

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:  
VLR 06/21/2012  
NRHP 08/22/2012

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Southern Biscuit Company  
other names/site number Interbake Foods, Inc.; Famous Foods of Virginia (FFV); DHR #127-6165

### 2. Location

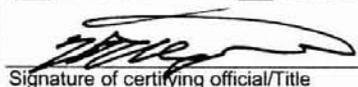
street & number 900 Terminal Place  not for publication  
city or town Richmond  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 760 zip code 23220

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title 7/2/10  
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Southern Biscuit Company  
Name of Property

Richmond, VA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
1	0	objects
3	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

None.

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry / Processing / Extraction (commercial bakery)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant / Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival – Colonial Rev. Commercial Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete

roof: Flat

other: Steel hopper windows

Southern Biscuit Company  
Name of Property

Richmond, VA  
County and State

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The Southern Biscuit Company building is an industrial building whose water tower and distinctive roof-top sign have been Richmond landmarks for 84 years. The six-story reinforced concrete building was constructed in 1927 and expanded four times. The exterior is defined by a rusticated base and Doric pilasters and concrete piers that flank multi-light industrial windows. The interior space is characterized by grids of concrete columns with flared tops and maple floors. Designed and built for the Southern Biscuit Company, the building served that business as well as FFV (Famous Foods of Virginia) and its successor, Interbake Foods, Inc., until the facility closed in 2006. The property includes one contributing building (the baking factory), one contributing object (the lighted rooftop sign) and one contributing structure (the rooftop water tower).

The building and its additions were designed by Francisco & Jacobus Engineers and Architects, a New York-based firm that specialized in designing industrial factories. The firm's work includes a number of contributing tobacco warehouse buildings in Richmond's National Register Historic Districts, and the individually listed Clay, Henry and Bock Company Cigar Factory in Trenton, New York (listed 1979).

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### **Narrative Description**

The Southern Biscuit Works, a Richmond-based bakery company, was founded in 1899. In 1927, the company changed its name from Southern Biscuit Works to the Southern Biscuit Company. At the same time, the company constructed a new headquarters building and central plant on Terminal Place, near the intersection of Broad Street and Boulevard. The Southern Biscuit Company building was designed by the New York-based industrial engineering and architecture firm of Francisco & Jacobus, which designed buildings predominately in the mid-Atlantic, the northeast, and Chicago. In 1939, the Southern Biscuit Company became an officially licensed baker of Girl Scout cookies, a successful move that led to a round of expansions at the Terminal Place building. It was also around this time that Southern Biscuit began producing under the brand FFV. In 1940, a large two-story cracker manufacturing wing was constructed on the south side of the main tower. Related additions include the construction in 1950 of a single-story office wing on the northeast corner of the site and, in 1951, the construction of another two-story cracker manufacturing addition on the north side of the main tower, as well as a two-story, one-bay addition to the East face of the 1940 addition. In 1967 the name of the firm changed again, to Interbake Foods. In 2006 the firm completed the construction of a new facility in Front Royal, Virginia, and moved its entire operation, including machinery, to the new facility. The Terminal Place facility was closed, and is currently vacant.

Southern Biscuit Company  
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**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.
- 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.)

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry, Commerce, Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1927-1952  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1927 – Construction of original six-story building  
1940 – Construction of a two-story addition (south)  
1950 – Construction of a one-story addition (north)  
1951 – Construction of a two-story addition (north)  
and a two-story loading dock addition (southeast)

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Francisco & Jacobus, Architect  
Wise Granite Co., Builder  
Wise Contracting Co., Builder

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins with the construction of the factory in 1927, and ends in 1952 following the completion of the north manufacturing wing when the factory remained in production. This period encompasses the growth of the Southern Biscuit Company from a local business to a producer of nationally-known products.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

None.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Southern Biscuit Company, also known as FFV and Interbake, was founded in Richmond in 1899. The present building was constructed in 1927 to house the company's expanding operation, which remained active in this facility until the company relocated in 2006. The Southern Biscuit Company building is locally significant and individually eligible for listing under Criterion A (in the areas of Industry and Commerce) for its role as a significant and innovative manufacturing anchor in the key historic commercial hub of West Broad Street. This resource is also locally significant and individually eligible under Criterion C (Architecture) with its classically and carefully detailed design by the New York firm of Francisco & Jacobus to create a monumental industrial building worthy of an esteemed Richmond baking company.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Southern Biscuit Company building meets National Register Criterion A because of its role in local commerce. Between 1927 and 2006, the property served as the headquarters of a significant Richmond-based business that produced foods under the Southern Biscuit and FFV (Famous Foods of Virginia) brands, and later under the brand name of Interbake. The company was best known for its shortbread cookies and enrobed cookies (cookies coated with chocolate) and, in the 1930s, became the first company to produce the Girl Scouts of America's now-famous cookies. The company also produced cookies and crackers under contract to other companies. The Southern Biscuit Company grew to become the third largest cookie/cracker manufacturer in North America, and shipped its products nationwide.

As an excellent example of industrial design by Francisco & Jacobus, a successful New York firm with a considerable Richmond-based clientele, the building also meets Criterion C. The eligible property includes one contributing building, one contributing object (the rooftop sign) and one contributing structure (the rooftop water tower.) The period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1927 and ends in 1952, following the completion of the north manufacturing wing.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See continuation sheet

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

"Baking Firm's Ex-President Dies, Aged 87." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 19, 1949, p. 24.

"Biscuit Works to Build Big Plant in West End," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1927, p. 1.

Dabney, Virginius, Richmond: the Story of a City (Rev. ed.) Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990.

Francisco & Jacobus Engineers & Architects, New York. Southern Biscuit Co., Inc., Addition to Manufacturing Building. February 29, 1940. Library of Virginia, Collection of Richmond, Virginia, Permit Drawings, Richmond, VA.

Potterfield, T. Tyler, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company ....," City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010.

Row, Steve. "So the Cookie Won't Crumble," *The Richmond News Leader*, December 18, 1989. P. B1-B16.

Tyler-McGraw, Marie, At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia and its People, Chapel Hill: Published for the Valentine Museum by the University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Preliminary Information Form, Southern Biscuit Company (DHR# 127-6165).

Southern Biscuit Company  
Name of Property

Richmond, VA  
County and State

Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National Register Nomination, West Broad Street Industrial and Commercial Historic District (DHR# 127-6570).

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton, The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary, Richmond, New South Architectural Press, 1997.

Wilson, Richard Guy, ed. Buildings of Virginia: Tidewater and Piedmont, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

**Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources,**

Name of repository: Richmond, Virginia

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR no. 127-6165

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3.295

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

(Follow similar guidelines for entering these coordinates as for entering UTM references described on page 55, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. For properties less than 10 acres, enter the lat/long coordinates for a point corresponding to the center of the property. For properties of 10 or more acres, enter three or more points that correspond to the vertices of a polygon drawn on the map. The polygon should approximately encompass the area to be registered. Add additional points below, if necessary.)

Datum: WGS84

Latitude: 37.563141°

Longitude: -77.467668°

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation Sheet.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Bryan Clark Green

organization Commonwealth Architects date 27 March 2012

street & number 101 Shockoe Slip, Third Floor telephone (804) 648-5040 x1135

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

e-mail [bgreen@comarchs.com](mailto:bgreen@comarchs.com)

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See Continuation Sheet

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**Property Owner:**

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

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name Brian McNeal, Rebkee Interbake Partners LLC  
street & number 15871 City View Drive, Suite 300 telephone (804) 419-0745  
city or town Midlothian state VA zip code 23113

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Southern Biscuit Company

City of Richmond, VA

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Continuation 1

Section 7. Narrative Description (continued)

Site

The Southern Biscuit Company facility is located on a 3.295-acre site fronting on Terminal Place, a short access road that runs from West Broad Street (south of the property) to the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac railway line that forms the property's northern boundary. The building is surrounded by an asphalt-paved parking lot and an industrial chain-link fence.

Exterior

Built in 1927, the original, six-story Southern Biscuit Company baking facility is designed for function, yet features decorative Colonial Revival elements (such as Doric pilasters and ornamental balustrades) that soften its industrial façade. The facility has been altered over time, both by the construction of additions to the original facility and by changes to the fenestration and interior. These alterations are, however, directly related to the growth and expansion of the business. As the Southern Biscuit Company evolved from a local bakery to a producer of nationally-famous baked goods, the facility evolved to meet its changing needs. The 1940, 1950, and 1951 additions are in keeping with the architectural character of the original 1927 design, and were designed by the original architects, which insured that while the complex grew over time, the additions and changes were in keeping with the architectural character of the original building. The additions were 1) a two story concrete wing built to the south to house cracker manufacturing (1940); 2) a single story office addition to the northeast, to house non-manufacturing management staff (1950); 3) a two story concrete wing built to the north to house additional cracker manufacturing (1951); and 4) a two-story concrete addition to the east side of the 1940 cracker manufacturing addition (which also caused the footprint of the south addition to match that of the north addition), designed to be a new and larger loading dock (1951); and 5) a series of three small metal-clad non-contributing, post 1970s additions to the west elevation of the 1940 addition (to house machinery), and a small non-contributing, post-1970 covered entrance walkway on the southeast corner of the 1927 building.

The Southern Biscuit Company building has stuccoed walls and a two-story rusticated base, which is punctuated by two-story arcuated openings; six bays on the east and west elevations, and four bays on the north and south. A one-story projection on the east side originally constructed as a loading dock, matches the rusticated pilasters and its parapet is finished with a cast-stone balustrade. On the east elevation, the arcuated openings were infilled in over time. The ground floor on the east was converted to office space and the exterior wall openings infilled and punctuated with small replacement aluminum-framed windows. The second story portion of the two-story arched openings on the east elevation was also infilled with various mechanical protrusions through the infill. The west elevation, however, retains the arcuated openings as well as the steel-framed arched windows, which are glazed with multi-light steel industrial sash. The arcuated openings on the north and south elevations have been incorporated into the interiors of later two-story additions, both constructed to support the needs of the growing business, and no longer have any sash windows. Above the two-story base rises four stories of construction (six bays on the east and west sides and four bays on the north and south), framed on each end by two Doric pilasters supporting a deep cornice (one pilaster on each end of the south elevation), now clad in painted aluminum. Each bay on the east and west elevations of the top four stories was originally filled with three units of 4x5-light steel-framed industrial sash. The central two bays on the north and south elevations (floors three through six; the elevation of floors one and two was removed during the construction of the 1940 and 1951 additions) were filled with three units 5x5-light steel-framed industrial sash to match the windows on the east and west elevations. On the south elevation the outer bays were not originally glazed as behind them were utilitarian staircases. The north elevation is similar to the south with the exception of the westernmost two bays on the fifth and sixth floors. These were not originally glazed, as

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behind them were the two story-ovens, which occupied both the fifth and sixth floors in that location. The remaining outer bays of the north elevation were filled with two units of 4x5-light steel-framed industrial sash flanking a central 3x5-light unit. The north elevation is unique in that just below the cornice is a row of windows in each of the four bays. The outer bays are three units of 2x3-light steel-framed industrial sash, and two 2x5-light units flanking a central 2x3-light unit in the inner two bays. Each set of sash are centered within their respective bay. Over time, the many sash throughout have been altered. On the north elevation all four bays on the third floor have been infilled to various degrees. Other portions have been modified for mechanical purposes. Additional ornamentation on the original 1927 building is found at the third floor of the east and west elevations, where an ornamental cast-iron railing was constructed at the third floor windows.

Over time, a series of additions were made to the building in response to the expansion of the baking business and the need for additional office space and staff amenities. These additional were commissioned from the original architects in order to maintain architectural continuity with the original design. The first and largest addition, built in 1940, is a fourteen-bay, two-story cracker manufacturing wing with east-facing loading bays added to the south side of the central building. This wing is plainer in appearance than the original building and is only three bays wide compared to the main building's four bays.

A single-story office wing, constructed in 1950, is located perpendicular to the central building near the northeast corner of the site. Its central paired glass entry doors and flanking windows are sheltered by aluminum awnings. Original steel sash windows remain on the front (south) and west elevations of the office addition, but those on other elevations have been removed and replaced with fiberglass panels or modern insulated window units. Due to its shape, this addition is colloquially referred to as the "triangle" building.

In 1951, two more additions were made to the building. The first is an eight-bay, two-story cracker manufactory on the north side of the original building, similar in design to the 1940 manufacturing wing. At the same time, a two-story loading area was added along the entire east side of the 1940 addition. The pilasters of the original façade remain visible in the interior of the building and now act as columns. The new east elevation of the south addition is similar to the north addition, with a vaguely Art Deco character and projecting cornice and pilasters defining its bays. The windows on the east and south façade of this south wing have since been removed and replaced with fiberglass panels. The windows of the north elevation of the north addition have also been replaced with fiberglass panels, and several other windows and door openings have been filled with masonry.

No major additions were made to the building after the two 1951 additions. Three minor additions, all semi-detached steel-framed utility storage structures, were added adjacent to the west façade of the building in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Secondary Resource Description**

Perhaps the building's most visible and distinctive features are its lighted rooftop sign and its water tower. The rooftop sign is a contributing object and the rooftop water tower is a contributing structure.

More than one-and-a-half stories tall and four bays wide, the sign is mounted on a steel-angle frame. It is comprised of three rows of letters spelling "HOME OF", "FFV", and "COOKIES AND CRACKERS". The top and bottom rows, placed on white banners, are red open box letters with incandescent bulbs inside. Centered between the banners, in the company's distinctive script, are the red open box letters "FFV" studded with a field of incandescent lights with a black outside frame. The FFV sign is one of a diminishing number of large-scale steel-frame signs in Richmond; other examples are at the

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nearby C.F. Sauer Company, also bulb-lit, the Hotel John Marshall at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Franklin Streets, which was recently converted to LED (light-emitting diode) from the original neon, and the bulb-lit Berry-Burk sign at 5<sup>th</sup> and Grace Streets.

The water tower is centered directly behind the FFV sign. It is made of white painted metal, has a conical roof and rounded bottom, and sits in a white painted metal tower structure. Just above the rounded bottom at the top of the tower structure is a black metal catwalk circling the tower. A ladder runs from the rooftop to a vent at the top of the conical water tower roof and access hatch.

**Interior:**

The interior of the original portion of the Southern Biscuit Company building consists of six floors of open manufacturing space supported by a grid of concrete columns with flared tops. The original 1927 building, as well as the 1940 cracker manufacturing wing (south), the 1951 cracker manufacturing wing (north), and the 1951 loading dock addition to the 1940 addition were all built with concrete floors/ceilings, columns, and walls. The architectural character of these spaces is consistent on the interior, with character defining concrete columns throughout the spaces. The floor surfaces are either exposed concrete, maple, or iron plates in various parts of the building, and the surfaces were likely related to the specific manufacturing processes in each location, with the exposed concrete generally located in areas where heavy machinery appears to have been located, and the iron plates applied over concrete in areas where machinery required additional support and/or the concrete floors were damaged over time. In the original 1927 building, the basement and first floors are exposed concrete; the second floor is a mixture of concrete, steel plates, and maple flooring; the third floor is concrete; the fourth floor is a combination of maple flooring and steel plates; the fifth floor is primarily concrete; and the sixth floor has a concrete center aisle flanked by maple flooring. In the 1940 south addition, the basement and first floors are concrete, while the second floor is a combination of concrete, steel plates, and in a few locations, brick pavers (the only use of these in the building). The 1950 office addition had sheet tile (and various other adhesive flooring materials) applied to a concrete slab. In the 1951 north addition, the basement and first floor are concrete, while the second floor is a combination of concrete and maple flooring, and the 1951 loading area addition features concrete on both floors. The use of flooring materials appears to have been purely functional, and related to the changing placement of equipment throughout the life of the building.

Two enormous, two-story, rotating rack ovens are located at the northwest corner of the tower's fifth and sixth floors. Crank wheels outside the ovens' brick walls rotated huge circular racks that carried enormous flat trays of cookies and crackers, all kept in motion to facilitate even baking. The ovens were gas-fueled from the fifth floor, while cookies and crackers were loaded and retrieved from two long slots in the sixth floor. Giant hoods are positioned over each of the loading slots. A steel stair provides easy access between the ovens' two stories, and a freight elevator, located on the west wall, runs from the ground floor to the top of the building. A 1927 article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* notes that the company transported all raw baking ingredients to the top floor where the ovens were located. From there, gravity conveyors were used to convey materials downward through the factory until finished cookies reached the basement level, which contained cooling chambers, probably added at the time that the company began to specialize in the production of chocolate wafers for ice cream sandwiches.<sup>1</sup>

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Plans filed in 1940, as part of permit application for renovations to the six-story main building and the addition of the south manufacturing wing, provide a wealth of information about the interior floor plan and specific use of each floor of the factory. According to these plans, the second floor housed offices for the president, vice president, and the company's sales manager. A general office area was located along the north side wall.<sup>2</sup> Other partitioned spaces on the second floor include a sample room, vault, women's locker room, and men's and women's toilets. The third floor included a large central storage area, a men's locker room on the south wall, a cafeteria along the east wall, a kitchen at the northeast corner, and an icing room on the north wall.<sup>3</sup>

Once the new one-story addition was constructed in 1950, a majority of the company's offices were moved out of the main factory and into the new addition. The architectural character of the two 1951 additions was nearly identical to that of the 1940 addition: large, open manufacturing spaces were created, utilizing concrete floors and ceilings, supported by concrete columns and concrete walls, lit on the perimeter by large industrial sash windows. The majority of these character-defining architectural features remain intact. When the factory was vacated in 2006, the building was emptied of most of its contents (which were moved to the company's new facility in Front Royal, VA), although the two massive baking ovens remain. The interior of the factory at present consists of largely open factory floor area with some heavily altered office space in the 1950 triangular addition and in the former loading bay area.

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**Section 8. Developmental history/additional historic context information (continued)**

**Summary**

The Southern Biscuit Company was founded as Southern Biscuit Works in Richmond in 1899. Following World War I, the company, led by president Basil Manley Gwathmey, "decided that the concern, to keep up with industrial progress, should be reorganized and modernized." North Carolinian Wade H. Adams was chosen to serve as vice president and general manager of the company during the design and construction of the Terminal Place factory and headquarters at what was, at that time, the western edge of the city of Richmond. The resulting factory, constructed in 1927, was a modern production facility fitted with new, state-of-the-art ovens and baking equipment.

**Industrial Development in the Vicinity**

In 1804, Deep Run Turnpike (now called Broad Street) was constructed across Western Henrico County to connect Richmond with the Deep Run coal fields in Goochland County.<sup>4</sup> Deep Run Turnpike extended to the northwest from Foushee Street, at that time the western terminus of the corporate boundary of Richmond. In time, Deep Run Turnpike became the primary route into Richmond from the northwest. In 1817 a group of investors, recognizing the transportation advantages presented by the Deep Run Turnpike, platted the Town of Sydney. This development consisted of half-acre building lots extending from the south side of the Deep Run Turnpike south, encompassing most of the present-day Fan neighborhood.<sup>5</sup>

The second major transportation corridor to extend through the area was created in 1836, when the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac (R. F. & P.) rail line began construction. Beginning at the intersection of Eighth Street and Deep Run Turnpike, the rail line extended northwest along the centerline of the Turnpike. Near the intersection with modern-day Hancock Street, the line angled to the north away from the Turnpike, running north-by-northwest. The first major development in the area was the 1859 construction of the Virginia State Agricultural and Mechanical Society Fairgrounds, located on a large tract of land west of Hermitage Road between the R. F. & P. right-of-way and the Deep Run Turnpike. Known as the "New" Fairgrounds, this was the second location of the state fair, which was originally held in the area now known as Monroe Park.<sup>6</sup>

Utilizing the transportation network in the area, industrial concerns such as the Southern Stove Works, large-scale food-production facilities such as the Todd Ham Company, and the Putney Shoe Factory located their facilities close to Deep Run Turnpike. Just to the north, large-scale industrial production of the American Locomotive Company and, to the west, various small-to-medium scale industrial facilities in Scott's Addition made use of the newly-available western land and the same rail and road transportation networks to develop the industrial capacity of that area.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the transportation, manufacturing, and distribution sectors of the Richmond economy recovered and expanded. This was the continuation of a process that began in the first half of the 19th century, during which a network of port facilities, turnpikes, canals, and railroads allowed raw materials to be freighted into Richmond and finished goods to be distributed outward to Virginia and points beyond.<sup>7</sup> While industrial and transportation improvements were underway in central Richmond, a corresponding series of improvements were being made in the area that includes the Southern Biscuit Company and the area was soon annexed by the City of Richmond. In 1888, Frank Sprague engineered the first successful electric street car system in Richmond, and over the next fifteen years, Richmond developed a comprehensive network of streetcar lines. The newly-renamed Broad Street (formerly Deep Run Turnpike) served as the main east-west line of the streetcar system, with spurs at Laurel, Harrison, Robinson, and Belmont Streets

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funneling traffic directly onto the Broad Street line. The development of the Virginia Railway and Power Company resulted in a reliable source of electricity for powering the streetcar system as well as the buildings and machinery located in the West Broad Street corridor.<sup>8</sup> This made it possible for workers from across the Richmond area to reach a steadily increasing number of new industrial and commercial businesses building facilities in the area that would eventually be occupied by the Southern Biscuit Company.<sup>9</sup>

In 1892, a major Richmond annexation incorporated 292 acres bounded on the south by Grove Avenue, on the west by the Boulevard, on the north by West Broad Street, and on the east by the former city limits at Lombardy Street. This large annexation and subsequent city improvements opened vast tracts of land to commercial and suburban development. By 1900, Richmond entered a period of economic growth, spurred by the expansion of railroad connections to area tobacco processing, iron fabrication, and other manufacturing industries, that placed this area at the forefront for industrial and commercial development.<sup>10</sup> By far the most important catalyst for development within this area occurred in 1902 when the Virginia fairgrounds moved north on Hermitage Road and the property became available. This created a large tract of land available for industrial and warehouse development west of the intersection of Hermitage Road and Broad Street, including the future site of the Southern Biscuit Company.<sup>11</sup>

**Southern Biscuit and other Richmond-based bakers**

According to the 1931, 1940, and 1950 Richmond City Directories, the Southern Biscuit Company was one of a few wholesale bakers in the city. Of all the Richmond-based bakery companies, only two survived to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Bromm Baking Company, which was founded in 1866, closed in 1956. Nolde Bakery, which was started by J. H. Nolde in 1892, closed in 1977. Atlas Bakery, known for the Mother Herbert's brand, was founded in 1919 and is now closed. The General Baking Company, which employed door-to-door bread salesmen from its location in Scott's Addition, closed their doors in 1966. Of the two that survived, the Southern Biscuit Company was the only historic Richmond bakery to garner and maintain both a successful local and national presence. The other, Sally Bell's Kitchen, which opened in 1929, remains a local favorite for breads, deserts and boxed lunches, but operates on a much smaller scale and never developed a following outside of the Richmond region.

The Southern Biscuit Company occupied Richmond's Terminal Place facility during the company's greatest period of expansion and success. The property's period of significance extends from the construction of the original portion of the building in 1927 until 1952, after the construction of the last additions from its expansion during its rise to national prominence. The Richmond bakery was a symbol of the Southern Biscuit Company's corporate achievement as well as its loyalty to its Richmond roots.

**Narrative History**

The bakery that would become the Southern Biscuit Company was founded in 1899 in Richmond as the Southern Biscuit Works.<sup>12</sup> In 1925, Basil Manley Gwathmey, the company's president, appointed Wade H. Adams to be vice president and general manager of the Southern Biscuit Works. This move led to a transformation of the company. Two years later, in 1927, the company changed its name from Southern Biscuit Works to the Southern Biscuit Company. At the same time, the company constructed a new headquarters building and central plant and moved its operation to Terminal Place. A 1927 article in the Richmond Times-Dispatch noted that "more than 100 varieties of soda crackers, saltines, oyster crackers, cookies, plain and fancy cakes" were produced and marketed by Southern Biscuit.<sup>13</sup>

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The Southern Biscuit Company building and its wings were designed by the New York-based industrial engineering and architecture firm of Francisco & Jacobus, which designed buildings predominately in the mid-Atlantic, the northeast, and Chicago. Among their other Richmond, Virginia projects, Francisco & Jacobus designed the following buildings: the British American Tobacco Company complex on Lombardy (1914, now operating as a U-Haul storage facility), alterations to the American Tobacco Company's buildings at 24<sup>th</sup> and East Cary Street (1920), a factory for P. Lorillard Co. at 22<sup>nd</sup> and Cary Streets (1929), a factory for Continental Tobacco at 1912-18 East Cary Street (1927), and a factory for Philip Morris at 700 Stockton Street, all of which are located in existing historic districts. Of all the local examples of the firm's works, the Southern Biscuit Company is the only industrial building whose purpose was the production of food. The firm's design accommodated the needs of an industrial bakery (large, open manufacturing and storage spaces, abundant natural light) without ignoring the potential for visual appeal. With its two-story rusticated base, Doric pilasters, ornamental balustrades, and extensive manufacturing wings, the Southern Biscuit building is the most architecturally ambitious of Francisco & Jacobus' several Richmond works.

An article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* prior to the building's construction notes that it will be designed to "conform to the classic style of architecture, and to a certain extent will have the façade of Battle Abbey as an example."<sup>14</sup> Although the Southern Biscuit Company lacks a portico, one can see that the factory's character-defining Doric pilasters and its second floor balustrade are direct references to Battle Abbey (which was built in 1913 as a "temple to the Confederacy").<sup>15</sup> In 1927, a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article noted that the Southern Biscuit Company was "anxious to have a building which will serve as a monument to the industry of the company, which had its birth in Richmond, and which is owned and occupied by local people, as well as an artistic building for the community."<sup>16</sup> This intent is evidenced by Francisco & Jacobus' use of classical elements in the building's façade, as well as the installation of the bulb-lit sign that continues to draw the attention of motorists on Broad Street and the Boulevard to the present day.

The use of ornamentation also causes the Southern Biscuit Works facility to stand out in the larger universe of Richmond-area industrial buildings, which are generally rather plain and utilitarian in both form and façade. In this respect, the Southern Biscuit Company building has much architectural in common with two nearby buildings on West Broad Street, 2220 West Broad Street, the Putney Shoe Factory (1910), and 2000 West Broad Street, the C.F. Sauer Headquarters (1911). All three buildings were designed to house industrial-scale production, yet each was carefully designed, and each presented a carefully-considered architectural presence to the city around them; their functions may have been utilitarian, but their architecture was not. Another shared trait was the distinctive illuminated signage: The C.F. Sauer Headquarters' most notable feature is the distinctive, bulb-lit sign atop the building, which features the legend "Sauer's Vanilla" and a full-color image of a chef. The Southern Biscuit Company shares with the Putney Shoe Company and the C.F. Sauer Headquarters a conscious use of architecture to create a public image of a company along Richmond's busy, commercial Broad Street.

In 1939, the Southern Biscuit Company became an officially licensed baker of Girl Scout cookies, a successful move that led to a round of expansions at the Terminal Place building. At the same time, vice-president and general manager David Ormiston Clark adopted the moniker FFV, for Famous Foods of Virginia, a shrewd move that cleverly played on the more common understanding of those initials, "First Families of Virginia." The building underwent a series of expansions to accommodate its expanding business. In 1940, a large two-story cracker manufacturing wing was constructed on the south side of the tower. Related additions include the construction in 1950 of a single-story office building on the northeast corner of the site, and, the following year, in 1951, the construction of another two-story cracker manufacturing addition on the north side of the main tower, as well as a one bay addition along the entire length of the east face of the 1940 addition.

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It is the end of this last campaign of expansion that marks the end of the period of significance. During this period of expansion, the company ceased to be locally owned and operated: in 1946, the Southern Biscuit Company was sold to Canadian conglomerate George Weston Limited.

The last major additions to the Southern Biscuit Company were made in 1951 (the two-story north cracker manufacturing wing, and the two-story loading dock addition to the south cracker manufacturing wing) mark the last major architectural changes made to the building. These additions fill out the present-day physical footprint of the footprint of the building; no substantial architectural additions or alterations were made to the building after these additions; the remaining physical additions were a series of small post-1970s additions to house equipment, and various internal adaptations as manufacturing processes and equipment changed over time. The architectural character and expression of the building changed little after the construction of the 1951 alterations were undertaken. Therefore, allowing for time to complete the additions undertaken in 1951, 1952 was selected as the end of the period of significance.

While the building was little changed after 1952, the manufacturing processes continued to adapt to changes in the marketplace. In the late 1950s, Southern Biscuit began manufacturing ice cream wafers and began selling ingredients and products to branded consumer companies. The ice cream wafer was a signature product of the company which pioneered its production. In 1967, George Weston Limited merged the Southern Biscuit Company with a number of other American bakeries and rebranded the new corporation Interbake Foods, Inc. By the 1980s, Interbake Foods became the United States' largest producer of chocolate wafers for ice cream sandwiches; the Terminal Place bakery was said to produce as many as 640,000 cookies an hour. In 2006, Interbake Foods, Inc. completed the construction of a new facility in Front Royal, VA. Production was moved to the new facility and the Terminal Place bakery was closed. With the exception of the two ovens, no equipment related to the manufacturing process remains in the building.

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**Section 10 (continued)**

**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description (Continued)**

The historic boundaries coincide with the current lot lines, defined by the City of Richmond as tax map reference number N0001481001. Located near the intersection of West Broad Street and Boulevard, both heavily-traveled thoroughfares, the Southern Biscuit Company is one of the largest and most visually imposing buildings at this significant crossroad. Across Terminal Place, which forms the eastern boundary of the property, are the Children's Museum of Richmond and the ca. 1917 Broad Street Station (now the Science Museum of Virginia). The former Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac railway line runs parallel and adjacent to the north property boundary. The western property boundary is formed by Myers Street, across which are located a collection of fast food restaurants and commercial businesses fronting on both Myers Street and nearby Boulevard. A paved alley runs along the south property line, across which are located several commercial buildings fronting on West Broad Street.

**Boundary Justification (Continued)**

The boundaries of the Southern Biscuit Company building are those historically associated with the building and encompass the setting within which the manufacturing processes were undertaken.

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Section number Photographs Continuation 9

**Photographs (Continued):**

**Name of Property: Southern Biscuit Company  
City: Richmond  
State: Virginia  
Photographer: Bryan Clark Green  
Date Photographed: 23 February 2012**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

Photo 1: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, East elevation, general view.

Photo 2: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, East elevation, detail.

Photo 3: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Southeast elevation.

Photo 4: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, South elevation, detail.

Photo 5: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Northeast elevation.

Photo 6: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, West elevation.

Photo 7: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, North elevation, detail.

Photo 8: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Sign.

Photo 9: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Triangle Building (1950 addition), interior, first floor.

Photo 10: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, South addition (1940 addition), interior, second floor.

Photo 11: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, North addition (1951 addition), interior, second floor.

Photo 12: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Tower, interior, fifth floor (general view).

Photo 13: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Tower, interior, fifth floor (view along perimeter wall).

Photo 14: 127-6165, Southern Biscuit Company, Tower, interior, sixth floor.

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Section number Endnotes Continuation10

Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Biscuit Works to Build Big Plant in West End," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco & Jacobus Engineers & Architects, New York. Southern Biscuit Co., Inc., Addition to Manufacturing Building. February 29, 1940. Library of Virginia, Collection of Richmond, Virginia, Permit Drawings, Richmond, VA.

<sup>3</sup> Francisco & Jacobus Engineers & Architects, New York. Southern Biscuit Co., Inc., Addition to Manufacturing Building. February 29, 1940. Library of Virginia, Collection of Richmond, Virginia, Permit Drawings, Richmond, VA.

<sup>4</sup> T. Tyler Potterfield, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company .....", City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National Register Nomination, West Broad Street Industrial and Commercial Historic District (DHR# 127-6570).

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National Register Nomination, West Broad Street Industrial and Commercial Historic District (DHR# 127-6570).

<sup>7</sup> T. Tyler Potterfield, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company .....", City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> T. Tyler Potterfield, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company .....", City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010, and Richmond City Planning Commission, A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City (Richmond: City Planning Commission, 1946): 166-72.

<sup>9</sup> T. Tyler Potterfield, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company .....", City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> National Register Nomination, West Broad Street Commercial Historic District (VDHR File #127-5807), Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

<sup>11</sup> T. Tyler Potterfield, "Analysis ... of the Eligibility of the Stephen Putney Shoe Company .....", City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development, 17 March 2010.

<sup>12</sup> "Baking Firm's Ex-President Dies, Aged 87." *Richmond Times-Dispatch* October 19, 1949, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> "Biscuit Works to Build Big Plant in West End," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Biscuit Works to Build Big Plant in West End," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources Reconnaissance Level Survey of Battle Abbey (DHR #127-0398-0061).

<sup>16</sup> "Biscuit Works to Build Big Plant in West End," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1927, p. 1.

Building (c)  
 Rooftop sign (c)  
 Rooftop water tower (c)

Southern Biscuit Co.  
 Richmond, VA  
 DHR # 127-6165  
 Sketch Map

