



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 123-0094-0115

1. General Property Information

Property name: Ragland Mansion

Property address: 205 South Sycamore Street

City or Town: Petersburg

Zip code: 23803

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Petersburg

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: .33

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

The property sits within the city limits of Petersburg within the Poplar Lawn Historic District. The corner parcel abuts S. Sycamore and Marshall streets, with S. Sycamore along the front elevation. The parcel sits in a mixed residential and commercial area, with residential dwellings, a church, rental apartment buildings, and businesses surrounding it. The entire parcel is outlined by original iron fencing. The house takes up most of the parcel, but there is a small front yard along S. Sycamore Street and a narrow side yard along Marshall Street. There are no trees on the property other than one in between the main house and what was the quarters building, which has been subdivided from the main house parcel.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Italianate

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Major Harrison Waite (remodel - c. 1888-1889)

If the builder is known, please list here: _____

Date of construction (can be approximate): c. 1853-1856

Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):

Briefly describe the property's general characteristics, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions or other major alterations.

This 3-story pressed brick Italianate style dwelling built in ca.1853-56 (remodeled 1888-1889 by Major Harrison Waite) is in good condition. It is a central hall plan with a prominent central cupola and one story, three-bay front porch. Windows are decorative eight over eight and six over six, as well as tripartite windows on the facade. The windows are in good condition. The front entrance is a wood double door with full pane windows in each section. The full-width front porch has a wood deck, wood steps, decorative paired brackets on porch and eaves, as well as Corinthian columns. The low-pitched roof is flat and not visible from the ground, but is metal, per city records. The home has built-in gutters. There are three brick chimneys visible. The foundation is brick. The elaborately carved double entry doors are flanked by pilasters.

The upper floors contain central windows that are taller and wider than those on the sides, and feature Venetian-inspired tracery. Cast iron hood moldings top the windows. The cornice features oversized paired scroll brackets that are repeated on the porch and additions. The cupola has a triple window bank with a larger central section.

The house offers a grand ballroom, formal dining room, two twin parlors with pocket doors, and a solarium on the ground floor. The building features twelve arched Italian marble mantles. The four-story center hall staircase contains over 200 hand carved fleur-de-lis mahogany balusters leading to the belvedere or cupola which offers a panoramic view of historic Petersburg. With its exquisite plasterwork, inlaid floors, original marble mantels and tile surrounds, doors and door surrounds, it remains highly intact and one of the few large dwellings that hasn't been subdivided into multi-family housing; it currently operates as a bed-and-breakfast.

There are multiple additions on the rear side of the building that appear to date to multiple phases of renovation. Additionally, there is a one story passage wing connecting the main house to a secondary building, what would have likely been the quarters ell.

It is an excellent example of a high-style Italianate villa, resembling Villa Lante c. 1586 north of Rome, as well as many forms and ornamentation found in period pattern books. It is one of the few intact brick Italianate houses that remains in good condition in Petersburg, as well as one of the largest dwellings remaining in the city. The Ragland family commissioned multiple houses along S. Sycamore Street in the 19th century, each imposing and prominent among more average size Italianate dwellings in the Poplar Lawn Historic District.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- Gravel parking area and brick paver patio at the back of the house

4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Poplar Lawn Historic District began as a fashionable 19th-century Petersburg neighborhood developed around a two-block public park originally known as Poplar Lawn, and now called Central Park. The park was set aside as a public open space in the first decade of the 19th century. In 1846 it was acquired by the city and transformed into a romantically landscaped common in the style of Andrew Jackson Downing. The park has been the scene of many public gatherings and military exercises. Through the 19th century, many houses were erected in the adjacent eleven blocks, most of them set in tree-dotted yards. Though the park itself has lost much of its early ornamental character, it has seen some restoration. The neighborhood has retained its genteel air, and many of its houses have been rehabilitated. Architectural highlights are the Federal-period Zimmer House and the Georgian Revival-style Trinity United Methodist Church.

The main building closely resembles Vignola's first design for Villa Lante (1586) north of Rome. The mansion was erected in 1856 by Reuben F. Ragland, a wealthy entrepreneur and descendant of high Welsh nobility linked to the Tudor monarchy.

It survived the siege of Petersburg during the Civil War. Later the mansion became the residence of Alexander Hamilton, a railway magnate. During World War I, the building served as the first officer's club for the nearby Fort Lee Military Base and was the residence of General Pershing who is said to have slept in the Sycamore Room. It was home to the family of Hollywood actor and Petersburg native Joseph Cotten, Orson Well's alter ego in *Citizen Kane* and *Third Man*.

Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

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5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: X Public\Local _____ Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Claudia Bezeka

organization: _____

street & number: _____

city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____

e-mail: claudiavb64@gmail.com telephone: _____

Legal Owner's Signature: See email

Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: _____

organization: _____

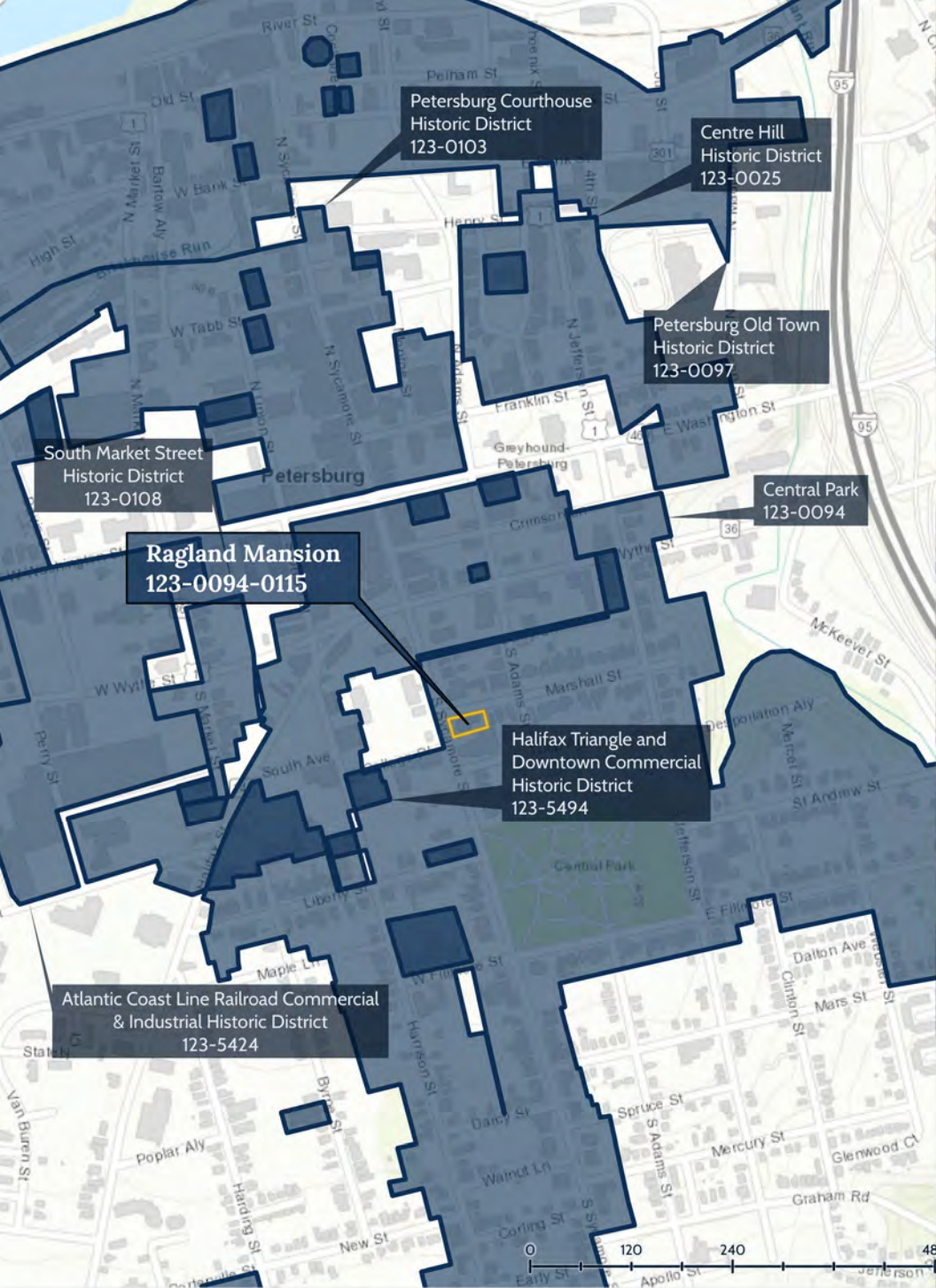
street & number: _____

city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____

e-mail: _____ telephone: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH CONTINUATION SHEETS TO THIS FORM. THANK YOU!



Ragland Mansion
City of Petersburg, Petersburg Quad
DHR ID: 123-0094-0115

Listed Resources
 123-0094-0115

Created By: D. Bascone 4/5/2023
 Sources: VDHR 2023, ESRI 2023, VDOT 2023, VGIN 2023
 Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years and the representation depicted is based on the field observation date and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general illustration purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. The map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". Contact DHR for the most recent information as data is updated continually.





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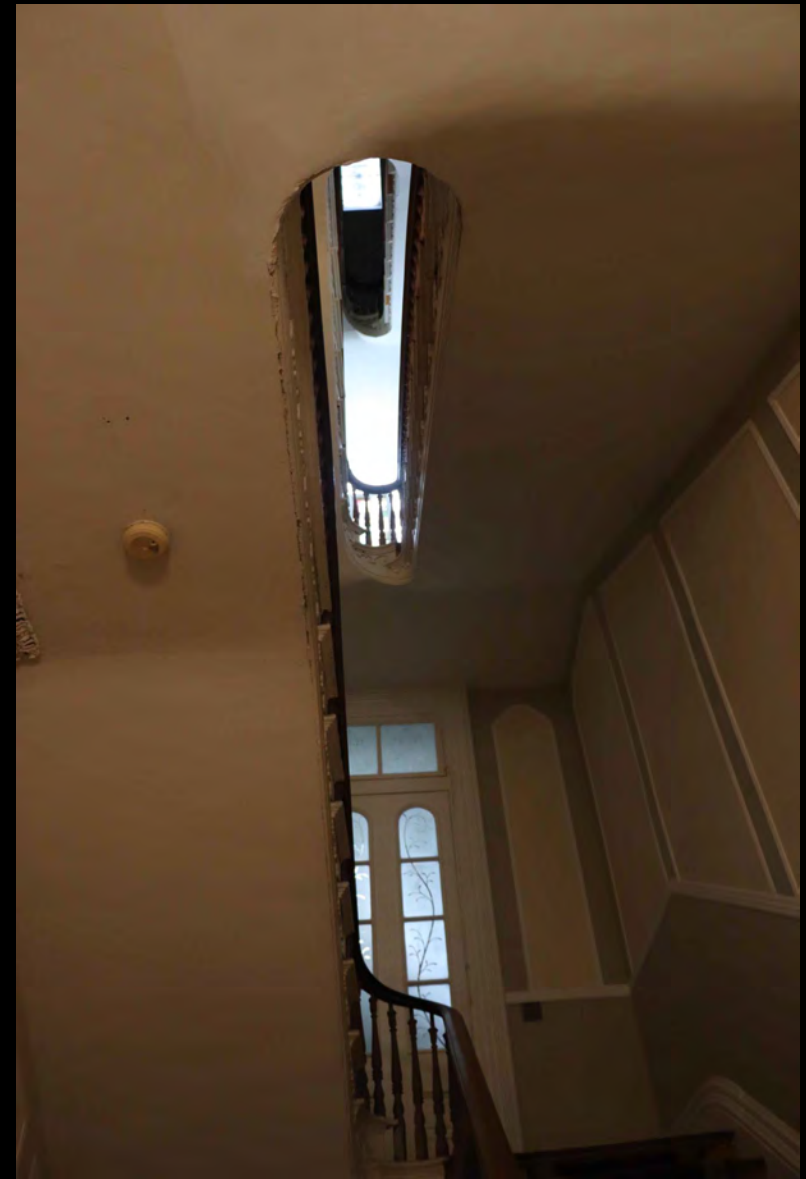
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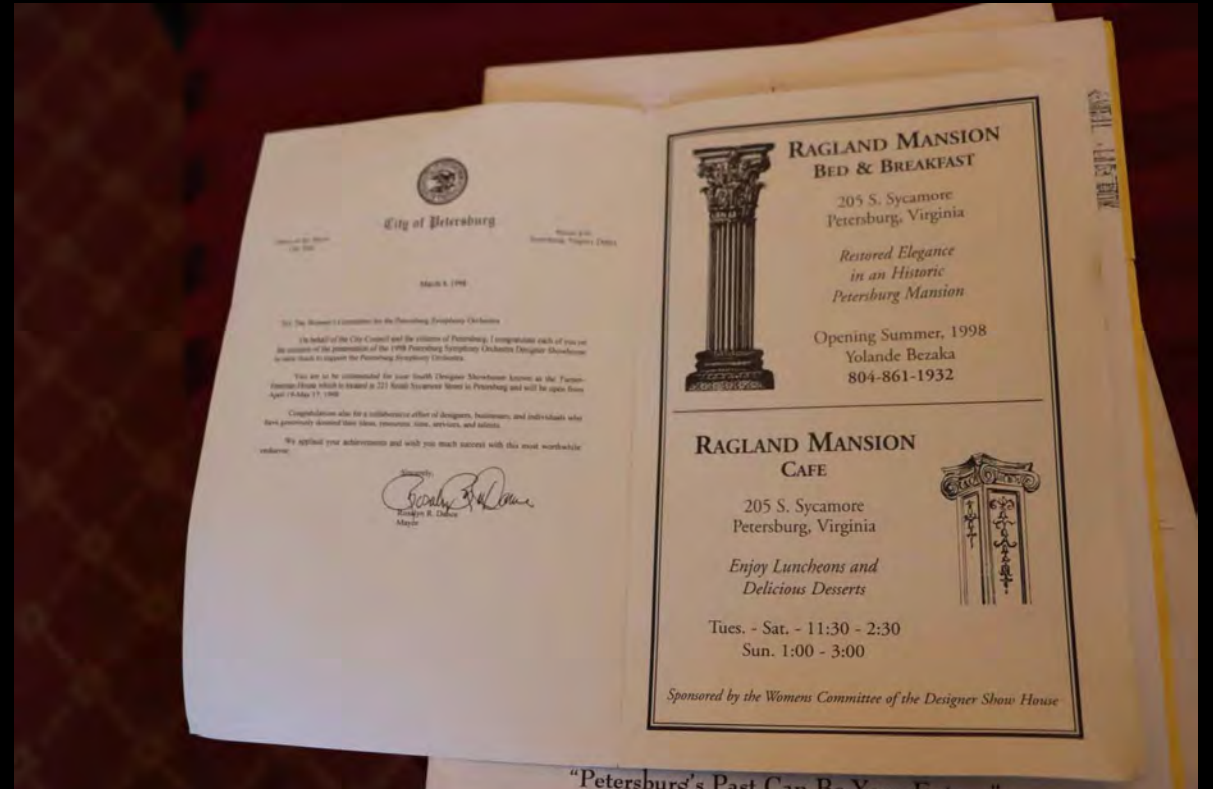
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