

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Blues Armory is a massive red brick structure located on the northeast corner of Sixth and Marshall Streets in the heart of downtown Richmond. It forms an important visual element in the approach to the Richmond Coliseum. The building is in a somewhat severe castellated style; only the south and west sides are treated with architectural embellishment; the north and east sides are plain, as they abut adjacent properties. A distinctive feature of the building is its projection over the sidewalks so that the public right-of-way is through an open arcade on the ground floor. The arcade has five bays on the south or Marshall Street side and seven bays on the west or Sixth Street side. The arches are rusticated and have stone keystones. The center bay on Sixth Street is enriched with rough-hewn stone blocks. Both of the principal sides are decorated with crenelated bartizans: larger ones extending from the top of the arcade frame the center bays and mark each corner and smaller ones extending from the machicolated upper story are placed between the intermediate bays.

The first-floor openings are sheltered by the arcade and have no special architectural treatment, being merely large glass windows to light the ground floor. The second-floor windows are grouped in threes in each bay and are topped by small square windows which light the mezzanines. The top-level windows are very small, being placed between each of the machicolations. Surrounding the top of the building is a crenelated parapet. On the Marshall Street side the gable of the roof rises above the parapet, following the curve of the trusses.

The whole of the armory's ground floor was originally given over to a food market. In recent years, the northwest corner of the ground floor has been converted into a fire station. The upper levels are reached by a single stair approached through the center bay of the Sixth Street side. Another entrance, intended for the movement of munitions, is located on the east side. The second floor is divided into suites for the individual military companies. Each suite (there are approximately six) is reached from a wide center hall and consists of a high-ceilinged meeting lounge, officer's quarters, and a mezzanine containing lockers for uniform storage. Also on the second floor is a large reception hall, a kitchen, and a latrine. The munitions room is located in a separate area off the second floor and is lined with steel plate. The entire top level is a vast wooden-floored drill hall covered by a curved, exposed steel-truss roof. The ceiling was originally pierced by skylights, but they have been closed. On the walls at either end of the hall are crude murals depicting the Richmond Blues on ceremonial occasions. The west side of the hall is lined with a spectators' gallery.

The entire building is constructed of reinforced concrete. The huge, steel floor joists are encased in concrete and are expressed in the reception hall ceiling. The upper floors have not been occupied for over ten years and are in deteriorated condition. All the rooms are very plain, having no architectural embellishment of consequence. The basic structural system is sound.

Plans have been made to convert the ground and second floors into a shopping mall. It is also planned eventually to convert the top floor into a theatre. The architectural integrity of the exterior is to be maintained.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1910

~~SIXXIX~~/ARCHITECT Averill and Hall, Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The castellated-style Blues Armory is a key architectural element in the heart of the Richmond commercial area. The massive red brick structure with its turreted walls and arcaded base serves as a picturesque foil to the many modern structures in the vicinity. With its martial air, it is a characteristic example of the style employed for the large armories erected in cities throughout the nation from the 1870s to the 1920s.

The building was designed by the Washington, D. C. architectural firm of Averill and Hall and was completed in 1910. The engineers were Marshall and Marshall, also of Washington. Typical of armories of the period, it is of especially solid construction, designed to withstand assault by mobs or rioters. Another design feature providing security is the complete separation of the ground floor from the upper floors. The ground floor, being more vulnerable, was designed to be a food market; the upper floors, used by the military unit, are reached by a single inconspicuous and easily guarded entrance. Also, like most armories, the building was given a central location so that the guard could conveniently handle any disturbance in the downtown area.

The armory was built as the headquarters of the Richmond Light Infantry Blues, one of the nation's most historic military units. The Blues were formally organized as a company in 1789. Their uniforms originally were red, but the association of that color with the former enemy, the British, caused the color to be changed to blue, with the unit acquiring its name accordingly. The dress uniform evolved to its final form just after the Civil War. The famous uniform was a familiar sight in parades and official functions for many years and, according to Thomas Nelson Page, was patterned after the uniform of the Swiss Guard of Marie Antoinette.

The Blues were first called to service to deal with the insurrection led by the slave Gabriel in 1800. They served in every major conflict from the War of 1812 to World War II. During the War between the States they were part of the Army of Northern Virginia and were nearly wiped out at the Battle of Roanoke Island in 1861. For many years it was a great social distinction to be in the Blues. Until 1930 one actually had to be elected to membership, and one negative vote was sufficient for exclusion. One of the last official functions of the Blues was to participate in the inaugural parade of President John F. Kennedy.

The Blues were formed into a battalion in 1894. Following World War II, they were incorporated into a National Guard regiment. They remained headquartered at the armory on Sixth Street until the early 1960s when a new armory was erected. By 1968 the Blues were the oldest continuous military organization in the country, but reorganization of the National Guard in that year caused the unit to cease to exist as an identifiable unit. Plans are underway to remodel the armory interior into a shopping area.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cutchins, John A. A Famous Command, The Richmond Light Infantry Blues. Richmond: 1934.
Richmond News Leader, May 22, 1965 article by Marie Louise Pinckney.
Richmond News Leader, June 27, 1975 column of Charles Houston.
Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 16, 1970.
Richmond Times-Dispatch, December 19, 1959.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	8
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2	8	4	8	0	0
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4	1	5	7	7	1	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

December 1975

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

804-786-3143

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Virginia Landmarks Register

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE DEC 16 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale 1:24000)
Richmond, Va. 1964 (PR 1968)

BLUES ARMY, RICHMOND
UTM References:

18/284800/4157710