.NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 Suffolk Historic District (Increased Boundary)

other names/site number (DHR File Number 133-72)

2. Location

street & number Portions of both sides of the 300-500 blocks North Main St. and part of the 100 block of Mahan St east of North Main St. not for publication N/A
city or town Suffolk vicinity N/A
state VIRGINIA code 51 county (Independent City) code 800
zip code 23434

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.)

M Catherine Slusser May 7, 1999
Signature of certifying official 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

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 Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_x_ private
_x_ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

___ building(s)
_x_ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Non-contributing	
__35_	___5_	buildings
___0_	___0_	sites
___0_	___0_	structures
___3_	___1_	objects
__38_	___6_	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register ___1_

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
COMMERCE/TRADE	professional
GOVERNMENT	courthouse
GOVERNMENT	correctional facility
GOVERNMENT	post office
RECREATION AND CULTURE	monument/marker

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	multiple dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
COMMERCE/TRADE	professional
COMMERCE/TRADE	specialty store
COMMERCE/TRADE	restaurant
GOVERNMENT	courthouse
GOVERNMENT	correctional facility
GOVERNMENT	post office
RECREATION AND CULTURE	museum
RECREATION AND CULTURE	monument/marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal
MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival
LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate, Queen Anne
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
	BRICK
	STONE/sandstone
roof	STONE/slate
	METAL/tin
	ASPHALT
walls	WOOD
	METAL/aluminum
	SYNTHETICS/vinyl

BRICK
STUCCO
CONCRETE

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)

__x_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

__x_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object,or structure.

__x_ 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_____ ___
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT__ ____
SOCIAL HISTORY_____ ____
MILITARY_____ ____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Period of Significance 1785-1948_____

Significant Dates _1837; 1862_____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
_____N/A_____

Cultural Affiliation _N/A_____

Architect/Builder __Unknown_____

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.
_x_ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
__ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
_x_ Other
Name of repository: Nansemond County Library, Morgan Branch; Nansemond/Suffolk Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __23.5 acres_____

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	358700	4066780	3	18	358820	4066300
2	18	358790	4066800	4	18	358690	4066280

_X_ 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 Shirley Maxwell, historian; James C. Massey, architectural historian; Geoffrey B. Henry, architectural historian

organization GAI Consultants, Inc. date April 17, 1998

street & number 570 Beatty Road Telephone 412/856-6400

city or town Monroeville state PA zip code 15146

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 _____

street & number_____ telephone_____

city or town_____ state_____ zip code _____

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.0. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Narrative Description

Summary

This 23.5-acre expansion of the existing Suffolk Historic District, Suffolk, Virginia, forms an irregular rectangle that stretches along North Main Street from the former Seaboard Airline Railroad Station (the northern edge of the existing district) northward to Constance Road, a major east-west highway, at the old Nansemond County Courthouse. The block north from the courthouse to the Nansemond River, east of Main Street, has been cleared for development, leaving no standing building at Constant's Wharf, where the city was founded. On the west side of Main Street, north and south of Constance Road, are large modern commercial buildings that are out of character with the existing district and its expansion. With the North Main Street spine as its focus, the expansion area contains 40 buildings, of which 34 are contributing resources and six are non-contributing. A busy urban road today, North Main Street was the original road north from Suffolk. From the city's settlement period, it has been the north-south axis. The area is comprised mainly of small to mid-sized houses, many from the 1830s and 1840s, with additional buildings from the Victorian period after the Civil War and others from the turn of the century, plus a few modern one-story commercial and residential structures. Among the buildings are one from the eighteenth century (the Old Post Office, ca. 1785), 12 constructed between 1837 and 1859, and 17 constructed between 1880 and 1915. Although several are deteriorated, most are in good to fair condition. The primary architectural examples are two fine Greek Revival structures built ca. 1838-39, the Nansemond County Courthouse (Photo no. 6) at 524 North Main Street and Constance Road, and the adjacent Riddick House (Photo no.7) at 510 North Main Street.

Description

Although the area south of Constant's Wharf on the Nansemond River is the oldest settled area of Suffolk, no buildings survive from the earliest period of settlement before the Revolutionary War. The area suffered periodic fires, particularly in 1779 and 1837, and only one late eighteenth-century building remains, the post-Revolutionary War house at 356 North Main Street (the Old Post Office, ca.1785, with extensive later additions; at left in Photo no. 3).

Without doubt, the old Nansemond County Courthouse (Photo no. 6) and the adjacent house, Riddick's Folly (Photo no. 7), both built after the fire of 1837, are the premier examples of the sophisticated Greek Revival style in Suffolk. The courthouse is a fine, brick, two-story, three-bay by four-bay building with a rather severe tetrastyle portico with unfluted Doric columns set on a low stone

porch. The large windows are 12/12 and there is a large central door with transom. Riddick's Folly, next door to the south, is a two-and-one-half-story brick house on a high, raised basement, five bays wide by four bays deep, with an added Doric porch at the south side. The handsome front entry porch, a simple, pedimented Doric composition, is raised on a flight of brownstone steps with iron railings. The front door has both transom and sidelights. The attic story is expressed as a fascia with five small, three-paned windows across the front. The principal windows are 9/9 lights on the first floor and 9/6 on the second floor. There are a brownstone watertable and brownstone lintels over the windows. These two fine Greek Revival buildings and five other houses on North Main Street built between 1830 and 1840 in the older Federal style (434, Photo no. 8; 431, Photo no. 9; 341, 342, Photo no. 3; and 425, Photo no. 2) complete the buildings from this architecturally important decade of Suffolk's development. All five Federal-style buildings are of frame construction, two stories, with simple gable roofs without dormers. All have three- or four-bay fronts with end-bay entrances and chimneys at the opposite end. Some have simple gabled entry porches. Although the houses are not identical, they are remarkable for their similarity.

These houses were built at a time when the mainstream of urban development was moving south to what is still downtown, where the north-south Main Street crosses Washington Street, the old road west from Portsmouth. The arrival of the railroad in 1832 neatly split the two sections of old Suffolk, although the courthouse and the first of several clerk's offices remained at the point of original settlement.

Because of the long Union occupation of the town, and the failure of the one major attempt by the Confederacy to capture it during the 1862 Siege of Suffolk, Suffolk avoided the widespread destruction wrought by the Civil War in other parts of Virginia. Although its buildings were variously used by the military, particularly the Riddick House and the courthouse, the buildings survived relatively unscathed.

Between the courthouse, jail, and clerk's office at the north, and the railroad at the south, the North Main Street area quietly prospered with periodic additions of new buildings, often replacing earlier ones on the same sites. In the 1880s, the pace of rebuilding quickened. The houses at 415 (photo 4), 421 (photo 4), 432, and 344 North Main Street (photo 3) represent this period of construction. The buildings at 415 and 421, for example, are two-story, three-bay houses of frame construction, with partial or whole pedimented front porches. These are narrower than the earlier houses and are built closer together.

Suffolk's development was generally concentrated in the new downtown until the 1960s and 1970s. The tide of post-World War II development did insert several small commercial buildings that replaced

earlier structures. The new buildings include the former ca. 1970 7-Eleven Store at 408 North Main Street. Typical of thousands, it is a low, one-story building with a brick and glass-wall front and a low pedimented roof. Other modern buildings of the same period are also one story in height and much wider than earlier examples. An incompatible panel-wall and glass addition was built at the rear of the courthouse in the 1960s. This addition, consisting of standardized components, is two stories high but of a type more often encountered in a large, freestanding or high-rise building. More recently the primary thrust of commercial development has occurred farther north with Main Street serving as a four-lane thoroughfare, and the old First Cross Street becoming a modern east-west bypass, Constance Road. From here northward across the Nansemond River to the even newer limited-access east-west bypass is the site of the current primary development in Suffolk. This has occasioned the destruction of three blocks of the Constant's Wharf area, those on each side of Main Street from the Nansemond River to Constance Road, and the block to the southwest of the Main Street intersection, which was cleared to facilitate substantial modern development. These circumstances prompted the omission of the area from this expansion of the historic district, along with the large modern U. S. Post Office at 445 North Main Street.

The area included in this historic district expansion along North Main Street has a substantial level of integrity with non-contributing resources of a low and less intrusive nature. The North Main Street area is architecturally compatible and contains excellent examples of late Federal and 1830s Greek Revival architecture, late nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-century late Victorian houses in the Queen Anne style mixed in with early twentieth-century Colonial Revival buildings. Most of the buildings are houses, and most are now in commercial use, as in the cases of the law offices at 431 and the restaurant at 434 North Main Street. Indeed, the area has always supported mixed uses, mainly residential and commercial, although the visual impact is of residential structures. Several buildings are either under rehabilitation or are awaiting rehabilitation. Some of the most serious deterioration is seen at 342 and 347 North Main Street, while rehabilitation is underway at 400 North Main Street. Typical of the early period, the latter structure is frame with a gable roof, two stories, three bays wide, with an end-bay entrance and chimney opposite. In this case, the house has been raised on a high brick basement as part of its renovation, as was done earlier at 434 North Main Street. At 351 North Main (Photo no. 13) at Second Cross Street, now Mahan Street, is a ca. 1920 gas station with a number of additions now used as a car wash. Mahan Street east of Main has been enhanced with a central landscape feature including memorials from World War I through the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts, and set in an allée of cedar trees leading to the main entrance of the picturesque Cedar Hill Cemetery (Photo no. 5). From Main Street east, the first memorial is a marble tablet for the Korean and Vietnam conflicts; next is a bronze plaque and behind the plaque, a cannon for World War II; and finally a large bronze statue of a World

War I soldier set on a high base. Outside the historic district, but significantly related to it, the cemetery has an unusually fine terraced landscape design.

The two major buildings, the old Nansemond County Courthouse and the Riddick House, are of brick. Most of the nineteenth-century buildings are of frame construction, except for 348 Main Street, which is built in two brick sections. In the twentieth century brick became the predominant material for new construction as seen at 403, 444 (Photo no. 12), and the non-contributing 409 North Main Street. Roofs are mostly of standing seam sheet metal, although some later roofs are of asphalt shingles. Two houses, 344 and 444, have slate roofs. Most buildings are two stories with gable roofs, though there are some flat roofs. Two one-and-a-half story bungalows are at 101 Mahan Street and 438 North Main Street (Photo no. 3). The area's post-World War II buildings are one story in height, except for the two-story courthouse addition. Most buildings are residential in character with the exception of the courthouse, jail, car wash, and the law office at 348 North Main. Some properties are built to the sidewalk; others are set back with small front yards. Side yards are generally narrow. Most front yards survive, with the exception of 444 and 506 North Main, which are now paved for parking. Most often, parking is in the rear of the lot, as at the restaurant at 434 North Main and Riddick's Folly museum. The modern commercial buildings break this pattern, being set back from the street with parking areas in front.

The connection to the original historic district is made by the contributing early buildings on both sides of north Main Street that adjoin the former Seaboard Air Line Railroad[1] Station, which marks the northern end of the existing district (Photo no. 1). From ca. 1905 until recently, a pair of tracks and at least two freight structures of the Virginian Railroad ran north of the Seaboard tracks in the same general corridor. These tracks and the structures have now been removed. During the relatively late construction of the Virginian tracks, several earlier historic buildings on both sides of North Main Street were demolished.

[1]The Seaboard Air Line and Virginian Railroad names are used here because they are the most traditionally identified names among those of the many mergers and acquisitions that took place both before and after these lines were so named.

Description -- Inventory

Mahan Street

101: Detached House. Bungalow, ca.1920. Brick, 1½ stories; gable roof; wide overhanging eaves; recessed porch. Windows have been altered. Contributing garage. DHR Survey No. 133-72-04

Main and Mahan Sts.: War Memorials. 1931; 1944; 1945; 1980s. 3 contributing objects: World War I Memorial "Doughboy at Rest" (1931) bronze statue sculpted by Joseph P. Pollia of New York. Recoil 3-inch gun (1944). World War II Marker (1945). 1 non-contributing object: Korean and Vietnam Memorial (1980s). DHR Survey No. 133-72-05

North Main Street

341: Detached House. Gardner's Store. Federal, ca.1830. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 2 bays; gable roof; gable-end facade. Building in precarious shape; 20th-century welding annex attached. Both are vacant. DHR Survey No. 133-9

342: Detached House. Ann Browne House. Vernacular Federal, ca. 1830. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories; 4 bays; gable roof with dentil cornice. Late-19th-century rear ell. Contributing shed and garage. DHR Survey No. 133-72-01

344: Detached House. Hamblin Peps House. Vernacular Italianate, 1880. Wood frame; 2½ stories; 3 bays; cross-gable roof and bracketed cornice. 1-story porch with bracketed eaves. DHR Survey No. 133-72-02

347: Luke House. Detached House. Italianate, 1902. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories, 4 bays, hip roof; projecting cross gables. House has bracketed eaves and molded window architraves. Wrap-around porch has chamfered posts. Contributing frame shed is in the rear. DHR Survey No. 133-72-27

348: House with attached office. Kilby House & Law Office. Greek Revival and Italianate, 1859. House is in two sections. House: Italianate. Brick (pressed brick facade); 2 stories, 3 bays; bracketed eaves. Office: Greek Revival. Brick; 2 stories, 3 bays; parapet gable front; 9/9 windows. DHR Survey No. 133-72-03

351: Joyner's Car Wash. Commercial Building. Vernacular, ca. 1920. Wood frame; 1 story, gable roof; former filling station. Gable-end facade and service bays on the south. Survey No. 133-72-26

356: Detached House. Old Post Office. Federal, ca. 1785. Wood frame (aluminum siding); 2 stories, 5 bays; gable roof; 1-bay portico; extensive 1920s rear additions. DHR Survey No. 133-6

400: Detached House. Wood House. Federal, ca. 1840. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories on English basement; 3 bays; gable roof; rear ell. 1-bay portico on raised posts. Rear porch is not original. In process of renovation/restoration. DHR Survey No. 133-72-06

403: Colden House. Detached House. Colonial Revival, 1912. Brick; 2½ stories, 3 bays, hip roof with bracketed cornice, hip-roofed dormer; polygonal bays. Wrap-around porch has Tuscan columns. Survey No. 133-72-25

404: Detached House. Vernacular Italianate, ca. 1885. Wood frame (aluminum siding); 2 stories, 3 bays; central cross gable; bracketed eaves. Converted to apartments and porch altered. 2 contributing garages. DHR Survey No. 133-72-07

408: Commercial Building. Family Market. Ca.1970. Brick; 1 story; gable roof. Convenience store. Non-contributing. DHR Survey No. 133-72-08

409: Detached House. Baptist Parsonage. Ranch house, ca. 1965. Brick; 1 story house on large double lot. Non-contributing. Survey No. 133-72-24

412: Commercial Building. Winning Edge. Ca. 1975. Cinder block; 1 story; flat roof. Non-contributing. DHR Survey No. 133-72-09

415: Detached House. Vernacular, ca. 1885. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories, 2 bays, gable-roof; gable-end facade with pedimented gable end. 1-story screened porch has tapered posts on brick piers. Survey No. 133-72-23

416: Commercial Building. East Va. Eye Care. Ca.1980. Stucco; 1 story, 3 bays. Non-contributing. DHR Survey No. 133-72-10

417: Detached House. Vernacular, 1885. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories, 2 bays, gable roof,

gable-end facade with cornice returns. 3-bay porch has tapered posts on brick piers. Survey No. 133-72-22

419: Detached House. Lemuel Norfleet House. Vernacular Colonial Revival, ca. 1910. Wood frame, 2½ stories, 3 bays, hipped roof with pedimented cross gable. Wrap-around porch has Tuscan columns. Survey No. 133-72-21

421: Detached House. Colonial Revival, 1880s. Wood frame, 2 stories, 3 bays; jerkinhead roof; classical window architraves and unusual false windows. Porch has Ionic columns on brick piers. Survey No. 133-72-20

424: Commercial Building. Suffolk Sheriff's Office. Ca. 1980. Brick (stucco); 1 story; false mansard roof. Non-contributing. DHR Survey No. 133-72-11

425: Detached House. Carr House. Federal, ca. 1837. Wood frame (aluminum siding); 2½ stories; 3 bays; gable roof with cornice returns; exterior gable-end chimneys. Windows have bracketed architraves. Roof was raised ca. 1900. DHR Survey No. 133-72-19

431: "Old Magnolias". Detached House. Federal, ca. 1840. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2 stories, 3 bays, gable-roof; exterior gable-end chimneys; 9/9 and 9/6 windows have molded architraves. Portico and wings are early 20th century. Brick kitchen (contributing) and cottage (non-contributing) are in the rear. DHR Survey No. 133-2

432: Detached House. Vernacular Italianate, ca.1890. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 3 bays; gable roof with bracketed cornice; Italianate window architraves and handsome corbelled chimneys. 1-story porch with Tuscan columns. DHR Survey No. 133-72-12

433: Detached House. Vernacular Colonial Revival, ca. 1905. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½ stories; 3 bays; hipped roof (slate) with pedimented cross gable; simple cornice and corner boards. Former porch has been removed. Contributing frame shed in rear. DHR Survey No. 133-72-18

434: Detached House. Federal, ca.1840. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 3 bays; gable roof; bracketed cornice; front door with 3-pane transom. House was raised on new brick basement with brick steps. Now a restaurant. DHR Survey No. 133-72-13

438: Detached House. Hargrave House. Bungalow, ca. 1915. Frame (brick-tex siding); 1½ stories; 3 bays; hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves over front porch. Some windows have diamond-pane upper sash. DHR Survey No. 133-72-14

444: Detached House. Grace House. Colonial Revival, 1933. Brick (stretcher bond); 2½ stories, 3 bays; gable roof (slate). Polygonal stone-faced entry has a French door and round arches. Contributing brick shed is in the rear. DHR Survey No. 133-72-15

506: Detached House. Norfleet House. Queen Anne, 1902. Wood frame (weatherboard); 2½-stories, 3 bays; projecting cross gables with tripartite windows; wrap-around porch with Ionic columns; corbel-capped chimneys. Brick garage is in the rear (contributing). DHR Survey No. 133-72-16

510: Riddick's Folly. Detached House. Greek Revival, 1838-39. Brick (Flemish bond facade); 2½ stories, 5-bays; English basement; parapet roof; gable-end chimneys; 1-bay front portico, 4-bay portico on south side. (NR-listed). DHR Survey No. 133-3

524: Government Building. Nansemond County Courthouse. Greek Revival; 1838-39. Brick (5-course bond); 2 stories, 3 bays wide, 4 bays deep; gable roof; tetrastyle Doric portico; 12/12 sash windows. 1960s rear addition. DHR Survey No 133-5

524: City Jail. Building. 1926 Brick (stucco); 2 stories; brick quoins. Large recent addition on the rear. DHR Survey No. 133-72-17

Section 8/ Statement of Significance

Summary

The 23.5-acre section of Suffolk, Virginia, that lies immediately north of the previously designated Suffolk Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture, politics and government, social history and military history. Not only does it give tangible evidence of Suffolk's nineteenth-century building practices, it vividly illustrates the city's development patterns from 1785 into the late twentieth century and also provides strong reminders of its antebellum and Civil War-era history. The area, which stretches along both sides of the northern end of the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of North Main Street and the block of Mahan Street east of Main Street, is adjacent to Constant's Wharf, where Suffolk's eighteenth-century development began, and is at the heart of the

1862-1865 occupation of Suffolk by Union forces. Although the buildings present a fundamentally residential appearance, they have in fact always comprised a blend of residential, commercial, and public uses. Mostly middle-class, single-family dwellings, they represent various periods of Suffolk's building history from ca.1785 through the 1930s and are in the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Colonial Revival, nineteenth-century vernacular, and bungalow styles. Among them are a single eighteenth-century survival (the Old Post Office,1785), 12 buildings constructed between 1837 and 1859, and 17 buildings constructed between 1880 and 1915. Although several are deteriorated, most are in good to fair condition. Architecturally, the most significant buildings are the imposing brick Greek Revival-style Mills Riddick House (ca. 1838; listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974) and the brick tetrastyle Nansemond County Courthouse, constructed at approximately the same time. The courthouse is the third such building constructed on the same site, which has remained throughout Suffolk's history the hub of the community's judicial and political life. The Riddick House served as Union Army headquarters during the 1862-1863 Siege of Suffolk. The extension area also includes a group of four commemorative pieces marking the entrance to the Cedar Hill Cemetery. In all, the addition to the historic district contains 40 buildings, of which 34 are contributing and six are non-contributing. The area also includes four objects, of which three are contributing and one is non-contributing.

Historical Information

The town of Suffolk, laid out between two creeks by John Milner in the 1750s, developed on the south bank of the Nansemond River around the shipping area known as Constant's Wharf, the site of a tobacco rolling house built in 1712 by John Constant. By 1730 John Constant's warehouse was storing not only tobacco, but grain and salt as well. By 1742, increased commerce along the Nansemond led the county to petition the colonial legislature to establish a town there.[2]

Ravaged by fire several times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the town was repeatedly rebuilt, with its center shifting away from the river front. However, the original wharf area continued to be a bustling place containing warehouses, icehouses, packing houses, livery stables, and, at least by

[2]Kermit Hobbs and William A. Paquette, Suffolk: A Pictorial History (Norfolk, Va.: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1987), p. 21.

1884, a railroad freight building at the end of a narrow-gauge rail line. (Because no above-ground structures from this long mercantile and manufacturing history remain in the area once occupied by Constant's Wharf, and a paved-over parking lot now covers any archeological reminders of it, the site is not included in the proposed historic district extension.)

Certainly none of the extant buildings in the North Main Street extension of the previously designated Suffolk Historic District existed at the time of Suffolk's near-total destruction by British forces in 1779, and only one--a much-altered and enlarged frame building at 365 North Main Street known as the Old Post Office (133-6; photo no. 3)--survives from the eighteenth century. Two other frame houses in the vernacular Federal style--the Ann Browne House (133-72-01) at 342 North Main Street, and Gardner's Store at 341-- are believed to date from about 1830.

With those exceptions, all of the buildings seen today in the area between the old Seaboard Air Line railroad tracks[3], where the previously designated historic district ends, and the modern highway bypass of Constance Road, were built after 1837. In that year, a calamitous fire swept through much of Suffolk, stopping just short of the Old Post Office. According to local historians, the fire began in the cabinet shop of Edward Arnold at the rear of a house that then stood on the lot at 400 North Main Street.[4]

Although frame buildings continued to be built on and around North Main Street into the twentieth century, concern about the safety of wooden construction prompted the use of brick as a building material for the two major landmarks of North Main Street, the Riddick House (510 North Main Street, ca. 1839; 133-3) and the Nansemond County Courthouse at 524 North Main (133-5). They are presumed to have been constructed at virtually the same time by the same unknown builder.

The Riddick House (separately listed in the National Register in 1974) was also known as Riddick's Folly because of its impressive size and architecture. The two-and-a-half-story, twenty-room brick house in the Greek Revival style was built for Mills Riddick, a prominent Suffolk citizen, to

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[3]Although the railroad changed ownership and names numerous times, the Seaboard Air Line name has continued in popular use. For clarity's sake, it is used consistently in this document to refer to the surviving station and tracks..

[4]Main Street brochure (Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, n.d.)

accommodate his large family, which included twelve children. Beyond the pedimented one-story entrance porch flanked by Tuscan columns, a long center hall opens to a grand double parlor on one side and a library and stair hall on the other. The interior decoration and sliding wooden parlor doors are Greek Revival features.

During the Civil War, the Riddick House became a Federal command post. It served as the headquarters of Union General John J. Peck from May 1862 until July 1863 as he coordinated the efforts of an enormous Union force (at one point estimated to number 29,000 soldiers) in the Suffolk vicinity.[5] Much of the Federal effort was devoted to fortifying the town against an anticipated Confederate attack, and, in fact, Peck's tenure at the Riddick House included the three-week Siege of Suffolk, which took place from April 11 to May 4, 1863. Some 20,000 Confederate troops under Lt. General James Longstreet attacked the town, hoping to recapture it and its vital rail links. The siege accomplished little militarily before Longstreet withdrew, hoping to reach Chancellorsville in time to aid Robert E. Lee in the battle there. Graffiti on the top floor of the Riddick House, reportedly used as a makeshift hospital, record the autographs and personal messages of Union soldiers, testifying to their wartime presence.

By November 22, 1865, the Riddicks had returned to their home, although they found that many of their furnishings, and even some of the house fitting such as doorknobs, had been removed during their absence.[6] The house remained in the Riddick family for six generations, until it was acquired by Nansemond County in 1967 and utilized for county offices. It is now operated as a historic house museum by a private foundation.

The Nansemond County Courthouse constructed ca. 1839 north of the Riddick House was the third such court facility erected on the site, two earlier ones having been lost to the fires of 1779 and 1837. It is believed that the Greek Revival tetrastyle courthouse was designed by the same architect-builder who designed the Riddick House.

Two related buildings that once stood near the courthouse-- a clerk's office and a jail--are no longer extant. A succession of buildings housing the county clerk's office was erected on a site just north of the

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[5]Hobbs and Paquette, op. cit., p.
[6]Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, op. cit.

courthouse. The first clerk's offices burned, and the last, a brick building put up in 1894 (Carpenter and Peebles, architects or builders)[7], was demolished ca. 1986 after it fell into what appeared to be hopeless disrepair.[8] A small brick jail behind the courthouse was replaced by a large, stuccoed brick facility in 1926.

During the Civil War the courthouse was reportedly used as a barracks for Union soldiers and the jail as a guardhouse.[9] County records that had been stored in the clerk's office were moved for safekeeping to Norfolk, where they remained for the duration of the hostilities. They were returned to Suffolk when the war ended, but on February 7, 1866, were lost forever in yet another fire that destroyed the clerk's office and its contents. Only one land book—for the year 1859—remains of the property tax records for pre-Civil War structures in Suffolk. The commissioner had fortuitously taken the book home to work on it.[10]

In addition to the Riddick House and the courthouse, a number of other buildings were constructed in the extended historic district within the same period. These include the Carr House at 425 North Main (133-72-19), which is said to have been built ca. 1837, and three other houses believed to date from ca. 1840: "Old Magnolias" at 431 North Main (133-2); the Wood House at 400 North Main (133-72-06), replacing the ill-fated building housing Edward Arnold's shop; and 434 North Main (133-72-13).

John R. Kilby, a prominent Suffolkian of the mid-nineteenth century, built a brick law office and residence at 348 North Main Street (133-72-03) sometime before 1859 and possibly not long after the fire. It is shown in what is believed to be the earliest photograph taken in Suffolk (reportedly made in September 1859), that shows it sitting amid what appear to be mature trees. [11] In addition to his law

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[7]Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, op. cit.

[8]"Our View: Tumbling Down," Suffolk News-Herald, Mar. 15, 1986.

[9]The small, brick jail was replaced in 1926 by a stuccoed brick, two-story jail (524 North Main Street; 133-72-17). A large modern addition is at the rear of the jail.

[10]Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, op. cit.

[11]Hobbs and Paquette, op. cit., p. 37. The photograph is owned by the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society.

practice, which continued until 1878, Kilby was the editor of Suffolk's first newspaper, *The Suffolk Intelligencer*. He was a member of the Virginia General Assembly from 1851-1853 and represented his city in the Virginia Convention when it adopted the Ordinance of Secession in 1861.[12]

The 1880s saw the beginning of a surge of new building on North Main Street. Among the houses that were constructed on the street between 1880 and 1915, seventeen are still extant, mostly unpretentious two-story frame homes in simple versions of the Colonial Revival or Queen Anne style. A large number of others have been removed.

As the twentieth century and the automotive age progressed, car traffic on the street increased, demanding the services of automobile-related facilities. A small gasoline filling station (now a carwash; 133-72-26) was added to the building stock ca. 1920.

On Mahan Street east of Main, a row of war memorials at the Main Street entrance to Cedar Hill Cemetery has seen successive additions since 1931. The memorials now include a 1931 sculpture entitled "Doughboy at Rest" by Joseph P. Pollia of New York City; a three-inch recoil gun (1944) and a marker commemorating World War II; and a memorial to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts erected in the 1980s. These have been included in the extended historic district, along with a 1920s bungalow adjacent to the row. The cemetery itself is not within the extended district.

In the late twentieth century, a number of non-contributing buildings, including small, one-story commercial, governmental, and residential structures, were built on North Main Street within the extended district boundaries. Among the most intrusive are the two-story modern addition to the historic courthouse and a massive addition to the 1926 jail. Smaller non-contributing buildings include the stucco sheriff's office (ca. 1980), a convenience store (ca. 1970), a brick ranch-style house (the Baptist parsonage; ca. 1965), a cinder-block commercial building, and a stuccoed office building.

Just beyond the edges of the extended district, however, loom larger and more intrusive buildings and transportation features. Outside the district at the southern end, a large, modern cement-block building next to the historic train station houses a wholesale seafood company, reminiscent of the oyster-

[12]Hobbs and Paquette, ibid.

packing houses that once stood in the vicinity of Constant's Wharf. At the northern end of Main Street, across from the courthouse, is an imposing free-standing drug store constructed in 1996. Beyond the courthouse is the bustling highway bypass on Constance Road, with its attendant clutter of gas stations and fast-food establishments, all reminders of the fragility, as well as the value, of the historic resources that survived within the North Main Street extended district.

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MAPS

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1884, 1889, 1902, 1920

UTM References (continued)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
5.	18	358650	4066600
6.	18	358740	4066620

Verbal Boundary Description:

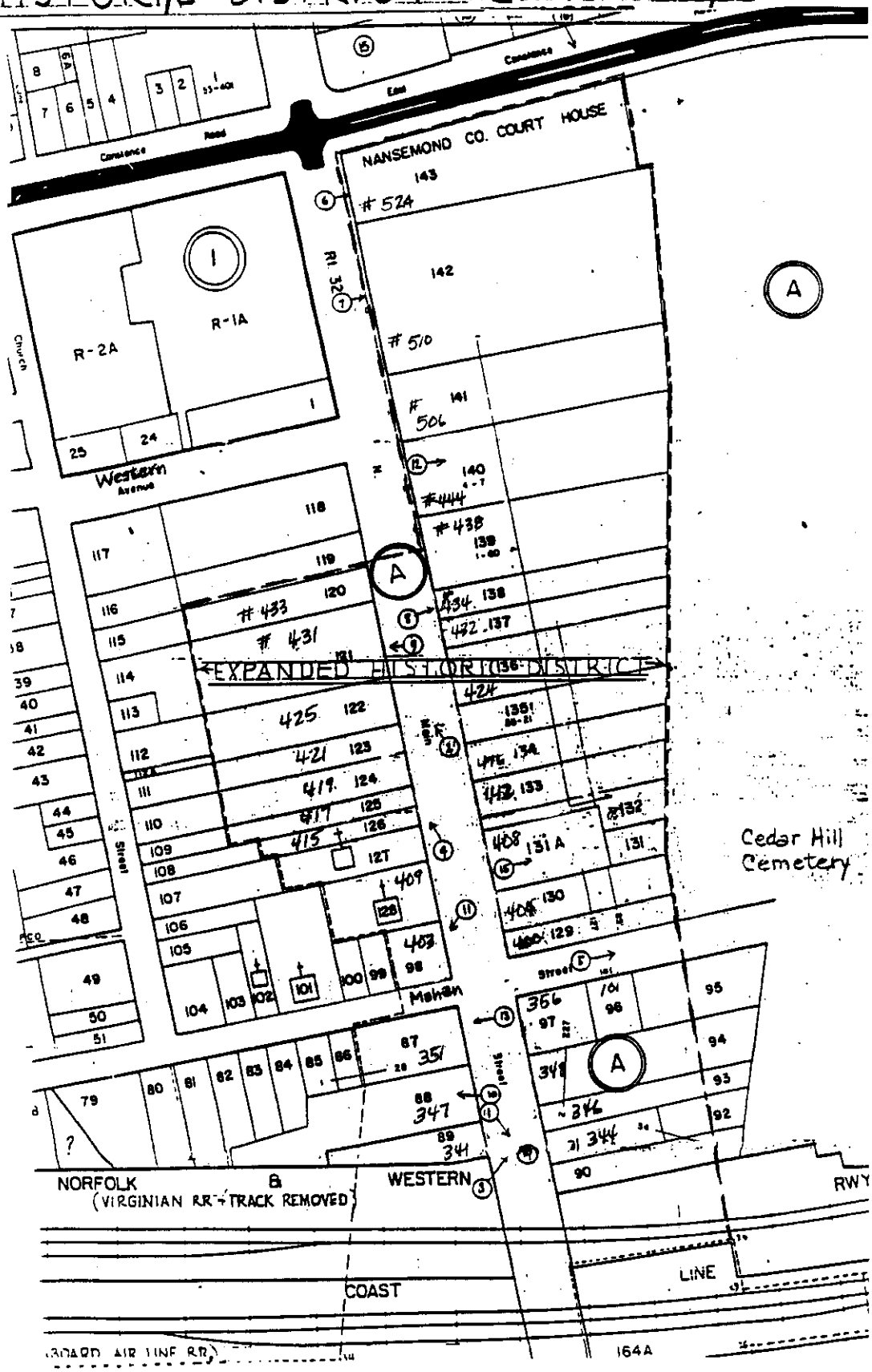
Beginning on the southeast corner of North Main and East Constance Road and extending southward on North Main Street to a point 135' south of Western Avenue (comprising Lots 118 and 119), thence westward to the rear property line of Lot 119; then southward along the west rear property lines of the west side of North Main Street through to the southwest property line of 351 North Main Street (Lot 87), then continuing on a line across Lots 88 and 89 and the former Norfolk & Western Railroad right-of-way and the existing right-of-way of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad to the existing historic district at Map Point #34 (all map points noted are those marked on the previously submitted map of the existing historic district and the map of the district extension accompanying this submission); thence southward to Map Point #33 eastward to the east side of North Main Street at Map Point #32, northward to Map Point #31; thence eastward to Map Point #30; thence generally northward across the right-of-way of the Norfolk and Western Railroad in a line crossing portions of Lots 90 through 95 to the southeast corner of Lot 129 on the North side of Mahan Street (400 N. Main St.); thence northward along the east rear property lines of North Main Street to the south side of Constance Road, then west along East Constance Road to North Main Street.

Justification of Boundary

The existing Suffolk Historic District is comprised of the central area of the city and extends northward to the Seaboard Air Line Railroad right-of-way, including the significant former SALRR passenger station on the north side of the tracks. This amendment is an extension of the district northward, generally along both sides of North Main Street, encompassing an area of significant historic properties in the oldest part of Suffolk. The extended boundaries have been drawn to extend the district north along North Main Street from the SAL station, as the point of connection to the existing district. It extends toward Constant's Wharf on the Nansemond River but stops when the area ceases to retain sufficient architectural and historical integrity. On the east side this is at East Constance Road (originally called First Cross Street); on the west side, 135' south of Western Avenue, south of the modern post office. The areas farther north comprise tracts of large modern buildings and tracts cleared for large-scale commercial development. On the east boundary, the amended district follows the boundary of Cedar Hill Cemetery, a significant property with a different set of historic and design values. On the south the

district follows the line of the existing district with the SAL station as the principal point of connection. It should be noted that the former Virginian Railway tracks north of the Seaboard Air Line in the original historic district have been removed, although the right-of-way is included in this increased boundary. On the west side, the area to the west of the extended district has a different historical and architectural character, as it is comprised of small houses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century built on narrow lots. Although this area as a whole may also have architectural significance, the buildings here are very different from the substantial freestanding properties found within the expanded district on North Main Street. Thus the border lines on the west are generally drawn at the rear property lines of the Main Street properties. South of Mahan Street, both east and west boundaries cross the rear of lots to provide a reasonable connection to points in the existing district. However, no buildings have been deleted from the enlarged district by cutting through these properties. The east boundary from the former railroad station northward has been drawn to exclude the large modern building containing a wholesale seafood business northeast of the railroad station.

SUFFOLK VA HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION



KEY

BOUNDRY OF EXPANDED DISTRICT — — — —

BOUNDRY OF EXISTING DISTRICT - - - - - - -

MAP POINTS OF EXISTING DISTRICT - 34 TO 26

PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION → DIRECTION (7) →

STREET ADDRESSES - 342 TO 524 N. MAIN ST.