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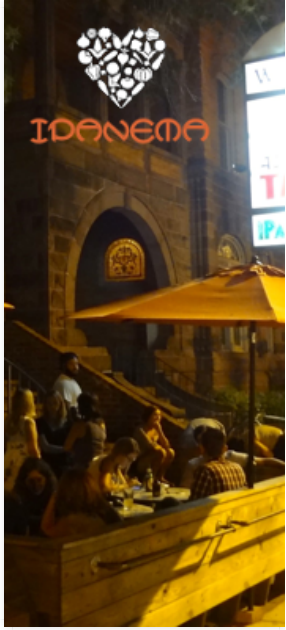

The Fan Area Historic District Extension

The 37-block area roughly bounded by South Harrison Street, Cary Street, South Mulberry Street, and the Downtown Expressway was named to the National Register of Historic Places as the Fan Area Historic District Extension in May 1986.



History

The area comprising the Fan Area Historic District Extension was part of the land tract granted to William Byrd I by the British Crown in 1575. The Byrd family sold the property at auction and, like the adjacent Fan Area Historic District, the land was laid out in 1817 by Jacquelin Harvie as part of the Town of Sydney. According to the Harvie plan, the land was divided into house lots and public streets were laid out. Unfortunately, Sydney never

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materialized and the property remained largely unsettled throughout the 19th century.

Due to a number of factors the City of Richmond by 1900 was ripe for development. First and foremost among these was Richmond's economic growth. By 1901 Richmond had a manufacturing output of nearly 356 million dollars with iron and tobacco serving as the mainstay of the city's economy. Along with its economic growth the city's population had reached 85,050 people, making it the fourth largest southern city, a position that it would occupy until 1930. A direct consequence of the city's economic and population growth was the development of new areas of settlement, such as the Fan Area Historic District Extension, whose development occurred primarily from 1900 to 1930.

While the area south of Main Street like the area to the north arose as a predominately residential neighborhood, commercial and industrial activity figured importantly in its development and to a great extent, determined its architectural character.

Virginia Railway and Power Company storage barn circa 1905. Taken from Robinson Street at Parkwood.



The decision of the Virginia Railway and Power Company in 1905 to move its carsheds, machine shops and offices to the vicinity of Cary and South Robinson provided a major impetus to the surrounding area's development. The brick, one-story car sheds still stand on Cary and Robinson streets and were long used as garages for the Greater Richmond Transit Company buses. The company made a series of additions to their site in 1910 which included a blacksmith shop, two paint shops and a store room, all designed by company engineers.

00 block of South Robinson Street

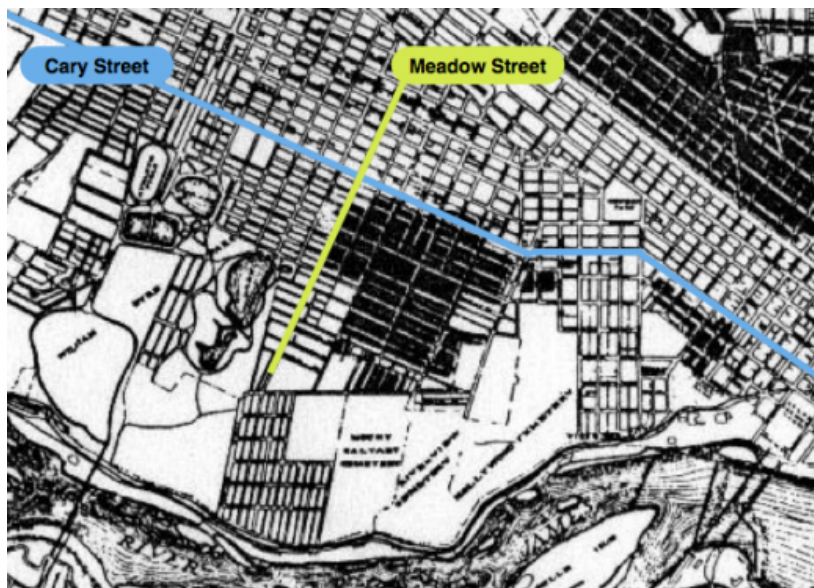


From 1905 to 1915 houses for company workers and their families were constructed on blocks which immediately surrounded the railway yard on Cary and South Robinson. Typically, the structures are frame, single-family duplex residences two-stories in height. A search through Richmond directories reveals that the first occupants of 2-22 South Robinson Street were conductors, motormen, a car builder and a teamster. The Robinson block is typical of the area near the railway yard as it first developed to serve the company's workers.

The presence of several lumber companies within the extended district likewise shaped its built environment in the early 20th century. According to the 1910 Richmond City Directory, the area south of Main Street contained three lumber companies: W. R. Francis and Brother, the largest, whose woodworking and lumber yard was located at 1422 West Cary Street; Leonard J. Koster, whose lumber business was found at 1422 Chaffin; and Smith and Woodall, whose operation was located at 1828 West Cary Street.

Richmond City Directories reveal the occupations of the extended district's earliest residents. In addition to the Virginia Power and Railway Company workers, other skilled and semi-skilled laborers lived in the area. Illustrative in this regard is the 1500 block of West Cary Street. According to the city directory for 1910, the occupation of the residents of this block were as follows: laborer, paper hanger, carpenter, tinner, steamfitter, and butcher. On nearby South Davis Avenue in a block of five brick houses designed by William Skinner in 1914 lived two carpenters, a barber, a mechanical engineer, and a salesman. Such occupations were typical of district residents who lived south of Main Street.

Detail from 1923 City of Richmond Public Works map that upon which the darker areas "indicates location of colored population".



It should also be noted that settlement in the area was historically divided on racial lines, with the blocks from Meadow Street east to Harrison and south of Cary street occupied entirely by blacks. These lines were reinforced by a residential segregation ordinance passed by Richmond City Council in 1911 and they continued long after such ordinances were declared unconstitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1917. By 1923 the area south of West Cary Street between South Harrison and South Meadow streets, or nearly half the district extension, was populated entirely by black working class families.

200 block of South Mulberry Street



The largest houses in the Extension stand on the 200 block of Mulberry Street, in close proximity to the Boulevard. Here, listed as residents in the 1920 directory lived a musical director, electrician, traveling salesman, the owner of a motor car company, the local manager of C & P Telephone Company and the manager of a car dealership.

Former service station at 116 South Addison Street



At least four early 20th-century service stations are located in the district extension. Although none are currently used as service stations, several have retained their character-defining features. The building at 1600 West Cary Street (ca. 1920) has a hipped pantile roof supported by heavy square piers and a porte cochere. The small station at 1700 West Cary Street (ca. 1920) also has a hipped pantile roof and tall windows. The former service station garage at 1900 West Cary Street (1930s) is a large stucco and brick structure with a tall segmental parapet and original garage bays. The small brick service station at 116 South Addison Street (1920s) features a sweeping hip-roofed porte cochere supported by a single wood pier and triangular braced supports.

Originally built in the late 1910s, Fire Station #12 at the corner of West Cary Street and South Addison Street is also a local neighborhood landmark.



As in the area north of Main Street in the Fan Area Historic District, the extended area was well settled by 1925 and fell on hard times in the Great Depression. Unlike other neighborhoods in the city for whom tobacco companies were the sole employers, the area did not enjoy economic security. Harland Bartholomew, writing in his Preliminary Report on Housing Conditions and Policies for the City of Richmond in 1943 observed that of the city's lower-income housing units needing major repairs, "The district extending between Harrison and Meadow Streets both north of Main and south of Cary, while small was one of the worst in the city."

1972 map showing land cleared for Downtown Expressway



The Downtown Expressway was planned and built during the mid-1960s and 1970s. Over 700 residential dwelling units were demolished in the route of the expressway, mainly in the Randolph, Sydney and Oregon Hill neighborhoods, and splitting the area south of Cary Street. Property acquisitions were begun in 1967 and were completed by 1968 with the right-of-way cleared and buildings demolished.


Credit and Sources

The text above is almost entirely sourced from the the registration form from [the Fan Area Historic District Extension application to the National Register of Historic Places \(PDF\)](#). The original document, dated May 1985, includes much more than is shown here. Check out the original form to learn more about the Fan Area Historic District Extension, or read up on [any of the other sites in Richmond that are listed on the National Register](#).

The black and white [photo at the top](#) is from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Fire Station #12 via Richmond Fire Department. GRTC storage barn photo and 1972 aerial [via Two-Street](#). [Lamplighter](#) is from rllayman. Photos are by John Murden unless otherwise noted.

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2. [The Oakwood-Chimborazo Historic District](#)
3. [The Fairmount Historic District](#)
4. [The Church Hill North Historic District](#)
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Posted in [Uncategorized](#)

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05/14/2011 at 12:45 pm By [john m](#)

7

CONVERSATION (7)

Last reply was 6 months ago



1. [john m](#)

[View 05/16/2011](#)

I got this via email:

Great article on the "Extension" – I live in this area and found it very interesting and informative.

The article mentioned a 1920 listing of residents in the area – I would be interested in that information – is it publicly available? Do you by chance know where I can access it/get a copy? I would appreciate it!

I believe that this is a reference to the Hill Books. The Hill Directories are a series of directories for a variety of cities with the residents listed by address and by last name (often with their employment). You can look up who lived in your house back in the day and then cross-reference to see their occupation.

In Richmond, there are directories available for Richmond and for the Richmond Suburbs (of Henrico and Chesterfield). Some places have put their directories online, but to see ours you have to go to the Main Library and crack open the big books up on the 2nd floor (or the microfiche if you want to get further back...).

Through the listings, it is possible to find out who lived at an address and their occupation. It is also possible to get a feel for the development/decline of houses and blocks. As the addresses are in numeric order, you can tell when addresses come online for specific blocks, or when specific houses went vacant or were demolished. Tracking the names down through the years can give a real sense of the history of the houses, people, and blocks.

Here is a post about the Hill Books from CHPN:

http://chpn.net/news/2009/11/29/who-lived-in-your-house_10930/

2. [North Richmond News](#)

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[...] Highland Park Plaza Historic District The Brookland Park Historic District The Town of Barton Heights The Fan Area Historic District Extension [...]

3. [The Fan Area Historic District < Fan of the Fan](#)

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[...] The residential area south of West Main Street was excluded from the district because it is commonly considered part of another neighborhood other than the Fan District. [...]

4. [The Boulevard Historic District < Fan of the Fan](#)

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[...] The Fan Area Historic District Extension [...]

5. [Idlewood \(1928\) < West of the Boulevard News](#)

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[...] of the expressway, mainly in the Randolph, Sydney and Oregon Hill neighborhoods, and splitting the area south of Cary Street. Property acquisitions were begun in 1967 and were completed by 1968 with the right-of-way cleared [...]

6. [The Ginter Park Historic District < North Richmond News](#)

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[...] The Fan Area Historic District Extension [...]

7. [Elizabeth O'Leary's "The Carillon Neighborhood: A History" < West of the Boulevard News](#)

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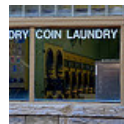
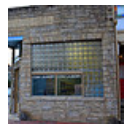
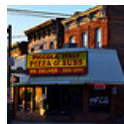
[...] 1960s saw much change. The Downtown Expressway was built in the later half of the decade, and led to the loss of dozens of houses for the western edge of the neighborhood. It was also at [...]

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