

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Monroe Park Historic District (VHLC File No. 127-383)

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number (see continuation sheet #8) N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county (in city) code 760

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (See Continuation Sheet # 1)

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richmond City Hall

street & number 900 East Broad Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

(1) Monroe Park Historic District by Robert Winthrop
title(2) West Franklin Street Historic District as this property been determined eligible? yes no
NR 1972 District)

date (1) 1983 (2) 1972 federal (2) state county (1) local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond, state Virginia 23219

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Monroe Park is an irregularly shaped, five sided public park located in central Richmond, between downtown and a densely populated town house neighborhood. The park is without topographic interest, and its design consists of a number of radial walks which focus on adjacent streets and on a central fountain. These walks form a geometric network. The park is planted with large shade trees and numerous small, ornamental trees and shrubs. The design of the park and most of the features in it date from the late 19th century; the modern plantings of small trees and shrubs tend to obscure the axial planning of the park. A series of late 19th-century houses interspersed with monumental churches and public buildings, as well as several high rise apartment houses face the western and northern sides of the park. These buildings range in height from two to twelve floors, and include examples of the Gothic, Moorish, Italian Renaissance, Second Empire, Jacobean Revival, and Georgian Revival styles. The park provides a forecourt for viewing this unique assemblage of structures. Monroe Park, and the buildings which enclose it, form a distinctive urban ensemble. The district contains sixteen buildings and five objects; two of the buildings do not contribute to the character of the district.

ANALYSIS

Located in the middle of a densely developed urban district, Monroe Park is a natural oasis in an otherwise man-made environment. The site is flat and has no dramatic natural features; its character is determined by the tree-filled open space and the varied and eccentric cluster of buildings which surround the park.

The park design, which dates from the 1870s, is an example of axial, formal planning, with sidewalks radiating from each major entrance to other entrances. The architectural focus of the park is a four-tier, cast-iron fountain in the middle of the open space. Trees and shrubs do not relate to this plan consistently; they are randomly distributed across the site. In addition to the fountain, the park is embellished with two major statues and two smaller monuments, as well as the Checkers House, an octagonal pavilion which holds public toilets. Only one statue and the fountain are related to the plan of the park.

The buildings which face the park on the northern and western sides are exceptionally varied in scale, material, design and style. These consist of eight, late 19th century, Second Empire and Georgian Revival town houses; these are all brick, and are two to three stories tall. In addition, there is the Italian Renaissance, limestone Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (1906), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; the Gothic, granite Grace and Holy Trinity Church (1895); the Moorish, brick and terra-cotta Mosque Auditorium (1927); and two Medievally inspired, brick, twelve-story apartment houses, one of which was converted into a dormitory for use by Virginia Commonwealth University students. A modern high rise dormitory and a church also face the park in these blocks, but do not contribute to the character of the district.

(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 type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater | | |
| <input checked="" 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 varied Builder/Architect multiple

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Monroe Park is situated on land acquired in 1851 by the City of Richmond. Planned to serve as a park for the stylish western suburbs, it was first used for the site of an agricultural exposition and later as a camp site for Confederate troops before being developed for recreational use in the 1870s. With the rapid growth of the western suburbs of Richmond at the turn of the 20th century, the park provided an ideal setting for the monumental Gothic Grace and Holy Trinity Church (1895), the Italian Renaissance Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (1906), and the Moorish Mosque Auditorium (1927). These buildings, along with several late 19th-century town houses which recall the earlier residential character of the park, and two impressive apartment houses of the 1920s, create an architectural ensemble which is unique in Virginia for its monumental character and stylistic diversity. This district, with its park setting, juxtaposition of styles, scales and materials, and exotic skyline of minarets, towers, and domes, is an exceptional demonstration of eclectic architectural tastes and preferences. Notable architects of significant buildings in the district include Joseph McGuire and Alfred Bossom.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Park

In 1850 the only public park in Richmond was Capitol Square. With a population of 30,280 at that time, this single open space was no longer sufficient for the growing city's needs, and in 1851, city councilman Charles Dimmock proposed that parks be acquired near future major residential areas. In 1851-52, seven and one-half acres of land were purchased to become Western Square. This square would later become Monroe Park.

The site being beyond the city limits and to the west of developed residential areas, the park was not developed for two decades. In 1854 the property was used by the Virginia State Agricultural Society for a fair. The fair was visited by President John Tyler and General Winfield Scott and was celebrated as a major civic event in the antebellum period.

During the Civil War the site was used for the campground of a South Carolina regiment, and as a drill field. At the end of the war it served as a tent hospital for Federal troops, and was used by occupation troops until 1869, when the area around the park was annexed by the City of Richmond.

By the late 1870s residential development had expanded to the west, and the park was indicated on maps of the period with an arrangement of curved paths, similar to those in Capitol Square. By 1889, this original scheme had been replaced by the present configuration of straight walks. The central feature of this design was a tall, granite, rustic pyramid from

9. Major Bibliographical References

Christian, W. Asbury. Richmond, Her Past and Present. Richmond: The Hermitage Press, 1912.

(See Continuation Sheet # 8)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 21 acres

Quadrangle name Richmond, Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------------|---------------|---|-------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 6 6 0 | 4 1 5 8 2 4 0 | B | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 6 1 0 | 4 1 5 8 0 4 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 2 8 0 | 4 1 5 8 0 5 0 | D | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 2 9 0 | 4 1 5 8 2 9 0 |
| E | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 4 3 0 | 4 1 5 8 3 4 0 | F | 1 1 8 | 2 8 3 5 3 0 | 4 1 5 8 3 4 0 |
| G | | | | H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at the NW corner of the intersection of W. Main St. and Belvidere St.; thence extending approximately 1100' W along the N side of W. Main St. to the NE corner of the intersection of said street with Cherry St.; thence approximately 800' N along E side of Cherry St. to

(See Continuation Sheet # 8)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|--------|-----|------|
| state | N/A | code | county | N/A | code |
| state | N/A | code | county | N/A | code |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert P. Winthrop, Architect

organization Aquino & Winthrop, Architects date November 1, 1983

street & number 417 North Boulevard telephone (804) 353-8828

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23220

12. 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell

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

date November 15, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

MONROE PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, Richmond (city), Virginia

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 4, 7

Page 1, 1

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4. OWNER OF THE PROPERTY

- Monroe Park - (Including the Checkers House) City of Richmond, Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St., Richmond, Virginia 23219
- 6 N. Laurel St. - The Mosque, The City of Richmond, Community Facilities, 800 West Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- 8 N. Laurel St. - Grace and Holy Trinity Church
8 North Laurel Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- 14 & 16 N. Laurel St. - Bishop Walter F. Sullivan
807 Cathedral Place, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- Floyd & N. Laurel St. - The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
Bishop Walter F. Sullivan
807 Cathedral Place, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- 20 N. Laurel St. - Clark Glasgow
22 North Laurel Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- 22 N. Laurel St. - Clark Glasgow
22 North Laurel Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- 26 N. Laurel St. - Virginia Commonwealth University
Box 222, Richmond, Virginia 23298
- 600 W. Franklin St. - J. Mark Sowers
7337 Longview Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23225
- 610-614 West Franklin St. - The Prestwould - c/o Grice McMullan
13 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
- The Prestwould Homeowners Association,
610-614 West Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- *700 W. Franklin St. - The Pace Memorial Church
704 West Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- *710 W. Franklin St. - Virginia Commonwealth University
Box 222, Richmond, Virginia 23298
- 806 Cathedral Place - William M. Bridgeforth
2905 Grove Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- (Park Avenue)
808 Cathedral Place - Alan McCullough, Jr.
403 North Strawberry Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220
- (Park Avenue)
811 Floyd Ave. - Bishop Walter F. Sullivan
807 Cathedral Place, Richmond, Virginia 23220

7. DESCRIPTION

The residential buildings facing the park are unified in material and scale, and they reflect the character of the upper-class neighborhood which once surrounded the park. The monumental buildings were designed as isolated landmarks with Monroe Park serving as a spacious forecourt. Each is notable and distinctive and is independent of its neighbors. A combination of minarets, domes, Gothic towers and gables, and mansard roofs floats above the tree-filled park. The dramatic juxtaposition of styles and scale is the distinguishing characteristic of the district.

The park has not changed in design since the early 20th century, and most of the buildings bordering the park are still used for their original purposes. The only exception is the conversion of houses for office use. All of the buildings are well maintained and are in good repair.

(See Continuation Sheet # 2)

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MONROE PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, Richmond (City), Virginia

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7. DESCRIPTION - Inventory

The following is a listing of the sixteen buildings and five historic objects in the Monroe Park Historic District. Of these, two are non-contributing to the district, as they are less than 50 years old and do not conform to the character of the district. Non-contributing structures are indicated by asterisks.

MONROE PARK

Fountain: cast-iron; four-tier; ca. 1903; cast by J. W. Fiske. The first tier is a large basin supported by acanthus leaves; water pours from four masks on the side of this basin into a lower pool. The second tier is supported by four dragons; the upper tiers are simpler in design and diminish in size. This fountain replaces a granite pyramid fountain, erected in this location in the 1870s. The upper portions of the fountain were recast in 1971 by the Robinson Iron Company.

Wickham Monument: a bronze statue on a grey granite pedestal; 1891; sculpted by Edward Valentine; cast by the Henry Bonnard Bronze Company, N.Y. The standing figure of William Carter Wickham is in his Civil War uniform. Valentine, Richmond's best known sculptor, specialized in Civil War subjects.

Bryan Monument: a bronze statue on a pink granite pedestal; 1911; sculpted by William Couper; cast by the Gorham Company, N.Y. Joseph Bryan was a noted Richmond industrialist and publisher.

WorldWar II Memorial: a brick wall containing limestone tablets inscribed with the names of the war dead of the City of Richmond; flanked by yews and a pair of benches; ca. 1948; Charles Gillette, landscape architect and designer.

Fitzhugh Lee Monument: a granite cross four feet high; ca. 1910. This monument was erected by Lee's comrades in the 7th Army Corps in 1898-99.

Checkers House: brick (flemish bond); 2 stories; octagonal hipped roof, slate; ventilator cupola; wrap around porch on the second level. Public toilets; Modern (Art Déco), 1939. The first floor is occupied by public toilets, the second by a porch and a room large enough to accommodate a single game of checkers. This building replaces an earlier wooden band stand.

NORTH LAUREL STREET

6 North Laurel Street (The Mosque): brick (running bond) and terra-cotta; six stories; flat, built-up roof, five-part composition consisting of thirteen bays; bronze canopies at the main entrances. A four thousand-seat Auditorium.

Moorish. 1926. Marcellus Wright and Charles M. Robinson Associates, Architects.

(See Continuation Sheet # 3)

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7. DESCRIPTION - Inventory

In the Laurel Street facade the central entrance bay is indicated by a pointed arch the full height of the building and is decorated with Moorish designs in terra-cotta, limestone and bronze. It is flanked by minarets which rise six stories above the roof. These are flanked, in turn, by five-bay, low wings which indicate the location of a former small hotel. The second-floor windows are horseshoe-shaped and are decorated with arabesques in terra-cotta. The upper three floors have simple double-hung windows in terra-cotta frames. These wings are flanked by six-story, copper-domed pavilions at the corner of the building. The side elevators are two stories high and are dramatically asymmetrical. The rear elevation is without architectural interest.

The huge auditorium is entered through arabesque encrusted, low lobbies. The decorative scheme includes glazed, polychromatic terra-cotta, and fresco. Moorish decoration in ornamental plaster, fresco and tile, is used throughout the public spaces of the structure. The building also accommodates several meeting rooms, a large, Egyptian-style ballroom, a swimming pool, and a small hotel which has been converted into offices.

The Mosque was erected as the Acca Temple, and was a Masonic meeting hall as well as an auditorium. Intended to be a profit-making venture, the building failed in the Great Depression and was acquired by the City of Richmond. The Mosque has been the site of many cultural and civic events since it opened. It is one of the best known landmarks of the City of Richmond, and the most memorable building in the Monroe Park District.

8 North Laurel Street: Grace and Holy Trinity Church: Stone (random ashlar granite); two stories; gable slate roof; irregular bay spacing. Church. Gothic Revival. Roland & Baskervill, Architects, 1895. The nave is indicated by a tall gable surmounted by a cross. Three lancet windows are centered in the gable. The gable is flanked by a tower to the south, and a curved bay to the north. The asymmetrical composition is decorated with restrained Gothic ornament and a single gargoyle. The interior of the church is elaborately decorated and is well preserved. Part of this building is The Parish House: Stone (random ashlar granite); two stories; flat roof; three bays. Parish Hall, Tudor Revival. Baskervill & Lambert, 1926. To the west of this addition is a new wing with an entrance. It was erected in 1981, and was designed by Glave Newman Anderson, Architects.

14 North Laurel Street: brick (running bond); two stories; mansard roof (slate); three bays. Offices (built as a residence). Second Empire. 1879. Three-bay, cast-iron porch, with an entrance to the south. Two dormers. The double-hung windows have granite lintels. This house is a part of a cluster of Second Empire houses.

(See Continuation Sheet # 4)

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7. DESCRIPTION - Inventory

16 North Laurel Street: brick (running bond); two stories; mansard roof (slate; three bays. Offices (built as a residence). Second Empire. 1891. Three-bay, cast-iron porch, with an entrance to the north. Three dormers. It has a deep, bracketed cornice and jack arches over the double-hung windows. This is a handsome house on an important corner site.

Floyd Avenue & North Laurel Street: Cathedral of the Sacred Heart: limestone (coursed ashlar); one floor; gable roof with central dome (copper); three-bay Corinthian portico, flanked by towers, and surmounted by a blind arcade. Church. 1906. Joseph McGuire Architect. This building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (1981).

20 North Laurel Street: brick (running bond, painted); two floors; shallow, hipped roof, standing seam metal; three bays; with a three-bay wooden porch. Detached house. Italianate, ca. 1879. This was the home of P. H. Baskerville in 1879.

22 North Laurel Street: brick (running bond); two stories; gable roof with a classical pediment, standing seam metal; four bays, asymmetrically positioned Ionic portico. Detached house. Georgian Revival, ca. 1895. This house contributes to the character of the district.

26 North Laurel Street, Johnson Hall: brick; twelve stories; flat roof; seven bays. Apartment building converted for use as a dormitory. Jacobean Revival, 1922. Alfred Charles Bossom, Architect. The Laurel Street elevation is composed of paired bay windows which flank a central entrance. The bay windows form vertical elements which rise to the roof and terminate in gables. The gables were decorated elaborately, but were stripped of most ornamentation when the building was converted to dormitory use. This building was erected as the Monroe Terrace, a luxury apartment house.

WEST FRANKLIN STREET

600 West Franklin Street: brick (running bond); three stories; flat roof, (metal); five bays; three-bay elliptical porch, Ionic order. Detached house converted to office use. A Colonial Revival remodeling of a Second Empire house, 1879. Remodeled ca. 1910. Originally a three-bay house with a mansard roof, this house was rebuilt to be almost symmetrical, and have a full three floors. The elaborate Colonial Revival interior has been retained.

(See Continuation Sheet # 5)

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7. DESCRIPTION - Inventory

610-614 West Franklin Street, Prestwould: brick (common bond) with limestone trim; twelve stories; gable roof (slate); irregular bay spacing. Apartment building. Jacobean Revival, (1923.) Alfred Charles Bossom, Architect. This is a "U" shaped building with a central courtyard which can not be seen from the street. The roof line is made up of medieval gables and a crenelated tower. With large apartments, this building was the most stylish residential tower in Richmond. It has been converted to condominiums. It is well preserved.

* 700 West Franklin Street: brick; one story; hipped roof (slate); dormers; one story free standing tower in yard. Church. 1970. Modern. Charles Shifflet, Architect. This building is on the site of a Gothic church which burned.

* 710 West Franklin Street: brick and concrete; twelve floors; flat roof composition. Dormitory. 1970. Lee, King & Poole, Architects. This structure consists of a low recreational wing, and a high-rise bedroom tower. The cast-iron fence of the former house on the site is preserved in the front terrace.

PARK AVENUE (CATHEDRAL PLACE)

806 Cathedral Place: brick (running bond); three stories; flat roof; three bays; a wooden, three-bay porch, one story. Detached house. Italianate. 1891. Cast-iron fence. This is a good example of the town houses which were once typical of this area.

808 Cathedral Place: brick (running bond); three stories; flat roof; three bays; a cast-iron, three-bay porch, one story. Detached house. Italianate. 1891. Cast-iron fence. This was the home of S. B. Witt, Judge of the Hustings Court. It is a fine Italianate house.

FLOYD AVENUE

811 Floyd Avenue (this includes the houses once numbered 811, 813, 815, 817, and 819 Floyd Avenue): brick (running bond); two stories with a mansard roof (slate); each of the five units has a three-sided bay window, and a single-bay entrance porch to the side. Row houses. Second Empire. 1889. These houses have been combined to become a single office building, but retain the appearance of individual houses. Each house is set back from the street to make a transition from the park to the setbacks of Floyd Avenue.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

the apex of which water gushed. The pyramid was similar to the memorial erected to Confederate dead in Hollywood Cemetery in 1869. The Monroe Park feature was surmounted by a metal pipe structure supporting an electric light. Adjacent to this odd pyramid was a wooden band stand. In the first decade of the 20th century the pyramid was replaced with a four-tier, cast-iron fountain cast by J.W. Fiske. In 1971, the fountain was recast by the Robinson Company. The band stand was replaced by the Checkers House in 1939.

Serving as a residential square from the later 19th century into the first part of the 20th century, the park by 1930 was surrounded by high rise apartments and major public buildings and churches. As the area aged it became less stylish as a residential neighborhood and the Richmond Professional Institute, the forerunner of Virginia Commonwealth University, expanded into the older houses of the area. By the later 1950s the residential character of the district was lost, and several proposals were made to destroy the park by extending streets through it, converting it to parking space, or erecting a medical center on the site. These proposals were all rejected and the park remains a major public amenity today.

As was typical of 19th-century practice, the park became a site for monumental sculpture. The foundation for a huge rotunda dedicated to Jefferson Davis was laid in the park in the 1890s, but this impressive scheme was abandoned in favor of a more modest monument erected on Monument Avenue. A bronze statue of General William C. Wickham was dedicated in 1891, and in 1911 a monument to Joseph Bryan was unveiled. Smaller monuments to Fitzhugh Lee and the dead of World War II were erected in the later 20th century. Only the Wickham Statue was related to the park's axial plan.

The Buildings

While the park and its development are of interest, the park is most significant as the forecourt for a series of monumental public buildings. The buildings are individually important but it is their close proximity and relationship to the park that enhances their architectural impact.

The north and west sides of the park retain several late 19th-century houses, typical of those which once surrounded the entire park. Modest in scale, these emphasize the monumentality of the public buildings and churches.

The first church to be established in the district was the Pace Memorial Methodist Church, whose congregation first met in the park in the 1850s. The original Gothic church building burned and has been replaced with a structure which does not contribute to the district. The oldest surviving church in the district is Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, erected

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8. SIGNIFICANCE - The Buildings

in 1895, and designed by Richmond architects Noland & Baskervill. The Church was established in this location in 1874 and had formerly been known as the Moore Memorial Chapel. The granite exterior is austere and handsome; the well-preserved interior is elaborate, with many fine examples of ecclesiastical art of the period. Grace and Holy Trinity is among the finest churches of its period in Virginia.

In 1906, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was erected at the intersection of Floyd Avenue and Laurel Street. Designed by the Beaux Arts-educated, New York architect Joseph McGuire, the cathedral's significance is fully documented in a National Register nomination report prepared by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

Two luxury, high-rise apartment houses were erected in the 1920s, the Prestwoud and the Monroe Terrace which is now Johnson Hall. These were designed by Alfred Bossom, a well-known New York architect who designed a number of buildings in Richmond. These buildings make use of Medieval decorative elements and have elaborately articulated skylines. The apartment building Monroe Terrace, is also located in the West Franklin Street Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1972.

The last major landmark to be erected on the park is the Mosque, a Moorish style auditorium. With four copper-clad domes and two minarets, the Mosque is an architectural fantasy on Moorish themes. It was designed by two Richmond architects, Charles M. Robinson and Marcellus Wright, and is unique in Virginia.

The district's Gothic towers and mock crenelations, Renaissance domes and towers, and Moorish minarets provide the most exciting architectural skyline in Virginia. The combination of styles and the scale and monumentality of the individual structures make the buildings on the park one of the most memorable ensembles in Virginia, a perfect example of turn-of-the-century American eclecticism.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Scott, Mary Wingfield. Old Richmond Neighborhoods. Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1950.

Winthrop, Robert P. Richmond's Architecture. Richmond: Richmond Times Dispatch, 1981.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

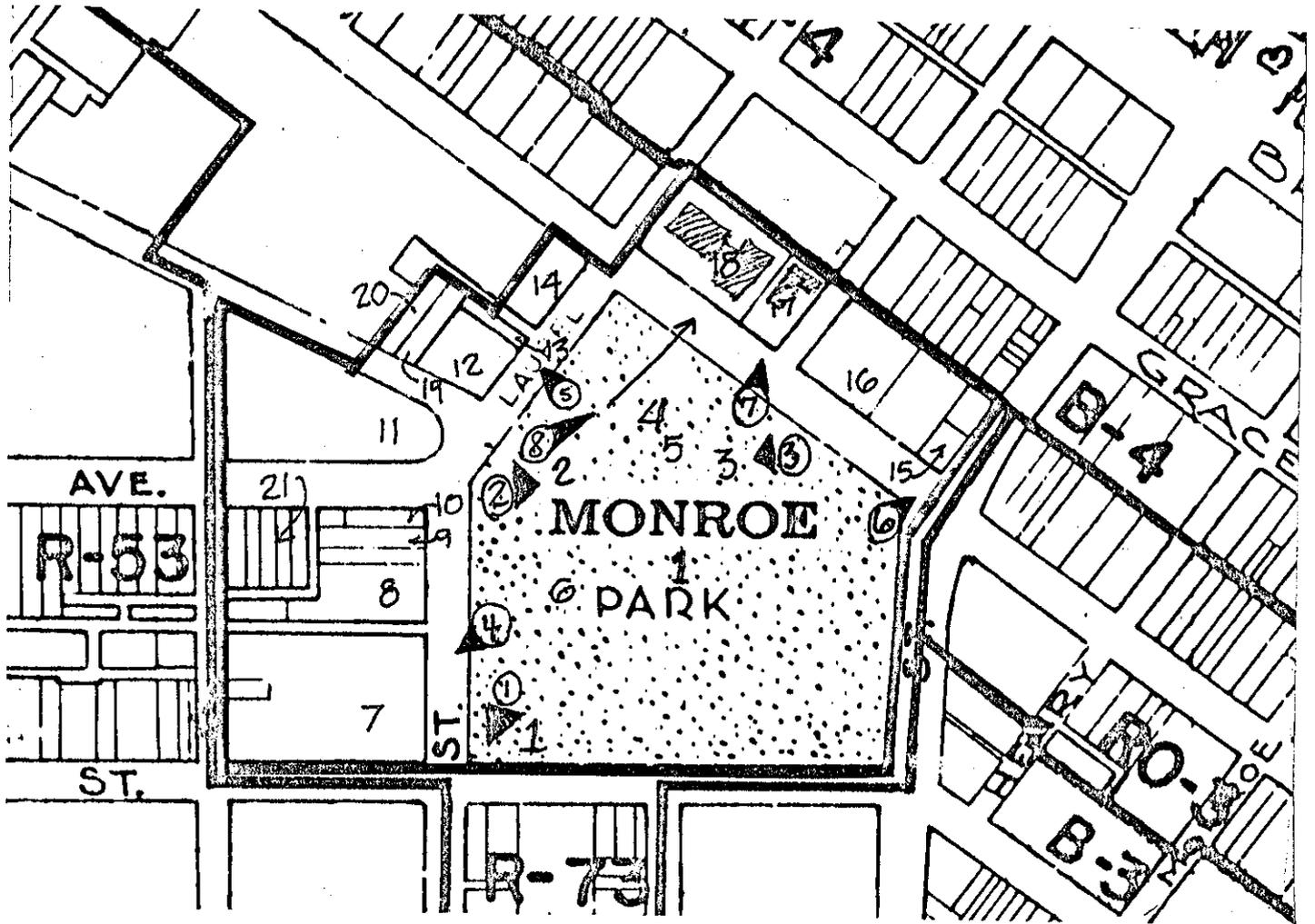
a point on the S side of Park Ave. (Cathedral Place); thence approximately 200' SE along S side of Park Ave. (Cathedral Place); thence approximately 300' NE, crossing Park Ave. (Cathedral Place); thence approximately 50' E; thence approximately 200' N to S side of W. Franklin St.; thence approximately 200' SE along S side of W. Franklin St. to a point on the SE side of intersection of said street with Laurel St.; thence approximately 200' NE along E side of Laurel St.; thence approximately 550' SE to W side of Belvidere St.; thence approximately 600' S along W side of Belvidere St. to point of origin.

Justification

The district includes the entire Monroe Park and all of the buildings which face it on the northern and western sides, as well as the houses on Park Avenue (Cathedral Place), and Floyd Avenue which are visible from the park. This includes all of the monumental structures and 19th century residences facing the park. The building on the east side of the park is not in the district since it is a 1950s era, mid-rise hotel with a parking deck. The buildings on the south side of the park were excluded from the district. They include two warehouses, a bar and grill, a one-level car dealership, and a new, one thousand-bed dormitory. All boundaries follow the curb or property line adjacent to, or nearest to Monroe Park.

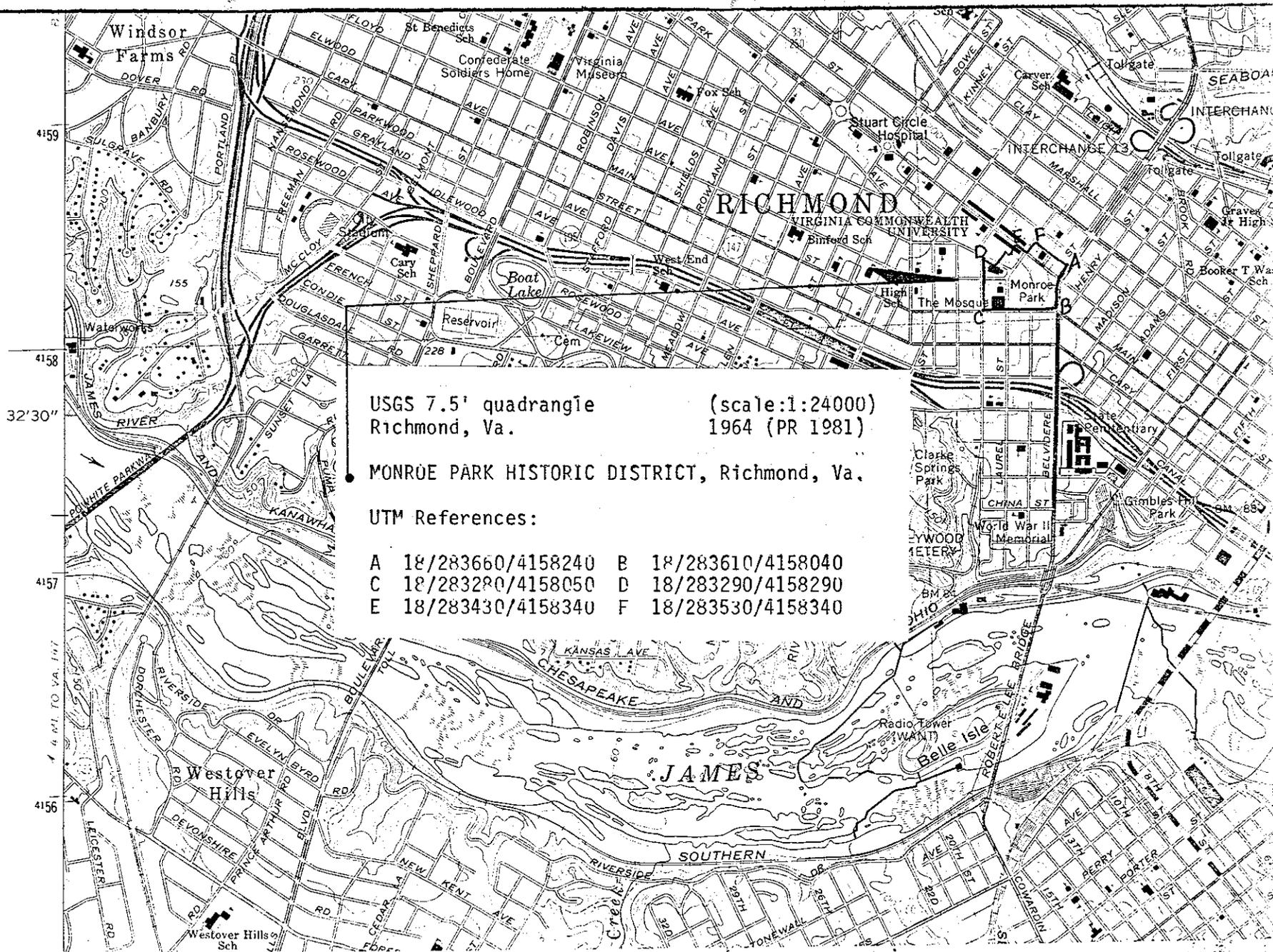
2. LOCATION

The block bounded by West Main Street, Laurel Street, West Franklin Street and Belvidere Street and the properties on Laurel and West Franklin Streets which face the park.



- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----------------------------------|
| -5 | 1. fountain | -16 | 16. 610-614 W. Franklin |
| -4 | 2. Wickham Monument | -17 | 17. 700 W. Franklin |
| -3 | 3. Bryan Monument | -18 | 18. 710 W. Franklin (127-202-54) |
| -1 | 4. World War II Memorial | -19 | 19. 804 Park Avenue |
| -2 | 5. Fitzhugh Lee Monument | -20 | 20. 808 Park Avenue |
| -6 | 6. Checkers House | -21 | 21. 811 Floyd Avenue |
| -7 | 7. 6 N. Laurel, the Mosque | | |
| -8 | 8. 8. N. Laurel | | |
| -9 | 9. 14 N. Laurel | | |
| -10 | 10. 16. N. Laurel | | |
| -11 | 11. Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (127-137) | | |
| -12 | 12. 20. N. Laurel | | |
| -13 | 13. 22 N. Laurel | | |
| -14 | 14. 26 N. Laurel (127-202-37) | | |
| -15 | 15. 600 W. Franklin (127-371 + 127-202-53) | | |

Sketch Plan- Monroe Park Historic District



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
 Richmond, Va. 1964 (PR 1981)

MONROE PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, Richmond, Va.

UTM References:

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| A | 18/283660/4158240 | B | 18/283610/4158040 |
| C | 18/283280/4158050 | D | 18/283290/4158290 |
| E | 18/283430/4158340 | F | 18/283530/4158340 |