

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Planters National Bank

and/or common Old Planters Bank

Location

street & number 12th and E. Main Streets

N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond

N/A vicinity of

congressional district

state Virginia

code 51

county (in city)

code 760

Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Commonwealth of Virginia

street & number N/A

city, town Richmond

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall Tax Assessor's Office

street & number 900 E. Broad St.

city, town Richmond

state VA 23219

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None Previously Recorded has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A

state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary Description

Planters National Bank is a late 19th-century Richardsonian Romanesque commercial building fronting on the north side of Main Street at the eastern edge of Richmond's financial district. The building is sited on a sloped hillside inclining towards the rear (north) of the block. The bank's major facade facing Main Street rises from a rusticated Seneca brownstone high basement, interrupted in the central bay by a stone-arched entryway in the manner of H.H. Richardson. Charles H. Read, Jr.,'s design features a symmetrical, three bay, 2½-story front elevation. Three gable roofs intersect in an I-plan over the rectangular structure. The typically Romanesque treatment of semicircular arches framing windows and entrances is repeated consistently from basement to attic story and carried back continuously along the west elevation facing 12th Street.

Architectural Analysis

The basement and first story of the building's Main Street (south) elevation are constructed of Seneca brownstone, similar in type to the stone used for the Smithsonian castle in Washington, D.C. The original floriated brownstone arch vaulting the main entrance within the central bay remains intact, although the entrance vestibule beneath the arch has undergone substantial modifications.

Read's original rendering in Modern Buildings shows that he intended a straight formal stair recessed within the entrance vestibule. His accompanying plan of the banking floor indicates that the original entrance doors were located at the top of the stairs, recessed a full twenty feet within the exterior wall. Early photographs of the building reveal, however, that the entrance vestibule which was actually constructed featured three central doors directly under the arch opening, flanked by sidelights. Above a single lintel over the doors spanned an ornate wrought-iron grill exhibiting a spiraling organic design similar in style to Louis Sullivan's Chicago work. Both the grillwork and the early doors were removed sometime after the state purchased the building in 1930. The original holes bored into the stone arch to anchor the grill above the entrance can still be seen today. Some of these holes contain small wrought-iron stubs left behind in the hasty removal of the grill. Today the entrance under the arch consists of a single door placed asymmetrically within a concrete in-fill panel. This recent modification under the arch places the entrance door in a recess about a foot behind the plane of the front facade.

The transition from rusticated brownstone to off-white pressed brick on the main elevation occurs at the transom level of the first-floor windows. A floriated string course receives the semicircular arches over the transom windows and also serves as a belt course dividing the rough-hewn ashlar from the pressed brick of the upper stories. Two large windows with round-arch transoms flank the main entrance. The transoms retain their original stained-glass artwork, a simple abstract design containing symmetrical scrollwork culminating in a star at the apex.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1893 **Builder/Architect** Charles H. Read, Jr.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Statement of Significance

Planters National Bank, located at 12th and Main streets in downtown Richmond, is a highly original interpretation of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, a style that flourished in the United States during the late 19th century. The building survives today as the last remaining specimen of the Romanesque idiom in Richmond's city center. The archetypal Romanesque themes of solidity, permanence, and fortress-like protection are ably expressed by its rusticated and elaborately carved brownstone facades, its picturesque roof line of steep gables and decorative finials, and its stone-arched entryway. The bank was designed in 1893 by Charles H. Read, Jr., a native Virginia architect who attended the Virginia Military Institute and the School of Engineering at the University of Virginia. Read contributed several other significant buildings to Richmond's cityscape, notably the Union Theological Seminary complex, the Masonic Orphans Home, and the Times Building of 1893. Planters National Bank exemplifies the creative talent of a prolific native architect and remains one of the most capable expressions of the Romanesque Revival style to be found in Virginia. Among the first of the grand bank designs to be built in Richmond, this distinguished work of architecture is believed to be the oldest bank building in the state capital.

Historical Background

Broadly speaking, Read's design for Planters National Bank reflects the ubiquitous influence of Henry Hobson Richardson, the Boston architect whose most famous work, Trinity Church, established the architectural movement that bears his name, "Richardsonian Romanesque." Richardson's 1872 design for Trinity Church in Boston won one of the most prestigious architectural competitions of the day and set the standard for a generation of American architects to emulate and reinterpret in their own works.

Richardson's buildings were characterized by the horizontal coursing of heavy stone rustication which was often carried up the full height of the major elevation. Heaviness and solidity were themes intrinsic to his designs, articulated not only by the rough-hewn brownstone coursings, but also by the deep window reveals and cavernous arched entryways that gave added emphasis to the great weight and thickness of the walls. The overall effect of a Richardsonian Romanesque building relied upon an expansive roof line, a strict geometric placement of windows and door openings, and a relatively planar treatment of the major facades to achieve its august appearance.

By contrast, the exuberant articulation of detail in the Planters National Bank design illustrates a more playful and imaginative use of the Romanesque idiom by Read. The horizontal string course which caps the brownstone basement is broken by two engaged piers, producing a vertical counterpoint in the center bay of the front elevation. Decorated cushion capitals,

Major Bibliographical References

Blumenson, John J.G. Identifying American Architecture. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.
 "Funeral of Mr. Read." News-Leader (Richmond), June 21, 1904.
 (See Continuation Sheet #5)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3/4 acre

Quadrangle name Richmond, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification The site of Planters National Bank is referenced at the Tax Assessors Office, City of Richmond, by map number E000-0101-019A. The address is listed as 1200-12 E. Main St. The property measures 156.66' by 213.69'. The site is bounded by E. Main St. to the S, 12th St. to the W, Bank St. to the N and a street level parking lot to the E.
List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (See Continuation Sheet #5)

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date February 11, 1982

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3143

city or town Richmond state VA 23219

State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
 title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date SEP 16 1982

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	date
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

PLANTERS NATIONAL BANK, RICHMOND, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

7. Description (continued)

The central bay above the entrance arch is defined by a broad floriated console from which two engaged piers rise to frame the central pediment of the roof. Two pairs of semicircular windows are positioned above the console beneath two larger relieving arches which continue the rhythm of the transom arches on the corner bays. On the second-floor level five arcaded semicircular awning windows are couched between the console piers in the middle bay. Three rectangular awning windows are grouped on either side of the central arcade, centered within the corner bays. Above these windows the wall is embellished by corbeled and blind arcading which is carried across the full width of the corner bays.

The attic story is designated by a thin belt course extending across the central bay and by a modified Palladian window centered in the projecting pediment. A delicately scaled modillion cornice caps the treatment of the wall at the eave, reflecting the prevailing eclectic attitude towards architectural design that is evident in Read's complex composition.

A decorative elliptical finial caps the central pediment while small hemispherical finials top the four piers projecting above the roof line. Old photographs show that the original roof was first constructed of ceramic Roman tile. This roof was replaced by the state after 1930 with the standing-seam terne roof that exists today.

The west elevation continues the horizontal coursing and rhythm of semicircular windows established in Read's design for the front facade. The brownstone rustication is carried up to the transom level only for the first two bays, however. For the rear six bays, the rustication is continued only along the basement level. The two southwest corner bays are framed, like the central section of the front elevation, by two engaged piers joined horizontally by a double belt course. Between the two belt courses the company title "Planters National Bank" was originally displayed in raised letters. Today the tell-tale anchor holes remain visible in the brick.

The long central section of the west elevation contains four repeating bays reiterating the design of the corner bays on the front elevation. Each of these bays contains a tall semicircular window surmounted by three rectangular awning windows. The upper wall is capped by blind arcading and a modillion cornice, identical in arrangement to the outer bays of the front elevation.

The side entrance to the bank is located on the west elevation in the seventh bay to the rear. The street-level door is recessed within a semicircular arch that is reiterated as a window arch for the eighth and final bay.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

PLANTERS NATIONAL BANK, RICHMOND, VA

Continuation sheet # 3

Item number 8

Page 1

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

ornamental finials, and an elaborate corbel table are just a few of the means by which Read embellished the Romanesque theme. In this way Read exhibits some of the same "exuberance" as the Philadelphia architect Frank Furness, whose influence, like Richardson's, was also widespread during this period. For example, in Furness's Guarantee Trust and Safe Deposit Company building of 1875 we find an arcade treatment of the upper floor that may have influenced Read's arcade design at Planters National Bank. Though the two arcades cannot be considered identical, they show by their scale and detail a comparable spirit of ornamentation that far exceeds Richardson's more restrained use of the Romanesque idiom.

The architect of Planters National Bank, Charles H. Read, Jr., was born in Richmond in 1846. Read attended the Virginia Military Institute and participated in the celebrated charge of the cadet corps at the Battle of New Market. In 1866, a year after the war ended, Read entered the School of Engineering at the University of Virginia. Upon graduating in 1871 he returned to Richmond to work for the Tredegar Iron Works as a mechanical draftsman for a period of five years. In 1876 Read moved to Washington, D.C., to practice in the offices of the Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury and the U.S. Geological Survey. His stint as a federal employee extended from 1877 to 1889, after which he returned again to Richmond to begin a private practice. Read's most prolific phase as an architect extended from 1890 to 1900. During this decade he designed numerous significant commercial, residential, and religious structures in the city of Richmond. Among his most successful local works were the Union Theological Seminary Complex (1893), the Masonic Orphans Home (1893), the Times Building (1893), and the Strause and Talbott residences (1894) on West Franklin Street. After 1900 Read moved once to Washington, D.C., where he died in 1904.

The history of the Planters National Bank building can be traced to the dissolution of the Confederacy at the end of the Civil War which resulted in the revoking of all charters of banks sympathetic to the Confederate cause, including the Farmers Bank of Virginia, founded in 1812. Shortly after the war ended the officers and stockholders of the defunct Farmers Bank applied for another charter under the new name of Planters National Bank. Within eight months of their application, a national charter was granted by the Department of the Treasury. The new bank company opened for business on December 8, 1865. The bank's first home was located on the corner of 12th and Main in a simple two-story commercial building. This building was succeeded by Read's Romanesque Revival structure some thirty years later.

Planters National Bank was designed and built in 1893 and dedicated in 1894. According to Read's own publication Modern Buildings, the building cost approximately \$100,000 to construct. At the time Planters National was one of four National Banks in Richmond. The other three were First National, the National Bank of Virginia, and the Merchants National. In the Chamber of Commerce's book The City on the James (1893), Planters National is described as "one of the most successful banks in the land."

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

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PLANTERS NATIONAL BANK, RICHMOND, VA

Continuation sheet #4

Item number 8

Page 2

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

With the quick growth of the bank's business in the first part of the 20th century, expanded facilities were eventually required. An annex was added to Read's building in 1919 to accommodate the increased demand for office space. Although the annex, which wraps around the east and rear of the 1893 building, is similar in scale to its parent structure, the addition lacks any of the original's rich Romanesque ornamental designs or rubbed brick detailing. The architect for the annex is not known.

In 1926 Planters National Bank merged with State and City Bank and Trust Company to become, by a compression of names, State Planters Bank. Due to the sudden doubling of the merged bank's clientele, the 12th and Main facility was unable to accommodate the increased business demand. At the end of 1929 State Planters moved to its new modern headquarters at Ninth and Main and sold Read's building to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Forty years later in 1963, State Planters was consolidated with the United Virginia Bank Holding Company. The name "State Planters" was dropped soon afterwards. Today the only tangible evidence of Planters's early history is Read's 1893 building.

Beginning in 1930 the Planters National Bank building was occupied for over thirty years by the state's Division of Motor Vehicles. Subsequently the departments of Taxation and Education occupied office space there. The building became vacant in April of 1981 when the Department of Education moved their offices to the new Monroe Tower complex two blocks to the east. The 1893 building now stands vacant and in a state of growing deterioration.

Planters National Bank building today remains the sole vestige of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in downtown Richmond. The only other comparable commercial building still standing in Richmond is the Masonic Temple at 101 West Broad, located far from the downtown commercial district. That building, however, was not designed by a native Richmonder, but by Jackson Cott, a Baltimore architect. All but two of Richmond's Romanesque-style commercial buildings are now gone, including Read's other works in the style, the Times Building (1893), and the Levy and Davis Store (1895). All were demolished after 1930 to make way for commercial redevelopment.

DJH

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service



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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

PLANTERS NATIONAL BANK, RICHMOND, VA
Continuation sheet # 5

Item number 9, 10

Page 1

9. Bibliography (continued)

"Obituary." Times-Dispatch (Richmond), June 21, 1904

Read, Charles H. Jr. Modern Buildings (1882-1900 , Designed by C.H. Read, Jr., Architect).
Richmond. 1900.

Richmond Chamber of Commerce. Richmond, Virginia: The City on the James. Richmond:
George W. Engelhardt, 1893.

Richmond, VA. Valentine Museum Library. Steve Nelson, "Charles H. Read, Jr. in Richmond,
August 9, 1979.

"State-Planters Bank 1865-1965," Richmond, 1965.

What Style Is It?. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1977.

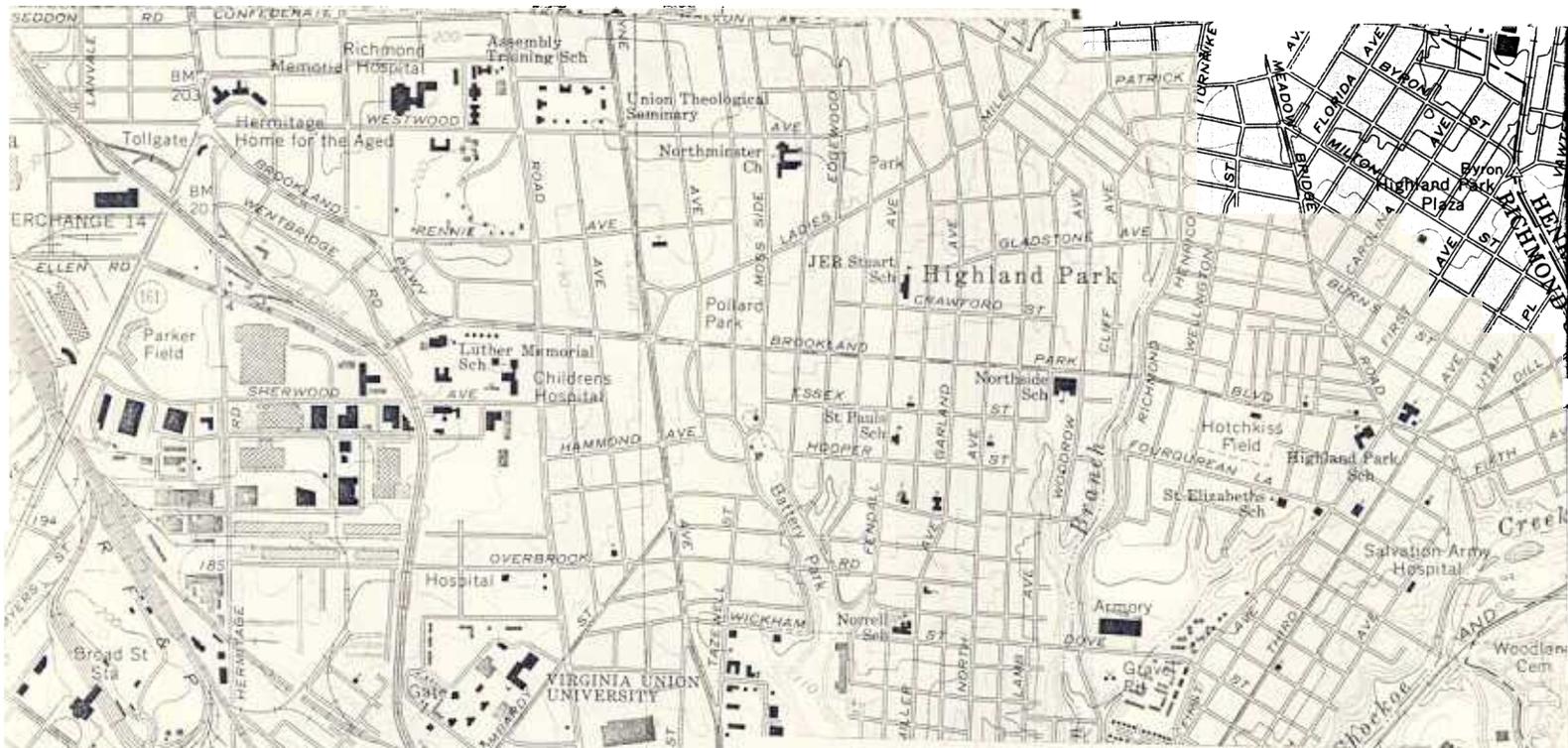
Williams, Frances Leigh. They Faced the Future. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1951.

10. Geographical Data (continued)

The narrow dimension of the property (156.66') fronts Main Street, while the length
(213.69') of the site extends along 12th Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The bounds have been drawn to coincide with those of the above described city lot on which
the building is situated.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Richmond, Va. 1964 (PR1968,1974)

● PLANTERS NATIONAL BANK, 1200 E. Main St
Richmond, Va.

UTM References:

18/284960/4156970

