

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

LISTED ON:	
VLR	06/17/2010
NRHP	09/09/2010

**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 John Rolfe Apartments  
other names/site number DHR # 127-6513

**2. Location**

street & number 101 Tempsford Lane not for publication N/A  
city or town Richmond vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 760 zip code 23226

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date 7/23/10

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
- 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>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

International Style

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof OTHER

walls BRICK

other N/A

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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)

- 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1940

Significant Dates 1940

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder George E. Hoppe, Jr.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more 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**

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

Name of repository: VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

=====  
**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property** 0.887

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing												
1	18	277442	4160692	2				3				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.)

=====  
**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

name/title Kimberly M. Chen and Melanie A. Moran

organization Johannas Design Group date 3.4. 2010 rev. 3.24.2010

street & number 1901 West Cary Street telephone 804.358.4993

city or town Richmond state Virginia zip code 23219

=====  
**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 Tempsford Apartments, LLC

street & number PO Box 14807 telephone (804) 314-7440

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

=====  
**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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**Narrative Description**

**Summary Description:**

The John Rolfe Apartments is a two and three-story, ten-unit building located in the city of Richmond, near its western boundary with Henrico County. It is a large International Style building set in an otherwise conservative neighborhood of traditional-styled single family houses. The building is located on the east side of Tempsford Lane between Cary Street Road and the north bank of the James River on a .887-acre lot that slopes down to the east towards Kennondale Lane which forms the eastern property line. The building responds to the topography and steps down the hill which allows for the incorporation of rooftop terraces and entrances on different levels. The only decorative elements on the building are curved steel canopies at the entrances which are more functional than decorative. Completed in 1940, the brick apartment building was designed by George Edward Hoppe, Jr. (September 7, 1905 – July 21, 1984), a professional engineer, and the owner-developer of the project. It is an early and unusual example of modern residential architecture in a city and region that has never embraced contemporary design. The building has been minimally altered since 1940 and possesses a high level of integrity.

**Detailed Description:**

**Location and Site**

The John Rolfe apartment building is located in the west end of the city of Richmond on the south side of Cary Street Road near the north bank of the James River. At the time of its construction, the John Rolfe apartment building was located in Henrico County near the exclusive Country Club of Virginia and Tuckahoe Apartments to the east, and the fashionable Westhampton neighborhood to the north. With the exception of Wilton, an eighteenth-century, Georgian-style dwelling, which was relocated from Wilton Farm Road in eastern Henrico County to Wilton Road in western Henrico County in 1933, the land to the south of Cary Street, was sparsely developed and much of it was still held in large estates in the early 1940s. George Hoppe, as head of the John Rolfe Corporation,

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purchased the .887 acre lot from the Vanderhook estate. In 1942, the city of Richmond annexed the portion of Henrico County west of Malvern and Commonwealth avenues to its current western boundary. This annexation included Westhampton and the area south of Cary Street. In 1949, another portion of the Vanderhook estate surrounding the John Rolfe Apartments was platted as the Kennondale subdivision and Colonial Revival-inspired single-family dwellings were constructed.

The John Rolfe apartment building is situated on a lot that is 250 feet long and 160 feet wide. The .887 acre parcel slopes gradually from Tempsford Lane on the west to Kennondale Lane on the east. The setting is park-like with a heavy buffer of trees to the south and an open lawn and trees along the property line to the north. The lawn is punctuated with randomly placed pines, ornamental trees, and a large magnolia. According to Philip Hoppe, George Hoppe's son, the original plan of development called for the construction of a second matching building to the north. There is a gravel parking area on the west along Tempsford Lane and concrete sidewalks that step down the hill on the north and south sides of the building. Perpendicular walks extend to the unit entrances and a gravel path meanders down the hill from the end of the concrete walk to Kennondale Lane. The perimeter of the building is planted with azaleas, hollies, and dogwoods set in beds of ivy, lirioppe and vinca.

Exterior

The building has a rectangular foot print with the narrow, blank elevations oriented to the east and west, facing Tempsford and Kennondale lanes. The exterior walls are constructed of painted brick laid in a five-course American bond pattern and terminate in concrete copings at the edges of the staggered flat roofs. The long, north and south elevations of the building are organized into six, two- and three-story blocks that step down the hill. The western most section of the building is two stories tall and three bays wide. The next two sections to the east are three stories tall over a basement, and four and three bays wide, respectively. The next three sections at the east end of the building are each two stories tall and three bays wide. Each of the two-story sections contains a townhouse unit and the three-story sections contain six, one-story apartments that are accessed from the north and south by central stairs. The two, third-floor apartments open onto rooftop

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terraces enclosed with pipe rails and protected by fabric awnings.

The north elevation contains the primary entrances into the units. Each of the two-story, three-bay sections have two, closely spaced nine-light, steel, awning windows and a flush, wooden door on the first story and two, six-light steel awning windows on the second story that are stacked above the lower windows. The area above the door on the second story is blank. The door and the adjacent first story window are protected by a rectangular steel canopy, one side of which is curved. Vertically stacked rectangular steel panels that descend from one side of the canopy to the ground serve to screen and enclose the concrete stoops at the entrances. One corner of the concrete stoop is curved to reflect the curve of the canopies above. The three-story sections are organized around a central entrance that is sheltered by a semi-circular canopy that is held in place by steel tie rods. Centered in the wall above the canopy is a glass block panel that is three blocks wide and nineteen blocks tall which lets natural light into the stair. The entrance is off-set below the east end of the canopy and consists of a flush, wooden door, the upper two-thirds of which are glass. There is a transom over the door that is composed of three glass blocks. The roof-line steps down to the east of the entrance bay. There are three bays on each side of the entrance that are composed of two, closely spaced nine-light, steel, awning windows nearest the entrance and a single, six-light, steel, awning window in the outer most bays. On the upper two stories there are similar windows stacked above the lower level openings.

The south elevation contains the secondary entrances to the units, which are accessed by concrete stoops with a varying number of steps depending on the grade. The elevated stoops have pipe rails and there are small, rectangular steel canopies over each door. Each of the two-story, three-bay sections of the building has a nine-light, steel, awning window and a two-light, steel, awning window close to the rear door, which is a flush, wooden door with a single light in the upper quarter. On the second story, there is a six-light, steel, awning window and a two-light, steel, awning window stacked above the lower windows and the wall area above the door is blank. The three-story sections are organized around a central, three-story, stair that is open to the outside. The steel stair has open-risers, intermediate concrete landings and pipe rails. There are four windows on either side of the stair well. The windows are arranged in the following pattern -- a six-light, steel, awning window in the outer most bay, a two-light, steel, awning window, a nine-

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light, steel, awning window, and a two-light, steel, awning window in the bay closest to the stair well. There are similar windows stacked above the lower windows on the upper two stories.

All of the window openings are punched into the smooth walls and the sash are flush with the brick walls. There are steel lintels and no sills. The flange bolts that hold the windows in place are exposed. There are wooden screen doors at all of the entrances and much of the original steel hardware is in place. This original steel hardware includes through-the-wall mail slots, circular door knockers, lever-operated handles on the screen doors, and round interior door knobs.

Interior

There are ten apartments in the building. Four of the units are two-story, two bedroom townhouses with private front and rear entrances. The remaining six units are one-story, two bedroom flats that are accessed by shared stair wells on the north and south sides of the building. All of the units have efficient plans with open spaces and limited circulation. In all of the units, the front door opens directly into the living room. The dining room, entered through a generous cased opening, is located directly behind the living room, and the narrow kitchen is accessed from the dining room and has its own exterior door. In the two-story units, the interior stair is located on axis with the front door and ascends to a square hall on the second floor. Two bedrooms and a bathroom open off of the hall. In the one-story units, there is a small cased opening from the living room into a rectangular hall with two bedrooms and a bathroom opening off of it. There are hardwood floors and plaster walls and ceilings throughout. The interior details are minimal. The base boards and door and window casings are a single-member, clamshell trim. The dining rooms have crown molding and reeded chair rails. The original, flush, wooden interior doors and steel hardware are still intact. Many of the interior doors and much of the trim still have the original shellac finish. The bathrooms have black and white tile, basket-weave pattern floors and many retain the white subway tile walls with black tile trim. There are four interior staircases in the two-story units in the building. These are wooden, straight-run, closed-stringer stairs with two, parallel, diagonally placed wooden rails. The rails are mitered into a newel post of similar dimension at the bottom and they terminate into the

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ceiling at the top. The one-story units are accessed by central staircases on the north and south sides of the building. The stair on the north side is enclosed by painted brick walls on three sides and a plaster wall on the fourth side. It is a wooden, u-shaped, closed-stringer stair with two flights and an intermediate landing per floor. There are parallel, diagonally placed wooden rails at the stairs that are supported by square newel posts at the base and top. There are similar horizontal rails on the landings. The stair on the south side of the building is enclosed on three sides by painted brick walls and the fourth side is open to the outside. It is a steel, u-shaped, closed-string stair with two flights and concrete landings and pipe rail balustrades.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Summary Statement:**

The John Rolfe Apartments, at 101 Tempsford Lane, designed and built by George Edward Hoppe, Jr. (September 7, 1905 – July 21, 1984) in 1940 are a rare and early example of International Style residential architecture in the city of Richmond and the region. In addition to the John Rolfe Apartments, Hoppe designed and built several other modernist single and multi-family dwellings between 1935 and 1956. The John Rolfe Apartments are the most sophisticated of Hoppe's buildings and best illustrate his interpretation of the International Style of architecture as practiced in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. The building is responsive to the topography and incorporates prefabricated elements and regional materials. With the exception of Hoppe's other residential buildings there are very few other examples of modernist residential architecture of this period in the city of Richmond or the region. Among the only other examples of International Style residential architecture in the region are Azurest South and the Rice House. Azurest South, located in Chesterfield County, was designed by Amaza Lee Meredith in 1939. The Rice House, located on an island in the James River, not far from 101 Tempsford Lane, was designed by Richard Neutra in 1962. Both of these dwellings are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Criteria Statement:**

The John Rolfe Apartments is of local significance and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C. The apartment building is an early and unusual example of International Style residential architecture in a city dominated by traditionally styled buildings. The John Rolfe Apartments are significant in the area of architecture with a period of significance of 1940.

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**Historical Background:**

George Edward Hoppe, Jr.

George Edward Hoppe, Jr. was born September 7, 1905 in Chattanooga, Tennessee to George E. Hoppe, Sr. and Lillian (Lily) Pickett. Federal census records show the family living in Shelby, Tennessee in 1910 and in Richmond, Virginia by 1920. Hoppe's father, George Sr., was a Major in the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry, United States Army, and a machine shop owner. He died in 1935 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Hoppe's mother Lillian, who died in 1946, was an interior decorator with Sydnor and Hundley, a downtown furniture store, for many years. She, too, is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Hoppe attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) from 1924 to 1925 but appears to have left by 1926 without graduating. Hoppe majored in Mechanical Engineering, and later became a licensed professional engineer. Virginia Tech did not have a curriculum in Architectural Engineering until 1928. According to his son, Philip Hoppe, after leaving VPI George moved to New York City, where he worked for a pencil manufacturer. Hoppe had moved back to Richmond by 1930 and in 1935 he designed and built the first of his modernist houses. Between 1935 and 1940, George Edward Hoppe designed and built four single-family houses and two apartment buildings, all of which are still standing, in the International style. From 1938 to 1948, George Hoppe was the sales manager for the Richmond Engineering Company, a manufacturer of steel tanks, which gave him access to materials and equipment to produce some of the steel elements incorporated in his buildings. Mr. Hoppe also incorporated current advances in building technology in his projects, including radiant heating in the driveway at 103 Tempsford Lane. In 1948, he was listed as the President of Old Dominion Iron and Steel Company. The Refrigeration and Engineering Company of New York (Recony) bought control of Old Dominion in 1955. One of the new owners of Recony was Andrew Ashe, who would become a prominent Richmond developer. He and Hoppe built a number of multi-family projects together in the 1960s.

In 1935, George Hoppe designed the first of his International Style dwellings at 1900 South Meadow Street in Richmond, Virginia. Between 1935 and 1937, Hoppe would ultimately design and build three adjacent houses in this area – two in the International Style and one

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a more traditional Colonial Revival style dwelling. The two International Style houses (1900 South Meadow and 1905 Kansas Avenue) are set on steep lots where the terrain slopes towards the James River to the south. The more traditionally styled-house, 1900 Georgia Avenue, is sited on a corner lot with higher, level topography. George Hoppe resided in each of these houses for a brief period of time. In 1938, Hoppe designed and built his first multi-family building, 1413 Park Avenue, in the International Style.<sup>1</sup> This building is sited on a narrow, urban lot between traditionally styled row houses. Over the next few years, George Hoppe designed and built three more International Style dwellings in the soon to be annexed Westhampton area of Henrico County. Two of these buildings were single family dwellings and one was the John Rolfe Apartments on Tempsford Lane. The earliest of these three buildings is located at 201 Amphill Lane, reportedly built in 1936 but more likely constructed in 1938. This single family residence has been enlarged and altered over the years but still remains a strong example of International Style iconography. In 1940 and 1941, Hoppe designed and built the John Rolfe Apartments and a small single family dwelling at 103 Tempsford Lane for his mother, Lillian Pickett. George Hoppe and his family resided in apartment # 6 at Tempsford Lane until 1952 when he completed a traditionally designed house nearby at 207 South Wilton Street. In the 1950s, Hoppe designed and built several more single and multi-family dwellings in the city of Richmond all of which are more traditional in form but with minimal detail. One of the multi-family buildings, 311 North Nansemond, built in 1956, has a more modernist design but does not have the same form as Hoppe's earlier buildings. The building at 101 Tempsford Lane is the most developed of George Hoppe's modernist buildings and possesses a high level of integrity and retains much of its original architectural character, finishes and materials. It is a good example of the local interpretation of modernist design ideas coming to the United States from Europe.

Westhampton Neighborhood

Hoppe's first two modernist houses and the grouping of houses and the John Rolfe Apartments in the west end are all located near the James River on sites with complicated topography. They are also located in neighborhoods that were in the early stages of being developed at the time of their construction and located near very desirable areas. In 1940, when the John Rolfe Apartments were completed, they were located in Henrico County

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near the elite neighborhood of Westhampton. Westhampton was roughly bound by Grove Avenue on the north, Westview now Granite Avenue on the east, Cary Street on the south, and Three Chopt Road on the west. In 1901, the Westhampton Park Railway Company was chartered and began constructing a trolley line along Grove Avenue from the corner of Robinson Street and Floyd Avenue in the city of Richmond to Westhampton Park in Henrico County. Westhampton Park, a short lived amusement park at the terminus of the line opened in 1902 and closed in 1904. In 1910, Richmond College, now the University of Richmond, purchased the former Westhampton Park and in 1914 moved from its downtown location to Westhampton. By 1910-1911, twenty to thirty large, traditionally designed houses had been built in Westhampton by 'country lovers,' and two private schools with flawless reputations, the Chamberlayne School for Boys, now St. Christopher's School, and Virginia Randolph Ellett's School for Girls, now St. Catherine's School, had left their downtown locations for spacious Westhampton tracts.<sup>2</sup> In 1910, the Country Club of Virginia was established on the west side of Three Chopt Road on the north side of its intersection with Cary Street. By 1928, Monument Avenue and the Fan District had lost some of their social cachet and prime lots in Westhampton were in high demand. In 1929, the Tuckahoe Apartments, a six-story, Georgian Revival-style building was constructed on the south side of Cary Street at its intersection with Three Chopt Road. The Tuckahoe was the last of Richmond's luxury high-rise apartment buildings to be constructed.<sup>3</sup> In 1933, Wilton, a mid-eighteenth century, Georgian plantation house was relocated from a bluff overlooking the James River in eastern Henrico County to a similar site south of Westhampton in western Henrico. Moved and restored by the National Society of the Colonial Dames, Wilton was opened to the public as a house museum in 1952. The City annexed this portion of Henrico County in 1942, but the area south of Cary Street remained sparsely developed well into the 1950s. The property surrounding the John Rolfe Apartments was platted in 1949 as the Kennondale subdivision and Colonial Revival-inspired single-family dwellings were constructed over the next ten to fifteen years.

Apartment Living in the Early Twentieth Century

Richmonders discovered apartment living in the early twentieth century. These early apartment buildings were high-rises, six to twelve stories, they were located near downtown, and they contained large, lavishly appointed units with formal rooms and

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servants' quarters. "These earlier high-rise apartments such as the Chesterfield and Shenandoah had been spaciouly designed for gracious living and entertaining for the city's upper-income citizens."<sup>4</sup> The Tuckahoe, built in 1929 on the south side of Cary Street at the southern terminus of Three Chopt Road, near the John Rolfe Apartments, was advertised as "Richmond's first suburban apartment hotel" with an exclusive address offering the best social atmosphere.<sup>5</sup> The golden age of luxury apartment dwelling came to a close with the stock market crash in 1929 but there was a growing demand for rental duplexes and flats for the city's middle-class. In the 1930s and 1940s, a large number of apartment houses were constructed on the blocks lying to the west of the Boulevard.

With the exception of Hoppe's projects, Richmond's apartment buildings, the early high rises and the later two and four-family buildings, were built in one of the popular revival styles with double-hung, sash windows, gable and hipped roof lines and colonial or classical ornamentation. In contrast, the John Rolfe Apartments have smooth walls, punched openings with steel windows, flat roofs with terraces, prefabricated metal entrance canopies, glass block, and a complete lack of applied ornamentation. The early tenants of the John Rolfe apartments were professionals – engineers, managers, physicians, and realtors – and primarily married couples.<sup>6</sup>

### Architectural Analysis

The John Rolfe Apartments and George Hoppe's other modernist buildings are regionally important examples of early modernist residential architecture. The International Style developed in post-World War I Europe and began to be interpreted in the United States in the 1930s. The fall of the monarchies in Germany and Russia and the installation of more progressive governments allowed for radical experimentation in all the arts including architecture. This experimentation led to the constructivism movement in Russia and the establishment of the Bauhaus in Germany in 1919. The new movements in architecture were marked by an absence of ornamentation and by harmony between design and function. These new ideas were also influenced by William Morris, a nineteenth century English designer, who espoused that art should serve society and that there should be no distinction between form and function. The ideas being formed in Europe began to infiltrate the United States as early as 1914 when Rudolf Schindler immigrated to Chicago

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to study with Frank Lloyd Wright. Schindler relocated to Los Angeles in 1920. Other early European architects to immigrate to the United States were William Lescaze and Richard Neutra. In 1920, William Lescaze, a Swiss architect, arrived in Cleveland, Ohio. He then moved to New York, and by 1929 he had settled in Philadelphia. In 1932, he and partner, George Howe, designed the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society building which is considered the first International Style skyscraper in the United States.

The construction of civic and commercial buildings dwindled during the Depression, thus the private house became the principle vehicle for the evolution of the International Style in the United States. It was "adapted to the needs of individual clients and to the architectural culture of the American suburbs."<sup>7</sup> Richard Neutra, an Austrian architect, immigrated to the United States in 1923 and worked for a brief time with Frank Lloyd Wright before joining his friend and university companion, Rudolph Schindler, in Los Angeles. In 1929, Neutra designed the Lovell House in Los Angeles which is considered the first single family house in the United States to be built in the International Style. Also of note is the International Style Rice House which Neutra designed between 1962 and 1965 in Richmond, Virginia approximately a half-mile from George Hoppe's Tempsford Lane building.

European projects like the 1927 Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart, Germany, became international icons for modern architecture. The Weissenhofsiedlung development in Stuttgart was part of a series of Deutsche Werkbund exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s, but unlike any of the other exhibitions it gained international acclaim. Over 500,000 visitors came to see the project and it was published worldwide. It was the first time that many of the characteristics like smooth walls, punched windows, and flat roofs that helped define the International Style would be readily accessible to a broad audience. It is unlikely that George Edward Hoppe visited Stuttgart but he must have been familiar with the published images because his International Style buildings, including the John Rolfe Apartments, appear to draw inspiration from the houses and apartments erected at Weissenhofsiedlung. The thirty-three buildings (apartments, duplexes and single-family houses) with sixty-three units at the Weissenhofsiedlung development in Stuttgart were designed by seventeen architects from Germany, France, Holland, Belgium and Austria including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and J. J. P. Oud, who shaped modern architecture worldwide. These simple working-class dwellings featured smooth walls, punched windows,

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and flat roofs and all but two of the buildings were painted white. The rectangular massing and stair placement of the John Rolfe building is similar to an apartment building designed by Mies van der Rohe. Hoppe's stepped façade appears to echo J. J. P. Oud's design for a row of small houses that stepped to conform to the ground slope. The staggered front entrances of which were separated with planted screens, a device that was also employed by Hoppe at the John Rolfe apartments. Hoppe's design for the John Rolfe building also incorporated roof terraces as seen in houses by Hans Poelzig and Ludwig Hilberseiner.<sup>8</sup>

According to George Hoppe's son, Philip, his father's primary goal was to create housing that could be built economically, an understandable goal as the country was emerging from the Great Depression (1929-1941). Hoppe's goal was not dissimilar to the goals of the city of Stuttgart in 1927 as it was trying to address the serious housing shortage and rampant inflation that had persisted since the end of World War I. In an early memorandum dated June 27, 1925, the Mayor of Stuttgart, Karl Lautenschlager, and the President of Deutscher Werkbund, Peter Bruckmann, outlined the intentions as follows:

"Efficiency measures in all areas of our lives do not stop where housing is at issue. The economic conditions of today prohibit any kind of waste and demand the maximum effect with minimum amount of means, requiring the implementation of such materials and technological appliances which will lead to lower building and operational costs, and will lead to a simplification of households, and to improvements of living itself."<sup>9</sup>

George Hoppe achieved his goal of producing economically built housing by using regional materials, prefabricated elements, and selecting sites that had steep grades that would not accommodate a more traditionally designed dwelling.

Hoppe was also undoubtedly aware of the 1932 Museum of Modern Art exhibition entitled *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson were the curators of the exhibition which catalogued European projects by the pioneers such as Le Corbusier, Oud, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe, along with projects in America by architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, Hood, Howe and Lescaze, and Neutra. The exhibition coined the term "International Style" and put forth the theory of the style in formal and aesthetic terms and ignored the important sociological and political premises

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from Europe. It also dismissed “the notion that modern architecture sprang from function alone and that it had no style.”<sup>10</sup> The International Style was gradually accepted in the United States during the 1930s and was furthered in the late 1930s by the arrival from Germany of Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe – all former leaders of the Bauhaus. Walter Gropius was the first director of the Bauhaus from 1919 to 1927 and established the architectural curriculum. Gropius was the chair of the Harvard School of Architecture from 1938 to 1952 and established a curriculum that broke the 200 year supremacy of the French Ecoles des Beaux-Arts as the model for an education in architecture. Marcel Breuer, best known for his furniture design, was the first student to complete the diploma requirements in architecture at the Bauhaus in 1924, three years prior to it being part of the formal curriculum. Breuer joined Gropius at Harvard in 1939. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was the last director of architecture at the Bauhaus from 1930 to 1933 when it was closed by the Nazi regime. In 1938, he became the director of architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

By the mid-thirties in Europe, the International Style “was effectively rivaled – or rejected – both by older and by younger architects during just those years when it was also spreading most widely through the western world.”<sup>11</sup> The American phase had begun with the work of the European émigrés and was marked by an expansion and diversification of its vocabulary. After 1932, American modifications of the canons enunciated by Hitchcock and Johnson included the prefabrication of products in accord with the visual qualities of the International Style; a greater concern for history, the vernacular, and regionalism; and greater diversity in the aspects of the style. Technology did not necessarily alter the style but made previously custom designed elements readily available like flush doors, hardware, ribbon windows and wall panels.<sup>12</sup> After 1937, the American architect “became less concerned with advanced technology, and more concerned in both theory and practice with the psychic values of regionalism, of natural materials, of the intimate relationship of the building to its site, and increasingly aware of the diverse requirements for psychological comfort.”<sup>13</sup>

Hoppe embraced the American interpretation of the style by creating an intimate relationship between building and site, and by including prefabricated and regional materials. Hoppe used local brick that he painted white, and he incorporated prefabricated elements including industrial steel windows, and metal canopies and wall panels at the

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entrances. Hoppe does not appear to have drawn inspiration from the horizontal, transparent houses being designed by Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler in California or Edward Durell Stone's 1933 Mandel House in Bedford Hills, New York. Hoppe appears to have drawn the majority of his design cues from the European forms like those found at Weissenhofsiedlung as he strove to produce economical housing for middle-class families in the closing years of the Great Depression. Hoppe also appears to have drawn from the work of Gropius and Breuer after they arrived in the United States and were designing houses in the northeast. George Edward Hoppe built the first of his modernist houses in Richmond in 1935. This was only six years after the construction of the Lovell House in Los Angeles, three years after the International Style exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and two years after the Mandel House in New York.

### **Conclusion**

Hoppe's body of work, especially the John Rolfe Apartments, is among few examples of modernist residential architecture in the city of Richmond and the region. The John Rolfe Apartments are a unusual example of an International Style building in a neighborhood and region dominated by traditional design. The apartment building is also significant due to its early construction date. In 1940, when the apartments were constructed, American architects and builders were just beginning to design and construct buildings in the International Style. The Museum of Modern Art exhibition occurred in 1932 and the major European architects associated with the style did not arrive in the United States until the late 1930s. The John Rolfe Apartments embody the characteristics that defined the International Style in the United States: the use of prefabricated products; the incorporation of regional materials; the response to the topography of the site; and the interpretation of the style to create an economic housing type. There are a limited number of modernist dwellings in the Richmond region and the John Rolfe Apartments are an early and significant example.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

The John Rolfe Apartments, 101 Tempsford Lane, are wholly located on parcel W0220087002, as identified by the City of Richmond, Assessor of Real Estate.

**Boundary Justification**

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

The boundaries for the John Rolfe Apartments have not changed since 1940 and the property is still wholly contained within parcel W0220087002, as identified by the City of Richmond, Assessor of Real Estate.

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

**Property:** John Rolfe Apartments  
**Location:** 101 Tempsford Lane, Richmond, VA  
**Photographer:** Melanie Moran, Johannas Design Group  
**Date:** May 2009  
**Photograph File:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, Virginia

**Photograph Number:**

0001 NW corner looking SE  
0002 North (façade) looking SE  
0003 North (façade) entry detail looking SE  
0004 North (façade) entry detail looking SW  
0005 North (façade) canopy detail looking SE  
0006 NE corner looking SW  
0007 NE corner looking SW  
0008 SE corner looking NW  
0009 South Elevation stair detail looking NE  
0010 SW corner looking NE  
0011 SW corner looking NW  
0012 typical stair in townhouse unit  
0013 typical view from living room to dining room  
0014 typical steel sash from interior

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**END NOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> City of Richmond, Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Building Inspection, Application for a Permit to Building #23186 (1 March 1935), #23699 (22 June 1936), #24109 (31 March 1937), and #24623 (28 April 1938).

<sup>2</sup> Gray and Sadler, Section 8, page 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Drew St. J. Carneal, Richmond's Fan District, Historic Richmond Foundation (1996), 135.

<sup>5</sup> Anna M. R. Gray, Mary Harding Sadler, National Register Nomination Form, "The Tuckahoe Apartments." (14 June 2000), Section 8, page 5.

<sup>6</sup> Hill's Richmond Virginia City Directory, Hill Directory Company, Inc., 1941-1949.

<sup>7</sup> Ricciotti, "Stone." 53.

<sup>8</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Philip Johnson, The International Style, W. W. Norton and Company, (1966). 114-115, 198-199, and <http://www.weissenhof2002.de/english/weissenhof.html>

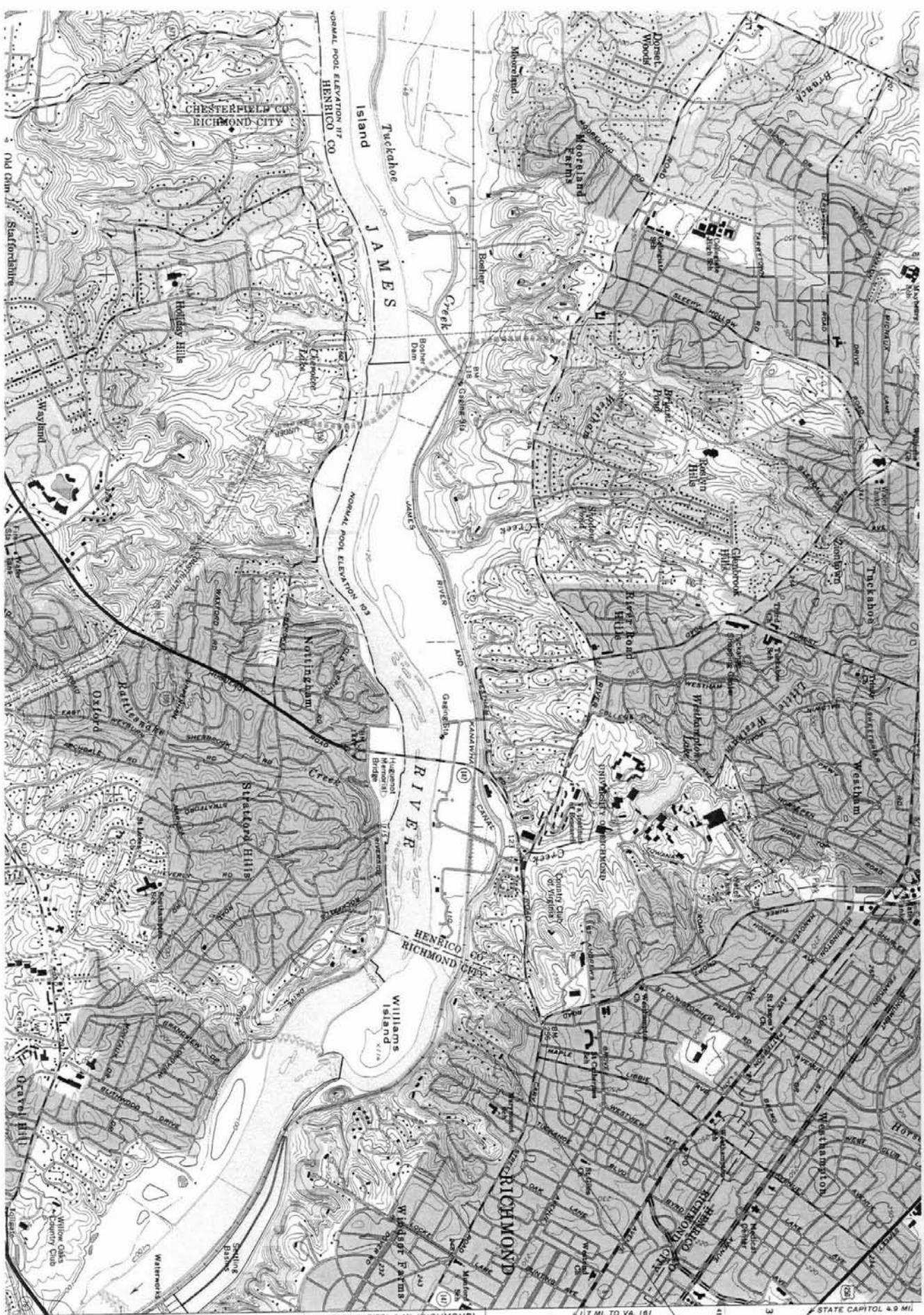
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.weissenhof2002.de/english/weissenhof.html>

<sup>10</sup> Dominic Ricciotti, "Edward Durell Stone and the International Style in America: Houses of the 1930s." *American Art Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1988), 49.

<sup>11</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson, ix.

<sup>12</sup> William H. Jordy, "The International Style in the 1930s." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 24, no. 1 (March 1965), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



STATE CAPITOL 4 MI. (RICHMOND) 5559 III SW 117 MI. TO VA. 161 35' STATE CAPITOL 4.9 MI.

171-6513  
 John Koffe Apt.  
 101 Tempford Ln.  
 Richmond, Va.  
 Zone 18  
 27742 E  
 4100292N



CITY OF RICHMOND

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
PLANNING AND PRESERVATION DIVISION

June 2, 2010

Mr. Marc C. Wagner,  
Register Programs Manager  
Virginia Department of  
Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, Virginia 23221

RE: John Rolfe Apartments,  
City of Richmond

Dear Mr. Wagner:

The City of Richmond Commission of Architectural Review appreciates the opportunity to review the National Register nomination report for the John Rolfe Apartments, as a part of Richmond's Certified Local Government responsibilities. At its May 25, 2010 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to support and recommend the designation of the John Rolfe Apartments to the Virginia Board of Historic Resources.

The Commission would like to offer the following comments on this project: The Commission strongly supports the nomination of this individual property as being of significance under National Register Criteria C.

If you have any questions about the Commission's recommendation or if the Commission can be of further assistance, please contact me by phone at (804) 646-6364 or by e-mail at [thomas.potterfield@richmondgov.com](mailto:thomas.potterfield@richmondgov.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Tyler Potterfield". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

T. Tyler Potterfield  
Planner II

c. James C. Hill, CAR Secretary