues to function as a space for leisure. Many residents of the neighborhood walk their dogs or jog on the carriage roads that no longer permit vehicles. The park remains the location of community gatherings and outdoor concerts.

WALKING TOUR 1

- ① **MONUMENTS**
Monuments to the Lost Cause
- ② **1 N 29TH / LIBBY HOUSE**
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- ③ **7 N 29TH**
Townhouse to Boarding House & Back
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- ⑩ **LUCKY STRIKE**
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- ⑪ **AMERICAN FURNITURE AND FIXTURE**
Outfitting Virginia's Banks, Bars and Bureaus Since 1904

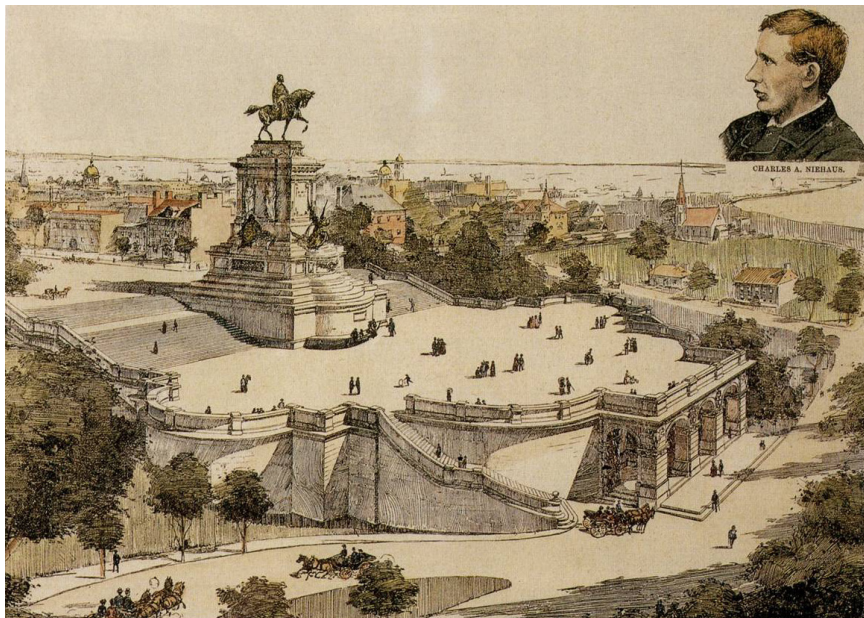


MONUMENTS TO THE LOST CAUSE

THE GENERAL LEE AND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MONUMENT

Standing before you is the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, located within a landscape of more complex history than the military valor it memorializes. Libby Hill Park was occupied during the Civil War by an encampment of African-American Union troops, but the site was later envisioned as a memorial to white Confederate soldiers and sailors. First proposed by furniture manufacturer J.B. Welsh, a memorial to the Confederate military was supported by most of the neighborhood. Frank Cunningham, who lived in the Libby House at the time, was a veteran of the war and became a strong advocate for the construction of the monument.

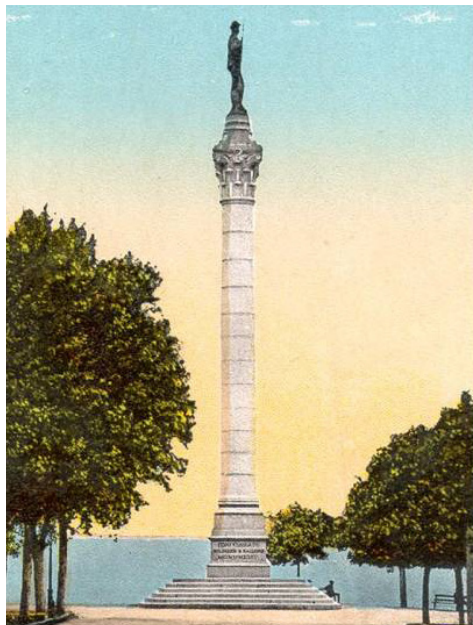
Erected in 1895 and designed by a committee led by veteran Wilfred Cutshaw, the monument shows an anonymous Confederate soldier atop a column. Cutshaw based this column on Pompey's Pillar in Alexandria, Egypt, a monument to Roman Emperor Diocleian's victory over an Alexandrian revolt. Originally, Cutshaw had envisioned Libby Hill as the site of a grand public memorial to General Robert E. Lee. He believed a monument on this site would be prominently visible from most points in the city. Though not as grand as the Lee proposal, the current monument is still highly visible throughout the city, serving as a visual marker of the location of Libby Hill Park as well as a link to Monument Avenue downtown.



Proposed Lee Monument. Marguerite Crumley and Historic Richmond Foundation.



Souvenir from the unveiling of the monument, 1894.



Historic postcard. VCU Digital Image Collection.





Libby House, 1930. Mary Wingfield Scott Papers. Valentine History Museum.



Libby House, rear dependencies, 2010. Photo by Kristin Rourke

VIEW FROM THE TOP

1 N 29TH STREET - THE LUTHER LIBBY HOUSE

Luther Libby, a wealthy shipping merchant, built this corner rowhouse in 1856 before the surrounding neighborhood was developed. The mansard roof, added after the Civil War, makes the home the tallest house in the neighborhood. The structure is prominently visible from other locations in the city. This led to people commonly referring to the hill and later, the park, as "Libby Hill." Libby likely chose the site for his residence because it allowed him to watch ships on the river and keep an eye on his thriving business, as would the next owner and occupant Lemuel Powers, also a merchant. Powers lived in the house from the early 1870s until 1895. The rear dependency which Libby had used as slaves' quarters was used during Powers's time as servants' quarters and occasionally a space to house working-class African American renters.

City tax collector Frank Cunningham would have enjoyed the visibility the large house on the hill afforded him as an important public figure when he lived there from 1895-1911. However, Cunningham would not use the former slave quarters for housing boarders or live-in servants and neither would the resident following him, John Nolde, owner of the Nolde Bakery who lived there until the 1930s. Nolde converted the stable in the rear of the building into a garage, adding an apartment above for his widowed sister's family. After Nolde's death, the property was divided into apartments.





7 N 29th Street, 2010. Photo by Justin Greving.

TOWNHOUSE TO BOARDING HOUSE & BACK

7 N 29TH STREET

Part of a row of three identical houses, 7 N 29th Street was built in the early 1890s. The appearance of the house remains largely unaltered since its construction and is three stories tall, three bays wide, with a full width porch on the ground floor. The home was owned and occupied by the family of William C. Armitage from 1892 to the late 1910s. The Armitages owned a successful manufacturing company down the hill that took by-products from the Fulton Gas Works to create tar paper, roof paint, creosote oils, ammonia, varnish and coal tar. The vantage point from Libby Hill allowed the Armitage's proximity to their business while at the same time enjoying a sweeping view of downtown Richmond and the James River.

In 1930, Suzie C. Alston, an African American woman, ran the residence as a boarding house for five young women. Boarders would have been able to lock their own rooms from the exterior but would have shared a communal kitchen and bathroom facilities. During the 1930s all three floors were occupied by residents, but towards the end of the 20th century the house had all but been vacated until its purchase in 1993 when it was restored to a single-family home.



A HOUSE DIVIDED

11 N 29TH STREET

The house at 11 N 29th Street was built in the early 1890s as one in a series of three identical row houses on the block. One of the earliest residents was George Cable, a railroad conductor from North Carolina, who rented the house from 1899 until the early 1910s, after which it was bought by Percy Allen, the owner of Model Laundry and Towel Co. located at 25th and Broad Street. A number of boarders also lived at the home during the time Cable rented the property. When Allen purchased the home, a servant lived on the property as well.

The plans of these properties along N 29th Street allowed for the easy partition of interior spaces to accommodate boarders in the homes. The house at 11 N 29th Street is no different: the side hall and parlor arrangement allows for the easy transition into individual apartment units. While other owners may have simply allowed renters to occupy a single room, 11 N 29th Street was eventually divided up into no fewer than three separate apartment units with separate kitchens and restrooms on each floor.

The conversion to three apartments took place as early as 1930. James C. Hood, his brother William, his two sisters Florence and Ruth, as well as their mother, Leila, were all likely occupants of the ground floor, paying 15 dollars per month in rent. While a bathroom has been added to the ground floor in recent years, the ground floor residents may have used the outdoor privy located to the rear of the property.



11 N 29th Street, 2010. Photo by Justin Greving.

MERCHANTS AND THEIR SLAVES

19 N 29TH STREET

Built by merchant James Goddin in 1851, the house at 19 N 29th Street was home to merchant and grocer Edmond Saunders and his family after the Civil War. By 1876, the house had been purchased by William Curtis, who managed the Richmond Wharf. This location was ideal for these merchants and wharf manager, who all had good views of the river from the nearby park. While Goddin's slaves stayed in the rear dependency, Saunders and Curtis rented the structure to African-American boarders such as Lawson Jones, a driver. Curtis also built the apartment building next door listed at 17 N 29th Street in 1907.

In 1910, 19 N 29th Street was converted to apartments and remains sub-divided today as condos. Each of the four floors, including the basement level, is a separate unit as is the rear dependency. This conversion demonstrates the change in the demographics of the Libby Hill neighborhood from wealthy families with slaves or live-in servants to middle-class residents. Two garages were added to the rear in 1910 to meet the needs of residents with automobiles.



19 N. 29th Street, 1930. Mary Wingfield Scott Collection, Valentine History Museum.



19 N 29th Street rear, 2010. Photo by Moseley Architects.



19 N 29th Street rear dependency, 2010. Photo by Kristin Rourke.





2822 E. Franklin Street, 2010. Photos by Kristin Rourke.

THE NEWEST HOUSE

2822 E. FRANKLIN STREET

Charles Fox, a ship builder by trade, built the original house on this property in the mid-1870s. The Fox family owned and lived in the house until around 1905, when it was bought by John Williams, manager of Henrico Tea, Coffee & Spice Co. At that point in time it was the only three-story house on the block. Rambling additions on the rear of the property allowed extra space for rental units and servant quarters. Servants most likely lived on the second floor of the stable located towards the back of the complex, while boarders may have rented rooms in the rear of the house.

Eventually, the building was divided into four separate apartments and the stable was converted into a garage. By 1930, the home was rented by four separate families: Ray Camp, a pipe fitter for a fire extinguisher company; Allen Curtis, the chief engineer of a steamship company; N. Robertson, a construction superintendent; and the widowed Nellie Langston. Around 1939, the original Fox house and garage were demolished, and a new two-story townhouse was built in its place. As it stands today, the house is the newest building facing Libby Hill and the massing and placement of the porch reflects its visual clues to its status as a relatively modern addition to the block.

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LIBBY HILL



FROM MANSIONS TO DUPLEXES

2800 E FRANKLIN STREET - THE CARRINGTON HOUSE

The four row houses on the corner of N 29th Street and E Franklin Street replaced the original residence on the site, the Adams-Carrington House (1803). The house was the first house built in the Libby Hill neighborhood but was demolished in the 1890s. The replacement of this large neoclassical styled mansion by more modest row houses indicates a shift in the neighborhood's demographic that took place during the turn of the century. Instead of massive single-family homes for the wealthy, Libby Hill was becoming more accessible to the middle-class with more modest and less expensive row houses and apartments. Meanwhile, the wealthy moved to more exclusive suburbs farther from the city.

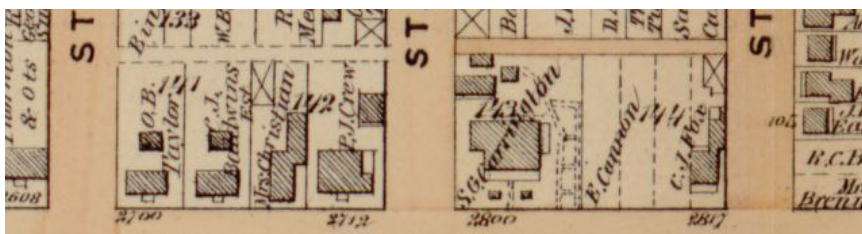
The Adams-Carrington House was built by the Adams family. There were several outbuildings on the property including a dependency used as a slave quarter later re-purposed as a servant's quarters after the Civil War. George Carrington purchased the house in the 1830s and enlarged the structure. His widow lived there until her death in the early 1890s. The house was then sold, demolished and replaced with four row houses at 2800-2806. These buildings display similar decorative features to the existing structure at 2808 so as to better blend into the neighborhood and appear to date back to the same time period. A number of renters employed by local industries have lived in these properties over the years, including Michael Mahoney, a tobacco foreman at 2804 E Franklin Street and Cornelius Goch, railroad conductor at 2806 E Franklin Street.



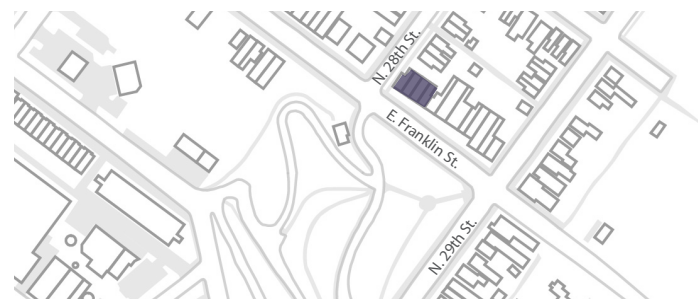
Carrington House, 1890s. Valentine History Museum.



Row houses 2800-2806 which replaced the Carrington House, 2010. Photo by Kristin Rourke.



Beer's Map, 1877 showing the Carrington House and dependencies.



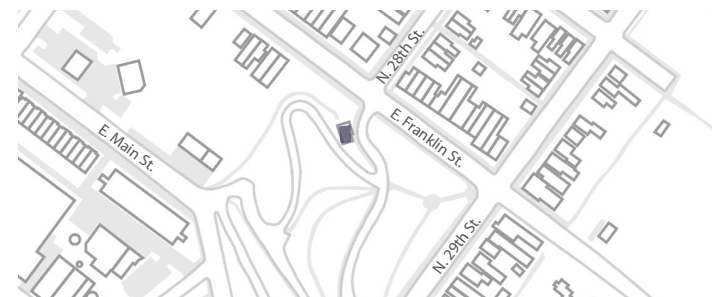
MUSIC FROM A CENTURY AGO

THE PARK PAVILION

As the Park gained popularity in 1880 as a social gathering space, the city proposed a park pavilion overlooking the sweeping views of Richmond. During that same year, the City Engineer encouraged “music” at the park and sought to facilitate it with the construction of the Pavilion circa 1895.

Located at the top of the hill, the pavilion provided a place for bands to perform. Iardella’s Band played on the deck every Friday night during the summer from 1900 until at least 1906. Later, in 1911, the Pavilion was expanded to accommodate an office for the park keeper as well as public restrooms.

The Pavilion was restored in 1994. The goal of the restoration was to return the pavilion to as close to the original design as possible. Proposed design changes included completely replacing the roof and upgrading the electrical and mechanical systems. Rotted wood members were to be replaced and repainted and exterior colors restored to white with gray and dark green accents.



Postcard of Libby Hill Park. Date unknown. VCU Digital Images Collection.



Libby Hill Park Pavilion, 2010. Photograph by Marcy Cameron.



Postcards of Libby Hill Park. Date unknown. VCU Digital Images Collection.

THE MEANDERING PATHWAYS OF LIBBY HILL

A HEALTHY AND MORAL FORM OF RECREATION

Standing on the top of the hill, the cobblestone paths of Libby Hill Park wind below you. The plan was laid out by city engineer Charles Dimmock, who urged City Council in the mid-nineteenth century to procure lands for “breathing spaces” within the city. Land was purchased shortly thereafter but the park remained undeveloped for nearly twenty-five years before formal plans were implemented. Dimmock’s successor, General Wilfred Cutshaw, laid plans for various parks, including Libby Hill Park. Cobblestone paths meander over the hill, following the natural topography. Trees were planted to obscure and create dramatic reveals of downtown Richmond as well as the James River. Carriage rides were considered a healthy and moral means of recreation and a desirable way to experience nature, take in the fresh air, and socialize by providing a setting for Richmonders to see and be seen.

In addition to the recreational use of the pathways, direct staircases provided a practical link between houses on the top of the hill and industry below. Many business owners and workers lived on top of Libby Hill and used the paths to commute to work. For example, William C. Armitage lived at 7 N 29th Street and operated a coal tar factory at the eastern base of the hill. The pathways have been closed to vehicular traffic but still remain a vital part of the Libby Hill landscape.



“IT’S TOASTED”

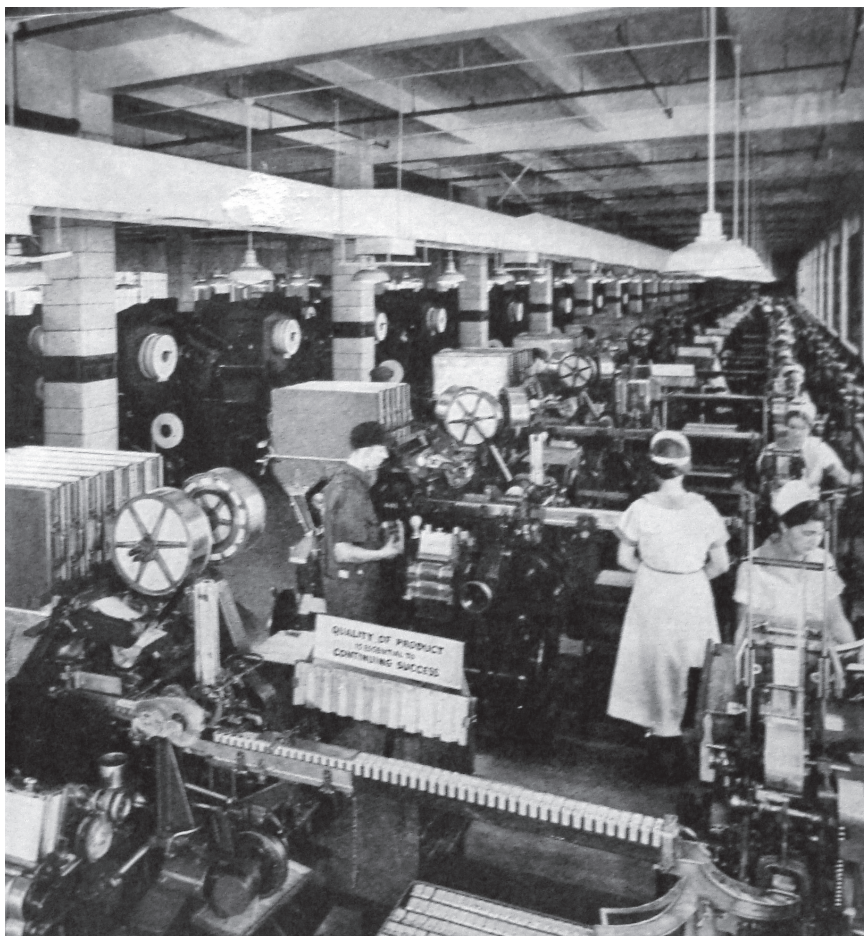
THE LUCKY STRIKE FACTORY

Looking west from the top of Libby Hill, Tobacco Row is the prominent string of factories and warehouses along East Cary Street. The Lucky Strike smoke stack stand as a symbol of the powerful industry of Richmond’s past, an industry that helped make Richmond the prosperous city it is today.

The Lucky Strike factory and warehouse are located at the eastern end of Tobacco Row. Lucky Strike, a name that referred to striking it rich during the Gold Rush in California, was established as a pipe tobacco manufacturer in 1871. In 1916, the motto “It’s toasted!” was coined and cigarette production began.

Richmond’s Lucky Strike factory was built in 1930 at 2600 E. Cary Street at a cost of \$625,000. The building contained about 260 cigarette-making machines and was the epitome of modernism; Roy C. Flanagan, author of *The Story of Lucky Strike* (1938), described workers as “healthier, happier, less liable to accidents than the average man on the street.” He also noted the workers’ interest in their work, watchful of the ingenious modern machines they controlled.

The factory manufactured cigarettes until the late 20th century. A series of floods in the 1970s unofficially ended Tobacco Row’s time as an industrial center, though the tobacco manufacturers began moving out of the area in the 1960s. After Lucky Strike moved out, the building was used for storage, and was renovated in 2008 into condominiums as part of the River Lofts at Tobacco Row redevelopment.



Inside Lucky Strike. *The Story of Lucky Strike* (1938) by Roy C. Flanagan.



Exterior of Lucky Strike Building. Virginia Department of Historic Resources.



Virginia Department of Historic Resources.



AMERICAN FURNITURE & FIXTURE

OUTFITTING VIRGINIA'S BANKS, BARS AND BUREAUS SINCE 1904

The American Furniture and Fixture Company was housed in the antebellum brick building located at the base of Libby Hill at 2823 E Main Street that now houses the Rocketts View Apartment. In the latter part of the 19th century, J. B. Welsh ran the Welsh Furniture Company in the same building before going bankrupt in the Depression of 1893. Reuben Burton decided that despite Welsh's failure, a furniture company could still be profitable in the same location, and in 1904 began operating the American Furniture and Fixture Company. According to advertisements at the turn of the 20th Century, Burton's company produced handcrafted interior wood and glass fixtures for offices, pharmacies, banks, druggists, saloons and small retail shops. Due to the initial success of the company, Burton expanded his operations in 1905. This addition doubled the size of the factory, allowing Burton to add an additional fifty skilled workers to his payroll.

The company built and installed fixtures for businesses throughout Virginia, including offices for the Richmond branch of the Virginia Trust Company. An advertisement in 1911 proudly announced the Trust's office interiors in the recently completed thirteen story Travelers skyscraper had been outfitted by the American Furniture and Fixture company.

The American Furniture and Fixture Company continued its operations well into the later part of the 20th Century until its conversion into apartments. This building relates to Libby Hill Park in that its original owner was the main proponent of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument.



American Furniture building, 2011. Photo by Katie Orr.

The American Furniture and Fixture Company

Of this city, which has the contract to equip our offices in the new Travelers Skyscraper, tell us all will be ready to move in on or before October 1st.

We hope our friends will pardon the suggestion, but we would like very much to have a number of new accounts opened the day we enter these new quarters! Will YOU do it?

Please remember we desire to have personal and inactive accounts, subject to check, upon which 3 per cent. interest is allowed.

Virginia Trust Co.
RICHMOND, VA.

Advertisement, 1911. Richmond Times Dispatch.



CHIMBORAZO PARK

In 1769, anticipating the expansion of Richmond, Colonel Richard Adams purchased large tracts of land that are now part of the 30-acre site of Chimborazo Park. Before the Civil War this land was primarily agricultural.

As the capital of the Confederacy, Richmond became the focal point for military engagements during the Civil War and in October of 1861, Chimborazo Hospital opened as one of the largest military hospitals in the Confederacy. After the Civil War, the former hospital buildings and salvaged materials were reused to build a Freedmen's community. In 1874, city officials recognized the need for more park space in a growing city, and purchased land on Chimborazo Hill. With a bandstand for concerts, a pavilion for refreshments and the advantageous setting on the James River, the park became a popular resort for residents and visitors.

"Disagreeable odors" rising from the gas works, which had operated at the base of Chimborazo Hill since 1856, tempered public enthusiasm for the park. From its inception, Chimborazo Park and the gas works were inseparable: the park served as a conduit between Church Hill and the gas works, as well as the nearby Fulton neighborhood. By 1900, a road connected the upper slopes of Chimborazo to Fulton, and in 1908 a brick path was extended from this road to the gas works.

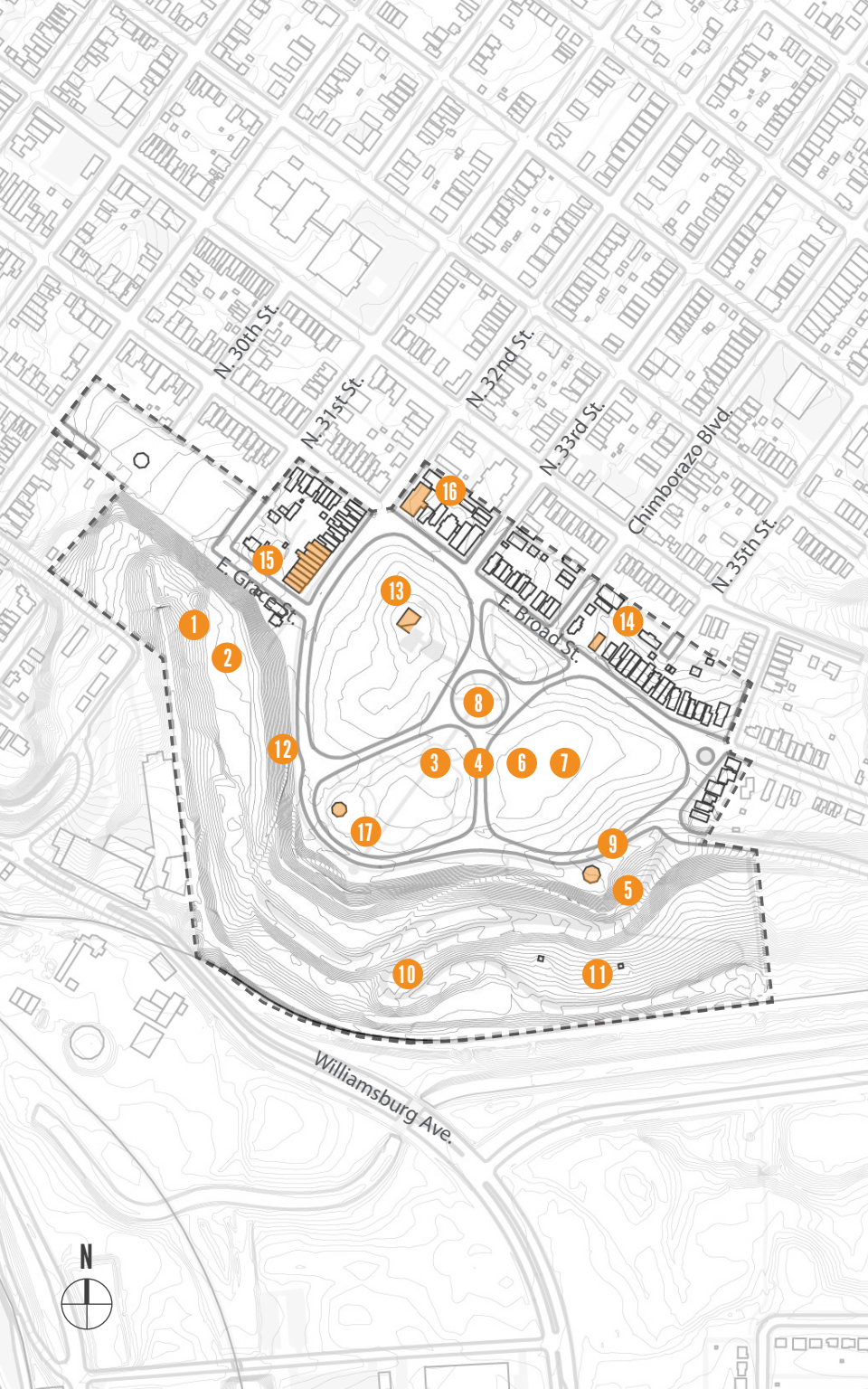
The park circulation patterns gave the people of the Church Hill and Fulton neighborhoods a chance to intermingle, and nowhere were the ties between the two neighborhoods stronger than in the old Chimborazo Playground. The Chimborazo Playground was built along the road to Fulton and opened in the summer of 1913 with immense success.

During the Great Depression, federal funding from the Works Progress Administration supported efforts to stabilize the slopes of Chimborazo Park with retaining walls and grading. This addressed the long term problem of erosion along of the edges of the park.

When the Fulton neighborhood was razed under the banner of urban renewal in the 1960s and the gas works closed in 1974, the park's connections to Fulton were entirely severed. The old route to Fulton remains as a ghostly, crumbling remnant, a curiosity in the broader Chimborazo Park landscape.

WALKING TOUR 2

- 1 **BLOODY RUN**
The Day the Creek Ran Red
- 2 **TRAGEDY UNDER THE HILL**
The Collapse of the Church Hill Tunnel
- 3 **THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU**
A New Community
- 4 **CHIMBORAZO MILITARY HOSPITAL**
Hospital on the Hill
- 5 **THE BREWERY**
The Attempt to Brew a Profit
- 6 **WILFRED E. CUTSHAW**
City Engineer and Park Designer
- 7 **THE SUBURBAN RESORT**
Nature and the City
- 8 **ORNAMENTAL FOUNTAINS AND SPRINGS**
A Landscape Flowing with Water
- 9 **THE PARK PAVILION**
Music in the Park
- 10 **THE PARK PATHWAYS**
Connections to Fulton
- 11 **PLAYGROUNDS OLD+NEW**
Shifting Forms of Recreation
- 12 **THE FIGHT TO HOLD THE HILL**
Landslides and Slippage
- 13 **U.S. WEATHER BUREAU**
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- 14 **MORTON G. BILLUPS HOUSE**
The House of the Undertaker
- 15 **ALLARD V. BELL**
Chimborazo's 19th Century Land Dispute
- 16 **BROADUS MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH**
Today's Mt. Carmel Church
- 17 **ODDS+ENDS**
Monuments Added Over Time



THE DAY THE CREEK RAN RED

BLOODY RUN

The Battle of Bloody Run took place in 1656 near present day Chimborazo Park. English colonists enlisted in the Charles City County militia allied with the Pamunkey tribe to displace the Rickohockans, who had recently settled near the falls of the James River. Colonel Edward Hill and his forces united with Pamunkey leader Totopotomoy and his forces, but they were overwhelmed by the Rickohockans and suffered great losses during the battle. Reportedly, the creek to the west of Chimborazo Hill ran red with blood, inspiring the name Bloody Run. During the battle, Totopotomoy died, and leadership of the Pamunkey passed to his widow, Cockacoeske, a relative of Pocahontas. In 1677, Cockacoeske united eight tribes to sign a peace treaty with the English. This treaty still stands today, and each year a Pamunkey representative travels to the Richmond Capitol to present a tribute to the governor. In 1884, Bloody Run buried and is no longer visible above ground today. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources erected a historical marker in 2005 to commemorate the bloody event.



Plaque at Chimborazo Park. Photo by Kate Boles.



U.S. Coast Survey Office, 1864. www.churchhillphoto.com



TRAGEDY UNDER THE HILL

THE COLLAPSE OF THE CHURCH HILL TUNNEL

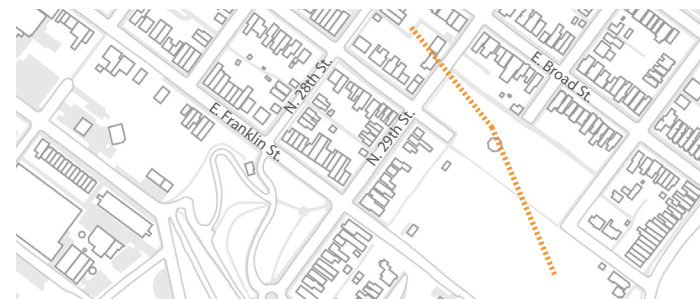
Between 1871 and 1873, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company constructed a tunnel beneath Church Hill to connect the C & O main line to the James River Ports. Because of multiple collapses in the tunnel, and the newly constructed Marshall Viaduct, C & O stopped using the Church Hill Tunnel in 1902. Later in 1925, with the increase of train use, C & O attempted to enlarge the tunnel to accommodate newer and larger cars. During this process on October 2, 1925, a collapse of 100 linear tunnel feet under Jefferson Park occurred. At least two hundred workers ran for their lives, most crawling underneath the ten flat cars to survival. One man, Benjamin F. Mosby, escaped, but then perished later that night from burns caused by the steam locomotive. The engineer of the locomotive was trapped underneath the controls and died in the tunnel. Another man, Richard Lewis, who was an African American laborer, also died in the tunnel. With the collapse and the two deaths, the tunnel project was abandoned. There were two more collapses in 1962 and in 1988. In 2006, there were efforts to recover the locomotive, but concern over the stability of the hill caused the project to be abandoned. Today, the tunnel is a sealed tomb for Richard Lewis, the locomotive, and ten flat cars. Rumors and urban legends still abound about how many workers and what remains buried in the tunnel.



Section of Church Hill Tunnel. Locomotive Historical Society.



Church Hill Tunnel, Year Unknown. Walter Washington Foster Collection. Virginia Historical Society.



A NEW COMMUNITY

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU / 1865-1866

Imagine standing on at the edge of Chimborazo Hill, looking out onto a landscape much different than the one you see today. The Civil War has just ended a few years ago. What was once the largest Confederate hospital in the country has now become the site of a growing freedmen's community, a refuge camp for former slaves. Freedmen are building new houses on the west side of the hill, re-using wood from wartime hospital buildings. Other men walk down the hill towards Fulton, heading off to start their day's work. Children rush by on their way to the nearby freedman's school. Rev. Scott Gwathmey passes on his way to Chimborazo Baptist, the local church. The newly formed community shows signs of a promising future, with its advantageous location and views over the James River. This community does not last long, however, as the refuge camp occupying the former Confederate hospital is closed in 1865. The Richmond City Council proposes to purchase the land to make a new park, noting that the area "would have all the advantages in drives from every part of the city." The land is purchased piece by piece, in many cases using public condemnation, slowly removing the freedmen's community from Chimborazo Hill. The city council auctions off the last remaining wooden houses in 1880, removing all traces of the previous community to make way for Chimborazo Park.



1876 Beers Map + Google Earth Image.



Wooden House on Chimborazo Hill, 1880. Valentine Museum.

HOSPITAL ON THE HILL

CHIMBORAZO MILITARY HOSPITAL / 1861-1865

With the approach of Civil War, Chimborazo Hill served as a site of a military camp for organizing and drilling troops. When the troops departed for battle, their wood frame barracks were converted for use as a military hospital. The site with views over the countryside and open to breezes along the James River provided an ideal site for recuperating troops. This hospital treated over 76,000 soldiers between 1862 and 1865 and was one of 27 Civil War hospitals in the Richmond region. Chimborazo Hospital was unequalled in quality amongst medical facilities and respected for its capacity, organization, and sophistication, conducted under the supervision of Richmond doctor James B. McCaw.

The hospital was comprised of 150 barracks-like structures arranged in wards. Each ward housed about 40 patients. The one-story buildings were wood-framed with shingled roofs and measured 40 feet by 150 feet and were arranged along 40-foot wide avenues and 10 to 12-foot wide alleys. The even spacing promoted ventilation between buildings. Free and enslaved factory workers largely performed the hospital construction. Leftover tobacco boxes from nearby factories were re-purposed for beds and furniture. Chimborazo housed a bakery; bathhouses; a brewery; carpenter's, blacksmiths', apothecaries', and shoemaker's shops; an icehouse; commissaries; quartermaster departments; and offices. Through the hospital's three and a half-year history, Chimborazo served approximately 75,000 patients with a very low mortality rate. Between 5,000 to 7,000 men died here, and most of these soldiers are buried in nearby Oakwood Cemetery.



Photo of Chimborazo Hospital, date unknown. Chimborazo Hospital Museum.



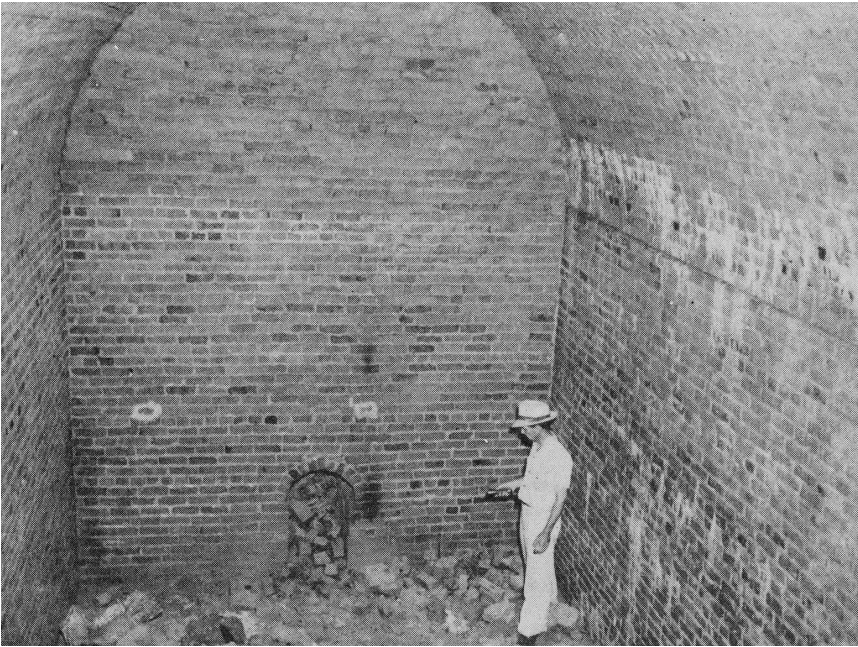
Photo of Chimborazo Hospital, date unknown. Chimborazo Hospital Museum.

THE ATTEMPT TO BREW A PROFIT

THE UNDERGROUND BREWERY C. 1870

Before the City of Richmond acquired Chimborazo Park, a succession of owners operated a local brewery in the southeast corner of Chimborazo Hill. The brewery's final owner, Joseph Bacher, was a successful brewer from Pennsylvania. He moved to Richmond, lured by the prospects of a more profitable business, and took ownership of the brewery in 1870. The brewery attempted to keep its beer cool by building underground vaults; however, the vaults proved too shallow for successful cooling and this contributed to the failure of Bacher's enterprise. He eventually sold his land to the city of Richmond.

Once the park was opened, the old tunnel and brewing vats were used to store park maintenance tools. The underground section of the brewery also provided plenty of adventure for local children, who were known to sneak into the old vaults. These children often made fires in the brewing vats, which caused smoke to pour out of the hillside, not unlike the volcano after which Chimborazo Park was named. The vaults were sealed in 1908. In the 1940s, plans were made to convert the cellar into a bomb shelter, but the structures were deemed too unstable for this use. In 1978, geologists discovered that water pooling in the underground sections of the brewery was significantly contributing to Chimborazo Park's unstable ground on the sloping sections of the park. With this knowledge the vaults and underground sections of the brewery were filled in.



Interior of Beer Vault, 1940. Shockoe Examiner.



"Beer Cellar Again Excavated." Richmond Times Dispatch, September 1978.

WILFRED E. CUTSHAW

CITY ENGINEER & PARK DESIGNER

The Civil War brought massive destruction and decline in central Richmond. By 1865, however, the city was rapidly rebounding in population and reclaiming its position as a prosperous metropolis. In 1873, Wilfred Emory Cutshaw became the City Engineer and championed many of Richmond's City Beautiful improvements of tree-lined avenues and a system of public parks. He created a municipal tree nursery to supply the city trees to promote health and beauty for generations to come. Among the parks Cutshaw designed were Libby Hill, Gamble's Hill, William Byrd Park, and Chimborazo Park.

His naturalistic design aesthetic integrated walking paths into the topography of the sites. Cutshaw's pleasure drives were highly detailed and meticulously planned to move carriages through the landscape in a series of experiential events and dramatic reveals. He had planned for a connection between Libby Hill and Chimborazo Hill to extend the concept of pleasure drives throughout the East End, focusing views on the lower James River. Although this direct connection between adjacent parks did not materialize the paths at Chimborazo Park were used for many years as pedestrian connections to the Fulton area.

By the early 20th century, these parks contained benches, refreshment stands, entertainment pavilions, and evening lighting. Park attendants enforced rules, assisted in maintenance, and educated visitors on the flora of the park. Today, remnants of Cutshaw's paths and picturesque landscape remain visible, revealing the design preferences, engineering technologies, and craft of picturesque park design.



Richardson, Selden. "Architect of the city": Wilfred Emory Cutshaw (1838-1907) and municipal architecture in Richmond. 1997.



Libby Hill pathways, 2010. Photo by Ashley Allis.

NATURE AND THE CITY

THE SUBURBAN RESORT

As the population of Richmond steadily increased during the 19th century, city officials looked to the suburban landscape for open areas to contrast with the hustle and bustle of commercial life. Urban living was often blamed for social unrest and poor psychological health. Richmond recognized the need to create more parks in 1874 before the city became too densely populated. Land was secured in 1876 when the Committee on Grounds & Buildings allowed for the purchase of thirty acres on Chimborazo Hill. By 1881 the park was nearly completed and described by a local newspaper, “with its handsome walks and shade trees...it is believed that no property on the market offers such speculative advantages as this does.” During its early phases of development, the neighborhood around Chimborazo Park was advertised as a Suburban Resort, a green landscape offering residents open spaces in which to enjoy fresh air, exercise, participate in various social activities, and admire majestic views of the James River.

To draw residents to the park, the city extended a streetcar line to Chimborazo Park in the late 19th century. City officials believed the park would reduce social unrest, increase the physical and mental health of its citizens, provide appropriate spaces for recreation, and provide green buffers between industrialized regions and residential districts. Richmond’s Suburban Resort therefore provided several benefits to the city and its residents, providing a landscape perfect for escaping city life. Today, locals and tourists continue to enjoy the park’s expansive recreational landscape with meandering pathways.

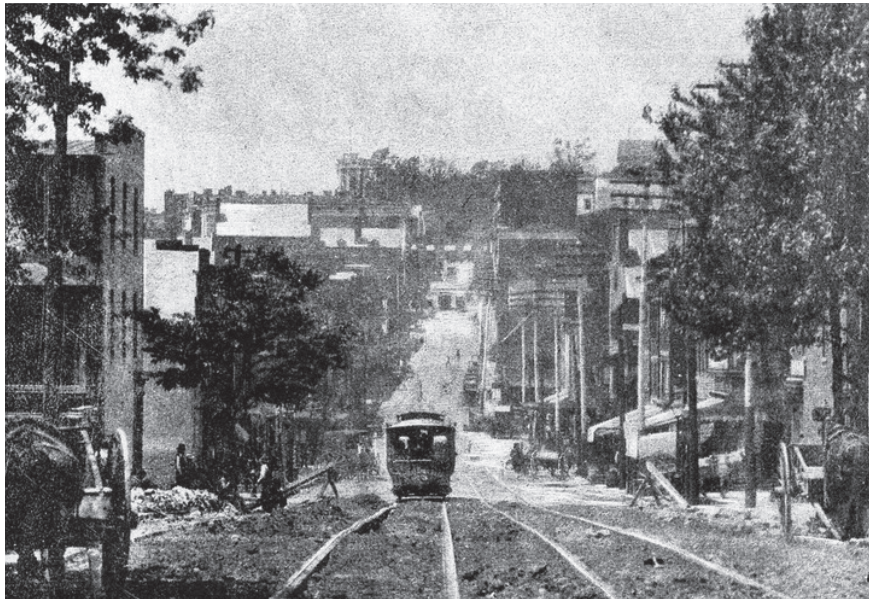


Image of Streetcar, 1890's. Shockoe Examiner.



Postcards of Libby Hill Park. Date unknown. VCU Digital Images Collection.

A LANDSCAPE FLOWING WITH WATER

ORNAMENTAL FOUNTAINS AND SPRINGS

Water has always played an important role in Chimborazo Park's history. The Chimborazo Hospital included a large bathhouse, built into Chimborazo Park's western hillside. The bathhouse, which drew upon the waters of Bloody Run, served thousands of soldiers throughout the course of the Civil War. In the years following the Civil War, a spring on the future park's southeastern hillside supplied water for brewery operations. In 1895, the spring was channeled into a stone wall at the base of the hill. Today, water from the spring continues to flow from pipes laid into the stone.

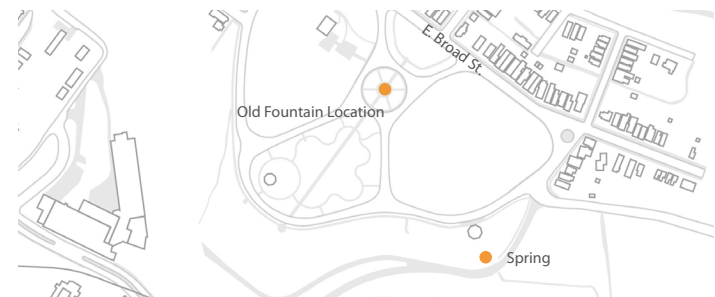
Also drawing water from the spring, the Chimborazo Fountain was built in the middle of the park's central circle in 1909. The fountain was wired for electric lighting, and at night colored lights shone from underneath the flowing water. This lighting required the City Engineer to install a series of electrical poles running through the center of the park, significantly detracting from the fountain's grandeur. In 1910, recognizing this severe design flaw, engineers dismantled the fountain and placed the wires underground. The city also added a handsome iron fence and a concrete walkway surrounding the fountain. The colorful lights of the fountain captivated visitors and neighborhood residents through the first half of the twentieth century. But by 1956, the fountain was shrouded in a thick coat of rust and its wiring had deteriorated beyond repair. The fountain was finally removed from Chimborazo Park, leaving the park's central circle vacant.



Public Works Department Annual Report, 1939.



Spring, 2010. Photo by Adam Robinson.



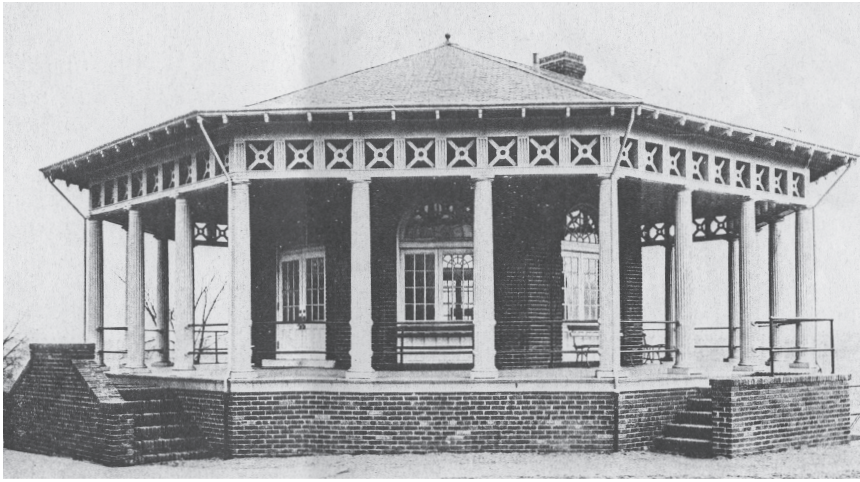
MUSIC IN THE PARKS

THE PARK PAVILION

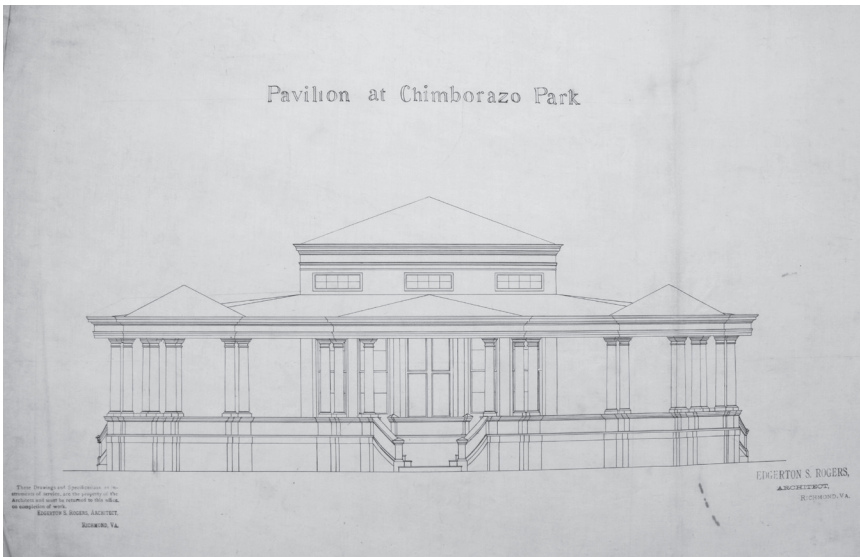
The original Chimborazo Pavilion was designed by Edgerton S. Rogers and built in 1905. The pavilion boasted a large veranda, which encircled the building, as well as a bandstand. In order to enhance the attractions of the park for the people of Richmond, city officials promoted the pavilion as a site for popular concerts and public events.

The expense of providing music and staffing the refreshment stand led the city to convert the concession stand into a park house to store maintenance tools. Two years later, both the pavilion and the old concession stand were torn down. The materials from the two structures were used to build a combination comfort station and park house on the site of the original pavilion in 1910. Five years later, the City Engineer built a new octagonal comfort station and park house, the same structure that stands in the park today. It is probable that the 1910 structure burned down, as the City Engineer made certain that the new comfort station be built out of brick to be fireproof.

Over the years, the old comfort station has experienced little change, with the exception of one small addition in 1940. Today, the building is known as the Chimborazo Round House, a landmark of the park landscape.



Comfort Station. *City Engineer Annual Report, 1915.*



Plan for the pavilion, date unknown. *Library of Virginia.*

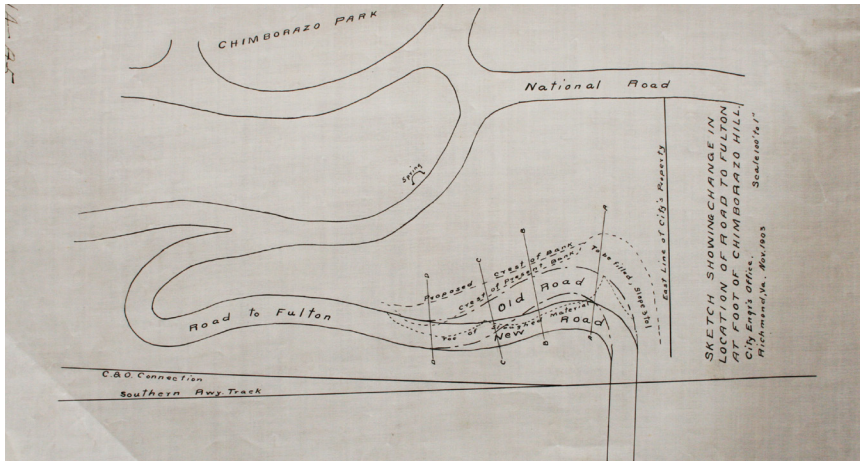
CONNECTIONS TO FULTON

THE PARK PATHWAYS

The City Engineer's office had grand plans for developing Chimborazo Park. They initially intended for Chimborazo Park to seamlessly join with another new park on Libby Hill, connecting the two parks with terraced roads and footpaths. The resulting road would make "one of the best drives of the city, with an extended view of the lower plain."

Park officials never built this connection to Libby Hill. But in 1900, the City Engineer did build a road extending from the upper terrace of Chimborazo Park to the neighborhood of Fulton, and shortly afterward, a brick walkway was built from this road to the Fulton Gas Works. Employees of the gas works, as well as residents of the Fulton neighborhood, made extensive use of these park improvements. Connecting Church Hill and Fulton and the industries and warehouses along the James River, the paths across Chimborazo Park allowed the residents of these neighborhoods to intermingle in work and in leisure.

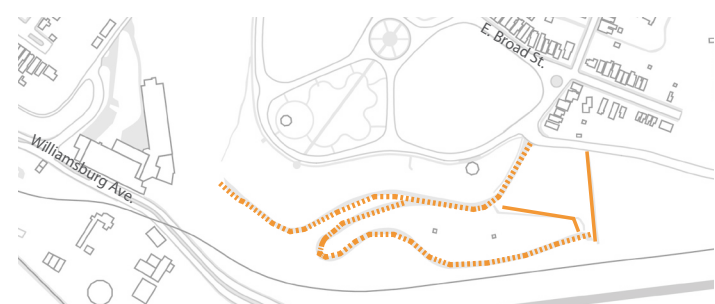
When the neighborhood of Fulton was destroyed under the banner of urban renewal, the park's connection to Fulton was entirely severed. Today, the weathered cobblestones of the old road to Fulton peter out and end abruptly near the Chesapeake & Ohio railroad tracks.



Sketch showing change in location of road leading to Fulton, 1903. Library of Virginia.



Paths to Fulton, 2011. Photo by Ashley Allis.



PLAYGROUNDS OLD AND NEW

SHIFTING FORMS OF RECREATION

The Chimborazo Playground gained instant popularity when it opened in 1913. Reformers felt that the playground improved the character and morals of neighborhood children, and the Superintendent of Playgrounds and Recreation reported, "Policemen said that street gangs were broken up, citizens say that the worst boys showed remarkable improvement in their conduct and a drunkard was reformed because he had to choose between drink and going to the playgrounds at night and he chose the latter."

The playground was built in the lowlands of Chimborazo Park along the road to the Fulton neighborhood, and was accessible to the children of both the Church Hill and Fulton neighborhoods. The playground even allowed children to discover the park's long history; in 1934, a boy digging in the dirt uncovered the skeleton of a man presumably killed during the Battle of Bloody Run.

Despite its popularity and acclaim the playground suffered from the toxic miasma rising out of the gas works and the area was also subject to frequent landslides, leading the Superintendent to recommend that the playground be moved to the main level of the park. In 1939, using labor supplied by the Works Progress Administration, the Department of Public Works moved the playground to its current location along N 30th Street, between Libby Hill and Chimborazo Parks.



BEFORE: Grading the hill for the new playground, 1939. Department of Public Works.



AFTER: The recently completed playground, 1939. Department of Public Works.



THE FIGHT TO HOLD THE HILL

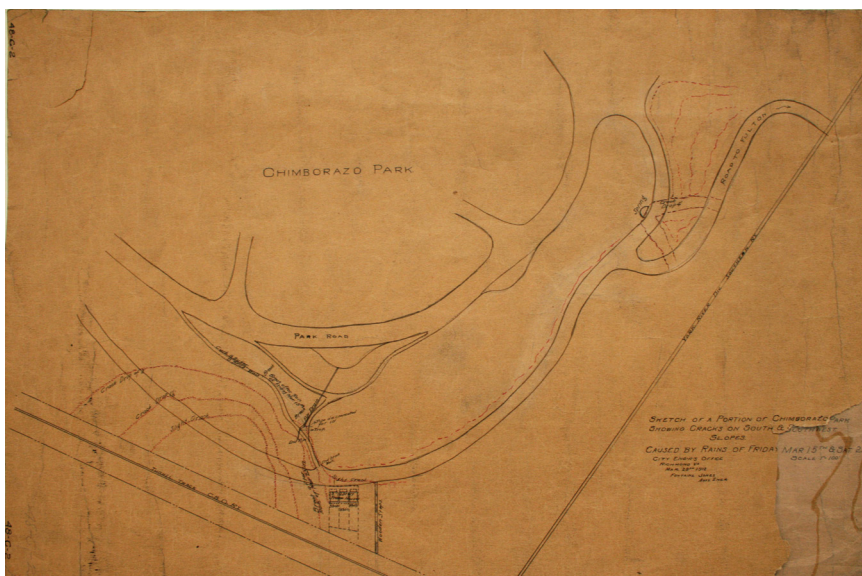
LANDSLIDES AND SLIPPAGE

In 1907, a landslide on the slopes of Chimborazo Park covered the road leading to Fulton. This was the start of major problems with the instability of land on the edges of Chimborazo Park. In 1921, one of Chimborazo Park's roads fell twelve feet as a result of the hill's slumping, and park employees worked tirelessly until 1923 to stabilize the hill. During the Great Depression, the city used Works Progress Administration grants to grade the slopes of the hill and build an extensive system of retaining walls to keep the park hillside from collapsing.

In 1978, after a rainstorm, large cracks were spotted in the roads along the park's edge. A geologist from the Department of Highways and Transportation made borings at the base of the hill and speculated that the crumbling hillside was the result of a rising water table; if the water table could be drained, the park's problems would be solved. Acting on a hunch, the geologist decided to excavate the old brewery, and discovered that rainwater and a broken sewer line had been seeping into the cellar's rooms. The water, which had been ponding inside the cellar, significantly contributed to the hill's slumping. Filling in the brewery vaults and structures, which predated the establishment of the park, arrested the collapse of the park's hill.



Newspaper article on the recurrent terrain problems at Chimborazo Park.
Richmond Time Dispatch, 1978.



Map showing cracks in slope, 1912. Library of Virginia.

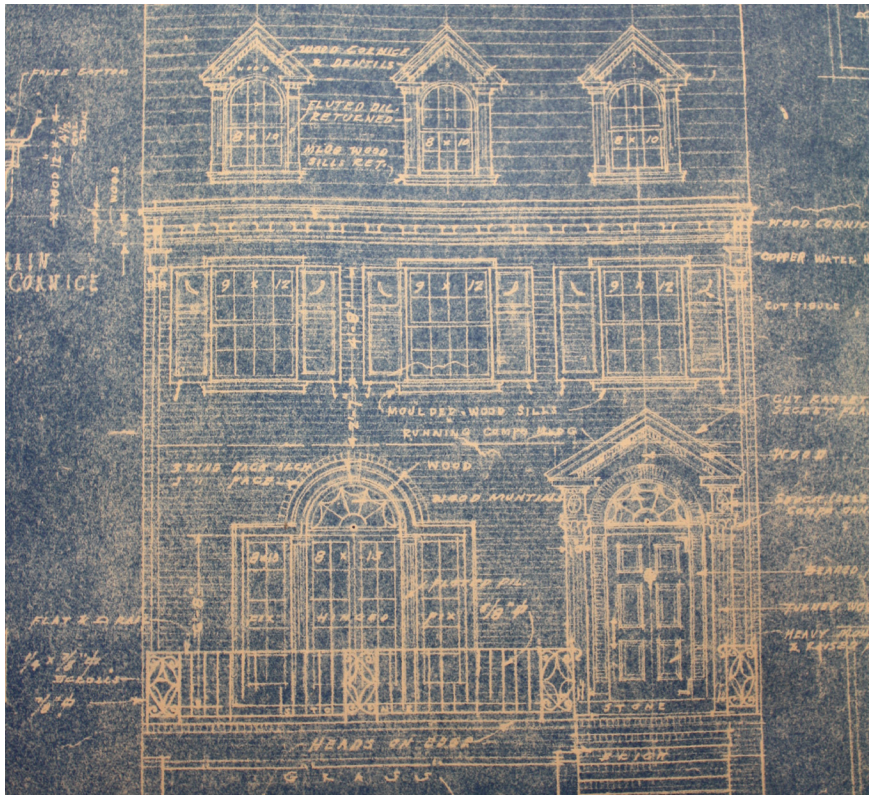


THE HOUSE OF AN UNDERTAKER

THE MORTON G. BILLUPS HOUSE- 3406 E. BROAD STREET

Constructed in 1931, the house at 3406 E. Broad Street, designed by architect Bascom J. Rowlett for Morton G. Billups, is the newest house built on the edge of Chimborazo Park. In association with his father and brother, Morton Billups operated the Billups Mortuary, located at 2500 E. Marshall Street. Before moving to the new house, Billups, his new bride and their young daughter resided with Billups' parents and brother nearby at a house located at 2610 E. Broad Street.

Subtle detailing around the entrance of Morton Billups' Neo-Classical house hint toward his occupation—a wreath and urns represent traditional funerary symbols. Originally flanked by two houses, which no longer stand, the side elevations of the Billups house reveal their earlier proximity to neighboring residences. The east elevation does not have windows while the west elevation has windows with small panes— this allowed light in but obstructed the view from the neighboring house. The house reflects both the architectural trends of the neighborhood with its traditional revival style, general form and setback and also reflects the profession of the house's first resident.



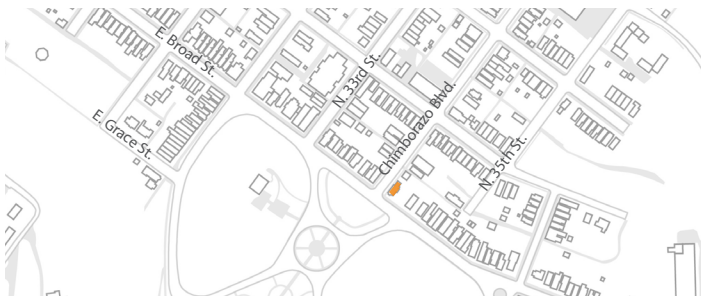
Bascom Rowlett, original plans, 1931. Library of Virginia.

Telephone **BILLUPS 3-6711**



MORTON G. BILLUPS CHARLES J. BILLUPS & SONS STUART L. BILLUPS

ALWAYS OPEN VISITORS WELCOME



The house's first resident, Morton G. Billups and early advertisement for his business. City Directory, 1948.



200-216 N. 32nd Street, 2010. Photo by Stephanie Langton.

ALLARD V. BELL

CHIMBORAZO'S NINETEENTH CENTURY LAND DISPUTE

The row houses overlooking Chimborazo Park on North 32nd Street have an interesting history, dating from the late nineteenth century. The construction of these houses reflects the eastern expansion of Richmond, to the establishment of Chimborazo Park, and to slavery. In 1884, Joseph Allard saw an opportunity to invest in the parcel of land on North 32nd Street between East Grace Street and East Broad Street. Originally, this land had been conveyed in 1825 to a freed slave, Dorcus Bell. Her grandson and heir, James Bell, left Virginia after emancipation and returned in the late 1880s to discover his family had sold the property without his consent. A federal court ruled that since Bell was once a slave, he did not have the right to inherit the land. Because of Bell's former enslavement, the property remained in Allard's possession.

Allard constructed nine units from 200 to 216 North 32nd Street. These houses represent the area's development as a predominately white suburban neighborhood. The economic and social connection between these houses and the valley below Chimborazo Hill was significant. During the early twentieth century a mixture of upper and working-class residents lived in the houses on North 32nd Street. Both laborers in the factories and railroads as well as John Armitage, the owner of the Armitage Factory, resided on this street. Brought together through economic activity, the residents on Chimborazo Hill and those down in the valley intermingled to form a rich complex urbanism.



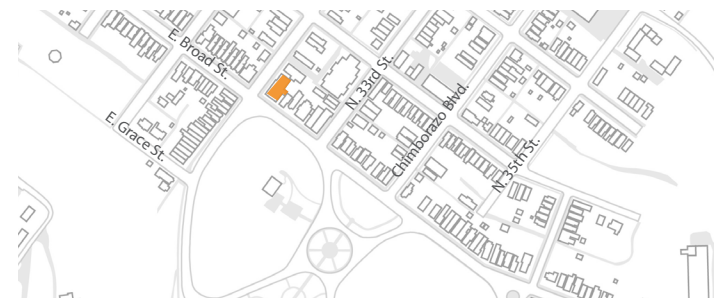
BROADUS MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

TODAY'S MT. CARMEL CHURCH

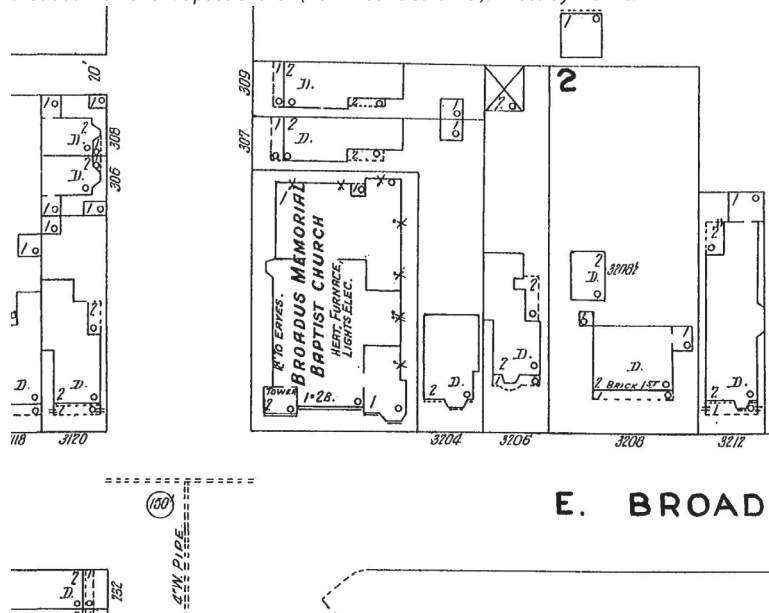
Broadus Memorial Baptist Church was established in 1895, named for renowned Richmond Baptist minister, John A. Broadus. To accommodate its growing congregation, the Gothic style church building was constructed in 1901, designed with input from church members. Broadus Memorial recorded 58 years of history in this location. It merged with East End Baptist Church in 1945, greatly increasing its membership and consolidating area white Baptists.

Influenced by the suburbanization of the 1950s, many members of Broadus Memorial moved from neighborhoods nearby to Henrico and Hanover County. In order to maintain and enlarge its membership, Broadus Memorial followed its members and moved to Henrico County in 1958. Mount Carmel Baptist Church, the second and current owner of this church building from north Richmond, moved in on June 1st 1958 and greatly increased membership. Mount Carmel's members were delighted by the prospect of occupying the Broadus Memorial building to accommodate their growing congregation. This location was more central and better able to serve its many members living in the East End.

Mount Carmel renovated and enlarged the church building in 1996-97. An administrative office, pastor's study room, and library in the lower level of the church building were all renovated. The entire church was painted, and two additional neighboring properties were acquired and connected to the building, giving Mount Carmel its current appearance.



Broadus Memorial Baptist Church (now Mount Carmel). Photo by Wei He.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1905.

ODDS AND ENDS

MONUMENTS ADDED OVER TIME

During the 20th century, Chimborazo Park saw the addition of several unique features not directly related to the original scheme of the park. The first of these modern installations occurred in 1934, when a memorial stone was placed 150 yards from the National Parks Service Visitor Center. The Confederate Memorial Literary Society erected the stone, recognizing the site of the largest military hospital in the country. The stone is appropriately sited, overlooking the Confederate Navy Yard on the James River, the Libby Hill Sailors & Soldiers Monument, and riverside Rocketts Landing.

In 1950, the Boy Scouts built a small replica of the Statue of Liberty in the park. For their 40th anniversary that year, the Boy Scouts of America national council promoted the theme of “Strengthen the Arm of Liberty.” In subsequent years, over 200 small replicas of the Statue of Liberty were erected by Boy Scout troops in communities across the country. A recent preservation campaign has helped promote the restoration of these neglected statues.

In the 1950s, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities placed the Powhatan Stone in the park. The stone commemorates King Powhatan and his relationship with Captain John Smith and the English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia. Two other curiosities are a part of the park landscape; a gazebo that was added to the park in the late twentieth century and a large interesting iron cage.



Photos by Adam Robinson, 2010.

Until the early 1800s, city streets were dark in the flickering light of lanterns. In 1852, forty-five years after London first illuminated its streets with gas distilled from coal, Richmond installed its first gas street lamps. The city constructed the multi-building plant that distilled gas from coke because municipal ownership was thought to provide lower prices and reliable supply, while generating revenue that reduced taxes.

New structures were frequently built on the site and old ones demolished, because of the rapidly changing gas manufacturing technology. Until the 1890s, the gas works produced coal gas by heating coal in ovens called "retorts." Later, production began shifting to water gas, produced by passing steam through superheated coal to produce a mixture of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. The gas produced was then pumped from the gas works through mains under the city streets to be used for fuel and illumination.

The City Gas Works relocated to the 3200 block of Williamsburg Avenue in 1856, doubling its output in just six years. Gas production grew even more rapidly as the city recovered and expanded after the Civil War. In 10 years, gas consumption had risen by 50 percent. Increased safety, warmth, and productivity came with a price. Almost from the beginning, the Gas Works' neighbors complained of smoke and foul odors so intense that a city report admitted that "some of the strongest men connected with the works... have been overpowered by the stench."

Although streets, houses, and factories were increasingly illuminated by electricity, gas became popular for home heating and cooking, as well as industrial power. Between 1907-1909, the Gas Works were expanded and modernized. By 1920, over four times as much gas was produced as in 1900, and Richmond's consumption per person had more than doubled.

Gas production increased dramatically during World War II and continued to grow through the late 1940s. However, transcontinental pipelines soon made natural gas a more economical fuel, and in 1951 gas production ceased. The Gas Works site was used as a storage and distribution facility until 1972, when flooding from Hurricane Agnes destroyed tanks and equipment. By 1978, the site was abandoned, leaving the toxic waste that had accumulated for over a century.

The sequence of this walking tour traces the flow of materials through the site as it had operated historically.

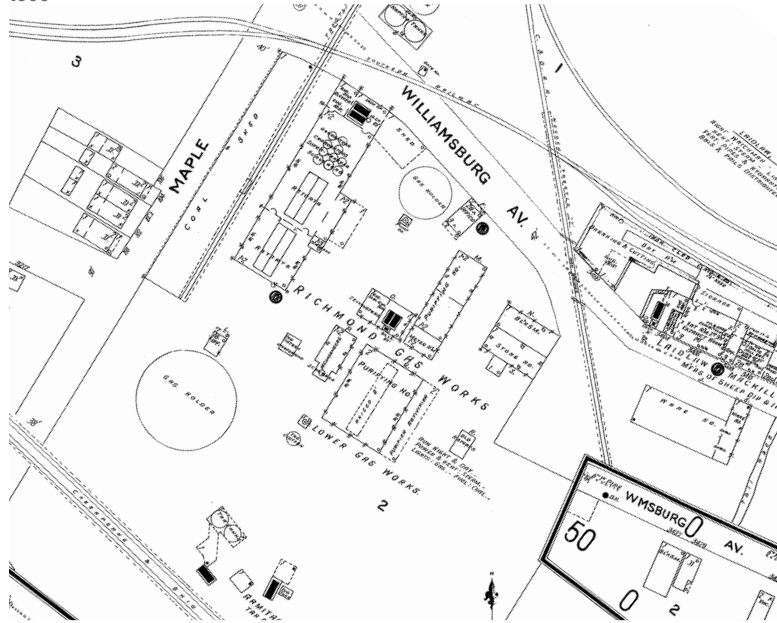


WALKING TOUR 3

- 1 PEOPLE OF THE GAS WORKS
The Gas Works Gang
- 2 TRESTLE AND COAL PITS
Fueling the Gas Works
- 3 BOILER HOUSE
Creating Steam to Distill the Gas
- 4 THE RETORT HOUSE
Creating a New Type of Gas
- 5 PROPANE FARM
Enriching Natural Gas
- 6 ENGINE HOUSE
Powering the Gas Works
- 7 GASOMETER
Storing the Gas
- 8 INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURES
Supplemental Pumping and Storing Waste
- 9 OFFICE BUILDING
Day to Day Administrative Operations
- 10 "BLUE BILLY" AND OTHER POISONS
Toxic Byproducts
- 11 THE ARMITAGE FACTORY
Recycling Byproducts
- 12 GILLIES CREEK AND ITS TRIBUTARIES
The Waters of the East End
- 13 ADJACENT HOUSES
Small Places with Many Faces

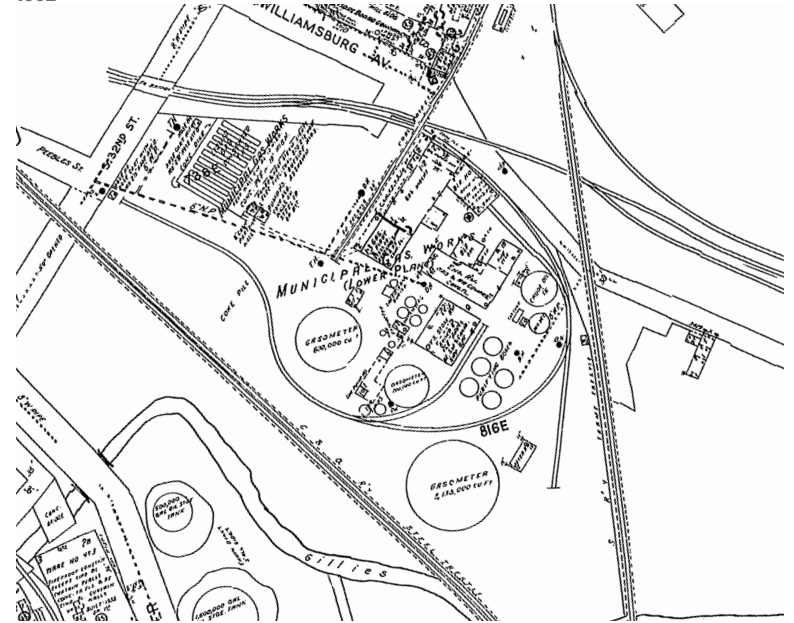


1905



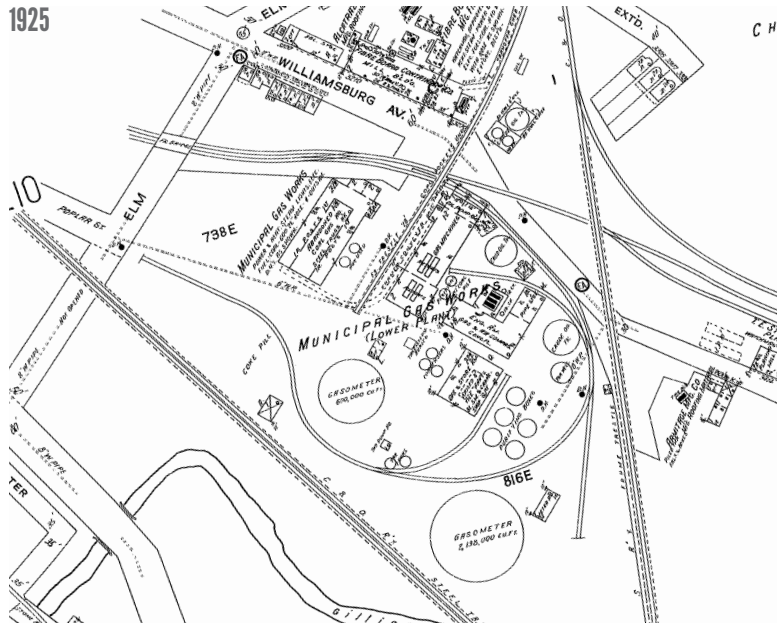
1905 Sanborn Map.

1952

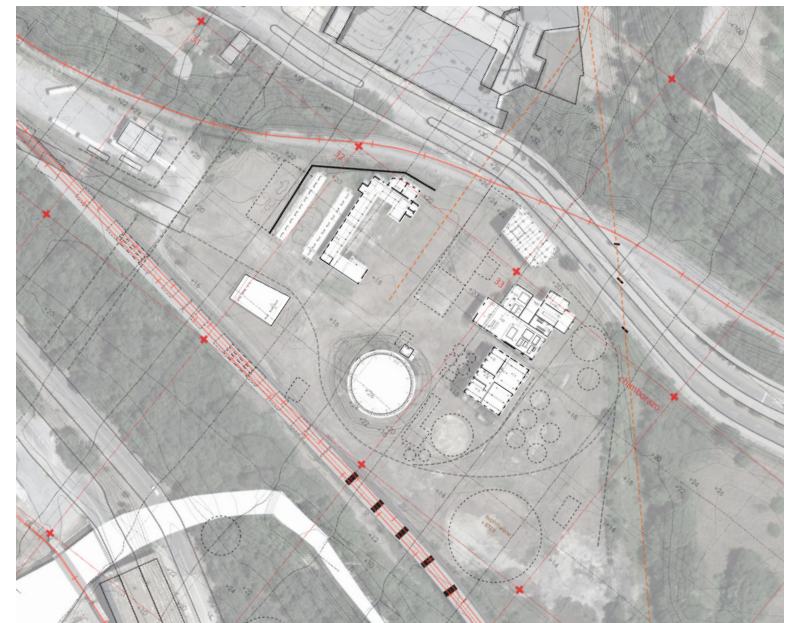


1952 Sanborn Map.

1925



1925 Sanborn Map.



The Gas Works, 2011. Map by Oscar Obando.

THE GAS WORKS GANG

PEOPLE OF THE GAS WORKS

It took many hands to transform coal and coke into gas and distribute it to the city. The Department of Public Utilities employed clerks, laborers, plumbers, mechanics, engineers, meter repairmen, and even product demonstrators who promoted the advantages of gas appliances at the Bureau's "Display Center" showroom in the downtown shopping district.

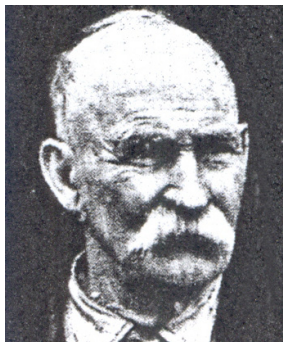
Much of the work performed at the Gas Works itself was physically demanding and occurred out of the general public's sight. Gas works employees were mechanics, yardmen, operators, fireman or simply "helpers." The lidmen in the retort house operated the retort, or brick furnace, in which 1200 degree steam was forced through coke. In addition to steam, employees worked in stench and smoke with fire and heavy machinery, as well as explosive gas and toxic by-products. It is not surprising that injuries occurred. For example, after a "flareback" in 1910, the city council paid 5 men about \$2.25 each for every workday lost due to "severe burns of the face and hands," cuts and other injuries.

Despite these arduous conditions, many employees had long careers at the gas works, and continued to work at physically demanding jobs long after the conventional retirement age. For example, Repair Foreman Horace Marvin Griffin, Yardman Joseph Macauley, and Operator Benjamin Mann had a combined total of more than 136 years' service when they retired in the 1930s. Such commitment under hardship earned employees the sort of mutual respect and personal esteem accorded family members.

Few employees could match the service of Superintendent William F. Knowles, who led the rebuilding program of 1907-1909. The Superintendent was elected by the city council. When Knowles was first nominated in 1895, representatives of the predominately African American Jackson Ward nominated J.C. Farley, an African American photographer to run against him. Knowles won the election, and in 1931, at age 80, he celebrated his 36th year as Superintendent and 55th year of employment with the city.



Employees stoking the fires of the retort house in the 19th century. 1936 Richmond Department of Public Utilities Annual Report.



Joseph Macauley, Yardman. 1938 Annual Report.



Horace Marvin Griffin, Repair Foreman. 1938 Annual Report.



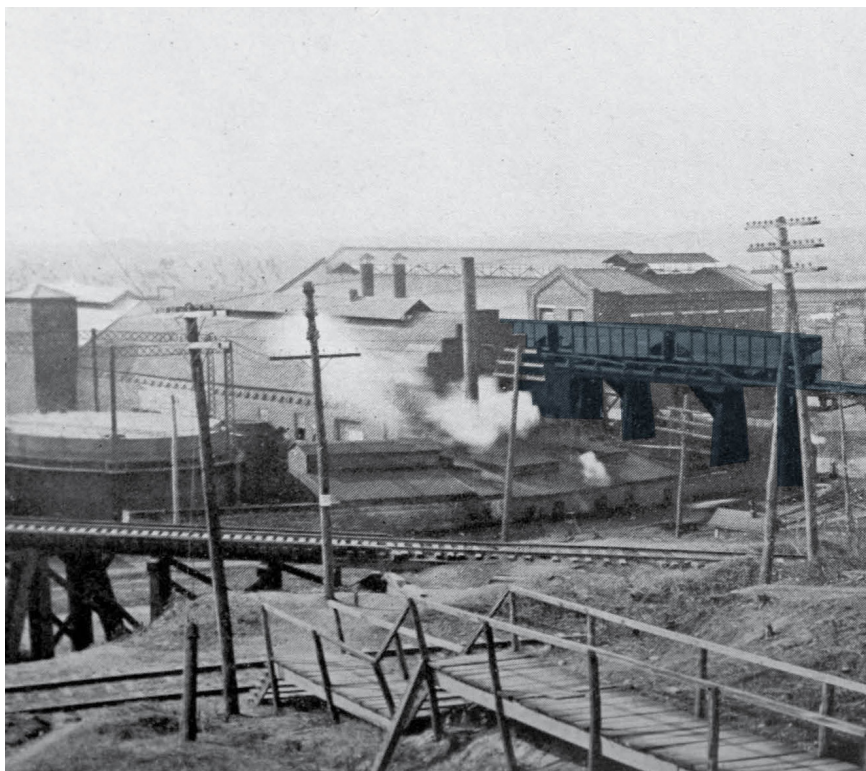
Gas Works employees celebrating Superintendent Knowles 55 years of service. 1931 Annual Report.

FUELING THE GAS WORKS

THE TRESTLE AND COAL PITS

Coal and coke arrived at the gas works on a trestle just south of Williamsburg Avenue.

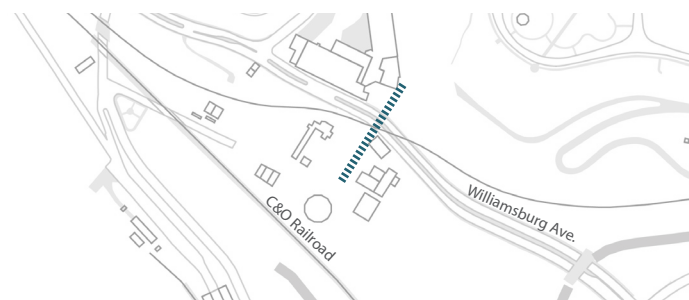
The gas works had a huge appetite for coal. In 1942, when the gas works produced 1.36 billion cubic feet of gas, it consumed 27,000 tons of coke and coal, or about 68 pounds of coke and coal per thousand cubic feet of gas. Coal came into the Gas Works over a C & O dead end spur rail line that crossed Williamsburg Avenue from the north. When this line entered the Gas Works property, it ran along a low trestle that had a row of coal pits underneath. After the engine had backed the last coal car all the way to the end of the trestle, the crew opened hatches in the bottom of the cars and coal filled the pits. Conveyor belts, supplemented later by a small tramway, carried the coal to the boiler and retort houses as needed. Coke was stockpiled at the back of the Gas Works lot just south of the retort house.



Railroad trestle with coal cars, 1910. 1936 Richmond Department of Public Utilities Annual Report.



Current photo of Railroad car located to the southwest of the Gas Works, 2011. Crystal Prigmore.



CREATING STEAM TO DISTILL THE GAS

THE BOILER HOUSE

Because of its elevation and location close to Williamsburg Avenue, the boiler house is the most prominent building on the Gas Works site. The boiler house is a simple composition of brick and concrete with full height steel frame windows on all four sides, parapetted roofline, and prominently placed "Fulton Gas Works" blue tiling. Its height, large glass windows, and Art Deco accents such as inset ornamental tile triangles give the Boiler House a more modern appearance than the neighboring early twentieth century structures.

Coal was brought into the boiler house through a small tramway and was used to generate high pressure steam that was passed over heated coal and filtered to create water gas, a mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen. Due to its location on the floodplain, gas production in the old boiler room could be interrupted for up to three days at a time during flooding, an unfortunately common occurrence during the 1930s. In 1937, the new boiler house was elevated 16 feet above ground on a series of concrete columns, thereby raising the boiler fires above flood levels. Building the new boiler house began with the installation of the boilers and their steel framing, and then constructing a masonry shell around them. When another flood hit in 1940, gas production continued uninterrupted.

The new Boiler House was designed by Carneal, Johnston, and Wright, prominent Richmond architects and designers of other notable structures including the Virginia Mutual Building, the Virginia State Office Building, and campus buildings at the University of Richmond.



Boiler House from Williamsburg Avenue, 2011. Photo by Michelle Benoit.



South View of Boiler House, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.



Inside of Boiler House, 2011. Photo by Oscar Obando.



CREATING A NEW TYPE OF GAS

THE RETORT HOUSE

The single story foundation is all that remains of the Retort House, a massive brick and steel structure built in 1908-1909, where the primary work of converting coal to gas was conducted. During the nineteenth century, the technology for producing gas from coal changed frequently. The Gas Works was sometimes slow to adapt new processes, which required discarding expensive equipment and adding new facilities. After much debate, the Gas Works converted from producing coal gas, created by heating coke over a coal fire, to “carbureted water gas” in the 1890s. This new technology required boiling water over coal burners to produce steam, which was then forced through coke at high pressure. The superheated coke gave off carbon dioxide which combined with the hydrogen in the steam to create “water gas,” a superior fuel for heating and cooking. To boost its illuminating properties and further enhance its heat value, the raw water gas was mixed with oil in a heated retort before being pumped to the purifiers outside the retort house. In 1907, the City Council Committee on Light authorized the city attorney to “acquire sufficient land for the desired expansion of the Gas Works.” In 1908, the plan for a \$60,000 Retort House that utilized water gas technology was approved. By August of that year, the Times-Dispatch reported that the building was “nearing completion.” The four houses fronting Maple Street had been demolished for this purpose. The old coal gas plant located north of the new facility had been abandoned by 1909. The 1908-1909 Retort House was technologically obsolete just 15 years after opening. A new Gas House east of the building took over its processes in the mid-1920s, and the Retort House was demolished in 1938.



Shell of the 1908-1909 Retort House before demolition. 1939 Richmond Dept. of Public Utilities Annual Report.

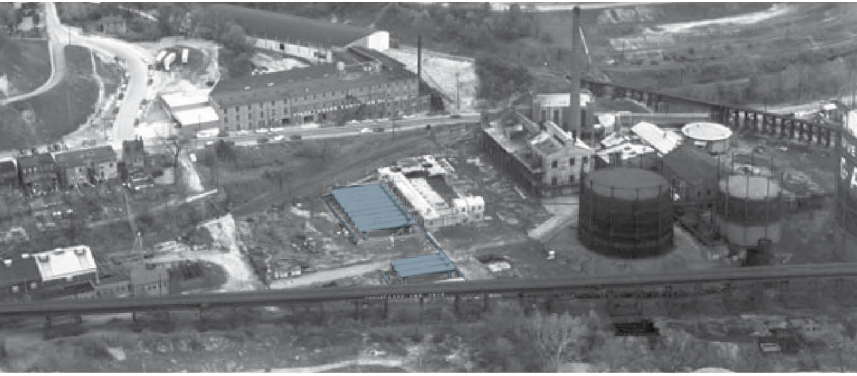


Reinforced concrete foundation of the 1908-1909 Retort House. 1939 Richmond Dept of Public Utilities Annual Report.

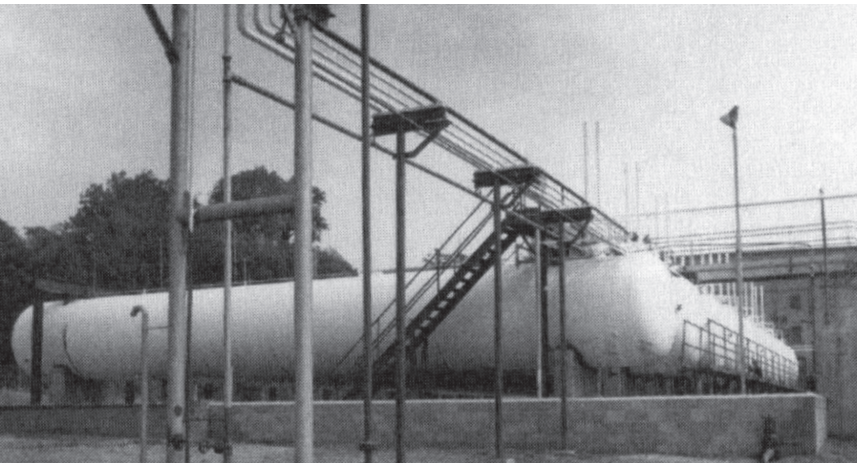


Reinforced concrete foundation of the 1908-1909 Retort House, 2011. Crystal Prigmore.





Aerial View of Propane Cribs, 1955. Library of Virginia.



Propane Cribs before the flood. 1971-72 Richmond Dept. of Public Utilities Annual Report.



Aerial View of Propane Cribs, 2011. Bing.

ENRICHING NATURAL GAS

THE PROPANE FARM

A row of gleaming white cylindrical tanks with rounded ends catch the eye in 1950s aerial photographs of the Fulton area. These dozen tanks, located near the northwest corner of the gas works, were adjacent to the site of the Retort House, demolished in 1939. Shortly after the gas works converted to natural gas in the 1950s, these tanks were installed to hold liquid propane transported through pipelines from gigantic storage caverns in the southwest. Propane was a more desirable supplemental fuel for high volume storage because it liquefies under only moderate pressure and contains more than twice as much heating potential per cubic foot, but it was too expensive to replace natural gas as basic fuel. During extremely cold weather and other periods of peak demand, the gas works converted this reserve propane to a gaseous state and mixed it with natural gas to augment fuel supply.

In June 1972, flood waters from Hurricane Agnes did major damage to the “propane farm”, wrenching the tanks loose from their cradles and deforming even their reinforced steel walls. To eliminate future vulnerability, the propane farm was relocated to another gas company facility, a key step in abandoning the Fulton Gas Works site after 120 years of operation. Today, only the row of “cribs” that supported the tanks remain.



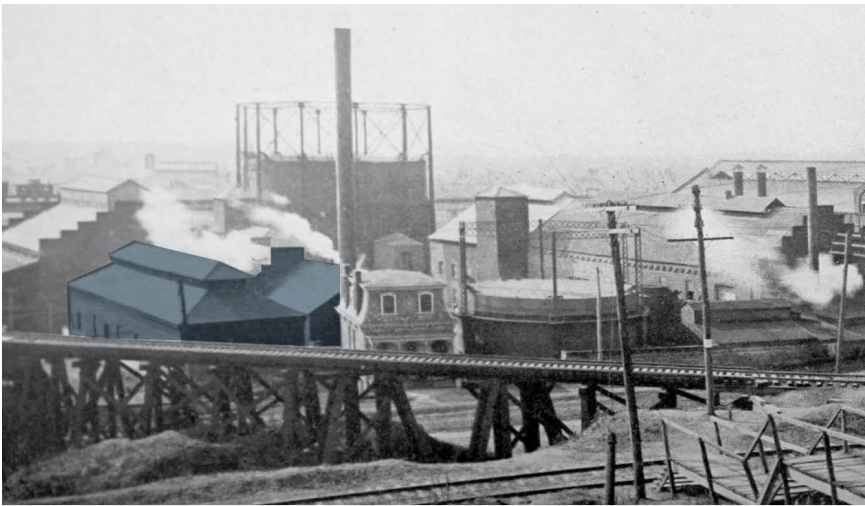
POWERING THE GAS WORKS

THE ENGINE HOUSE

The Engine House, located near the Gas and Boiler Houses, drew its name from the powerful gas and air compressors that moved the gas and its components through the manufacturing process, into the gas holders, and over a citywide network of more than 420 miles of mains to over 41,000 customers by 1948. These compressors occupied the main section of the building.

Boilers also operated in this building prior to the construction of the 1937 Boiler House. In 1939, they were removed and their tall smokestack was demolished. The boiler area, located in a wing at the southeast side of the building, was then used to store gas pipe, which ranged in diameter from two inch residential service lines to mammoth 24-inch distribution mains. The gas works, which installed or replaced as much as 20 miles of lines per year, purchased pipe in bulk from foundries as far away as New Jersey. The pipe traveled by barge to Richmond, where it was unloaded at the city wharf and stored here until it was required for installation.

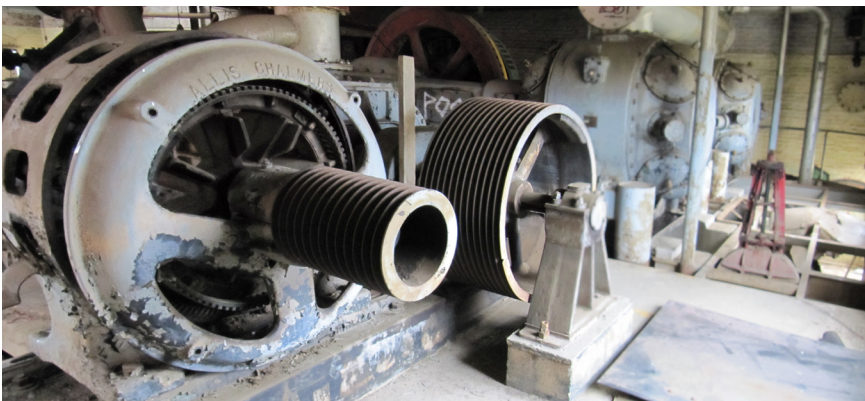
The single story red brick Engine House once had a complicated nineteenth century style hipped roof with an upper gabled clerestory section. However, it later acquired a stepped-ziggurat façade and simple gable roof which match those of the Office Building and Gas House constructed during the 1907 to 1909 expansion project.



North view of the Engine House, 1910. 1936 Richmond Department of Public Utilities Annual Report.



North view of the Engine House, 2011. Photo by Oscar Obando.



Inside the Engine House, 2011. Photo by Oscar Obando.



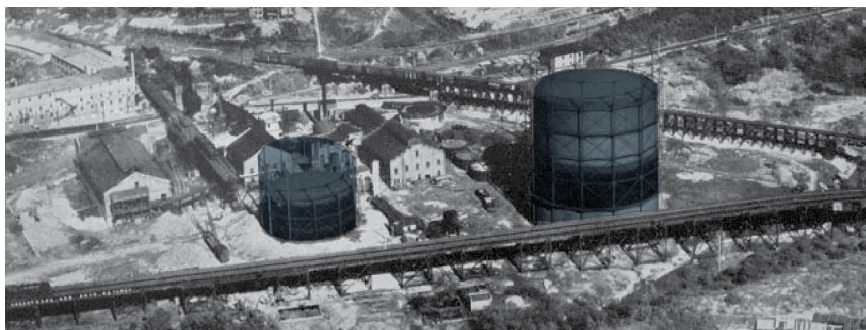
STORING THE GAS

THE GASOMETER

You are standing in front of the iconic structure of the Gas Works. The gasometer, used to store gas produced by the Fulton Gas Works, was built in the late 19th century. This gasometer dominated Richmond's skyline and served as the symbol of the Gas Works, as well as providing a visual monitoring system for of the city's gas consumption. By watching the height of the gas holder rise and fall, Richmond's citizens could easily determine the present state of the city's gas supply.

This structure utilized a telescoping storage system guided by a rigid exterior framework. During the day, when gas usage was minimal, the Gas Works would pump gas into the gasometer. The pressure would push up each of the gasometer's multiple storage chambers. At night, when gas usage was high, the gas would be pumped out of the gasometer and into the homes of Richmond's residents, causing the gasometer's storage chambers to recede.

This gasometer was capable of holding 650,000 cubic feet of gas. When the gasometer was first built, this was enough to provide gas for the entire city for two to three days. As Richmond continued to grow, the city's residents demanded more and more fuel. A larger gasometer, capable of holding over 2 million cubic feet of gas, had been built by 1925. When Richmond switched over to natural gas in 1950, the gasometers became obsolete. In 1972, engineers noticed large cracks in the larger gasometer, and it was demolished.



View of the Gasometers.



Gasometer, 2011. Photo by Crystal Prigmore.



Gasometer, 2011. Photo by Crystal Prigmore.





The Pump House at the foot of the gasometer, 2010. Photo by Crystal Prigmore.



Industrial Tar tank, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.

SUPPLEMENTAL PUMPING AND STORING WASTE

INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURES

8

FULTON GAS WORKS

The Fulton Gas Works grounds are dotted with the remains and footprints of numerous industrial structures and buildings. As technology changed or production levels varied, the gas works abandoned existing structures and built new ones in more convenient locations.

Many of these industrial structures were tanks and related small pumping stations. Some of the tanks contained oil which was injected into the “water gas” to boost its heat potential. Two large above-ground tanks contained crude oil used to fire generators and blowers connected to the modern equipment in the Boiler House. Oil was delivered by barge to the city wharf, and flowed to the gas works through a pipeline. Many of the smaller structures were related to the collection of by-products, such as tar.

Two important groups of industrial structures were the condensers and purifying boxes. Condensers removed water vapor and condensed oils from the gas, while purifying boxes used lime to filter out impurities like stench-producing sulfur. Cleaning contaminated lime compound from the purifying boxes was long considered one of the most unpleasant tasks performed by Gas Works laborers. The sites of the condensers, purifying boxes, and tar extraction site were situated close to the office building, between the Gas Plant and the gasometers.

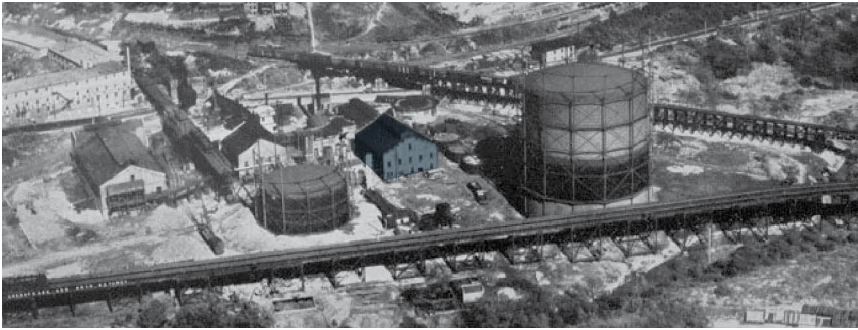


DAY TO DAY ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

THE OFFICE BUILDING

Constructed during the 1907 to 1909 modernization and expansion program, the Office Building housed the administrative staff of the gas works as well as specialized workshops. It replaced a domestic-scale building with a prominent mansard roof, suggesting that the growth and expansion of the gas work's business required additional administration.

In addition to manufacturing gas, employees of the Public Service Department's Gas Division maintained hundreds of miles of mains, installed and disconnected service, tested and repaired meters, and oversaw massive coal and coke deliveries. Not all these activities were centered at the Fulton Works. The complexity of the gas supply network required considerable administration and offices on the second floor of the three-story office building provided an excellent view of the full Gas Works site. The first floor of this large red brick building housed a blacksmith and carpenter shop, as well as a supply room where workers obtained parts and equipment, while the narrow third floor attic was used for storage. Photographs from the 1930s show the building with an ornamental stepped-ziggurat façade similar to that of the Engine and Gas Houses, but the façade has since been simplified to follow the angled continuous line of the gable roof.



Aerial view of the Office Building.



The Office Building, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.



Inside the Office Building, 2011.
Photo by Crystal Prigmore.



Inside the Office Building, 2011.
Photo by Oscar Obando.



TOXIC BYPRODUCTS

“BLUE BILLY” AND OTHER POISONS

Sixty years after the end of gas manufacturing, toxic by-products still remain on the Gas Works site. One of the primary contaminants of concern is “Blue Billy,” appropriately named, as exposure to large amounts of it has been known to turn people blue. Blue Billy is a product of cyanide wastes, created during the gas manufacture process.

Blue Billy is likely present near the purification boxes, and may be present in the nearby Gillies Creek. Blue Billy can be remediated by excavation and removal, or containment and protection of the substance in the soil to ensure the substance cannot escape.

The presence of Blue Billy on the site is just one example of why the Fulton Gas Works today remains a brownfield site. Other contaminants at the Gas Works may include coal tars near tar repositories and some spots near the rail line and Napthalene in sumps, distribution lines, and various other areas on site. One innovative potential “green” strategy for remediating coal tars is phytoremediation, a soil and groundwater treatment technology that removes, contains, or reduces contaminants with vegetation and its associated microbiota, soil amendments, and agronomic techniques.



Areas of acute toxicity inferred based on localized past uses, 2010.



Photo of “Blue Billy” at the Gas Works, 2010. Photo by Kelly Hitzing.



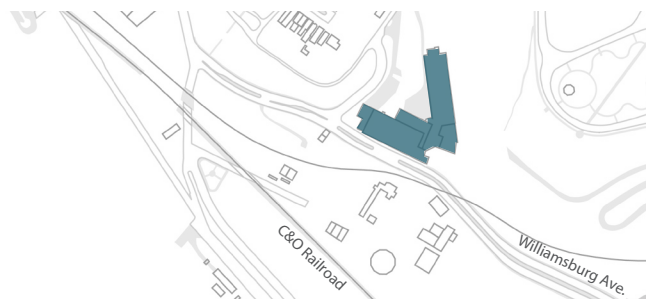
RECYCLING BYPRODUCTS

THE ARMITAGE FACTORY

Turning coal into gas created “Blue Billy”, which tinted the earth azure, and other pollutants which threatened the James River as well as the soil. However, thanks to a family from Chester, Pennsylvania, tar from the gasification process was transformed from messy waste into money in the city treasury.

In the 1880s, John Armitage and his sons Charles and William began manufacturing asphalt paint and other roofing products from tar purchased from the Gas Works. In February 1900, the Armitage’s wooden plant in a corner of the Gas Works was destroyed by a spectacular fire that menaced the gas holder. The Armitage Manufacturing Company hired architects Noland and Baskerville to design a replacement brick factory across the street on the 3200 block of Williamsburg Avenue. These architect’s were best known for their design of churches in Richmond and the Swannanoa mansion on Afton Mountain.

In 1911, Charles Armitage proudly reported that his factory mitigated pollution of the James by utilizing every scrap of tar purchased from the Gas Works. After Charles Armitage declared bankruptcy in 1913, William Armitage’s Alcatraz Paint Company, manufacturers of iron paint and roof coatings, took over the factory. Between the world wars, Alcatraz Paint shared the site with the Fibre Board Container Company, a carton manufacturer owned by the Donati family. Like the Armitages, the Donatis lived on Church Hill above the factory. Although Alcatraz Paint relocated after World War II, the factory was used to manufacture cartons into the 1960s, after which it served as a warehouse.



Armitage Factory, 2010. Photos by Abby Chryst.



Gillies Creek, 2010. Photos by Ashley Allis.

THE FORGOTTEN WATERWAYS OF THE EAST END

GILLIES CREEK AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

12

FULTON GAS WORKS

Richmond's East End is the home to many creeks and streams that historically ran freely into the James River below Chimborazo Hill. Gillies Creek and Bloody Run Creek were two such waterways that adjoin the Gasworks site. Today, Gillies Creek runs for 1.7 miles through the East End before passing by the site of the Gas Works and emptying into the James River through a culvert. The creek begins in Henrico County and flows into the City of Richmond. In the late 1800s, Gillies Creek was incorporated into part of the city's original wastewater system. In 1974, the channel was realigned as part of the Fulton Bottom Urban Renewal Project and rechanneled in order to alleviate severe flooding that had wrecked havoc during Hurricane Camille and Agnes. No longer natural, the creek is contained within a concrete channel and serves as a combined sewer outfall during large storm events, discharging untreated overflow wastewater and stormwater directly into the river.

Bloody Run Creek, on the other hand, was entirely filled in around 1884. It was named after a "bloody" battle between the Pamunkey and Rickohockan tribes that resulted in the waters running red. Fill material over the years has proven to be unstable. Poor soils combined with hydrology issues have caused repeated instances of hill slumping on neighboring Chimborazo Park.

Today, the East End largely falls within a Resource Management Area, which places stricter regulations on waters entering into the James River, and consequently, the Chesapeake Bay. Water quality will continue as a concern for the area in the years ahead.



SMALL SPACES WITH MANY FACES

FORGOTTEN HOUSES NEAR FULTON GAS WORKS

The Gas Works was not only the site of heavy industry, but also a neighborhood that was home to many of its employees. Today, virtually nothing remains of these one and two story frame houses, many of which lacked indoor plumbing as late as the 1960s.

After the Gas Works were moved to Williamsburg Avenue in 1856 to lessen their noxious effects on nearby communities, the superintendent remarked that workers had “difficulty finding suitable houses in which to live convenient to the works.” By the 1880s, blocks of wood frame working class homes had been built nearby. Workers of all kinds lived here, including Irish immigrants in the 1870s and African Americans in the 1890s. The 3200 block homes were purchased by businesses like the a Fibre Board Container Manufacturing Company in 1930

As the Fulton Gas Works expanded, many of these houses and streets were cleared. By 1925, only homes facing Williamsburg Avenue remained. The last of these were demolished for urban renewal projects in the 1960s. Today, the historic Woodward House at 3017 Williamsburg Ave, which was not occupied by gas works employees, is all that remains of the Williamsburg Avenue houses. The Woodward House is the 19th century home of John Woodward, Captain of the Sloop Rachell and other vessels operating out of Rocketts. The restored house stands as a reminder of Richmond’s maritime past and the Rocketts community and is the oldest frame house in Richmond built, c. 1750.



Back of the Woodward House, 1960's. Richmond Department of Housing.



Williamsburg Avenue, 1960's. Richmond Department of Housing.



FULTON

Looking out over the Fulton neighborhood, the modern development little reflects the thriving historic neighborhood that existed there prior to a late 20th century renewal project. Fulton has a rich history that dates back to the site of Chief Powhatan's principal town and his pivotal meeting with Captain John Smith and Christopher Newport in 1607 that paved the way for future development of the City of Richmond.

Centuries later, the area became an urban neighborhood settled largely by European immigrants working in nearby East End factories. Following the abolition of slavery, many freed men and women moved in from surrounding rural areas to start new lives. Fulton developed as a cohesive town that housed families, provided industrial jobs, and supplied goods for its residents. Like many other 19th century urban districts in Richmond, Fulton was comprised of a mix of retail stores, residences, and small factories.

As late as the 1940s, the commercial hub of Fulton along present day Williamsburg Avenue boasted barbershops, restaurants, grocery stores, a furniture store, a department store, a bakery, and a theater. The community was comprised of active, working-class citizens employed as laborers in East End factories. With the advent of automobile transportation, the Fulton community began to decline as Richmond residents and businesses spread out into the suburbs.

By the 1960s, Richmond city officials considered Fulton to be "the city's worst slum," and therefore, a leading candidate for Urban Renewal, a federal program of urban land redevelopment that aimed at revitalization through clean-sweep demolition and large-scale reconstruction. The Fulton community was divided on the merits of this approach, but protest ultimately failed as the last remaining buildings were razed in the 1980s.

Plans for redevelopment included separate zones for both industry and housing, bisected by a widened Williamsburg Avenue. Numerous tract houses and industrial warehouses, as well as a park, have been built, though reconstruction is not complete, leaving many vacant lots and undeveloped tracts throughout the area. No historical structures and few original streets remain; the remnants that still exist are veiled by the landscape of Gillies Creek Park. The neighborhood today is just that, a neighborhood of homes, and the view scarcely resembles the once-thriving community that was Fulton.

WALKING TOUR 4



- 1 **GILLIES CREEK PARK**
Community Renewal
- 2 **REMNANTS OF FULTON**
The Mystery House and other Ruins
- 3 **ADMIRAL GRAVELLY**
Fulton's Most Celebrated Native Son
- 4 **RAZING MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH**
Community Fellowship
- 5 **TRACT HOUSES**
Fulton's Reconstruction
- 6 **THE LAST HOUSE IN FULTON**
Spencer Armstead's Fight to the End
- 7 **WILLIAMSBURG AVENUE**
Richmond's Eastern Gateway
- 8 **POST-URBAN RENEWAL INDUSTRIAL**
Richmond's New Industrial Heritage
- 9 **TROLLEY BARN**
A Relic of Richmond's Streetcar

COMMUNITY RENEWAL

GILLIES CREEK PARK

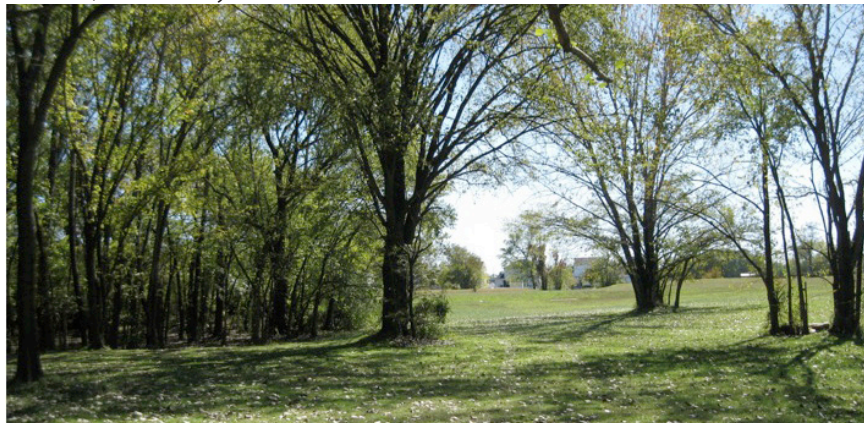
Gillies Creek Park is a 40-acre park created after the destruction of Fulton through Urban Renewal. The present day park, which lies within the flood plain of Gillies Creek, once housed a portion of a dense urban neighborhood. When the community was demolished in the 1970s, there was much discussion of how to appropriately redevelop the community. By 1987, plans were conceived for an active use park for all ages that would contribute to an urban greenway connecting other Richmond parks. Through community initiative, the park gained support from the City of Richmond and eventually led to the incorporation of the Gillies Creek Park Foundation in 1991. Federal grants along with local leadership allowed the Gillies Creek Park Foundation and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to plan and construct the park facilities by 1999. Presently, the park includes an 18-hole disc golf course, BMX bike track, horseshoe pit, and athletic fields for baseball, volleyball, and other outdoor activities. Though various events attract visitors to Gillies Creek Park, historic traces of Fulton pervade. The natural spaces with house foundations, streets, and bridges still visible suggest the urban Fulton neighborhood.



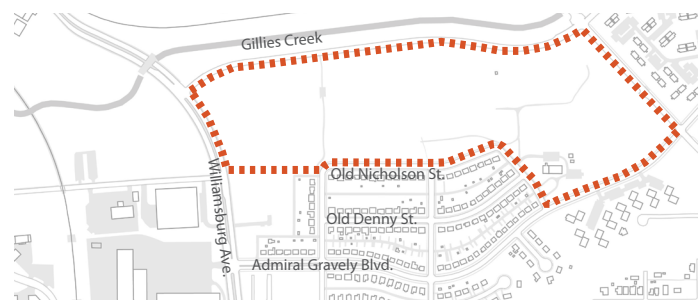
Remnant of Fulton Street, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.



BMX Track, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.



Gillies Creek Park, 2010. Photo by Peter Sefton.



THE MYSTERY HOUSE OF GILLIES CREEK PARK

REMNANTS OF FULTON'S PAST

A foundation in the Gillies Creek Park likely supported 615 State Street, a residence in the Fulton neighborhood. For thirty years between 1930-1960, it was the home of Louis Robinson, Jr. and his family. Louis worked as a machine operator at nearby American Tobacco to support his wife Susie and at least one daughter, Evelyn.

Today, an old brick and concrete foundation serves as the bunker on the Gillies Creek disc golf course. The house and the street it faced are a memory, the legacy of the 1970s Urban Renewal of Fulton. The ghosts of Denny Street and Fulton Street can still be seen running through the park, but Graham, Erin, Lewis, State, and other streets that made up a neighborhood of several thousand people are gone. The house itself was an early 20th century brick row house, similar to those pictured on Denny Street.

The city began planning to remove the 'blighted' community in the mid-1960s. After realizing the extent of the planned demolition, many of Fulton's residents spoke up to try to save the historic community and were even backed by such authorities as the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. Unfortunately, the clout of the City Council and the widespread perception that Fulton was "one of the worst slums anywhere" (Richmond Mayor Henry L. Marsh III) prevailed and resulted in Fulton's complete destruction by 1980-1981. An entire century of growth, industry, and town life is now only remembered, memorialized by a pile of rubble in an empty lot.



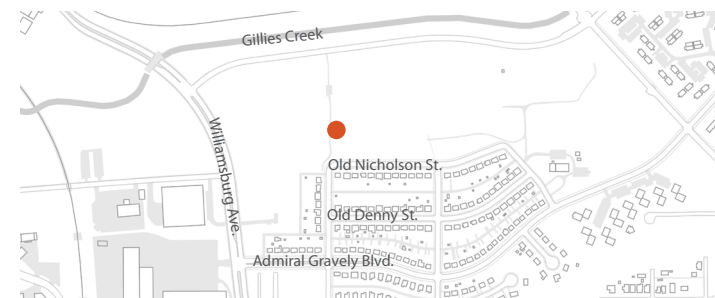
Denny Street Row Houses, 1970. Greater Fulton News.



615 State Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1925.



Foundation believed to be 615 State Street, 2011. Photo by Gray Graham.



FULTON'S MOST CELEBRATED NATIVE SON

ADMIRAL SAMUEL L. GRAVELY, JR.

Admiral Samuel L. Gravelly Jr., the first African American to command a Navy war ship, was born June 4, 1922 and raised in the house that once stood at 819 Nicholson Street. From an early age, Gravelly showed a strong work ethic and exceptional intelligence; by studying continuously through the summers he graduated from high school at the age of 15. With the outbreak of World War II, Gravelly signed up to serve in the Navy Reserve. As one of three applicants out of 120 seamen to pass the rigorous entrance exam, Gravelly was enrolled in Officer's training school. Soon thereafter he became the first African American officer to serve on the first all African American Navy sea vessel.

Not only did Gravelly have a distinguished naval career, he continually broke down barriers for African Americans in the Navy. He was also the first African American to be elevated to the rank of Admiral, and eventually to command a US Navy fleet. Although Gravelly moved away from Richmond, he was saddened to hear his childhood home had been demolished. In his words, "Frankly, I could not believe it." While spending his later years in northern Virginia, Gravelly maintained roots in Richmond and was the chairman emeritus of the Tredegar National Civil War Museum. Gravelly passed away in 2004 at the age of 82 and is buried in Arlington Cemetery. His legacy survives in the name of Admiral Gravelly Boulevard, which cuts through Fulton today.



Gravelly, 1971. www.defensemianetwork.com



819 Nicholson Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950.



View of 'replacement' houses on Old Nicholson Street, 2011. Photo by Gray Graham.



RAZING MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP

On Old Denny Street stood the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church, a Fulton site that embodies the story of the town and its people perhaps more closely than any other building. Founded in a Quaker schoolhouse around 1869, the church served the growing postwar black population in Richmond's East End. As industry boomed and jobs were plentiful, the church grew and was able to purchase a lot at the corner of Graham and Erin streets. This was doubly impressive because a recent schism had led half the church to depart and form nearby Mt Cavalry Baptist.

In the mid-1890s, a "Gothic brick church" was erected on the new site. The building rose 28 feet to the eaves with a tower steeple and occupied a full block of frontage along Graham Street. Despite other Richmonders' perceptions of Fulton as a rough area (one white minister famously said that to preach in Fulton one must "carry a Bible in one hand, a gun in the other"), the church seemed to thrive into the mid-20th century. In the 1970s, the church building was destroyed as part of the Fulton urban renewal. A mock funeral procession escorted the Rising Mt Zion congregation east from the original site to a new home seven miles away near Route 360, where much of the displaced Fulton community continues to worship today.



Rising Mt. Zion Church, c. 1975. RMZ Church Archives.



View of Old Denny Street, former location of the Rising Mt Zion Church, 2011. Photo by Gray Graham.



TRACT HOUSES

FULTON'S RECONSTRUCTION

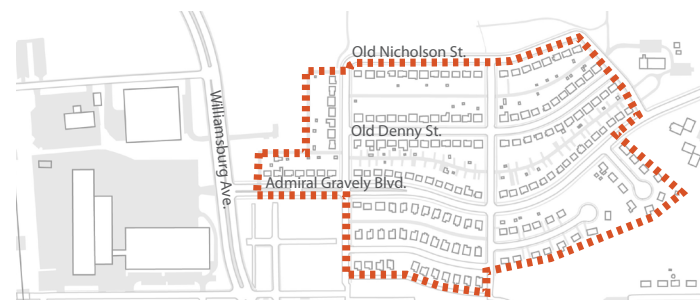
During the early 1990s, many houses were built on the tracts of land cleared by the Richmond Housing and Redevelopment Authority as part of the Fulton Urban Renewal project. The families living in these houses in 2000 were racially, economically, and educationally comparable to the residents of 1968, yet most are not the same families. Many moved to Fulton from other areas of Richmond, but few of the previous residents moved back. The residential redevelopment east of Williamsburg Avenue eliminated the dynamic mixed-use aspect of Fulton pre-1960s. Today there are a handful of house types, including low-single story ranches, two-story split-levels, two-story gable ended L-plans, and two-story contemporary Colonials. These are all fairly simple and of the modular house type. Although there are different floor plans, all of the houses share the similar characteristics of square footage (between 1,100 and 1,600 square feet), room number (between seven and nine), and materials of construction and finishing. The new homes provide more space, both inside and out of the house, than the houses of Old Fulton. Even with the change of house forms, street grid, and areas of interest, Fulton neighborhood has attempted to reestablish some of its historical urban vitality through its residential development and the activities center in the adjacent Gillies Creek Park.



View of Fulton Neighborhood from Chimborazo Park, 1890's. Valentine Museum.



Fulton Tract Housing, 2010. Photo by Abby Chryst.



THE LAST HOUSE IN FULTON

SPENCER ARMSTEAD'S FIGHT TO THE END

"Some black folks say you've got to go back to Africa to find your roots...Anytime I want to feel a little roots, I just walk up the stairs into the room I was born in." - *Spencer Armstead*

In this vacant lot, at the former site of 702 Denny Street, stood Spencer Armstead's house. Along with two flanking houses, at 700 and 704 Denny Street, it was one of the last houses standing in Fulton before the neighborhood was demolished to accommodate the single-family suburban tract houses present today. While the majority of houses and shops in Fulton had been torn down in the 1970s, Armstead formed Together Inc. in an attempt to save the remaining portions of his neighborhood from destruction. As the rest of the buildings in Fulton were sold off to the city and demolished, Armstead increasingly focused his efforts on saving his childhood home. Armstead fought a long and protracted battle with the City of Richmond to keep the house, where both he and his mother Marian were born, from demolition. Despite his efforts, by 1980 he and his mother were the only residents in the area and the three houses on Denny Street stood alone in a field of fallow land slated for redevelopment. The family lost the battle with the city when the house was forcibly taken through eminent domain in 1981 and demolished. They were paid only \$6,500 for vacating. The destruction of these three houses signaled the end of the Fulton community.

Like many others in the congregation of Rising Mount Zion Baptist, Spencer and his mother moved to the East End of Henrico County and began anew in a neighborhood near the new church.



Spencer Armstead, c. 1970. Photos from www.thenandnowrichmond.com



Spencer Armstead Standing on Old Denny Street. Photo from www.thenandnowrichmond.com.



View of Old Denny Street in Fulton, 2011. Photo from Google Maps.

RICHMOND'S EASTERN GATEWAY

WILLIAMSBURG AVENUE

Williamsburg Avenue, also known as Virginia State Route 5, was one of the original east-west travel routes along the James River. In the East End of Richmond, carters met oceangoing ships at Rockett's Landing to unload cargos and carry them west; because of the steep, rocky drop of the Falls, ships could not directly pass through the city. In the nineteenth century, the Kanawha Canal was constructed with a series of locks to circumvent the falls and emptied into the James at Rockett's. Throughout its history, Rockett's was the hub of road, canal, river, and eventually train traffic with a major railyard in nearby Fulton.

Williamsburg Avenue's role as a principal artery continued into the 20th century with the advent of the automobile. In the 1960s, the Richmond City Master Plan called for the widening of the road to facilitate travel into the East End. Unfortunately, this removed many of the old warehouses and homes built by nineteenth century residents of Rockett's and forever changed the appearance of Williamsburg Road; instead of a road distributing the activities of a bustling river port, it is now a wide, modern boulevard bordered by the river and Gillies Creek Park. One important survivor of the earlier era is the landmark Woodward House, a private residence dating to the late eighteenth century and the oldest frame dwelling in the City of Richmond.



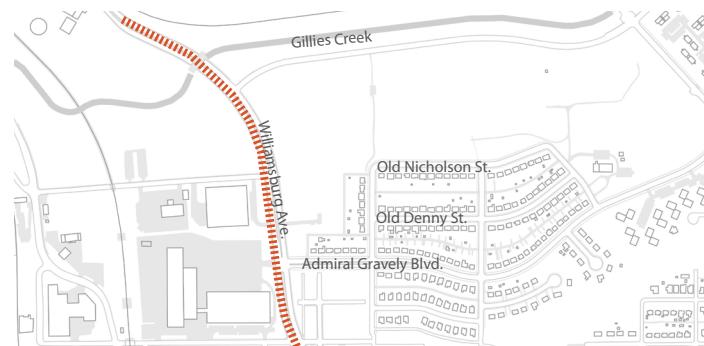
View from Libby Hill of Rockett's Landing, c. 1865. Library of Congress.



Woodward House. 1974. National Register Nomination.



Williamsburg Avenue with Fulton Gas Works in the distance, 2010. Photo by Abby Cryst.





View of Fulton, c. 1950. Adolph Rice Studio Collection.



View of post-urban renewal industrial area, 2011. Photo by Abby Chryst.

RICHMOND'S NEW INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

POST-URBAN RENEWAL INDUSTRY IN FULTON



FULTON

The history of Richmond is tied to its many industries, including tobacco production. When the city began to spread into the suburbs, so did its industry. Urban Renewal in Fulton was partially motivated by the City of Richmond's desire to provide a space for industry within the city. Because of Fulton's proximity to the James River and the railroads made it appropriate for industrial use, the Fulton Urban Renewal Plan designated the land between the river and Williamsburg Avenue for industry.

Since the destruction of Fulton, the American economy has restructured from industrial production to commercial consumption, leaving few primary industrial uses for this area. However, various warehouses and distribution centers have come into this zone, including Manchester Paper Recycling, Mafco Natural Products, Titan Virginia Ready-Mix Concrete, and William R. Hill and Company. Unlike the older sections of the Richmond, which included many multi-story factories and warehouses, this area is constructed largely of one-story modern buildings oriented increasingly towards truck transportation. The post-Urban Renewal industrial area in Fulton now seems to run against the Richmond trend of converting historic factories into mixed-use developments.



A RELIC OF RICHMOND'S STREETCAR LEGACY

THE TROLLEY BARN

In the valley east of Chimborazo Hill lies the Virginia Electric and Power Company trolley barn. The building was the site for storage and maintenance of Richmond's streetcars or trolleys. Richmond was the first American city to implement a streetcar system in 1888. Likely built in the early 1920s, the simple brick-clad, reinforced concrete frame trolley barn stands near the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Government Road (then National Cemetery Road). The structure housed Richmond's streetcars until they ceased operation in 1949.

By 1950, a small addition was constructed on the west side. The trolley barn once stood beside Gillies Creek prior to the creek's redirection. Houses were constructed across Glenwood Avenue from the trolley barn by the 1950s. In the 21st century, proposals for reuse of the abandoned structure and the surrounding site have been discussed, including a conversion into an elite members-only restaurant. The trolley barn remains a hidden, yet extant, relic of Richmond's illustrious past as an industry and transportation center.



Trolley Car, 1939. Carlton McKinney Rails.



Oakwood Trolley, 1939. Frank Pfuhrer



The abandoned trolley barn, off Government Ave. near Fulton, 2011. Photo by Gray Graham.



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