

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

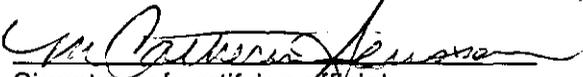
other names/site number West Broad Street Commercial Historic District (VDHR File #127-5807)

## 2. Location

street & number 1300 - 1600 West Broad Street (see boundary description, Section 10) not for publication \_\_\_  
city or town Richmond vicinity \_\_\_  
state VA county (Independent City) code 760  
zip code 23220

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official

12/7/2000  
Date

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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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 Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>20</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>20</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 (Coliseum/Duplex Envelope Building)

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

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## 6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>COMMERCE</u>	Sub: <u>Specialty store</u>
<u>INDUSTRY PROCESSING</u>	<u>Manufacturing facility</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Post Office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Fire Station</u>
<u>RECREATION</u>	<u>Auditorium</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>COMMERCE</u>	Sub: <u>Specialty store</u>
<u>COMMERCE</u>	<u>Business</u>
<u>RECREATION</u>	<u>Theater</u>
<u>TRADE</u>	<u>Organizational</u>
<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>Religious facility</u>
<u>LANDSCAPE</u>	<u>Parking lot</u>
<u>VACANT</u>	<u>Not in use</u>
<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>School (dance)</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Post Office</u>

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Colonial Revival; Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival; Italian Renaissance Revival

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements: Commercial

Modern Movements: Moderne; Art Deco

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Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	<u>concrete; brick</u>
Roof	<u>asphalt; ceramic tile</u>
Walls	<u>brick; stucco; concrete block</u>
other	<u>metal; stone; glass block</u>

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Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)  
[See Continuation Sheets, Section 7]

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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

- 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.
- 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)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1900-1950

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates circa 1900

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation NA

Architect/Builder Marcus A. Hallett and Roy G. Pratt, Architects

E.H. Armentrout, Builder

Otis Spiers, Architect

United States Treasury Department

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

[See continuation sheets, Section 8]

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

[See continuation sheets, Section 9]

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

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: VA Department of Historic Resources

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 5.5 acres

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

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 18 28307247 41509070    3 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_    4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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.)

[See continuation sheets, Section 10]

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Edna Johnston & Kathryn G. Smith

organization History Matters date June 10, 2000

street & number P.O. Box 32166 telephone 202-333-8593

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20007

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets [**Sections 7, 8, 9, 10, Property Owners List, Photo List, and Endnotes**]

### 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)

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## Property Owner

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

name  Multiple Owners [**See continuation sheets, "Property Owners List"**]

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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West Broad Street Commercial Historic District  
name of property  
Richmond, VA  
county and state

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

The West Broad Street Commercial Historic District comprises an area of approximately 5.5 acres located in central Richmond, Virginia. The district occupies a two block wide area that encompasses portions of the north and south sides of West Broad Street between the 1300 and 1600 blocks. The district is composed of 22 commercial buildings built between circa 1900 and the late 1930s that face onto Broad Street, Richmond's main commercial thoroughfare. Twenty of the 22 buildings contribute to the historic context of the district; and many were historically associated with the introduction of the automobile in Richmond in the early twentieth century. The district is characterized by a range of eclectic architectural styles and forms, ranging from standard post-1900 commercial storefronts to large commercial buildings embellished with Art Deco ornamentation. The majority of the buildings are two-to-four stories in height and are composed of brick with stucco, stone and metal detailing. Although many of the early twentieth century storefronts have been altered through the course of the century, above the ground floor, much of the original character of these structures remains intact.

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**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

*Setting*

Within the boundaries of the district, West Broad Street is mainly characterized by its significant width. The street consists of six travel lanes and curbside parking lanes. It is divided down the center by a narrow concrete median. Granite curbing edges the street in some areas, and wide concrete sidewalks accommodate pedestrian traffic. The street is straight and without topographic variation or significant street trees. Portions of the fifteen-foot alley that border the district on the southwest retain the original stone paving blocks. Modified cobra-style streetlights border the thoroughfare on either side, and overhead traffic lights mark each intersection.

*Architecture*

The buildings of West Broad Street vary significantly in architectural character and level of elaboration. They range in date from the first decade of the twentieth century up to the 1970s. However, the vast majority of the structures lining West Broad between Ryland Street and Allen Avenue are commercial in character and were erected between 1905 and 1930. Most of these buildings are modest in their architectural expression borrowing elements of the Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Art Deco/Moderne styles. A handful of the buildings represent substantial, architecturally sophisticated statements.

Many of the structures were at one time associated with the early automotive industry in Richmond, serving variously as automobile showrooms, service garages, and other specialty auto supply and detailing shops. The variety of businesses and the rapid turnover that characterized the early years of the automobile as a commercial product are reflected in the range of architectural expressions seen in the buildings that housed them. While many of the early auto shops occupied generic commercial spaces, by 1920, the auto industry had grown and profited in such a way that allowed it to adopt the fashionable architecture of the day. Automobile dealers erected impressive modern buildings designed in the fashionable Art Deco style or various revival styles. The buildings were designed to reflect the modernity and stylishness of the products they showcased.

The district encompasses several outstanding architectural examples that illustrate the use of fashionable architectural statements to market automobiles and their related products. Among these are the 1919 Forbes Motor Car Company building (1301-1307 West Broad Street), an impressive four-story brick building that combines elements of the Italianate style and various eclectic influences; the Harper-Overland Company building at 1335 West Broad Street, also a substantial and architecturally elaborate building erected as an auto showroom and service building around 1921; and the Jones Motor Car Company building, a stylish Art Deco inspired edifice built between 1922 and 1925 at 1655-1657 West Broad Street. The Firestone Building, erected in 1929 and located at 1510-1512 West Broad Street, attests to the sustained use of expressive architecture to market the automobile and related services, as well as the continued interest in this area as a location for automobile-related businesses well into the second decade of the century.

The district also encompasses several less monumental commercial structures that are representative of the commercial development that was typical along West Broad Street in the early twentieth century. In addition, two significant government-related buildings occupy the district. One, the circa-1900 Engine Company No. 10 Firehouse (1609 West Broad Street), served the Richmond City fire department in the area for over eighty years. Designed in

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a Richardsonian Romanesque style, this substantial structure has long stood as a landmark along West Broad Street. The other significant government edifice within the district is Saunders Station Post Office (1633 West Broad Street) erected in 1937 under the direction of the United States Treasury Department. The building is a good example of the "Stripped Classical" style of architecture that was favored in the design of public buildings during the 1930s and 1940s.

Over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, many of the original storefronts have been altered or remodeled. While these alterations have changed the historic character of many of the buildings, the vast majority of the district's structures retain their architectural integrity, including original windows, cornices, and decorative finishes, especially above the ground floor. There is only one historic building that has entirely lost its architectural integrity due to mid-century alterations.

INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS

SOUTH SIDE WEST BROAD STREET

**1300 Block**

1301-1307 West Broad Street

*Forbes Motor Car Company Building*

**Contributing**

(VDHR File no. 127-5258)

This 4-story reinforced concrete building with brick and stucco adornment was built between 1919 and 1921 for the Forbes Motor Car Company. The building housed the company's auto showroom and service center between 1921 and circa-1924. Kirkmyer Motor Company took over the business, and by 1929, had moved on to a new location on Hull Street, leaving the building vacant for several years. Between 1931 and 1964, the Coleman-Scales Auto Supply Company offered comprehensive auto services out of this building, and, in 1964, the building was transferred to the Capital Service Garage business of John M. Timberlake. The garage occupied the building until recently, when it was purchased and plans were initiated to renovate it for use as apartments.

The building was originally designed by Richmond architects Hallet and Pratt, known for their apartment building designs. It incorporates eclectic stylistic elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, including shaped gables and the stucco and brickwork finishes. The estimated original cost of construction was \$60,000. The building retains its historic appearance on the exterior; however, the current renovation will alter the building's original interior layout.

1309 (1309-1317) West Broad Street

**Contributing**

The 2-story brick Art Market building was constructed in 1920 shortly after the property was sold by the Advance Realty Corporation to A.W. Patterson and H.R. Pollard, Jr. (see Richmond Deed Records, 266C/ 258, October 14, 1920). The structure originally housed an automobile sales room and service center. Other early tenants were the Nugrape Bottling Company, an early soft drink producer in Richmond, and Clark Motors, Inc., an automobile sales and service business. A succession of automotive businesses occupied the building between the 1920s and the 1940s. Around 1950, the firm of Ezekiel & Weilman Company, Inc., restaurant

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equipment suppliers, took over the building and installed two plaques on the façade that read "Ezekiel & Weilman Company, Inc., Established 1924."

This modest 2-story brick commercial building is divided into five storefront-style bays across its façade. The building is adorned by five groups of three, 2-over-2, double-hung sash windows on the second story, a decorative metal cornice and a raised central parapet. The building retains its original character despite the replacement of its storefront windows.

1319-1323 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

Erected between 1928 and 1930 as an automobile repair shop, this 1-story brick building is plainly adorned by large open bays that incorporate 5-light transoms above shop windows. The façade originally incorporated several automobile entrance bays that have since been widened or enclosed. The building features peaked brick lintels over each of the façade's six bays, and a simple Colonial Revival style metal cornice. Its original decorative features present a plain Art Deco style face with minimal decoration.

Among several other tenants, the building housed the Richmond Battery & Ignition Corporation for over 30 years.

1333 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

This 1-story brick building appears to be contemporaneous with its neighbor at 1319-1323 West Broad Street. The building repeats the simple bay divisions of the former, only varying the cornice line and the treatment of the tops of the bay openings. This building has three bays each containing a shop window capped by a 7-light transom. The transoms are segmentally arched and outlined by a narrow concrete lintel. Each of the four pilasters that divide the façade is adorned by a projecting Art Deco style "arrow" plaque. The cornice line is finished by a simple corbeled brick row.

1333 West Broad Street was also constructed between 1928 and 1930. It originally housed the Shafer Motor Company, but was shortly taken over by the Richmond Battery & Ignition Corporation, which had established itself next door by 1936.

1335 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

*Harper Overland Company Building*

This 3-story brick commercial building was erected for the Harper Overland Company between 1920 and 1922. Harper Overland moved to its new building from its former location at 213-215 West Broad Street and sold and serviced automobiles here until United Motors Inc. took over the business in the late 1920s. A succession of automobile dealers occupied this building until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when a household appliance business moved into the space.

Ornately decorated, the building is one of the most imposing in the district. Rendered in red brick laid in a common bond, the façade incorporates spacious show windows at the ground floor, paired 9-over-1 double-hung sash windows above, a prominent bracketed wood cornice, and a shaped parapet. The entrance is centered on the façade and is topped by a multi-light transom. The window openings are trimmed with brick

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of a contrasting color and corner blocks of concrete or stone. The storefront and upper stories are well preserved. The building is currently undergoing a renovation.

1339-1363 West Broad Street  
*The Coliseum or Duplex Envelope Company Building*

**Contributing**  
(VDHR File no. 127-5811)  
***Individually listed on National Register***

This massive 3-story red brick building extends approximately 100 feet along the south side of West Broad Street in the 1300 block. Completed in 1922, the structure originally housed Richmond's largest public hall known as the Coliseum and owned and operated by Standard Amusement Corporation. The Coliseum was used as a roller and ice skating arena and for special performances including the circus. A restaurant, the Coliseum Inn, occupied the westernmost storefront. Despite its convenient location on the Broad Street electric trolley line, competition from several newer amusement and performance halls put the Coliseum out of business by 1927. That year, one of the building's owners moved his company there, extensively renovating it in the process. The Duplex Envelope Company's offices and manufacturing operations were located in the eastern half, while the western first story section was fitted out as an automobile showroom and service center. Individual stores occupied the storefronts facing West Broad Street on the ground floor.

The Duplex Envelope Company was an international supplier of the patented "duplex" envelope used by churches for offerings. The company was extremely successful and still retains the lead role in the manufacture of church envelopes. Duplex was located here until after the mid-1960s when the company was bought out by paper industry giant Hammermill.

Following the 1927 renovation of the building, a succession of automotive businesses occupied the building's western end of the building including Burroughs-Loth Motors, Inc., Philips-Vaughan Motor Company, Southern Motors, Inc., the Richmond Auto Parts Company, and the Robertson Chevrolet Company.

What has come to be known as the Duplex Envelope Building consists of thirteen equal storefront bays divided by brick pilasters on the ground floor. The two upper stories are defined by tripartite windows containing 6-over-1 sash. The façade is composed of a central pavilion articulated by a raised parapet and by a two-story segmentally arched window bay that once capped the main entrance to the building. Curvilinear raised parapets further articulate the end bays of the building. The ground floor is tied together by a continuous metal cornice.

1515 (previously 1365-1367) West Broad Street

**Contributing**

Between 1920 and 1922, the United States Postal Service established the West End Post Office sub-station at this location. Although the existing 1-story brick building may contain portions of the original post office, it appears to have been thoroughly remodeled in the Art Deco mode sometime during the 1930s. It is likely that the remodeling took place after 1937 when the post office moved to its new Saunders Station building one block to the west (see 1633 West Broad Street). Following its use as a post office station, the building housed the Tom Jones Hardware Store for over thirty years.

This 1-story brick structure is characterized by its streamline Moderne façade with its curved glass block

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recessed entrance, horizontal raised brick banding across the upper portion of the facade, and the striped metal awning that crowns the shop windows and central entrance.

1517-1521 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

The building at 1517 to 1521 West Broad Street has been significantly altered so that today it reads as two buildings, one at 1517 and the other at 1519-1521. The original 2-story brick structure on the site was erected in 1910 at 1517 West Broad Street. In 1922, 1517 was torn down and "five new [2-story] brick stores at 1517-1521 West Broad Street and 613-615 North Lombardy Street" were erected (see Richmond Deed Records, Deed 294A/18, May 29, 1923). The original building at 1517 West Broad Street housed the Tom Jones Hardware Store. Early tenants of the 1922 structure included a restaurant at 1519, and the Dawson-Goodin Rubber Company and the Whitten Motor Supply Company at 1521. By 1930, Whitten Motor Supply had moved out of its space and was replaced by a grocery store. In 1941, the city directory indicates that the space at 1521 West Broad Street was occupied by State-Planters Bank & Trust Company. The conversion for use as a bank may mark the period when this portion of the building was remodeled in the more stylish Art Deco mode.

1517 West Broad Street retains much of its original appearance, although the storefront has been mostly enclosed. As originally built in 1922, this storefront contained three bays outlined by a brick soldier-course frame with square corner blocks. A continuous bracketed metal cornice once tied the facade together, as did the matching shaped parapets on either end of the façade. Still visible beneath the metal coping applied to the 1519-1521 section of the building are alternating diamond and rectangular shaped decorative panels that have been painted over. The two western bays of the building were remodeled in the late 1930s in the fashionable Art Deco style. It appears that the window openings were also altered, a metal and plywood door surround added to the westernmost bay, and a pressed metal cornice/wall coping installed at the parapet.

**1600 BLOCK WEST BROAD STREET & 620 NORTH LOMBARDY STREET**

620 North Lombardy Street

**Contributing**

Although its address is on North Lombardy Street, this 2-story brick building anchors the southwest corner of West Broad and North Lombardy Street. Erected circa-1900, it was likely a dwelling before being converted for use as a drugstore. This rowhouse style building faces North Lombardy Street and features segmental arch window openings that have mainly been infilled with concrete block. It has been extensively altered over the years, but retains its decorative metal cornice that wraps around the corner of the building. At one time three additional rowhouses stood south of 620 Lombardy Street, however, in 1978 three were demolished and a 1-story concrete block structure was built to attach 620 to 612 North Lombardy.

1607 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

Erected between 1905 and 1908, this modest 2-story brick commercial structure retains its elaborate Victorian-style molded sheet metal cornice and jack arches on the second story. The storefront, however, has been altered by the removal of the storefront cornice, the alteration of the windows and entrance, and the application of "Permastone" facing to the ground floor level.

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At the time it was constructed, it housed the earliest automotive garage and dealership in the district. It was run by Benjamin A. Blenner, the founder of Richmond's first automobile dealership. Blenner relocated his business to 1611-1613 West Broad Street around 1910. By 1915, a hardware store occupied the store level, and by 1918, the building was home to Pleasant's Hardware store. Pleasant's Hardware would occupy this building for nearly the next fifty years before moving to larger quarters farther west on Broad Street.

1609 West Broad Street  
*Engine Company No. 10*

**Contributing**

Engine Company No. 10 of the Richmond Fire Department took up residence in its new 2-story brick firehouse on West Broad Street between 1901 and 1905. The building was designed in the Romanesque Revival style with its monumental brick façade articulated by round-headed arches with keystones and corbelled stringcoursing. The two truck entrances are defined by arched openings separated by a stout pilaster defined by a corbelled brick capital. Two corner towers topped by shallow pyramidal roofs frame the building. The roofline is defined by deep overhanging eaves with curved brackets. A large back building occupies the southeast corner of the building lot.

The firehouse has recently gone out of service and has been converted for use as a community theater.

1611-1613 West Broad Street

**Non-contributing**

This circa-1910, one-story brick commercial building was significantly remodeled in the 1960s, removing all trace of its original storefront configuration. Historically, it housed several auto sales showrooms and repair facilities starting with Benjamin A. Blenner's garage and sales business. Blenner established the first automobile dealership in Richmond in 1900 and operated the earliest auto-related businesses in the district. The White Motor Company took over the location around 1915. Later occupants of the storefront included the Gibson Motor Company, the Stewart Truck Corporation, and Broad Street Garage, Inc., among others. The building continued to play host to auto-related businesses well into the 1950s.

1615-1621 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

This row of four mixed commercial-residential buildings was erected between 1910 and 1915, and soon housed several small businesses with residential quarters provided on the second floor. This row housed a local food market and the Western Union Telegraph Company in 1915. Several auto-related facilities occupied 1615 and 1621 during the 1910s and 1920s. These included the White Motor Company, Whitten Motor Supply, Inc. and the Stewart-Warner Products Service Station.

These 2-story brick structures feature typical late Victorian commercial details, including the prominent metal cornices above the storefronts and at the roof, expansive glass storefronts (1619 and 1621 remain relatively intact), and recessed entrances. They also retain their original second story windows adorned by rough-cut sandstone lintels and sills.

1623 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

Built between 1912 and 1915 and originally occupied by the Alsop Motor Company, this simple brick building consists of a 1-story front gable brick structure with a decorative front parapet that screens the gabled roof.

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The façade consists of an all-glass storefront that has been altered over the years. The storefront is framed by paneled iron pilasters and molded metal trim outlines a pediment on the parapet screen wall.

Following the occupancy of the original owners, the building housed a series of auto sales rooms and repair shops throughout the teens and twenties. Except for a short period during the 1960s, this building has continuously housed automobile related businesses. Today, the building houses an auto body shop.

**1633 West Broad Street**  
*Saunders Station Post Office*

**Contributing**  
(VDHR File no. 127-0782)

Erected in 1937 under the direction of the United States Treasury Department, the Saunders Station Post Office replaced the earlier West End Sub-station located in the 1300-1500 block of West Broad Street (see 1625-1637 West Broad Street above). This new, expanded post office was the first full service post office in the area. The building reflects a strong Neo-Classical influence. It is a good example of the "Stripped Classical" style favored in public building design during the 1930s and 1940s. The building has a three-part composition consisting of a central pavilion flanked by slightly projecting corner blocks. A simplified engaged portico adorns the central block with a centered doorway topped by a "floating" pediment. The building is finished in red brick with granite and sandstone decoration. The building incorporates a loading dock on its east elevation.

Five buildings once occupied the present location of the Saunders Station Post Office (1625-1637 West Broad Street). Erected between 1900 and 1910, this block housed mainly automobile sales, supply, and repair shops. Several of the more prominent tenants here included the Ford Auto Company, Gordon Motor Company, and the Broad Street Garage, all tenants prior to 1915.

**1639-1649 West Broad Street**

**Contributing**

The row of six attached 2-story brick commercial buildings at 1639-1649 West Broad Street are similar in form and articulation to the row of shops located at 1615 and 1621 West Broad Street. Constructed shortly after 1910, the row historically housed various service industries, along with several automotive shops. As with the other mixed-use buildings on this block, the second levels of these buildings housed workers and proprietors. A prominent automobile-related business once located here was the Franklin-Fowkes Motor Company, established in 1914 and located at 1649 West Broad Street.

The row consists of six attached 2-story brick buildings with first-story storefronts each topped by three window bays. Each façade is articulated by both a storefront-level cornice and a wider, paneled cornice at the roofline. The windows have 1-over-1 wood sash and are adorned by stone sills and lintels. The two western units in the row have been significantly altered by major storefront alterations and by the removal of the cornices.

**1651 West Broad Street**  
*Parking Lot*

**Non-Contributing**

The parking lot at 1651 was once occupied by a 2-story brick automobile showroom, first home of the Jones Motor Car Company. Built before 1915, the building was demolished in September 1968. The parking lot that now occupies the site is paved in asphalt and enclosed by a chainlink fence.

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1655-1657 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

*Jones Motor Car Company Building*

Founded by W. Ashby and L.M. Jones in 1910, the Jones Motor Car Company, purveyors of Cadillac cars, moved to their new "spacious and well arranged quarters" at 1651-1655 West Broad Street between 1910 and 1912.<sup>1</sup> In 1920, the company expanded to the site next door, erecting a new 2-story brick building that still stands at 1657 West Broad Street. An earlier structure that occupied the site of the Jones headquarters had housed other auto sales shops including Plageman Motor Sales Company, Inc. and Chesapeake Motor Company. Jones Motor Car continued to occupy this building as well as its former location next door until the early 1930s when the Goodyear Service Tire & Rubber Company took over the space. For a period Goodyear maintained its district office at this location. Later the space served as a service shop and parts store. Goodyear eventually vacated the building in the early 1950s. In 1955, the city directory indicates that the building was in use as a U.S. Army Motor Pool for the Virginia Military District.

This 2-story brick and concrete building is one of the most architecturally interesting structures in the district. The building exemplifies the popular Art Deco style, incorporating strong vertical elements and the geometrical pattern vocabulary of the style. The exterior is divided into bays by full-height pilasters that culminate in peaks. The ground floor consists of storefront windows now bricked in or covered with plywood. The upper story contains industrial style multi-light steel windows with pivoting operable sash. The façade is composed of beige brick laid in stretcher bond with stuccoed panels making up the majority of the upper story wall surface. The building's corners are articulated by peaked parapets set between the extended vertical pilasters. A notable feature is the pyramidal roof 3-story tower that occupies the southwest corner of the building. The tower contains a garage entrance at its ground floor.

**NORTH SIDE WEST BROAD STREET**

***1300 Block***

1318-1320 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

*Sanders Brothers Company Building*

Erected between 1905 and 1908, the Sanders Brothers Company Building long housed the company's wholesale paints business. This four-story brick building is one of a handful of more traditional early commercial structures erected on West Broad Street around the turn of the twentieth century. It features a ground floor storefront (now altered), and three levels of office/living space above. The upper stories are divided into five bays each with a single window aperture each, containing 2-over-2 double-hung sash. The façade is crowned by an elaborate bracketed metal cornice.

The Sanders Brothers Company continuously occupied this building from the time of its construction until the last quarter of the twentieth century.

1322-1324 West Broad Street

**Contributing**

This four-story brick building erected between 1910 and 1912, originally housed the Baughman Stationery

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Company. By 1924, the company had vacated the building, and around 1928, the Polk Miller Products Corporation, wholesale druggists, took over the space. In 1936, the Polk Miller Company was listed in the Richmond city directory as purveyors of dog food and dog medicines. The building later housed A.H. Robins, Incorporated, a wholesale drugstore.

The building is characterized by its intact, early twentieth century commercial storefront on the first story and by its distinctive articulation of its central bay above the ground level. The upper stories are divided into three unequal bays, the center of which is articulated as a band of four windows set atop a paneled bulkhead and separated by attenuated Tuscan-style columns. The building is reminiscent of the "loft" style buildings built in New York City during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is possible that this design reflect the building's use for light manufacturing on the upper levels. The façade also incorporates a standard metal storefront cornice, a bold roof cornice, and brick jack-arches over the upper story windows.

**1326 West Broad Street**

**Contributing**

Construction of this 2-story brick building was underway by 1905. Erected by the National Biscuit Company as an ice cream cone factory, the building was later remodeled for use as a filling station first run by Bowers & Westerman and later by the Wolf Brothers. During the latter half of the twentieth century, the building housed a yacht sales company and later a painters' supply business.

The building's façade appears to date to the mid-1920s. It features a single bay framed by brick header patterned pilasters that extend above the small faux-mansard roof and are capped by pyramidal finials. The first story once contained a single storefront, while the second story encompasses a band of narrow multi-light casement windows. At one time, the storefront windows continued around the southwest corner of the building.

**1500 Block**

**1500 West Broad Street**

**Non-contributing**

Standing on the northwest corner of Bowe Street and West Broad Street, this 1-story concrete block building was built in 1975 as the GSA Interagency Motor Pool. The building has a flat roof, concrete block and ceramic tile exterior surfaces and metal windows. The west side of the structure contains a series of garage bay openings.

Between 1930 and 1970 this site housed auto-related industries in the form of a gasoline filling station and repair shop run by Whitten Brothers, Inc.

**1510-1512 West Broad Street**

**Contributing**

**Firestone Building**

Standing on the northeast corner of West Broad Street and North Lombardy Street, the present Firestone Building was erected in 1929 for the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company. This sizable and architecturally sophisticated building, housed Firestone's offices, service department, shipping department, and tire storage areas, as well as a filling station. The building continues to be occupied by the original company and houses many of the same functions.

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Designed with Art Deco style embellishment, this 3-story brick utilitarian building type is adorned by a lozenge pattern raised brick cornice band, decorative stone lintels and decorative brickwork. Several Colonial Revival style elements also punctuate the façade, including a scrolled parapet and an elaborate scroll-bracket door hood. The building incorporates a one-story service building that features industrial style steel windows and rows of garage bays.

The Firestone building replaced the Richmond Auto Sales Company's 1918 sales showroom.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The West Broad Street Commercial Historic District in Richmond, Virginia represents the surviving portions of a larger commercial area associated with the early introduction of the automobile and the development of the automotive sales and service industry during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Located just west of the historic downtown section, the area was home to many of the earliest automobile dealers, repair facilities, and specialty shops in the city.

The district possesses significance under National Register Criterion A for its association with the introduction and common acceptance of the automobile in Richmond shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. In addition, the district possesses significance under National Register Criterion C for its collection of commercial buildings that relate to the sale, repair and servicing of automobiles. The buildings, largely one-, two-, and three-story brick structures composed of traditional ground floor storefronts embellished by a variety of architectural styles, retain much of their historic exterior appearance, although many have been, and continue to be, adapted for new uses.

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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**Broad Street, 1780-1865**

Bisecting the historic heart of Richmond, Broad Street has long served as the city's commercial core. In the early 1780s, just after Richmond was designated Virginia's state capitol, Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson laid out the original section of Broad Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets. In 1804, the state legislature authorized the establishment of the Richmond Turnpike Company to construct a good road that would provide access to the coal pits that lay northeast of the city. That same year, West Broad Street was laid out independently as the Richmond Turnpike Road. The turnpike connected with H Street near present day 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Due to the road's exceptional width, H Street and its extension along the Richmond Turnpike were renamed Broad Street in 1845.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1800 and 1820 Richmond's population doubled. One result was a short period between 1815 and 1820 when rampant land speculation promised an expansive westward development of the city. The areas lying west of the city line were eagerly subdivided and advertised for sale. In 1819, a national bank crisis brought the land boom to an abrupt halt.<sup>3</sup> Although a few landowners built residential estates on these tracts, very little development actually took place during this period. However, the plats of the newly subdivided land guided the development of the area more than fifty years later.

The areas that bordered West Broad Street remained as large, undeveloped tracts until the second half of the nineteenth century. West Broad Street itself remained largely unbuilt. However, in 1834, one important institution established itself in the area west of the city line along the Richmond Turnpike Road near present day Lombardy Street. The Virginia Baptist Seminary, rechartered as Richmond College in 1840, remained at this site until 1912 when it moved to its current location in Richmond's west end.

The decades of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s witnessed Richmond's transformation into one of the premier commercial and industrial centers of the South. During this time, the production of iron, tobacco, flour, and textiles dominated the city's commerce and brought great wealth to many of its business people. In 1840, the completion of the James River and Kanawha Canal system to Lynchburg linked Richmond to western portions of the state, and encouraged the growth of commerce in the city. Even more far-reaching in its impact on Richmond's development was the construction of several local railroads between the 1830s and 1850s.

The first railroad built in Richmond was the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac (RF&P) Railroad. It opened its initial twenty-mile route in February 1836. The company built its first depot at 8<sup>th</sup> and Broad Streets near downtown and laid its tracks in the center of Broad Street running west, diverging from Broad Street to turn north near Harrison Street. The RF&P's line was completed to Aquia Creek in 1842. Providing both passenger service and freight service to northern destinations, the presence of the RF&P railroad lines along West Broad Street significantly influenced the character and development of the area.

The economic boom brought by widened commercial markets, expanded transportation links, and growing industry spurred the city's physical expansion. The already subdivided but never built western suburbs began to slowly form out of the open tracts and from the former estates of wealthy merchants. New residential districts housing middle and

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upper-class residents began to appear in the area known today as the Fan District.

The period of economic prosperity continued in Richmond until the Civil War (1861-1865). During the Civil War the tracts that surrounded West Broad Street and the RF&P line were the sites of several Confederate Army encampments. The war took an extremely heavy toll on Richmond with the 1865 evacuation fire destroying large parts of the riverfront commercial and industrial district. However, Richmonders set about reconstructing the city and its businesses almost immediately after the war ended.

**West Broad Street, 1865-1900**

Following the war, the city was in dire need of an expanded tax base to pay for the reconstruction of its infrastructure. One solution was to annex portions of surrounding Henrico County. Not only would this action provide additional real estate tax revenue, but it also would encourage the physical development of the annexed areas, thus relieving the serious problem of inflated rents in Richmond's downtown core. In 1867 the Virginia General Assembly approved the annexation of portions of the East End, the islands of the James River, and the West End, including the part of the district east of Lombardy Street. The commercial development of West Broad Street had finally begun. The city line was established just west of Lombardy Street so that the Richmond College campus was entirely incorporated within the city limits. The selection of Lombardy Street as the westernmost boundary of the city in 1867 indicates that there was little development beyond this point. It shows too that, at that time, there was ample land available for development east of the line.

Another factor that improved the development prospects for West Broad Street during this period was the forced relocation of the established commercial core that followed the evacuation fire of 1865. Since the downtown core that burned in the 1865 fire contained most of the city's factories, mills, and banks, many commercial enterprises were forced to relocate to other sites. One promising relocation area was Broad Street because of its center-city location, expansive width, and the convenience of the railroad running down its center. Thus during the decades after the Civil War, East Broad Street developed into the city's main commercial and entertainment district. While most of the activity was at first focused around the old 6<sup>th</sup> Street market on East Broad Street, development activity later expanded westward.

A key determining factor in this westward commercial expansion was the establishment of a major railroad facility near the western terminus of Broad Street. Although the RF&P Railroad had always offered freight service to points north, its passenger service accounted for the vast majority of its business until the late nineteenth century. Following the Civil War, the entire railroad industry experienced several major transformations that expanded its ability to move goods rapidly and efficiently to far-flung locales. The standardization of track gauge, along with the expansion and consolidation of many small railroad lines, plus improvements in equipment fueled the expansion of rail links to cities throughout the nation.<sup>4</sup> By the 1880s, the use of the national railroad system was rapidly outpacing ship-based transportation as the preferred method for conveying goods.

Taking part in this nationwide trend, the RF&P Railroad in Richmond experienced a major period of expansion after the Civil War. By the late 1870s, revenue from its freight business had increased significantly, enough to compel the company to construct a stand-alone freight station and warehouse in the city. An additional factor that prompted the

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relocation of freight services was Richmond's passage in 1874 of an ordinance banning steam engines on Broad Street. Thereafter, the RF&P had to employ teams of horses to pull their rail cars down Broad Street. This was an especially difficult method for hauling heavy freight cars. Therefore, in 1879 the railroad purchased a track of land on the north side of West Broad Street, just west of Hancock Street, and built a new freight terminal. After it opened in 1880, the new freight terminal and warehouse soon become the locus of the RF&P's expanding freight operations.

The removal of the noxious steam locomotives from the center of the street, along with the inauguration of a horse-drawn streetcar service in the 1870s, transformed West Broad Street into valuable commercial real estate. In addition, the location of the RF&P freight depot near what would have been considered the western terminus of Broad Street soon attracted businesses towards the west end of the city. During the decades that followed, the railroad's presence on West Broad Street drew commercial enterprises further west from downtown. Once dominated by modest residences and local markets, West Broad Street beyond 1<sup>st</sup> Street became an increasingly desirable commercial location.

The area of the district changed greatly in character in the nineteenth century. The earliest construction along West Broad Street between Ryland Street and Allen Avenue consisted of the Richmond College campus on the south side and a few residences and small businesses that were on the north side of the street between Norton and Lombardy Streets. The 1876 Beer's Atlas of Richmond shows the sparse, small-scale development on West Broad Street west of Harrison Street.<sup>5</sup> The district was at that time characterized by several large tracts of land that remained undivided.

By the last decades of the century, the Richmond College campus encompassed two present blocks bounded by West Broad Street on the north, West Franklin Street on the south, and Lombardy and Ryland Streets on the west and east. Several imposing buildings occupied the campus including the Second Empire style Ryland Hall, the college's main academic building. The areas of West Broad Street beyond Ryland Street remained undeveloped during the 1870s and 1880s.

By the mid-1880s, the blocks immediately east of the district contained small-scale stores and dwellings, plus a number of lumber and coal yards. In 1880, the RF&P Railroad built its freight warehouse on the north side of West Broad Street between Hancock and Harrison Streets. This location and the ready convenience of the railroad tracks attracted certain businesses that required the shipment of parts or finished goods.

While city directories and contemporary maps indicate that there were scattered residences built along West Broad Street prior to 1900, there were few businesses located in the area west of Ryland Street. The first substantial company to establish itself in the late nineteenth century on West Broad Street west of Ryland was the Continental Brewing Company, located at the northeast corner of West Broad Street and Kinney Street. Established around 1890, the brewery later became the R. Portner Brewing Company and occupied this location until World War I. The site would later host the Old Dominion Beverage Company and its successor, the Pepsi-Cola Corporation.

In 1892, the second major city annexation to affect the western development of Richmond occurred. Two hundred and ninety-two acres bounded on the south by Grove Avenue, on the west by the Boulevard, on the north by West Broad Street, and on the east by the former city limits at Lombardy Street were taken from Henrico County and deeded to the city of Richmond. This large annexation and subsequent city improvements opened vast tracts of land to commercial and suburban development. However, the nationwide financial depression that began in 1893 stymied

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efforts to build out the area. Construction and commercial expansion of Richmond's west end districts nearly halted. As a result, there was little commercial growth on West Broad Street until the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1900, the city entered a period of economic recovery, spurred by the expansion of railroad connections and the growth of tobacco processing, iron fabrication, and other manufacturing industries. The westward expansion of the city's electric streetcar lines on Broad Street and the attractiveness of the west end suburbs for residential development placed this area at the forefront for future development.

As the residential districts of the West End flourished through the first decade of the century, the westward expansion of commerce along West Broad Street began. By 1905, an old-fashioned mix of commercial, residential, and recreational uses characterized the 1300 to 1600 blocks of West Broad Street. Portner Brewery continued to operate at the northeast corner of Broad and Kinney Streets, the Red Rose Social Club was housed in a small, one-story, iron-front building at 1320 West Broad Street, and the National Biscuit Company building was under construction at 1326 West Broad. In 1905, the north side of West Broad Street was densely developed with small-scale buildings that housed residences, stores, and offices. Just west of present-day Lombardy Street a spacious baseball park was erected, complete with a grandstand and bleachers.

As the decade progressed, additional commercial buildings were built on empty lots on the north and south sides of West Broad Street. Several rows of identical, attached structures were erected here in the early years of the century. Unlike many of the pre-1905 structures built here, several of these remain standing today. The buildings in the district erected between 1905 and 1915 are generally characterized by their modest scale and their use of the traditional, turn-of-the-twentieth-century storefront design. Examples remain at 1639-1649 West Broad Street, erected circa 1910, and at 1615-1621 West Broad Street, built between 1910 and 1912. These rows of commercial buildings feature typical late-Victorian commercial details including prominent metal cornices that define the storefront and roofline, expansive glass areas at the ground floor, and recessed entrances. Typically, these buildings encompassed commercial enterprises on the ground floor and provided residential apartments above.

A few notable exceptions to this typical small-scale commercial structure still stand within the historic district. These are the two substantial buildings at 1318-1320 and 1322-1324 West Broad Street. Both are four stories in height and once incorporated retail businesses on the ground floor. They are notably more ornate than the other pre-World War I buildings in the district, but they continued to employ the traditional commercial architectural format.

### **The Automobile Industry, 1900 – 1950**

The first automobile appeared on the streets of Richmond in 1899. The impact of this new invention would soon influence all aspects of Richmond's growth. Early in the history of its development, the automobile took many forms and employed several technologies. For example, in Richmond, two of the earliest automobile owners operated very different machines. John C. Fowler owned the first electric powered car, while his rival Benjamin A. Blenner operated a steam powered "Locomobile." In 1900, Swift & Company, a packinghouse business, introduced the use of electric automobiles for the delivery of goods in the city, further popularizing this new technology.<sup>6</sup>

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By 1908, there were over five hundred companies manufacturing automobiles in the United States. Most operated out of converted bicycle and carriage shops, as the new vehicles were constructed using many of the same parts. Manufacturing in Richmond was no exception. Benjamin A. Blenner began operation of Virginia's first automobile dealership in 1900 when he initiated sales of electric automobiles from his machine works and bicycle manufacturing plant at 310 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Richmond. By 1905, there was at least one automobile manufacturer listed in Richmond's city directory, along with two automobile dealers. By 1910, the directory included eighteen merchants and manufacturers engaged in the automobile business. Of these eighteen, ten were located along West Broad Street, four within the historic district. By 1912, Richmond's first independent automobile manufacturing company, the Kline Motor Car Corporation established itself by building extensive shops on North Boulevard opposite the fairgrounds located there. Kline built and sold the Kline-Kar from this plant between 1911 and 1923.<sup>7</sup>

The period prior to World War I was one of fierce competition and an uncertain future within the automobile industry. The rapid change in businesses, illustrated by the city directory listings in Richmond, readily illustrates this uncertainty, but also reflects the enthusiasm and entrepreneurial fervor that accompanied the introduction of the automobile into the marketplace. By 1917, at least one local publication claimed that Richmond was "the largest automobile center in the South."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, between 1915 and 1918 the number of auto-related business in Richmond expanded from 58 to 157. The range of goods and services offered by these companies included repairs, exterior painting, auto slip covers, storage sites, replacement batteries, general supplies, tires, auto top manufacturers, tractors and truck dealers, and auto upholsters, as well as auto sales.

In 1917, the Virginia Illustrating Company published a promotional booklet profiling local businesses and prominent citizens in the city. Entitled *Richmond Virginia 1917*, the booklet illustrated the emergence of a strong automobile industry in Richmond. The publishers reported on the growth of Richmond as the center of automobile sales and distribution in Virginia and throughout the south, noting that, "Richmond is fast becoming the largest automobile center in the South. Practically every make of car is represented either by a factory branch or by a sales agency."<sup>9</sup> The booklet emphasized that "there are scores of repair shops and accessory establishments," in the city, and that Richmond's prosperity "is strikingly shown by the large number of automobiles of all makes that are seen on the highways and the rows of garages and repair shops lining the principal business streets."<sup>10</sup>

West Broad Street was by far the main thoroughfare for automotive businesses during this early era of the industry. Between 1910 and 1912, the number of automobile related businesses in the district grew from four to fourteen, while the number throughout the city more than doubled. In 1915, the city directory listed 58 auto-related businesses throughout the city. Eleven of these were located within the historic district. Seventeen of the twenty-five, auto-related businesses mentioned in *Richmond Virginia 1917* were located along West Broad Street. Of these, seven were established in the historic district. By 1924, a total of eighteen automotive establishments occupied the district's thirty-odd commercial buildings.

The convenience of the RF&P freight terminal, combined with the availability of building sites and the growing convenience of West Broad Street made it an ideal location for these new businesses. The street's substantial width accommodated and showcased the vehicles that were sold there. The area was also readily accessible by streetcar to both downtown and the preeminent western suburbs. The relocation of Richmond College from its longtime West Broad Street location in 1914 also boosted growth in the district by freeing up two whole blocks on the south side of

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West Broad Street for commercial development.

The earliest of the automotive businesses to locate in the district occupied older structures converted for their use. Benjamin A. Blenner, one of the initiators of Richmond's automobile era, established an auto repair garage at 1607 West Broad Street between 1905 and 1908. The garage was located in a typical, late Victorian-era storefront building. It remains standing today. As these auto-related businesses flourished and grew, they looked for new quarters, often expanding or constructing new buildings on vacant properties. The district proved to be an ideal location for this emerging industry. The railroad connections, the wide boulevard completely paved with modern macadam by 1924, and the availability of vacant and underutilized land combined to create a focus of commercial activity on "auto row."<sup>11</sup>

During World War I, the manufacture of automobiles for commercial sale nearly ceased altogether, as most plants were busy building military vehicles. However, the war years lead to significant advances in the design and construction of automobiles, producing cars that were more reliable and efficient. Manufacturers had honed their skills and had the capacity to produce more efficient combustion engine vehicles at a rapid pace. Manufacturers and dealers alike began marketing autos to more American consumers. An economic boom also helped popularize these once novelty devices. Following the war, the automobile sales and service industry boomed in Richmond and throughout the nation.

Automobile ownership became increasingly universal during the 1920s. With the initiation of mass production and increased quality and reliability of the product, more and more Americans owned automobiles. Richmond took part in this expansion of ownership with the number of vehicles on the road and auto-related businesses booming. In 1922, there were approximately 160,000 licensed automobiles in the state of Virginia, a ratio of one vehicle for every fourteen persons.<sup>12</sup> That number increased by 30 percent the following year.<sup>13</sup> In 1922, the city's engineer estimated that Richmond would have approximately 50 percent more automobiles on the roads within five years.<sup>14</sup>

Richmond's automobile dealers and auto repair shops competed fiercely to capture the bulk of this growing business. Many of the most prosperous dealers built expansive display, storage and repair facilities designed to attract customers and provide every modern feature. Early auto showrooms were decorated in a variety of styles including the Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and eclectic modes. Two examples within the district are the Forbes Motor Car Company building at 1301-1307 West Broad Street, designed in 1919 by the Richmond architecture firm of Hallet and Pratt, and the Jones Motor Car Company headquarters that was built at 1655-1657 West Broad Street in 1920. Both buildings, along with the majority of the early auto showrooms, emphasized the use of broad expanses of glass at the ground floor for viewing of the product on the sales floor inside. In addition, both incorporated repair facilities that necessitated multiple garage door entrances and massive freight elevators to convey vehicles and parts to the upper levels of the building.

By 1930, the district's identity in Richmond was securely connected to the automobile industry. The district's commercial character had become predominantly auto-oriented with twenty-five auto-related businesses located there. These shops ranged from expansive automobile showrooms combined with garage facilities to specialized supply shops. By the end of the 1920s the district had its first gasoline filling station as well, Whitten Bros., Inc. at the corner of Lombardy Street and West Broad Street (current site of 1500 West Broad Street). A notable addition to the district arrived in 1929 when the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company relocated to a brand new building at 1510-1512 West

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Broad Street at Lombardy Street. This elaborate facility incorporated warehouse space, offices, and an extensive service and repair facility. Designed in the popular Art Deco style with eclectic Colonial Revival details, the Firestone Building is one of the most prominent buildings in the district.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the district remained dominated by auto-oriented businesses. However, as dealers expanded their businesses, and their old quarters became inadequate, many moved farther westward along West Broad Street towards The Boulevard. Thus, the character of the district's automobile industries changed. Several used car dealers moved in, replacing the new car dealers. The ratio of automobile dealers to suppliers and repair facilities favored the latter.

**Decline & Renewal, 1950-2000**

By mid-century, the West Broad Street Commercial Historic District had begun to decline in importance as the city's automotive sales and service center. The ever-expanding suburbs surrounding the city drew more and more residents out of Richmond. In 1949, the city's last streetcar line was shut down and replaced by bus service. In 1956, Richmond's first regional mall opened, further attracting retail establishments away from the city's core.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many of the new car dealers moved out of the district to be replaced by a mix of retail and service establishments. Several auto supply and repair facilities, as well as used car lots, remained in the district throughout the 1960s and 1970s, thus continuing the area's historic association with the automotive industry. However, the area began a slow decline once the regional and suburban shopping centers captured the majority of the area's business. Many of the storefront alterations visible in the district today were made during this period. Retailers sought to capture pass-through business by incorporating modern facades and oversized signage on their West Broad Street storefronts.

Despite interest in the 1970s and 1980s in renewing the vitality of the city's downtown,<sup>15</sup> renewal was slow in the district. Indeed, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the area that surrounded the district, including the former RF&P freight house, remained underutilized with numerous vacant buildings. Because of its deteriorated character and the presence of large specialized building types that proved difficult to renovate for new uses, this area began to attract redevelopment proposals. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) included the reuse of this area as potentially prime construction locations for classrooms, parking, and research facilities. During the mid-1990s, VCU purchased many buildings and lots just outside the district. Today, several entire block faces along the north and south sides of West Broad Street have been entirely redeveloped with new university buildings.

In the process of redevelopment, several notable buildings associated with Richmond's West Broad Street "automobile row" were torn down. Historic photographs document several of these early automobile dealerships, including the Kaehler Motor Company showroom formerly at 1241 West Broad Street, the Gordon Motor Company building built circa 1912 at 1217-1223 West Broad Street, the M.D. Stone Motor Company dealership at 1001-1007 West Broad Street, and the Universal Motor Company building at 1012-1014 West Broad.

Currently, the revitalization of the district is underway with the rehabilitation and renovation of several historic buildings, including the Harper-Overland Company Building (1335 West Broad Street), the Forbes Motor Company Building

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Richmond, VA  
county and state

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(1301-1307 West Broad Street), and the Duplex Envelope Building (1339-1363 West Broad Street). All three are being converted for use as mixed-use residential/retail buildings. Several of the district's small storefront buildings now contain local businesses that cater to nearby university students. A handful of auto repair facilities remain active along this two-block stretch of Richmond's historic "automobile row."

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Geographical Data

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The district includes all of the parcels on the south(west) side of West Broad Street between Ryland Street on the (south)east, and North Allen Avenue on the (north)west. This includes the following tax parcels: 29, 24, 18, 16, 6, 4, 3, and 1 in block W-615. It also encompasses tax parcels: 33A, 33B, 31, 30, 27, 26, 25, 23, 22, 14, 13, 12, 9, 8, 6, and 1 in block W-736. It includes also all of the parcels on the north(east) side of West Broad Street between North Lombardy Street on the (north)west and Bowe Street on the (south)east. This includes tax parcels 12 and 19 in block N670. In addition, the district includes the three tax parcels that are located southeast of Bowe Street on the north(east) side of West Broad Street. These are tax parcels 29, 31 and 33 in block N-614.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the district were drawn to incorporate the remaining historic resources associated with the commercial sale and service of the automobile in Richmond during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The parcel boundaries within the historic district have been only minimally altered since most of the buildings were erected. The area located (south)east of the district was significantly redeveloped in the 1990s, leaving very little of the original commercial character in tact. Likewise, the area (north)west of the district contains a number of intrusive late-20<sup>th</sup> century structures, as well as vacant lots where commercial structures once stood.

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**PROPERTY OWNERS LIST**

[See attached pages]

# Broad St. Commercial DISTRICT

Page No. 1

IPS (INTEGRATED PRESERVATION SOFTWARE)

12/20/2000

ADDRESS REPORT **(BY NAME)**

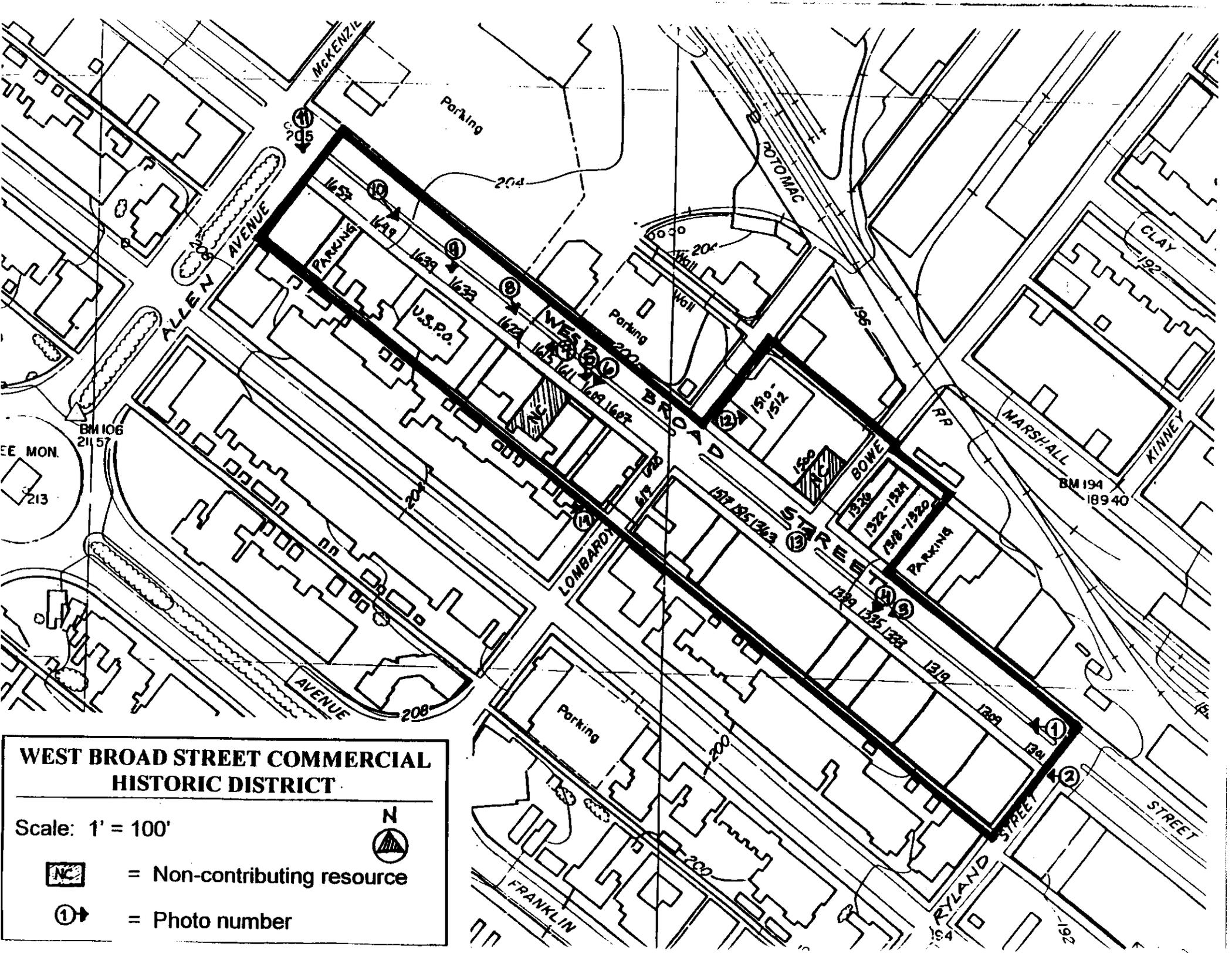
*Reviewed by Margaret Peters*

DHR ID #	PROPERTY NAME	ADDRESS
127-5807-0014	Alsop Motor Company Building Quality Customs Collison Repair	1623 West Broad Street
127-5807-0012	B.A. Blenner Motor Company Nationwide Insurance Office	1611 West Broad Street
127-5807-0019	Baughman Stationery Company Building Polk Miller Products Corporation Building	1322 West Broad Street
127-5807-0002	Commercial building, 1309-1311 West Broad Street Ezekiel & Weilman Company, Inc The Art Market	1309 West Broad Street
127-5807-0008	Commercial Building, 1517-1521 West Broad Street New Life Christian Center	1517 West Broad Street
127-5807-0013	Commercial Row, 1615-1621 West Broad Street	1615 West Broad Street
127-5807-0016	Commercial Row, 1639-1649 West Broad Street	1639 West Broad Street
127-5811	Duplex Envelope Building The Coliseum	1337- West Broad Street -06
127-5807-0022	Firestone Building	1510 West Broad Street
127-5258	Forbes Motor Car Company	1301 West Broad Street
127-5807-0021	GSA Interagency Motor Pool Building	1500 West Broad Street - DEMOLISHED
127-5807-0005	Harper Overland Company Building Commercial Building, 1335 West Broad Street	1335 West Broad Street 2003
127-5807-0017	Jones Motor Car company Building Refrigeration Supply Company	1657 West Broad Street
127-5807-0020	National Biscuit Company Building Bowers & Westerman Filling Station	1326 West Broad Street
127-5807-0010	Pleasants Hardware Store B.A. Blenner Garage Harrison Higgins, Inc.	1607 West Broad Street
127-5807-0009	Richmond Ballet Building	612 North Lombardy Street
127-5807-0003	Richmond Battery & Ignition Corporation Commercial Building, 1319-1323 West Broad Street Delco Tech Service Center Building	1319 West Broad Street
127-5807-0011	Richmond Fire Department Engine Company No. 10 Richmond Fire Department Truck Company No. 3 Firehouse Theater	1609 West Broad Street
127-5807-0018	Sanders Brothers Company Building	1318 West Broad Street
127-5807-0004	Shafer Motor Company Building Richmond Battery & Ignition Corporation Commercial Building, 1333 West Broad Street	1333 West Broad Street

## ADDRESS REPORT

DHR ID #	PROPERTY NAME	ADDRESS
127-5807-0007	Tom Jones Hardware Store West End Post Office	1513 West Broad Street
127-0782	United States Post Office-Saunders Station	1633 West Broad Street -15
127-5807	West Broad Street Commercial Historic District	

23 RECORDS IN THIS REPORT



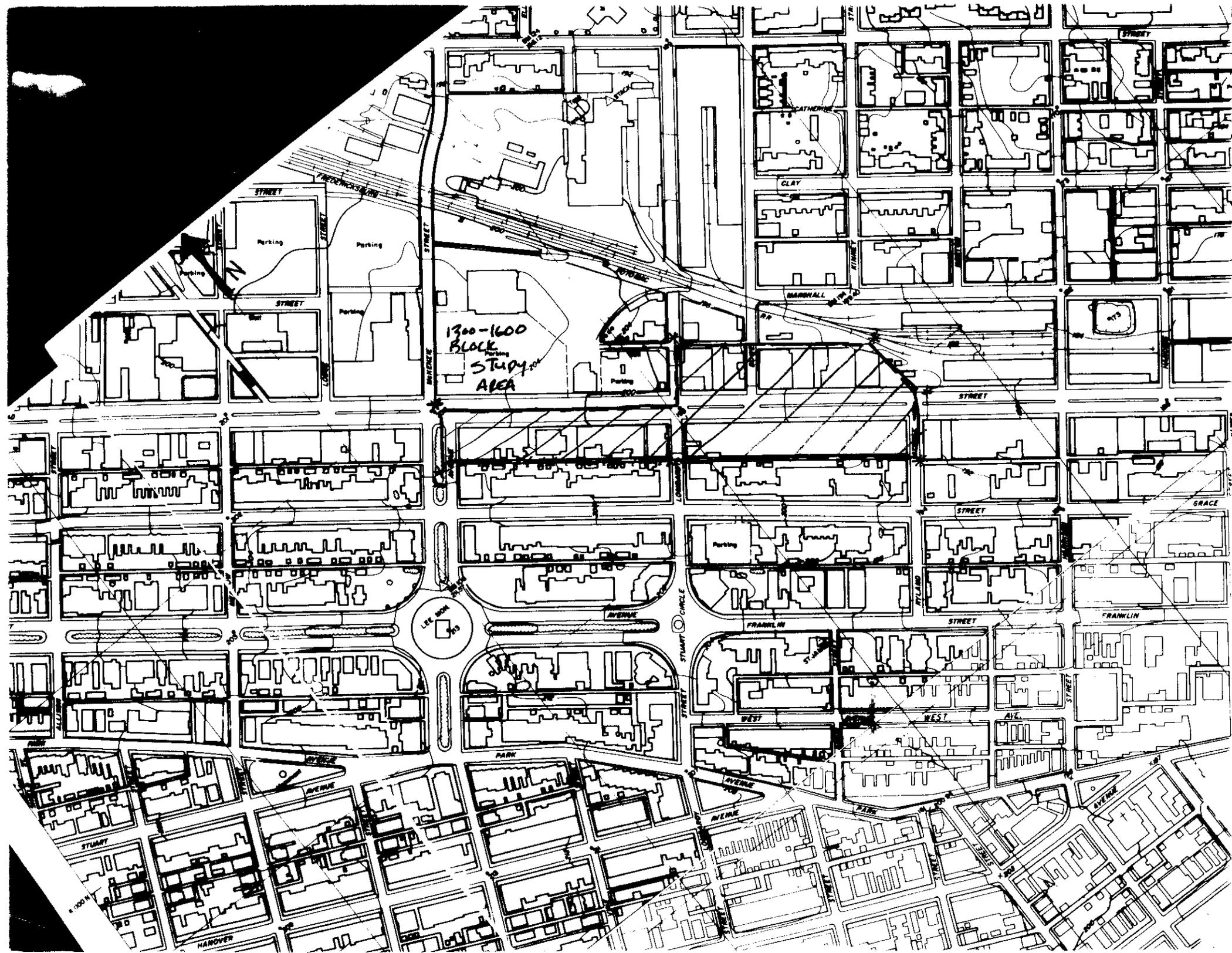
**WEST BROAD STREET COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Scale: 1' = 100'



**NC** = Non-contributing resource

**①** → = Photo number



1300-1600  
BLOCK  
STUDY  
AREA

CATHEDRAL

CLAY

MARSHALL

GRACE

FRANKLIN

FRANKLIN

WEST

WEST

AVENUE

PARK

AVENUE

STAMPT

HARVARD

8,000 N

127-5807

WEST BROAD STREET  
COMMERCIAL HISTORIC  
DISTRICT  
(PROPOSED BOUNDARY)

ZONE 1B

E-283 072 47<

N-415890980

4158

32'30"

4157

4 MI. TO VA. 147

4156

4155

