

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

LISTED ON:  
VLR 09/17/2009  
NRHP 12/23/2009

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
other names/site number Leigh Street Armory, Monroe School, Monroe Center, [VDHR No. 127-5676]

**2. Location**

street & number 122 West Leigh Street not for publication n/a  
city or town Richmond vicinity n/a  
state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 760 zip code 23220

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] [Date]  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
[X] public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- [X] building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Defense Sub: Arms Storage
Social Meeting Hall
Education School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant / Not in Use Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
roof Asphalt Shingles
walls Brick
other Terra cotta belt course, terra cotta crenellations.

Narrative Description (See continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Criteria A: Ethnic Heritage - Black
Criteria C: Architecture

Period of Significance 1895-1945

Significant Dates 1895, 1899, 1942

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Cutshaw, Wilfred Emory

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
X Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources; The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Table with 4 columns: Zone Easting, Northing. Values: 18 284302 4158479, 2, 3, 4

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Selden Richardson, architectural historian
organization Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (A.C.O.R.N.) date 15 May 2009
street & number 7624 Bryn Mawr Rd. telephone 804 683-9651
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23229

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

- Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Richmond, Virginia, c/o Christopher Beschler, Acting Chief Executive Officer
street & number 900 East Broad Street telephone 646-7978
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Constructed in 1895 in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia, this armory is a two-story brick structure with a partial basement. Located at 122 West Leigh Street, the building is indicative of the style of the classic American civic armory building type, with brick towers and crenellation along the roof parapet. There are four towers: circular turrets on the southeast and southwest corners, a rectangular tower over the center front entrance, and a square tower on the northwest corner. The generous fenestration of the building reflects a trend in armories at this period to be more social or educational facilities rather than a genuine fortification, as was the case with earlier American armories. The armory is constructed of red brick, with granite details and terra cotta crenellations along the roof parapet on three sides and a decorative terra cotta band below the roof parapet. Because of neglect after a post-1985 fire on the second floor, subsequent stabilization of the building required the complete removal of all wooden members of the structure and replacement of the roof, floors, and joists. The demolition of a 1940s gymnasium addition in 1998 means the armory today again looks much as it did when constructed at the close of the nineteenth century.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

Beginning at sidewalk level along the Leigh Street and St. Peter Street facades of the armory, the exterior walls of the building are constructed of red brick, approximately 8 x 2-1/2 x 4 inches, laid in common bond with headers every eighth course. A granite water table runs around the south and west sides of the building, as does a granite belt course at the level of the second story floor. There are 51 windows of four over four panes on the west, south, and east sides of the armory building, and these have flat headers and sills of granite on the west and south sides and granite sills and plain arched brick headers on the eastern side. These windows are currently covered with a painted plywood sheet since the original windows have been removed. Four granite steps lead up to the double-leaf front door, which is recessed inside the central tower to create a sheltered entrance. Judging by the 1895 architectural drawings of the armory, the front door is original and features three panels on each leaf. They are mounted below a four-pane transom window. The two circular turrets on the Leigh Street side are, according to the original plan, 44 feet tall. A large projecting square tower, 52 feet tall and 16 feet across, is the central element, which rises above the arched main entrance of the building, and another square tower is on the northwest corner. Below the level of the parapet a belt course of highly detailed terra cotta decoration with a stylized floral motif runs around the towers and turrets and along the two exposed sides of the building facing Leigh and St. Peter streets. Blocks with a lion's head decorate each corner of the terra cotta belt course on the main, central turret. Recessed panels in the brickwork decorate the towers below the crenellations. There is a decorative granite belt course on the exterior between the floors and a heavy granite belt course runs around the two exposed sides of the building as a water table. A terra-cotta plaque over the entry reads "1895 - FIRST BATALION VIRGINIA VOLUNTEERS INFANTRY - 1895" identifying the armory and giving the date of construction.

The width of the front of the structure on Leigh is 68 feet. The length of the original building is 67 feet along the St. Peters Street side. The addition of a gymnasium in the 1940s meant the loss of a wooden two-story gallery that ran across the rear of the building. This gallery would have overlooked what was once a drill area in the rear of the building when it had a military use. The drill field served as a playground when the building became a public school.

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Richmond, Virginia**

This gallery once allowed access to toilet facilities in the top of the tower at the rear of the building. The gallery was replaced by a narrow addition to the rear of the structure beyond the rear corner turret to make this façade straight across the rear of the building from east to west. The gallery is also shown in the plan as having double stairs that would have served as access to classrooms on the second story before the construction of an interior stair in the 1940s. The loss of this exit apparently led to the addition of a metal fire escape to the front of the building, which was created by the lowering of one of the front windows on the second story of the central square tower, changing a window to a door. This fire escape was removed in 2002 and the window restored to its original appearance. The gymnasium fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1998, although the concrete sub-flooring, the foundation of the gymnasium, and a double set of stairs on the western side of the gymnasium foundation leading up from the St. Peter Street sidewalk to what was once a side entrance to the gym are still in place between the armory and the alley that forms the northern edge of the property.

The interior was originally divided into four large rooms on each floor around a central hall that runs from the front entry to the rear of the structure. These rooms were approximately 25 feet square. The conversion of the armory into a facility for black servicemen during World War II resulted in the removal of a wall on the second floor that divided the rooms on the eastern side of the central hallway. The purpose of this was to make space for a large shower facility. Today this space is one large room from front to back of the armory on this floor, while the other rooms on this and the first floor are as they were constructed and as they were shown on the original plans of the armory. The exception is that a doorway was cut between the rooms on the western side of the central hallway on both floors to offer communication between these spaces, perhaps during the 1943 remodeling. A frame vestibule inside the front entrance was added inside the front doors at some point to reduce heat loss and drafts. The original ceilings were 14 feet tall.

The second story is reached by a stair that rises from the west side of the center hall. Another smaller stair (now removed) in the top of the central tower gave access to the roof and to the flagpole whose truncated base is still visible on the roof of the central tower. The ghost marks of this stair can still be seen inside the tower.

A listing of the spaces of the interior of the armory on the first floor are four rooms, two on each side of a central hallway running through the building from north to south, along with a small room in the northeast tower (originally a restroom) and a room running across the rear of the building that formed the hyphen between the armory and the gymnasium addition. The second floor is divided into two rooms on the western side of the central hall, the large room described above on the eastern side of the hallway, the small room in the northeast tower, and the second floor of the hyphen that connected the gymnasium. There is also a room above the front entrance in the central tower whose purpose appears to have been solely to accommodate the small stair to the roof. Small closets in the front circular towers on both floors were apparently used as coat closets, judging by the remnants of hardware still in place.

The roof of the armory is a hipped design built on a wooden truss system which slopes down from a central peak to the parapet walls, served by gutters whose downspouts are mounted on the outside of the walls. The current roof (built in the same configuration as the original) is temporary and covered in asphalt shingles, although it was originally a standing seam metal roof. The east and west walls each have two chimneys that rise above the parapet,

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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and there is one chimney on the north wall. During stabilization, the building's masonry walls at roof parapet level were repointed and the tops of the four turrets were disassembled and carefully reconstructed. This reconstruction of the top level of the building gives a slightly different appearance to the brickwork, compared to courses below the heads of the second story windows.

The wooden members and trim of the original interior have been largely removed due to fire damage and subsequent rot and deterioration (although samples were retained for later reconstruction). A small amount of the original plasterwork remains in some rooms, notably those on the western side of the central hallway, and some of the wall-mounted blackboards are still in place from the period when the building was used as a city school. Some doorframes also remain with their original transom windows. The current stair in the northwest corner of the building is a temporary structure, but is in the location of the post-1943 interior stair. The flooring throughout the building is currently plywood, laid on modern joists.

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Richmond, Virginia**

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory is a building of significance on the national and state level. The Leigh Street armory is the oldest armory building still standing in the Commonwealth of Virginia<sup>1</sup>. It is also believed to be the only such building built for blacks in the state.<sup>2</sup> The building has on several occasions been revamped and redirected in service to African Americans in general and the citizens of Jackson Ward in particular. Its first change came when the black militia company who used the armory was disbanded in 1899.<sup>3</sup> The national system of local civic militias to provide security and respond in case of disasters was largely supplanted with the passage by Congress of the Dick Act in 1903 which increased federal oversight of the National Guard.<sup>4</sup> The same year the building was turned over to the Richmond School Board to be used as a “school for colored children.”<sup>5</sup> The building served as a school for elementary grades for the next forty years.<sup>6</sup> During World War II the armory was again pressed into use to serve as a reception center for servicemen of color.<sup>7</sup> Thousands of African American soldiers passed through the doors of the armory during the period 1942 –1945.<sup>8</sup> After World War II, the armory continued to serve Jackson Ward as a school and gymnasium annex to nearby Graves Middle School and as the Colored Special School until 1954, and for a period housed The Black History Museum of Richmond.<sup>9</sup> In the capacity of armory, school, and museum the Leigh Street armory has served the people of Richmond for generations and housed various activities of thousands of its citizens. The castellated style of this building, once common among the disappearing number of civic armories, is becoming uncommon and worthy of recognition and preservation. Although the interior of the Leigh Street armory has, for the most part, been lost, the exterior of the building remains both sound and intact.

**Criteria Statement:** The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic History, African American, for its role as an armory for the African American militia unit and as a center of social life in Richmond’s Jackson Ward neighborhood. It is also eligible under Criterion C for architecture as one of only two surviving armories in Richmond (the other being the 1909 Blues Armory on the corner of Sixth and Marshall Streets which has been altered), where once five such crenellated armory buildings existed.<sup>10</sup> The armory on Leigh Street is a reminder of the arrangement that provided not only local and national defense units, but also a social center for thousands of black Richmonders. As the only armory built in Richmond for an African-American militia unit and as the oldest of three identified African-American armories in the country, the building has significance at the national level under Criterion A and at the state level under Criterion C. Its period of significance extends from 1895, the date of its construction, to 1945, when its use as an armory ceased.

Historical Background

A biography of John Mitchell, Jr., the outspoken editor of Richmond’s African-American newspaper, credits Mitchell with persuading Richmond City Council to fund construction of an armory for the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers militia.<sup>11</sup> Mitchell had used the editorial voice of his newspaper, *The Richmond Planet*, and an eight-year term on Richmond City Council from 1888 to 1896 to lead controversial fights to provide the black residents of Jackson Ward with more amenities and greater civil rights. His participation in the fight to fund and build the Volunteers Battalion armory is certainly consistent with his life-long struggle for rights and privileges for his African-American readers and constituents. Mitchell even helped secure the contract for the brickwork for the building for an

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African-American, Armistead Walker.<sup>12</sup> Walker was known as a prominent masonry contractor and was the husband of Richmond's most famous black businesswoman and advocate for black self-reliance and economic empowerment, Maggie Walker.<sup>13</sup> The construction by blacks and for blacks of the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory in the heart of the most dynamic African-American neighborhood in the city, Jackson Ward, was an important signal of social parity with the white militia organizations and white society. The City of Richmond paid \$10,000 toward its construction which compares rather favorably with the \$12,000 provided for construction of the Blue's Armory, one of the city's three white armories, which was constructed in 1909-1910.<sup>14</sup>

The location of the armory on Leigh Street on the western side of Jackson Ward was a logical choice. At the time the neighborhood represented one of the largest concentrations of black capital and talent in the American south. By 1895 the area had completed its transformation from what had been a prominently residential neighborhood into an African American entrepreneurial zone.<sup>15</sup> With the rise of a black middle class, new buildings, churches and banks were constructed to serve this growing demographic and the Leigh Street armory is emblematic of this trend.

The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers was first organized in 1876 with four companies of forty men each. They had met in various buildings around Richmond prior to the construction of their own armory.<sup>16</sup> On the occasion of the inauguration of the building, City Engineer Wilfred Cutshaw (in whose office the armory was designed) praised the conduct of "the colored troops," especially during an emergency when they were called out in the aftermath of an earthquake that damaged the State Penitentiary.<sup>17</sup>

The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory was designed in the office of the Richmond City Engineer Cutshaw's office, and was part of an extensive building program under Cutshaw during the 1890s that saw the construction of several armories, schools and markets by the City of Richmond. The drawings from Cutshaw's office for both the as-built structure and a one-story alternative design survive in the collection of the Library of Virginia, and from these it can be seen that the building that stands on Leigh Street is faithful to the original design. The appearance of the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory closely follows the decorative scheme of two other armories built by Cutshaw during this period. Both the Richmond Howitzers' Battalion Armory (1895, demolished circa 1971) and the First Regiment Cavalry Virginia Volunteers Armory (1895, demolished circa 1970) shared identical crenellated towers with distinctive panels.<sup>18</sup>

During the opening ceremonies on October 12, 1895, City Engineer Cutshaw presented the key to the armory to J. B. Johnson, Commander of the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers.<sup>19</sup> Such was the immense pride in the Jackson Ward community that the opening of the armory began a weeklong "Military Bazaar" including a series of celebrations, drill exhibitions, and receptions. There were dances, concerts and speeches, and notices were put up reminding the public "the superb Battalion Band will be in attendance each night to discourse rare selections."<sup>20</sup> The African-American newspaper, the *Richmond Planet*, proudly reported a few days later "on last Wednesday night, the beautifully lighted armory could be seen from this section glowing in magnificent splendor."<sup>21</sup> The social aspect inherent in the system of local militias, combined with the site in Jackson Ward, the largest African-American neighborhood of the city, ensured the armory would become an important municipal presence in the heart of the community.

Unfortunately, Jackson Ward would not be able to celebrate the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory

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for very long. Conflicts inherent in the system of command between white officers and black soldiers became evident during the Volunteers Battalion's service in the Spanish-American War of 1898. This was exacerbated by the poor equipment provided to black militias and general neglect by State authorities that were expected to supervise these units. According to one historian of the period, "A rising tide of racism also doomed the militiamen," and "When the Dick Act increased federal oversight of the National Guard, making it more difficult for states to discriminate against black units, some states chose to disband them rather than issuing new arms and equipment."<sup>22</sup> This, coupled with the end of the emergency of the war in 1898 caused the Virginia Volunteers to be disbanded.

In March of 1899, Richmond City Council voted to allow the use of the "Colored armory" as a school. It became known as Monroe School and it served the people of Jackson Ward for 40 years as an elementary school. The armory continued as an elementary school until 1940. Generations of African-American school children attended the turreted Monroe School during these years. The armory was declared unsuitable as a school in 1940 and was then used as a storage warehouse by the City of Richmond.<sup>23</sup>

During World War II, the armory was once again put into service for African-Americans in uniform. In 1942 it was turned over to a government agency called the Richmond Service Defense Unit. The gymnasium addition was added to the rear of the building in 1943 with funds from the Federal Security Agency, so the armory could serve as a recreational center for African-American troops.<sup>24</sup> A newspaper article described the extensive facilities that were created in the 1943 renovation: "When the remodeling is completed there will be on the first, beside the auditorium, a recreation room, a lounge room, an up-to-date kitchen, and a ladies' lounge room. Upstairs there is space enough for 100 cots and one of the smaller rooms on this floor is being turned into a shower room... This center is a beehive of activity most of the time as the building is the headquarters for Negro defense work in Richmond."<sup>25</sup> This description of the armory during this phase as a wartime facility underscores the importance of the structure to Richmond's African-American history and the amount of activity that occurred within its walls from 1942-1945.

After 1945, under the name Monroe Center, the armory became an annex to the nearby Armstrong High School and later Graves Junior High School, which used it for both classrooms and gymnasium. The armory was used as the Colored Special School from 1952 to 1954.<sup>26</sup>

Appropriately, the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory housed the Richmond Black History Museum for a period in the 1980s. It was during this time that a fire damaged the roof and upper floors of the building.<sup>27</sup> After this fire the damaged roof and second floor were not repaired, the Black History Museum moved to other facilities, and the armory has been vacant since then.

The City of Richmond declared the armory surplus in 1988. In 2002, plans were funded through a "Save America's Treasures" grant through the United States Department of the Interior to remove the wooden elements of the interior of the armory and stabilize the masonry. This work involved the removal of the entire roof structure and almost all of the interior woodwork, ceilings and floors. At the same time, the crenellated parapet and tops of the four towers and chimneys were removed and carefully rebuilt with new mortar and reinforcements. Several of the terracotta crenellations that had fallen or been lost to vandals were replaced. New joists and floors were put in the building, and a new, temporary roof was put on the building.

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In 2003, in an agreement between the City of Richmond and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, a protective easement was put in place that will ensure the preservation of the exterior appearance of the Leigh Street armory in perpetuity.<sup>28</sup> The building is currently for sale, and new owners will need to seek guidance and approval from the Department of Historic Resources before making changes to this important structure.

Documentation as the Oldest Armory in Virginia

John W. Listman, Jr., Historian for the Virginia Army National Guard Historical Collection at Pickett Park in Blackstone, Virginia, cites the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory in Richmond as the oldest purpose-built armory in the Commonwealth. While the basement of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century church in Winchester once served as an armory, that building was not constructed to serve as an armory.

Roger Cunningham has written a number of books and articles about African-American participation in militia and national guard units. His research places the First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory in context. According to his research, 23 states and the District of Columbia allowed segregated black units to belong to their respective militia between the Civil War and World War I. All militia were renamed as the National Guard by 1916. Cunningham knows of only two other instances where public armories were built for the specific use of black units. One of those was in Chicago's Bronzeville district (for the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment) in 1914-1915 and the other in New York's Harlem (for its 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry) between 1920 and 1923. Those two armories and Richmond's still stand. Only New York's is still being used by the New York National Guard. Chicago's is used as a school. He cites Richmond's Leigh Street Armory as the oldest and the only 19<sup>th</sup>-century black militia armory still standing in the United States. Based on this history, the building is significant at the national level for its association with African-American history.

Architectural Significance

The Leigh Street Armory is Richmond's oldest armory and is one of only two remaining of five built. Although altered for other uses and showing the effects of a fire as well as years of vacancy and little ongoing care the building is easily recognizable as that shown on the original architectural drawings prepared by Richmond city engineer Wilfred E. Cutshaw in 1895. Those drawings are filed at the Library of Virginia; images are included on this nomination's continuation sheet entitled Additional Documentation.

The design for the Leigh Street Armory is similar to the designs for the Richmond Howitzers Battalion Armory and the First Regiment Cavalry Virginia Volunteers Armory, both constructed in 1895, and demolished in 1971 and 1970, respectively. The building's crenellated towers and masonry construction convey a fortress-like edifice, and was considered particularly appropriate for armory designs. The Blues Armory constructed in 1909 in Richmond also used a crenellated design and provides evidence that the design remained popular for this particular building type. The exterior features of the armory possess good integrity and the interior spaces, while altered for other uses, remain essentially as laid out in the architectural drawings.

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- Richmond, City of, Common Council Journal 1887 - 1890.
- Richmond, City of. Office of the City Engineer, Architectural Drawings and Plans Collection. The Library of Virginia. [This collection contains both the original 1895 drawings for the building and the plans for the now-demolished 1943 gymnasium addition.]
- Richmond Dispatch, 3 March 1895.
- Richmond News Leader, 12 March 1985.
- Richmond News Leader, 26 February 1943.
- Richmond Planet, 19 October 1895.
- The Richmond Planet, 21 October 1895.
- The State, 17 October 1895.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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Simpson, Gunpertz & Heger, Inc., "Condition Survey, First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory, Interim Report," 2001.

Todd, Nancy L. New York's Historic Armories: An Illustrated History. (Albany: University Press, 2006).

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The city lot that the Leigh Street Armory is located on is bounded as follows:

North: by a city alley running east and west between St. Peter Street and Chamberlayne Parkway. Immediately on the other side of this alley is 611 St. Peter Street.

East: by property line with 120 West Leigh Street

South: by West Leigh Street

West: by St. Peter Street

The property is identified on the tax parcel maps for the City of Richmond as parcel N0000153032.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of this property are well defined and have not changed since the City of Richmond acquired the lot the armory stands on. This is documented on the sheet titled "Lot Plan" in the original architectural drawings, located at the Library of Virginia: Office of the City Engineer, Architectural Drawings, plans, and plats, 1809-1975, Accession no. 34886 a-b, Folder 01.

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National Park Service**

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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**The following information is the same for all photographs:**

Property name: First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Location: 122 West Leigh Street, City of Richmond, Virginia  
DHR file number: 127-5676  
Photographer: Selden Richardson  
Digital images stored at Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Photo 1: Front (southern) elevation showing relation to house to the east at 120 West Leigh Street and corner location at St. Peter Street and West Leigh Street. Note repointing and reconstruction of masonry above the level of the tops of the second-floor windows. Temporary painted plywood sheets protect window openings. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 2: Western elevation. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 3: Northern elevation showing former southern wall of gymnasium addition (demolished). Photo: May 2009.

Photo 4: Eastern elevation showing repointing and reconstruction down to second floor level of formerly fire-damaged wall. Photo May 2009.

Photo 5: Front of armory (detail) showing building name and date, decorative terra cotta blind and terra cotta crenellations. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 6: Front of armory (detail) showing the top of the central tower and top of tower on southwestern corner of building. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 7: View of front door from inside central hall, showing woodwork detail and transom window still in place. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 8: View of room in northwest corner of first floor, looking toward central hall. Note door frame and transom still in place, as are several blackboards from use as a school. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 9: Northeast corner of second floor. Note bricked-up original window opening to the left of doorway cut in original rear wall. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 10: View of southeast room, second floor, looking south. Note original plasterwork on brick walls, entry to corner turret on left, and modern ceiling joists that were part of the stabilization process for roof reconstruction. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 11: View of central hallway, looking north through original rear door. Note bricked-up back door that would have been the entrance to the now-demolished gymnasium addition. Photo: May 2009.

Photo 12: Southwest room on second floor, looking toward turret room. Note some window frames and moldings still in place, as are base of coat hooks in turret room, used as a coat closet when the armory served as a school. Photo: May 2009.

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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Additional Documentation

Original Architectural Drawings – 1895

The Library of Virginia

Office of the City Engineer, Architectural Drawings, Plans, and Plats, 1809-1975.

Folder 01

1. Front Elevation [unbuilt alternate design]
2. Foundation Plan
3. First Floor Plan
4. Second Floor Plan
5. Roof Plan
6. Front Elevation
7. Side Elevation
8. Cross Section

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**First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory  
Richmond, Virginia**

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, Roger D. "They Are As Proud of Their Uniform as Any Who Serve Virginia: African American Participation in the Virginia Volunteers, 1872-99," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 110, No. 3 (2002). 336.

<sup>2</sup> There has been little documentation on this subject, but research has failed to produce another such armory in Virginia specifically built for African Americans.

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, "African American Participation..." 332.

<sup>4</sup> Fogelson, Robert M. *America's Armories -- Architecture, Society, and Public Order*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. 215.

<sup>5</sup> "To Teach in Armory -- Former Home of Colored Soldiers to be so Used." *Richmond Dispatch*, 3 March 1899. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Callihan, Shirley L., et. al. "A Mini-History of the Richmond Public Schools --1869-1992." Richmond: City of Richmond School Board, 1992. 136.

<sup>7</sup> "School Now Used as Center For Negro Men in Service." *Richmond News Leader*, 26 February 1943. n.p.

<sup>8</sup> According to a history of Richmond during World War II, 55,806 "Negro men" were given sleeping quarters at the Monroe Service Center (the Leigh Street armory). See Lutz, Francis Earle, *Richmond in World War II* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1951). 568.

<sup>9</sup> The exact dates the Black History Museum used the armory is uncertain, and the Museum staff is unable to supply this information. There is a newspaper article which describes fund raising for the "Virginia Museum for Black History and Archives" in 1985, and presumably the facility moved into the building some time after that. See "Fund Goal Set for New Museum," *Richmond News Leader*, 12 March 1985. 14.

<sup>10</sup> These were the Blues Armory, the Howitzers Armory, the Richmond Grays armory, the Leigh Street Armory, and the Cavalry Battalion armory. All of these structures stood in the area north of Broad Street and east of Belvedere Street.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, Ann Field. *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002). 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 79-80.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete history of the role of Maggie Walker and a description of Jackson Ward in Walker's time, see Marlowe, Gertrude Woodruff, *A Right Worthy Grand Mission: Maggie Lena Walker and the Quest for Black Economic Empowerment* (Washington: Howard University Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Listman, John W., Jr. Historian Virginia Army National Guard Historical Collection in a letter to Selden Richardson June 26, 2990.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson, Selden. *Built by Blacks: African American Architecture and Neighborhoods in Richmond*. (Charleston: The History Press, 2008). 74.

<sup>16</sup> "Their Gala Day, Also a Gala Night for the Colored Soldiers." *The State*, 17 October 1895. 1.

<sup>17</sup> "The Colored Armory." *The Richmond Planet*, 12 October 1895. 1. See also Cunningham, "African-American Participation..." 323.

<sup>18</sup> For a more complete description of municipal projects by Cutshaw, see Richardson, Selden. "Architect of the City": Wilfred Emory Cutshaw and Municipal Architecture in Richmond." Master of Arts Thesis, Art History Department, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> "The Colored Armory." *The Richmond Planet*, 12 October 1895. 1.

<sup>20</sup> "New Armory -- St. Peter & Leigh Streets -- Military Bazaar." *The Richmond Planet*, 19 October 1895. 4.

<sup>21</sup> "Jackson Ward Brevities." *The Richmond Planet*, 19 October 1895. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Cunningham, "African American Participation..." 337.

<sup>23</sup> Callihan, et al., "Mini History..." 136.

<sup>24</sup> "School Now Used as Center For Negro Men in Service." *Richmond News Leader*, 26 February 1943. n.p.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Callihan, et al., "Mini History..." 136.

<sup>27</sup> Research has failed to determine the exact date of the armory fire, although the building appears intact in a 1985 newspaper photograph. See *Richmond News Leader*, 12 March 1985.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources, "Deed of Easement, First Battalion Armory, 122 W. Leigh St., Jackson Ward National Historic Landmark District. 9 May 2003. Recorded as "PG 0234, 30 May 2003."

# City of Richmond



CHRISTOPHER L. BESCHLER  
ACTING  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

"SIC ITUR AD ASTRA"  
SUCH IS THE WAY TO THE STARS

June 1, 2009

Ann Andrus, Director, Capital Region Preservation Office  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23221

Dear Ms. Andrus:

**RE: Individual Listing of the Leigh Street Armory on the Virginia  
Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places**

The City of Richmond supports the nomination of 122 West Leigh Street, the Leigh Street Armory, to the state and federal registers. We concur that the significance of the armory warrants individual designation, in addition to the current designation of the building as a part of the Jackson Ward Historic District.

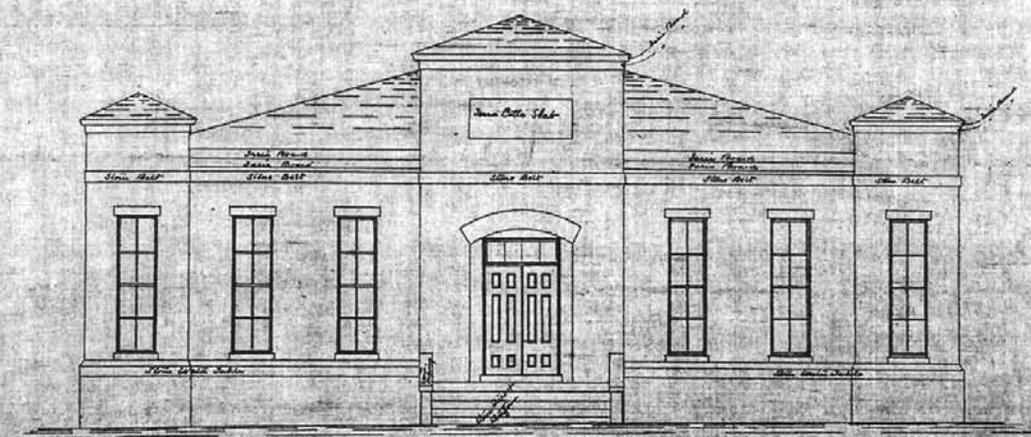
Please feel free to forward questions about the ownership of the building to Jane Ferrera, Director of Real Estate Services at 804.646.6350 or historic preservation questions to T. Tyler Potterfield in Department of Community Development at 804.646.6364.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Beschler  
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

c: Jane Ferrera, Real Estate Services  
T. Tyler Potterfield, Community Development

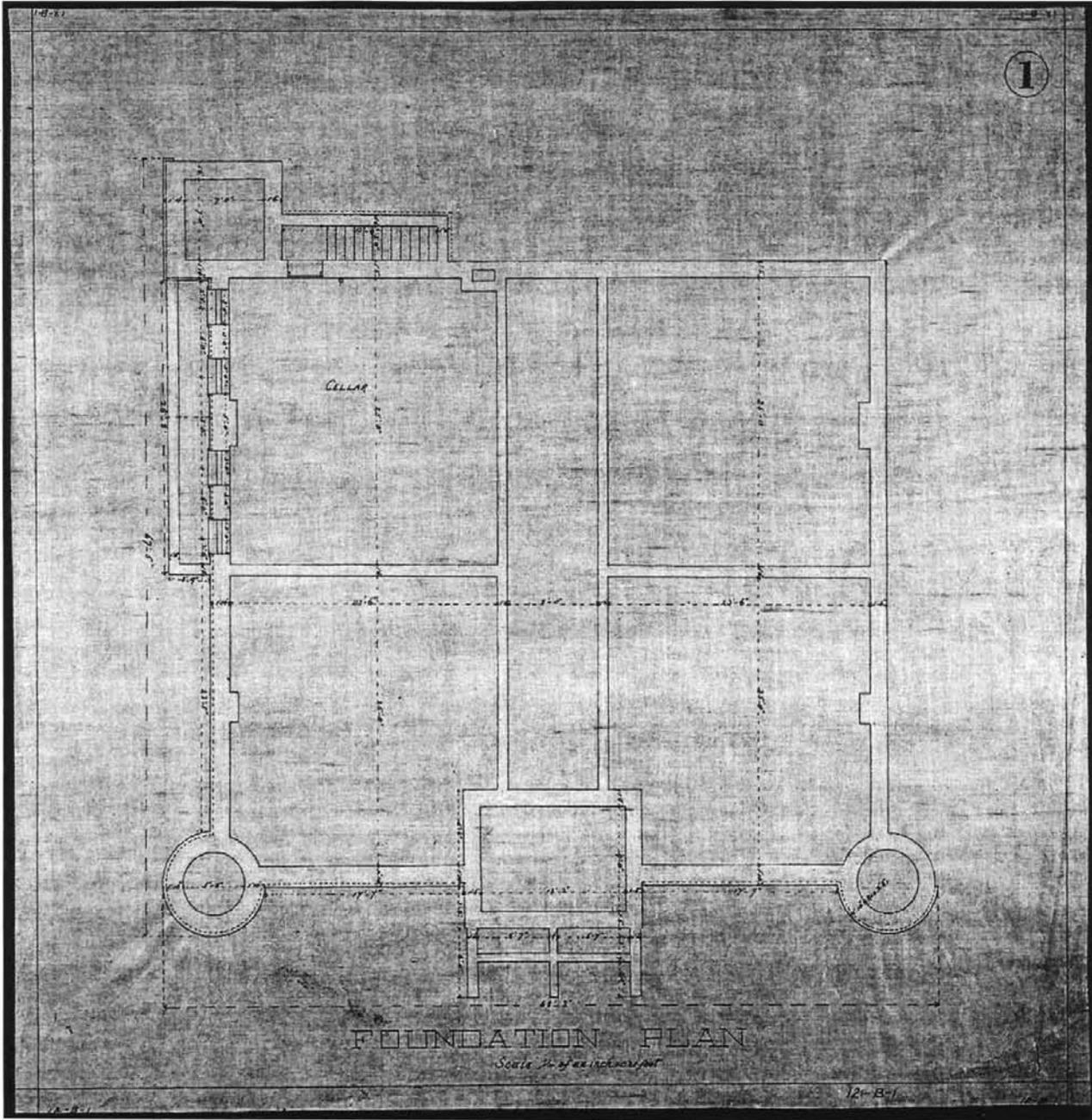
First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers: Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR 121-5676  
Figure 1.



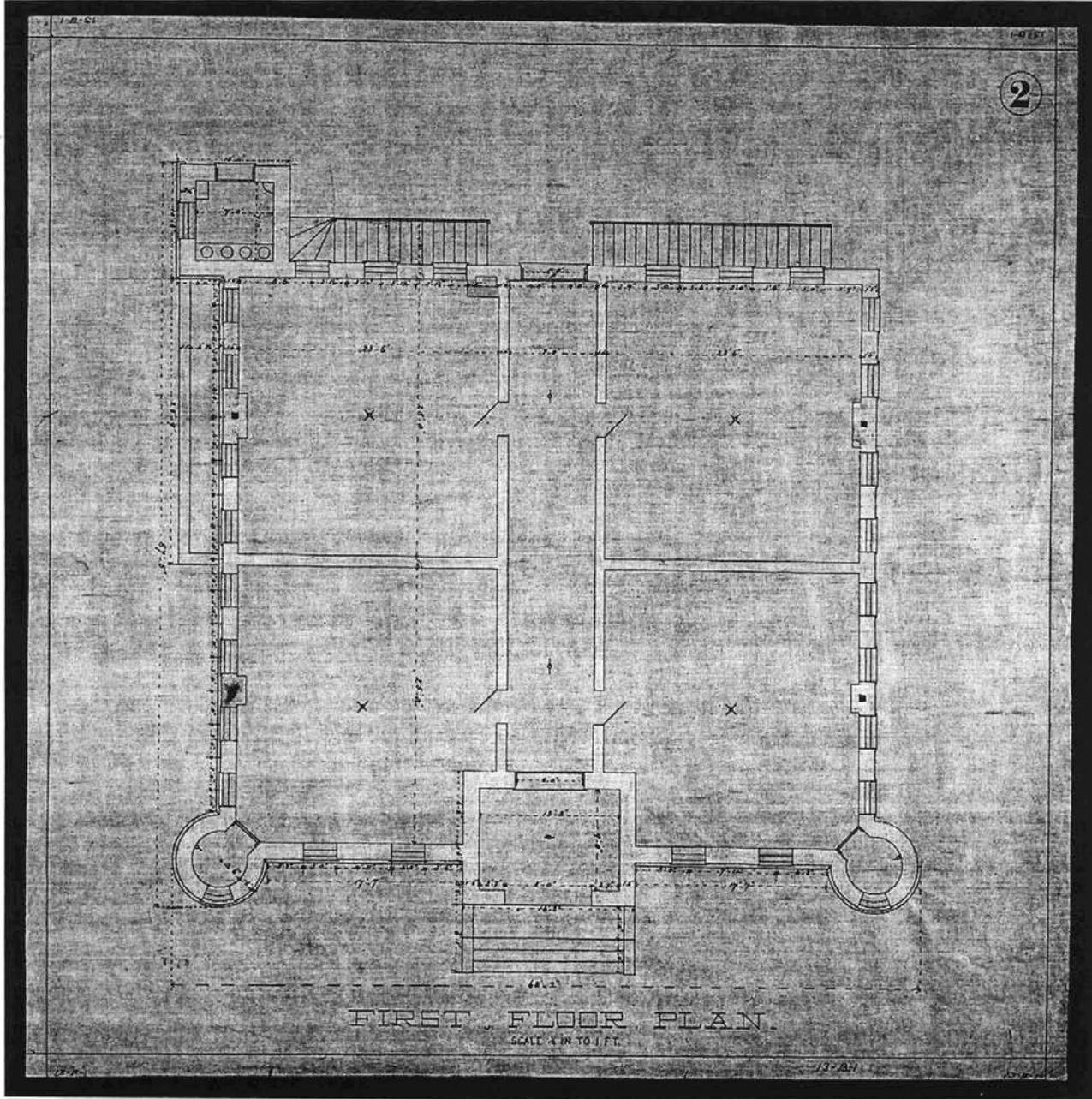
FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE 1/4 INCH TO 1 FOOT

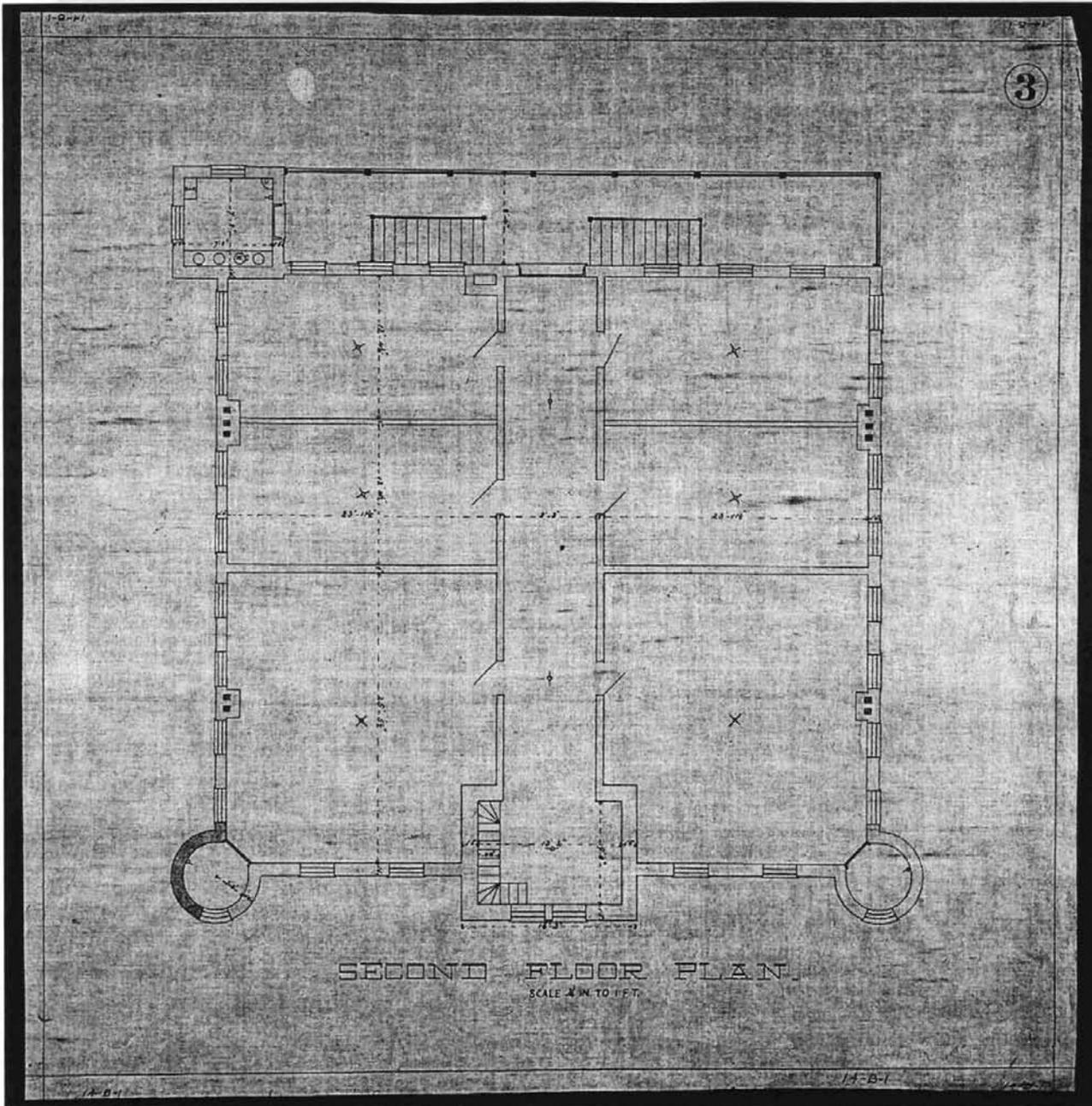
First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR #127-5676  
Figure 2



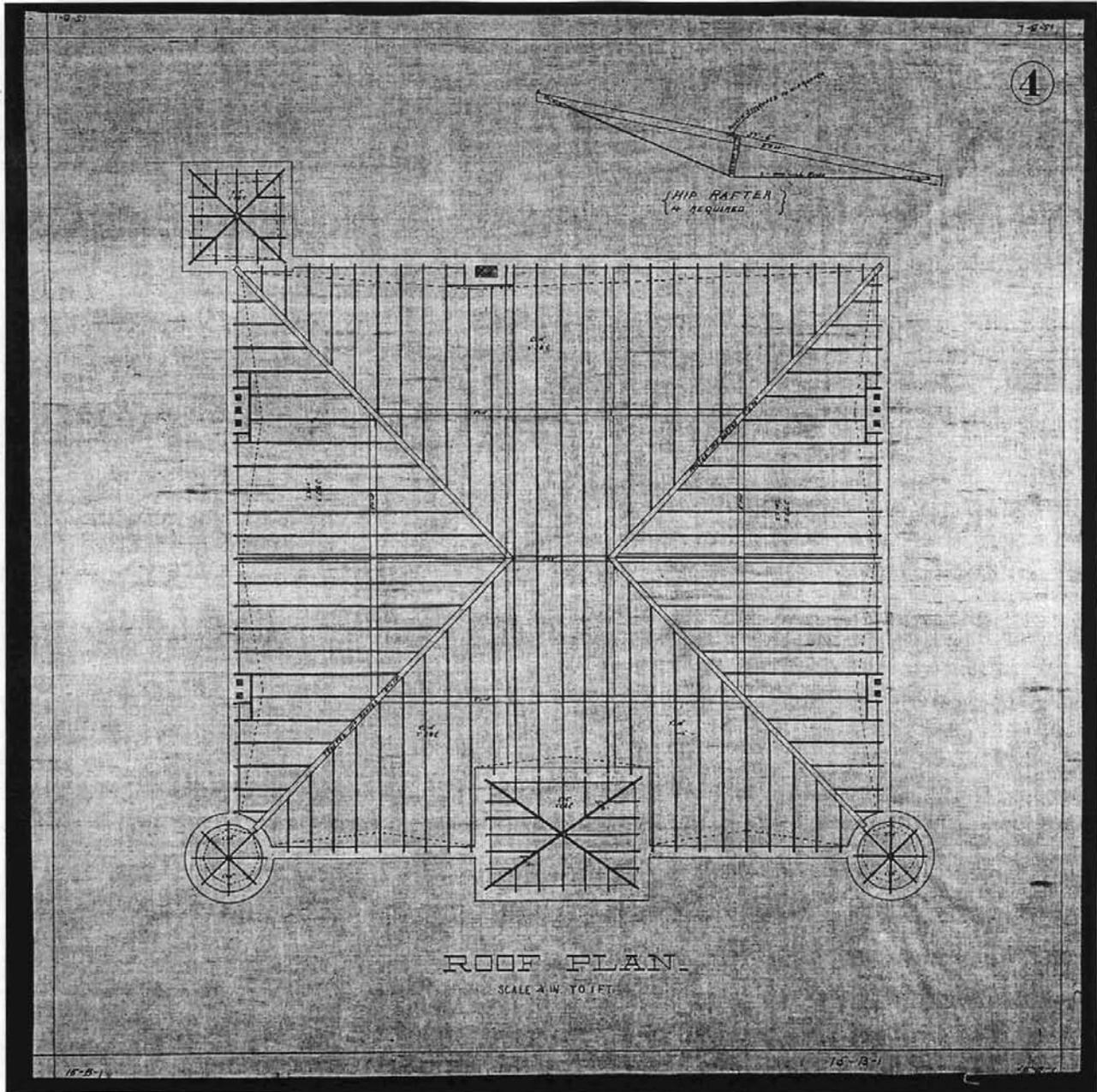
First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR # 127-5676  
Figure 3.



First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR File # 127-5076  
Figure 4

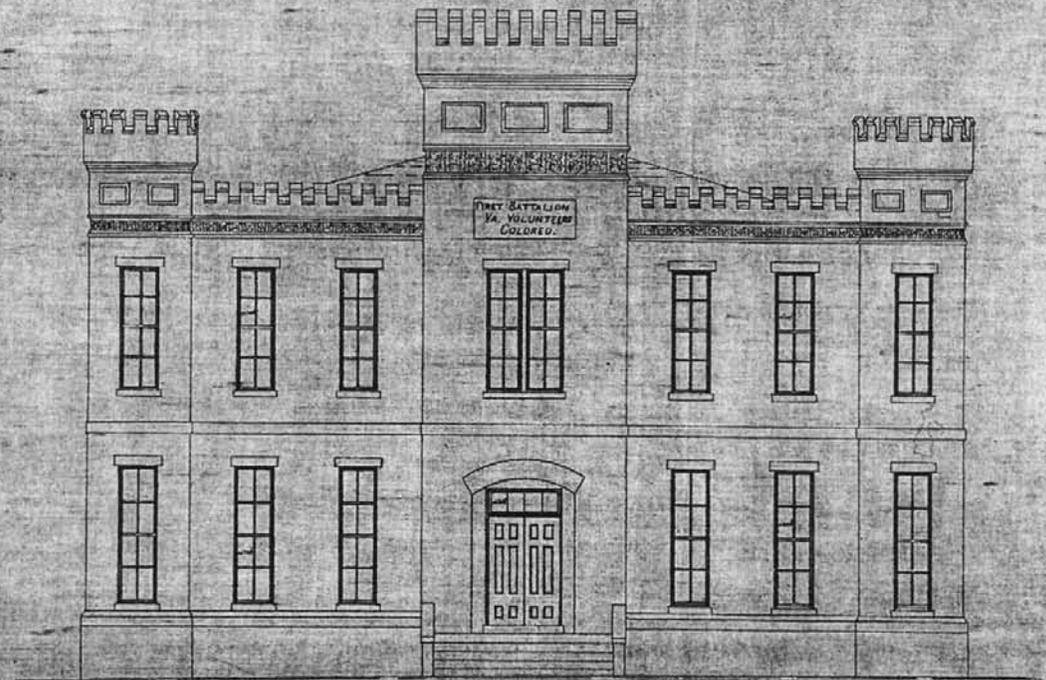


First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR # 127-5676  
Figure 5



First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR# 127-5676  
Figure 6

5

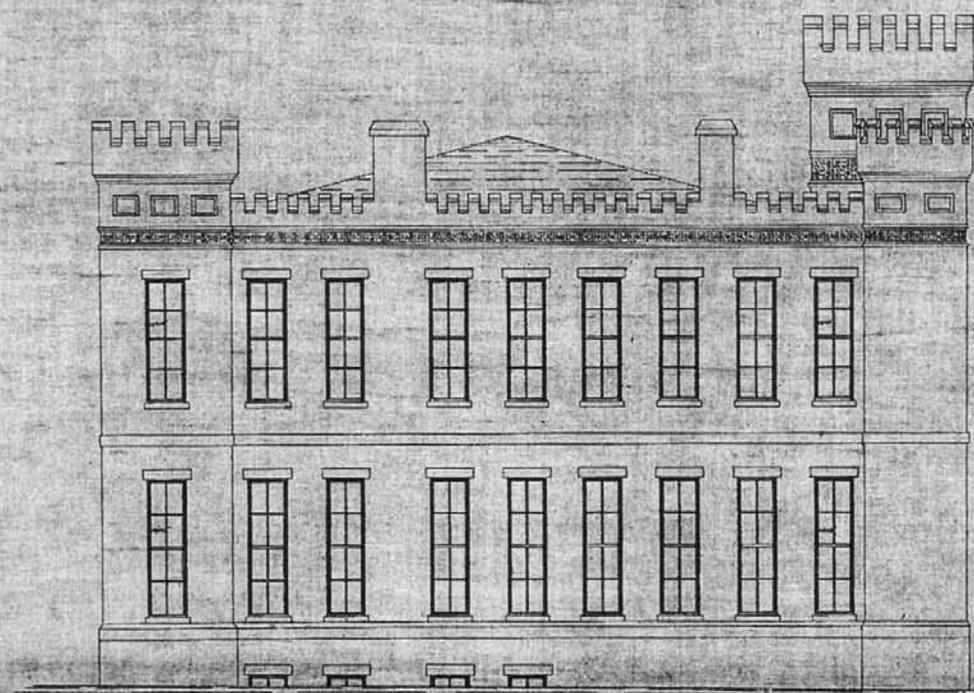


FRONT ELEVATION.

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR # 127-5676  
Figure 7.

6

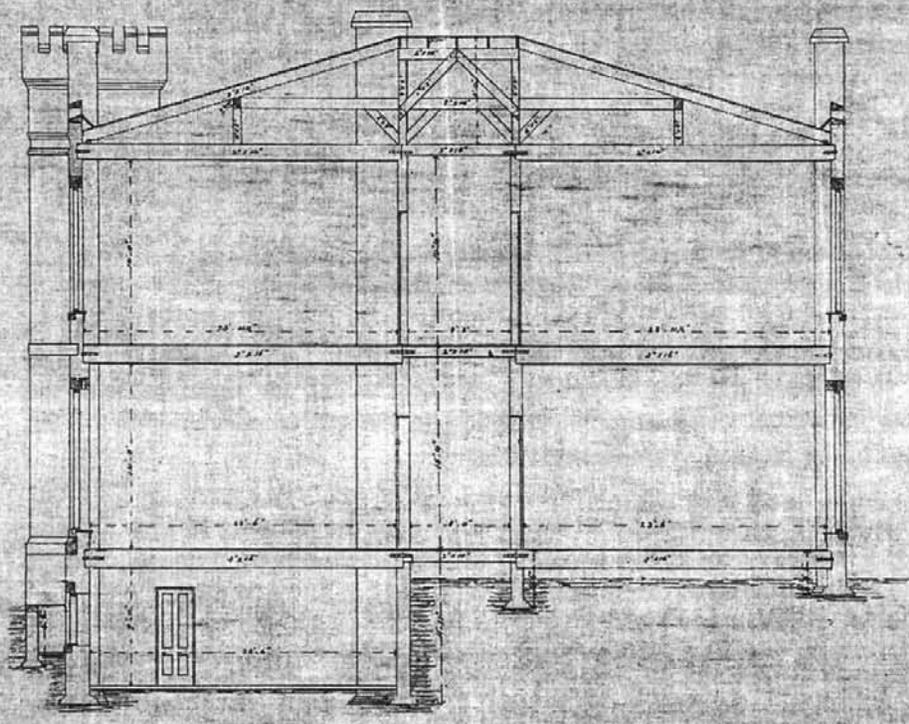


SIDE ELEVATION.

SCALE 1/4" = 1 FT.

First Battalion Virginia  
Volunteers Armory  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR # 127-56716  
Figure 8

7



CROSS SECTION  
SCALE 1/4" = 1 FT.

10-2-1

18-13-1

First Battalion  
Virginia  
Volunteers  
Armed  
City of Richmond  
DAR# 127-9674  
NAD 83  
zone 18  
Easting 284302  
Northing 4156479

