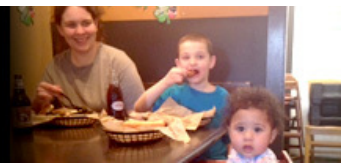




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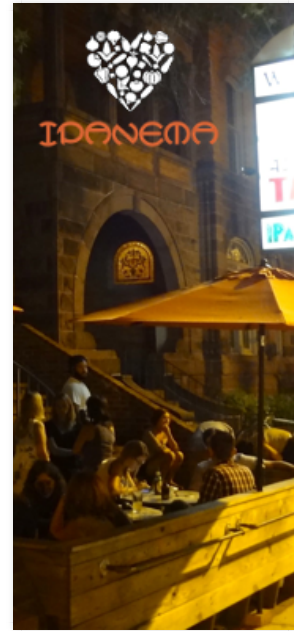
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A history of the Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District

Among the many sites and districts in Richmond listed on the National & State registries is the [Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District](#) (PDF).

Located in the northeastern corner of the city and including First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Avenues, and the cross streets from Brookland Park Boulevard to Trigg Street, the area is part of what is generally known as [Highland Park](#). The Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District abuts the [Highland Park Plaza Historic District](#) to the north.

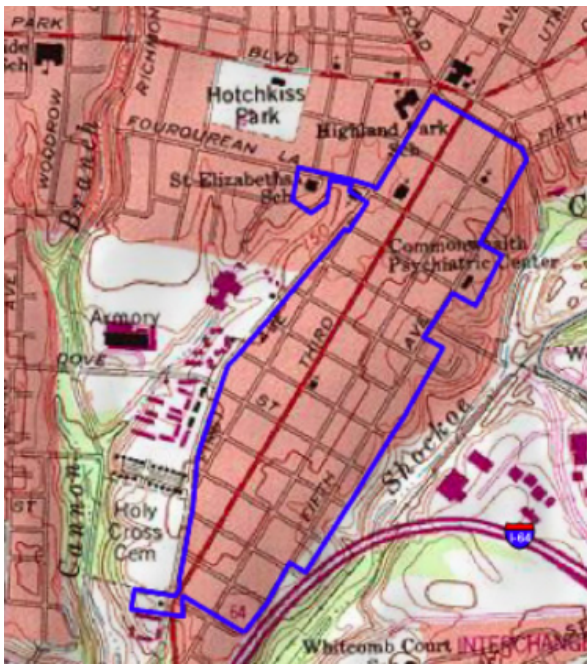


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The following text is a history of the area sourced from the *Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District application to the National Registry* (PDF). Photos are from the *Northside Richmond flickr pool* and various other sources (including *Dave's Electric Railroads*).

Chestnut Hill, one of Richmond's early streetcar suburbs, was established about 1890 and experienced much of its growth by 1901. It continued to grow into the third decade of the twentieth century. The district's resources are frame, two-story, residential buildings for the most part, but also include multiple dwellings, a small number of commercial buildings along Brookland Park Boulevard, fraternal lodges and several prominent churches. Architectural styles represented in the district include Queen Anne, American Foursquare, Bungalow, Colonial Revival and Gothic Revival. The area contains a significant number of contributing garages, several of which were designed to complement the houses they supported. The district contains 742 resources, 83 of which were deemed to be noncontributing.



Colony to Early National Period

(1753-1830)

The Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District was the site of a farm owned, in the eighteenth century, by prominent city man Samuel DuVal(1714-1784). He acquired 300 acres on Shockoe Creek adjoining Widow Cannon's pasture, Cannon's Branch, and William Byrd's line in 1745. He later acquired an adjoining 100 acres, named the property Mount Comfort, and built a large brick center-passage-plan dwelling on the flat center of the tract on the east side of the Meadow Bridge

In 1813, DuVal heirs sold 30 acres, part of the Mount Comfort tract, to David Bullock and others. This tract did not contain the house, which was nearby. The tract containing the house was eventually acquired by members of the Randolph family, who insured the two-story brick house, the frame kitchen, and the frame dairy for \$3,100 in 1809. Peter V. Daniel (1784-1860) acquired the tract for life through the inheritance of his wife, Lucy Randolph, in the early 1820s.¹⁶ The upper portion of Mount Comfort or Spring Farm, including "the brick dwelling house, the kitchen, and the house sometimes called the office" was inherited by Lucy N. Daniel and the southern portion by her sister, Edmonia M. Preston. Peter V. Daniel purchased an additional tract of the original DuVal farm in 1828.

Antebellum Period (1831-1860)

Peter V. and Lucy Daniel's property included most of what became the Chestnut Hill subdivision. Daniel, lieutenant governor of Virginia from 1818 to 1835 and a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1841 to 1860, lived most of his life on Grace Street in the city, but maintained his residential property just outside the city. The farm included the southernmost part of the Chestnut Hill/Plateau district of Highland Park stretching from Trigg Street north to Magnolia Street.

Immediately to the northeast of Mount Comfort was the property owned by Adolph Dill, a prosperous Jewish baker born in 1792, who arrived in Richmond in 1819 and lived and worked in the city. His house stood at 00 Clay Street in the city's Jackson Ward. His land, a part of the Chestnut Hill/Plateau Historic District stretching from near Magnolia Street to Brookland Park Boulevard (originally Dill Street), was developed after 1908 and was known as the Plateau.

The Virginia Central Railroad was built along Shockoe Creek in the early 1850s. Daniel also owned a mill on Bacon's Quarter Branch. The mill race ran along the eastern edge of the property and was held by a dam on the property line bordering Mount Comfort in 1856.²² Daniel clearly benefited by the industrial potential of the confluence of water power and rail service in developing the area on a small scale.



Civil War (1861-1865)

The Civil War adversely affected Richmond in many and well-known ways. The principal effect on the Chestnut Hill/Plateau area was the construction of a fortification, Battery No. 7, which protected the city on its northeastern approaches. This was located near the present-day Juniper, Willow, and Spruce streets in the center of the proposed district. No archaeological investigations have been made to determine if any trace remains of the battery in the built-up suburban lots.

After Judge Peter V. Daniel's death in 1860, the property, divided into tracts or lots, was sold at auction, where it was purchased by Francis H. Deane, a physician." The area along Meadow Bridge Road on the east, including Mansfield, was held by Deane and his son, Francis, for many years. The sloping land on the west side of the road was settled in smaller lots. A tract at the top of the hill on the west side of the road was purchased in 1862 by Bemhard Brauer from Early Corbin. This 226-by-300 foot tract was in turn sold to Rudolf Kastelburg in the following year.

Kastelberg probably built the large, frame, Greek Revival-style, double-pile, central- passage-plan dwelling on the site (127-0343-0203) shortly after the end of the war, or it may have been built at the end of the Antebellum period by a previous owner.

Reconstruction and Growth (1866-1916)

Industrial Growth and Initial Development (1866-1889)

The Virginia Central and the Chesapeake and Ohio railroads were consolidated under the latter name in 1868, with direct connections to a large geographical area. The rail access in the Mount Comfort area attracted the firm of Tanner and Delaney to the site in 1875. In that year they opened the Metropolitan Iron Works, known by 1883 as the Richmond Locomotive Works, which made locomotives, boilers, and mills in a large and busy operation employing as many as 2,000 men at one point. The Locomotive Works were housed in a handsome towered brick structure on a twelve-acre site located between Bacon's Quarter Branch and Valley Road.

The tracts along the west side of Meadow Bridge Road ran down the slope to Cannon's Branch and shared that water source with adjoining outlots owned by

numerous persons. About 1873, the Meadow Bridge Road through the Highland Park area was superseded by a new highway, known as the Richmond and Henrico Turnpike, built along the bottom of the Cannon's Branch Ravine to the west. In 1877, most of the area was still taken up by the rural tracts of Deane's heirs, Dill's heirs, and others. In fact, the entire area of Henrico County north of Richmond was divided up into small farms and nurseries, most of which were engaged in supplying the produce needed in the city.

Development of the area was foreseen by prudent investors in the city and elsewhere. Richmond was the first city in the nation to have a revenue-producing electric streetcar line, in 1882. The streetcar would stimulate the development of five outlying suburbs. Popular destinations were included in parks at the terminuses of some of the early lines including Reservoir Park (Byrd Park) and Woodland Park (Forest Hills Park). Land improvement companies took advantage of the growing demand for housing in open suburban settings and the rising standard of living among the middle classes to open tracts of land in the north and south sides and the west end of the city.

Developers played upon an anti-urban spirit among the middle classes, in part induced by volitional fears and in part by health concerns, to promote the northern suburbs of Richmond.

With characteristic hyperbole, one booster for the adjacent suburb of Barton Heights proclaimed:

There would be no anarchists if all the people owned their homes. The ownership of real estate, especially of homes, tends strongly to the making of good citizens. You may go still further and say that of all good citizens, those who own suburban homes are the best. For whom is Barton Heights? Hundreds of people living in Richmond with an unsatisfied longing for something, they hardly know what, are utterly unaware that it is for them. They are dimly conscious that the spending of two-thirds of the year in ill-lighted halls and badly ventilated rooms, sitting in damp and dingy basements and climbing numerous flights of steep and narrow stairs, while the children are exposed in the streets to every danger of body, mind, and soul; and the remaining third in little coops of rooms at stuffy summer resorts, with increased expenses, while "benedict" stays at home and endures life in abject misery, is not the way to make the most of life."

The Southside Land and Improvement Company, the West End Land Company, and the Northside Land and Improvement Company were all chartered in 1889, immediately after electric streetcar lines became feasible. Both the Northside and Southside companies were chartered to operate streetcars as well as develop land. A streetcar line was opened in 1890 to the south of Richmond terminating in Woodland Park and serving the suburb named Woodland Heights. A similar project was begun in 1889 immediately west of the Mount Comfort property. The Barton Heights development and the Brookland Park suburb to its north were begun by James H. Barton and others. The project included construction of a viaduct over Bacon's Quarter Branch connected to Richmond's First Street and including a streetcar line operated by the Richmond Railway and Electric Company.

In September of 1889, the 135-acre Mount Comfort property of Francis Deane was sold to the Northside Land Improvement Company. Several buildings were standing on the property and indicated by blocks on the plat of the Deane property on the eve of the sale. One of these may represent the Mount Comfort house of Samuel DuVal. These had vanished within a few years, but archeological traces may survive among the lots and houses of the district.

The development was laid out soon after in squares (as Richmonders referred to blocks), streets, and alleys and known as "Mount Comfort."³¹ This name was used in deeds for some time, but by 1893 it was known as Chestnut Hill. Some lots were sold immediately. The Northside Land Improvement Company was dissolved in March of 1890 and its property was transferred to a new entity, the Northside Land Company for \$150,000.³² Several squares or parts of squares had already been sold or assigned, including one parcel to a man named Christian Schnedler. Schnedler bought lots one through ten in square 10 of the plan of Mount Comfort in February of 1890 for \$820, financed by the company. At almost the same time, a 150-acre subdivision some distance north of Mount Comfort, to be known as Highland Park, was purchased by the Highland Park Company, which shared many of the same developers as the Northside Land Company.

The Northside Land Improvement Company was made up of two principals, J. M. Fourqurean, a dry-goods merchant, and N.V. Randolph, a manufacturer, and a number of prominent investors sewing as director. Fourqurean had held land on the west side of the Meadow Bridge Road for some years. A related, interlocking group of investors, including Randolph and Fourqurean, as well as Frank and A. F. Mosby and others, formed the Highland Park Company. Frank Mosby had sold the 150 acres to the Highland Park Company in 1890 for \$250,000. Mosby owned the land between the two suburbs, a tract later known as the Plateau. Here he conducted a prosperous business known as the Richmond Commercial Nurseries, supplying fruit trees to the mid-Atlantic region.³³ The two development companies acquired the land for two real estate ventures and together proceeded to build a viaduct and to provide a streetcar line to serve them.



Street Car Suburb (1890-1916)

In 1892, the Fifth Street Viaduct, a toll bridge, was built by the Northside Viaduct Company to carry vehicles, pedestrians, and a proposed streetcar line seventy-five feet above Bacon's Quarter Branch. The 1,200-foot-long viaduct was constructed by the Edgemoor Bridge Company of Wilmington, Delaware. The streetcar line was promised to buyers of lots as soon as sufficient lots were sold. As in the case of the other streetcar lines, a park was proposed near the terminus. This eight-acre Plaza Park, occupying two squares at a central point in the neighborhood, was mentioned in advertisements and a prospectus. No similar park was planned, however, for the Chestnut Hill development, through which the line ran. The streetcar line, originally known as the Richmond-Henrico Railway Company, was completed by 1893 and was operated by the



Most of the lots were sold in 1891 and by 1901 deed records indicate few remained in the hands of the company. Some of the squares were sold entirely as investments, such as Square 17, purchased by A. F. Cordes in February of 1890." The company built houses on some of the lots as a demonstration of their seriousness to buyers. These were probably the Queen Anne- style houses at the southem end of Fourth Avenue (127-0343-0363 to 0365). A city promotional publication in 1893 indicates that the company had spent \$275,000 in building houses, the viaduct, the street railway, and in lights, streets, sewers, and other betterments. By that time approximately thirty-five houses had been built, including the very substantial dwellings of William Carstang, M. B. Leonard, R.E Heinrich [1910 Fourth Avenue (127-0343-0349)] and Dr.C.T. Duke (127-0343-0174) built at the comer of Willow Street and Third Avenue. These four were illustrated by photographs in the same publication. In addition, a "Handsome Presbyterian Church" had been erected." The streetcar line ran along Fourth Avenue through the middle of the district.

In 1894, the effects of the Panic of August 1893 were felt by businesses and developers across the nation. Many communities failed because they had been "boomed" or falsely promoted. The chestnut Hill, Highland Park, and arto on Heights projects undoubtedl; suffered a slowdown, but recovered from the effects of the Depression because of the demand for housing and the improved living standards required by the middle classes in the New South. A promotional brochure issued for Barton Heights in 1894 best expresses the mood of the period:

How was it begun? Not with a boom. . . There has never been a boom in Barton Heights and there never will be. The growth has been rapid indeed, but healthy and steady, making the safest and most profitable investment possible. . . It is also the oasis in the desert of hard times for the working man. On every hand the ear is greeted with the music of trowel, saw, and hammer. Since the Panic of 1893, thirty-nine houses have been built and contracts are out for eleven more.

Undoubtedly in response to the fmanacial crisis that followed the Panic of 1893, the men of the community formed the Highland Park Citizen's Association to promote the neighborhood and to foster community life for their mutual benefit. The group began in September of 1894 by oublishing the fust number of a monthlv newsletter called the Northside News. In it the following announcement, in keeping with national trends in community and business

development related to the development of chambers of commerce across the country, called notice to the group's goals and "booster" spirit:

A number of gentlemen of the Northside have conferred together and have decided to have a called meeting on Tuesday, September 18, at 8:00 p.m. at Highland Park Hall for the purpose of organizing an association for the mutual benefit of the residents. See your neighbor and talk it up. Try to have one representative from each house on the Northside. Remember the date and the hour as it is important to have a full meeting and begin to work at once. Time is fleeting."

Businesses grew up to serve and profit from the development of Chestnut Hill and the neighboring suburbs. One of the most successful was the firm of Ruffin and Fourqurean, a lumber company that supplied the materials for many of the houses built in the Northside area. Fourqurean owned substantial tracts of land in the area and served as a director of both the Chestnut Hill and Highland Park companies. The lumber company, later known as Ruffin and Payne, was located on the southeasternmost lot of Chestnut Hill and in the adjoining Mansfield section around the northern end of the Fifi Street viaduct. It remained in the Mansfield area until 1966. The coal-fired power plant that supplied Chestnut Hill and Highland Park with electricity was shared with the American Locomotive Works and stood nearby on the north side of Valley Road. "Mansfield had been developed with a street grid aligned with that of Chestnut Hill. It contained a fire department connected with the power plant and a gas storage facility. It also was the home of the Richmond Sand and Gravel Company. This firm, like the lumber yard, took advantage of the railroad adjoining their property to bring in materials.

Necessary for the successful development of a new suburb was the provision of amenities close at hand for the residents, so that constant trips to the city were not needed. Prominent among these requirements were schools, commercial establishments, and churches. Since Chestnut Hill and Highland Park were in Henrico County, provision of a new county school district was necessary. The original two-room schoolhouse for the area, now gone, was located in the northern suburb. It was not superseded until 1909, when the present building of the Highland Park School was built on the west side of Second Avenue south of Dill Street (Brookland Park Boulevard), just outside the district. This school contained all grades, including, until 1914, a small high school department. In that year the enrollment at Highland Park School was 509, with an additional 27 high school pupils.

Commerce developed along Dill Street, later Brookland Park Boulevard, at the north end of the district, although no commercial buildings date from the nineteenth century. Conventional commercial buildings near the corner of Second Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard date from the first and second quarters of the century (127-0343-0015 through 0018). As the twentieth century progressed, commercial buildings were permitted on isolated lots and in groups on cross streets through the north side of the city to allow close location of shops needed on a daily basis by residents.

The first church in Chestnut Hill was mentioned in an 1894 promotional publication for the city at large: a handsome Presbyterian Church. This structure, a stuccoed frame building erected for the Mizpah Presbyterian congregation in 1892 on the corner of Third Avenue and Juniper Street, undoubtedly reinforced the viability of the entire suburban project. Mizpah Church had been founded in 1885 to minister to Presbyterians on the north side of Richmond. The congregation had originally built a structure on Henrico Turnpike three miles north of the city. After that church burned in 1891, they saw an opportunity of moving to the new suburban district. The second building stood until recent years, but was torn down to make room for the New

Grayland Baptist Church. A third Mizpah Church was built on Brookland Park Boulevard just outside the district in 1926.

Similarly, the original Highland Park section north of Chestnut Hill was the site of a new Highland Park Methodist Church built in 1893, replaced in 1916 with a large brick structure, and further enlarged in 1927. The Episcopal Church of the Ascension had its beginning in 1896, when a member of Monumental Church in the city organized a woman's guild in the Highland Park area. Services were held in the town hall. The Highland Park company gave a lot for the erection of a chapel in the northern suburb of Highland Park and a small frame building was completed by 1902. The parish purchased lots at 2901 Fourth Avenue in the Plateau section of the historic district in 1911 and built a new building (127-0343-0441), which opened in 1912.

The Northside Baptist Church was organized in Chestnut Hill in 1907, at a meeting held at the town hall. Services were held in the town hall for about a year before a substantial Gothic Revival-style building (127-0343-00138) was completed at the corner of Third Avenue and Victor Street in the area known as the Plateau. Today it is the well-preserved home of Fifth Street Baptist Church. The Highland Park Christian Church was organized in 1920 and built a church in the northern suburb in 1927 after years of meeting in the Highland Park School.

Most of the lots were sold in the 1890s, but few were built upon in the slow economy following the Panic of 1893. There were only about sixty houses standing in the district in 1901, when a map of the development was prepared. Many of the earliest houses were large and ornate dwellings built before the panic, as illustrated in an 1893 promotional brochure.

Although the existing streetscapes of Chestnut Hill were by no means fully filled up, the demand for housing lots was, however, sufficient to persuade A.F. Mosby, the owner of the land to the immediate north, to develop his fruit-tree nursery land as a continuation of the Chestnut Hill street grid. The development between Highland Park and Chestnut Hill was named "the Plateau" and was laid out well before it was developed in 1908. A few lots had even been sold by 1901, including three sets of lots to a "Foundling Hospital" (which apparently never located here) and a Northside Hall on Dill Street (Brookland Park Boulevard) and Fourth Avenue, which served as a community meeting hall.

The Plateau stretched between Second Street and Fifth Street. The upper six squares of the twelve that made up the Plateau were longer than the original ones in Chestnut Hill and resembled those in Highland Park to the north, incorporating eighteen lots on each side. The lots were generally aligned with the numbered streets, but, in a few cases, faced the cross streets, in particular those on Logan and Pulaski streets. Some of these lot alignments were required by the intrusion of shallow ravines along the northeastern edge of the suburb. The district was bordered on the south by Magnolia Street and on the North by Dill Street, named for Adolph Dill, the previous owner of the Plateau tract. The cross streets were named Logan (later Pulaski), Victor, Custer, and Stuart.

Stuart Street later was incorporated as a section of Brookland Park Boulevard, the major east-west street in Richmond's Northside connecting all the late nineteenth-century streetcar suburbs.

In 1908, the now-adjacent villages of Chestnut Hill and Highland Park were consolidated in order to incorporate the area as a town. The council of Chestnut Hill voted to accept a new survey and to change the name of the new entity to Highland Park. The new town was an independent entity within Henrico County. The town developed rapidly in the era leading up to the First World War, although the Plateau area resembled agricultural fields in the first years. Many of the squares were completely vacant, as is clear from the history

of Northside Baptist Church: “on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1909, the congregation met in the town hall and marched across the field to hold the first service in the new church. The “town hall”, or Highland Park Hall was located on Fourth Avenue just south of Dill Street (Brookland Park Boulevard), where it would be equally accessible to the northern and southern suburbs. It no longer stands, but a sketch in one history shows it as a two-story building with a gambrel roof.⁵⁴ A small frame building on Fourth Avenue housed a single horse-drawn fire engine.

Most of the houses standing in the district take the form of the ubiquitous Foursquare house, with its simple two-story form and its Craftsman-style detailing based on designs in popular national publications. Many were constructed in groups of from two to four by builders as speculative developments intended to be sold to lower middle-income home-buyers. These were constructed between 1910 and 1930. The form and the decorative details were based on popular magazines and pattern books. A few were intended as duplexes.



World War I to World War II (1917-1945)

The period between the wars was occupied with the filling in of almost all of the vacant lots in the district. Commercial functions remained focused on Brookland Park Boulevard, which became a commercial strip road linking all the Northside suburbs. In 1921, an active citizen’s group petitioned the city to change the name of several Highland Park streets, including Logan Street, the name of which was changed to honor Count Casimir Pulaski of the American Revolution. Recreational activities were developed at Hotchkiss Field, west of the district. One of the principal meeting places for the community was Highland Park Pharmacy, housed in the two-story brick commercial building (127-0343-0015) at the corner of Second Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard. In the 1930s many streets were regraded and repaved to eliminate steep sections. The viaduct was replaced in 1939 by a new concrete bridge named for Confederate General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson.

Some new institutional buildings were built on formerly unoccupied corner lots. Saint Elizabeth’s Roman Catholic Church was established by the Bishop of Richmond in 1923. The former Sitterding house and the large tract surrounding it on the west side of Second Avenue were acquired on the edge of the Plateau section of Highland Park. The house was adapted to serve as a rectory, meeting room, chapel, and housekeeper’s rooms. The lot on which the church stood was eventually deeded to the diocese by Fritz Sitterding in honor of his deceased daughter’s patron saint, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. The

present Classical Revival-style church (127-0343-0558) was built in 1925 and included a basement social hall.

Life in Highland Park in the 1920s resembled that in many other small communities in the early twentieth century. This is perhaps best recalled by a member of Mizpah Presbyterian Church, Wallace Bwan Stockton: "Highland Park became neat, with mixed architecture. The citizens were of mixed economic strata, from one end of the spectrum to the other, but basically they and their community were modest. . . board fences abounded. There were chicken lots in back yards and barns for horses and cows. There were chicken thieves, too, and Gypsies from the C & O tracks. The community abounded with vacant lots for ball games and lots of ice houses for boys on hot summer days. . . . Scouting received strong emphasis in Highland Park. Each of the three protestant churches had active troops at various times. . . . When the patrols were not fighting each other there was unity in a rock battle with Barton Heights scouts down in the ravine.

The houses built in the district in the period between the world wars embody the popular architectural stylistic details found in national publications and pattern books. These include Bungalow, Foursquare, Tudor Revival, and Colonial Revival-style buildings.



The New Dominion (1946-Present)

After the end of World War II, Richmond's suburban population continued to grow and the mostly urban black population expanded as well. Increased affluence and expectations of higher living standards encouraged remaining urban populations to move from the city center to the suburbs. Construction of the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike (Interstate 95) and urban renewal decreased the availability of traditional urban housing. The city's northern suburbs, with their close proximity to the city, access to public transport, pleasant streets, and affordable housing stock, were under pressure to change. Richmond's segregated housing traditions could not bend easily and Highland Park, in particular, felt threatened. In 1949, the last streetcar ran down Fourth Avenue as the entire Richmond system was dismantled. The Highland Park line was, however, immediately replaced by a bus following the same route, which continues in operation today.

A school had been conducted by the parish from 1930-36. Although the school did not immediately flourish for a variety of reasons, the establishment of a parochial school in the neighborhood is an important gauge of its developmental maturity and the confidence of the parish in the future. The entire tract of land owned by the Sitterdings was purchased after 1937. The

Saint Elizabeth's school was reopened in 1948 and a new school building was built in 1950 to supplement the old Sitterding house.⁶⁰ The impressively detailed International-style school served for several decades. It is closed and vacant today several hundred yards to the west of the church. Another important Roman Catholic institution, St. Mary's Cemetery, forms the southwestern boundary of the lower part of Chestnut Hill. An impressive mid-twentieth-century brick wall with elaborate gates gives a special architectural character to First Street.

In 1942, almost all the residents of Highland Park signed a pledge not to be the first homeowner on the block to sell to a black buyer. The campaign was sponsored by the Highland Park Citizens Association and included a fund-raising effort to raise money for a white veteran who was outbid by a black purchaser. According to a contemporary article, the residents feared that black buyers would form syndicates to engage in "block busting." They feared that a group of black buyers would purchase a house at market value and then take advantage of white fears and subsequent flight to buy other houses at reduced rates, sharing the overall cost.

In spite of white fears, the transformation of Highland Park did not occur quickly. The change began as many residents moved out to the growing suburbs in Henrico County. The average income among residents declined as those who remained aged. The racial transformation did not happen until the mid-1960s, but when it did the process was sudden. Black homeowners replaced whites, until by 1970, about 70% of the properties had changed hands. By the late 1970s very few white residents were left. According to a 1978 news story a counselor for a fair housing group stated that some real estate salesmen played on racial fears and persuaded some white owners to sell their homes at low prices. The real estate agents then sold or rented them to black residents at a substantial profit.

Locally based commercial enterprises continued to serve the citizens from centrally located business areas along Brookland Park Boulevard. After the middle of the century, rather than invest in new buildings or demolish the existing stock of commercial buildings, merchants and building owners chose, in many cases, to maintain or to modernize the exteriors of the commercial building stock. Often this took the form of a new aluminum storefront. New shopping centers outside the neighborhood began to draw shoppers away from pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and business districts.

As the community changed during this period, its churches also expanded and changed hands. A few Highland Park area congregations elected to move away due to the altered racial character of the neighborhood, in favor of larger suburban lots with room for additional expansion. Their large buildings, such as the former Northside Baptist Church, were purchased by black congregations and their functions continued. Others, such as Highland Park Methodist Church, just outside the district, and St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church (127-0343-0557), simply kept on with their ministry and gradually opened their doors to the changed community surrounding them. Other churches simply went out of business as their largely white membership declined below a functional margin. These include Mizpah Presbyterian, located just outside the district, and Ascension Episcopal Church (127-0343-0441). After much study, Mizpah Church merged with Ginter Park Presbyterian Church in 1974.⁶⁴ Both the Mizpah and Ascension buildings now serve primarily as day care centers. The previous frame building of Mizpah Presbyterian Church building at Third Avenue and Juniper Street was demolished in recent years to build a new (and hence noncontributing) church for a Baptist congregation (127-0343-0240).

Over the ensuing years, Highland Park has suffered from problems common to other older city neighborhoods. Crime, declining population, and a deteriorating housing stock kept property values low and most houses unemstored. Vacant and boarded up houses became common by the 1980s.

Some new single-family houses were built in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as several plainly detailed concrete block and frame apartment buildings. A high-rise apartment building for the elderly was built on the southern edge of the district. Construction of apartment complexes occurred on Mathews Street on the western edge of the district.

By 1990, the community had suffered from the ongoing exodus of homeowners as they moved into higher levels of income and whose children had reached the middle school years. Increased levels of crime, much of which was associated with certain isolated commercial locations and the apartment complexes on the western edge of the district, devastated the area.

Expansion of public facilities and services was a necessary accompaniment to the growth Richmond experienced during the period. Most of this took place outside the proposed district, but the publicly owned former Highland Park School, just adjacent to the district on Second Avenue was developed as a public housing project for senior citizens in 1987-90. The empty building was sensitively remodeled.

Most important to the successful revival of the neighborhood, the Highland Park Restoration and Preservation Program was formed in 1988. The organization's mission is to revive the potential for Highland Park and improve its declining housing stock. Toward that end, the foundation has worked closely with the City of Richmond to identify strategies for achieving historic preservation goals in the area. As a result of this effort, several houses have been thoroughly rehabilitated as single-family homes. Most recently, programs established by the city have aided the revitalization of older communities, including Highland Park, by promoting their unique historic character and by funding further rehabilitation of decayed houses.

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