

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Danville Historic District
2019 Update
Name of Property
City of Danville, VA
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  additional documentation  move  removal  
 name change (additional documentation)  other  
**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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title:  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Date of Action

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  
 additional documentation accepted  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**Summary**

The Downtown Danville Historic District was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The district’s period of significance extends from 1875 to 1943, and areas of significance are Architecture, Commerce, Government, Ethnic Heritage: Black, Social History, and Industry. This district is listed at the statewide level of significance. Herein, this 2019 Nomination Update amends the contributing status of one of the commercial resources in the Downtown Danville Historic District that was listed as noncontributing due to what was believed at the time to be non-historic alterations to the building’s façade. Originally, the building in question featured a Neoclassical brick façade with a parapet balustrade and cornice, as noted in the NRHP nomination and illustrated by a 1903 rendering. The upper two stories of the existing façade, which was believed to be a post-World War II modification and therefore postdating the period of significance, features scored concrete, while a non-historic storefront is on the first story. However, upon further investigation, historic evidence was found that places the existing scored concrete façade within the period of significance. A 1939 newspaper article lists the light fixtures, windows, and doors along with other items for sale from the old Register and Bee Building (115 S. Union Street) and announces a new Dan Theatre will begin operating out of the building in 1940. Additionally, a 1941 photograph of the building’s exterior depicts the scored concrete façade. In Section 7, the inventory entry for this building has been changed from noncontributing to contributing, as the building is associated with the district’s areas of significance in Commerce and Ethnic Heritage: Black and dates to the period of significance. The resource counts in Section 5 have also been updated to reflect the contributing status of the building. The historic district boundaries and areas of significance *have not changed* as a result of this update.

**Section 5. Classification**

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>49</u>	<u>25</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>49</u>	<u>25</u>	Total

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Section 7. Description

**Inventory**

The following is the corrected inventory entry for the resource affected by this additional documentation.

**115-117 S. Union St. Register and Bee Building. 1899-1904. 108-0111-0066. CB.**

This two-story brick building is actually two buildings joined under a single concrete façade on the upper two stories. The façade has vertical and horizontal scorings and dates to 1940, when the Dan Theatre opened. The extant rectangular windows on the façade's second story do not appear in a photograph (see below) of the building taken immediately after it was converted to house the Dan Theatre. The windows have metal-framed sash with stacked horizontal lights, and are of a type that was commonly used during the 1940s-1960s. Spacing, size, and shape of the window openings, as well as their alignment with windows on the north elevation, suggest that the current openings are in the same places as the original windows. Patching of the concrete façade also suggest the windows were installed after the concrete cladding.

The marquee and theatre signage that once identified the building are no longer extant. The current storefront has brick veneer, large, single-light display windows flanking a recessed entry that is in the same location as the historic theatre entrance, a corner entry with a flush metal door, and a mansard-type roof with wood shingles. The design and materials suggest the storefront was in place by the early 1980s. Original stretcher-bond brickwork and segmental-head door and window openings (most bricked up) are apparent on the north side elevation; a later rear addition, noted in the 1993 nomination, remains extant.

The two altered buildings that came to comprise the Dan Theatre are of approximately the same age. The building at 115 South Union was constructed between 1899 and 1904 for the Register Publishing Company and was known as the Register and Bee Building. Danville's principal historic (and present) newspaper was published in the building. The printing press was located in the basement, offices occupied the ground floor, and the second floor was used for composing. Damage sustained from the Masonic Temple Fire of January 3, 1920, combined with a desire for more sumptuous quarters, prompted the newspaper's move down the street to the Rorer A. James Memorial Building (108-111-0070). The Register and Bee Building originally had a Neoclassical façade with a parapet balustrade and cornice, round- and jack-arched-head windows on the front, and a pedimented surround for the angled corner entry.

Boatwright Brothers Company was the early and probably original occupant of 117 South Union. The building was constructed between 1899 and 1904, possibly after 115 South Union. Boatwright was a printing and stationary plant. In 1910 the building was occupied by a bookstore. Later a furniture store was located in the building, and in 1920 an automobile showroom occupied the address.

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

The Downtown Danville Historic District was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The historic district is significant at the statewide level under Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, Government, Social History, Industry, and Ethnic Heritage: Black. The period of significance begins in 1875 with the construction of the Pace Building—the oldest building in the district—and ends in 1943, on the eve of the postwar shift in commercial development to suburban Danville.

In the district’s 1993 nomination, the building at 115-117 South Union Street was listed as noncontributing due to substantial exterior alterations that were believed to postdate the period of significance. Upon further research, however, it was discovered that the original window openings were infilled, and the existing scored concrete façade was installed by 1940, when the building became a theatre. Changing commercial uses for the two buildings at 115-117 S. Union Street was a well-established pattern for each resource, and in keeping with the evolving commercial character of Danville’s downtown. The installation of the scored concrete façade likely served two purposes: first, to infill now-unnecessary windows and second, to create an impression of modernity. The smooth concrete surface with a combination of incised vertical and horizontal lines is in keeping with tenets of the then-burgeoning Modern architecture movement as it eliminated historical references and architectural embellishments that, at the time, would have been considered unnecessary. The theatre owners also likely sought to convey an image of modernity and up-to-date technology suggestive of an enjoyable theatrical experience. Of important note is that the theatre provided a venue for movies featuring performers of color.

The theatre opened at the height of Virginia’s Jim Crow segregation era, when performers of color rarely were shown in movies considered to be mainstream (meaning that the movies were targeted to white audiences) and when audiences of color were permitted to view movies only from segregated areas, typically a balcony accessed via a separate entrance from the theatre’s main entry. The former Dan Theatre therefore is directly associated with two of the historic district’s areas of significance, Commerce and Ethnic Heritage: Black.

The alterations to convert the two buildings at 115 and 117 S. Union Street occurred during the district’s period of significance. The scored concrete façade is intact and in relatively good condition overall. In addition to the concrete façade, the building also retains other historic features, including its flat roof, two-part commercial block form, and intact north elevation.

Since the 1940s, however, and likely as late as c. 1980, the building’s integrity has been diminished by loss of the marquee and theatre sign, installation of a new storefront that spans both buildings, and reopening of five windows on the second story. The second-story windows are a reversible alteration and are considered less detrimental to the building’s overall integrity of design, workmanship, and materials.

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The storefront materials are typical of mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial design in Virginia's smaller cities, with the mansard-type roof especially suggestive of a 1970-1980 date, when that roof type enjoyed a brief renaissance on commercial buildings, albeit applied in an ahistoric design.

The availability of historic photographs, however, along with retention of the theatre entrance's general form with a centered entry and a separate entry on the canted corner, provide evidence that at least rough integrity of design has been retained, although the integrity of workmanship and materials on the façade's first story have been lost. The property also has integrity of association, as noted above, and of location and setting within a historic downtown commercial district. The property's integrity of feeling is partially intact as the commercial block on which the former theatre is located has seen few major architectural changes in recent decades and the property itself has remained in commercial use. Overall, therefore, the buildings at 115-117 S. Union Street retain sufficient integrity to be contributing to the historic district.

**SECTION 11: Form Prepared By**

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date: July 2019

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**Photographs**



Photo 1: 115-117 S. Union Street, view SE (2019)

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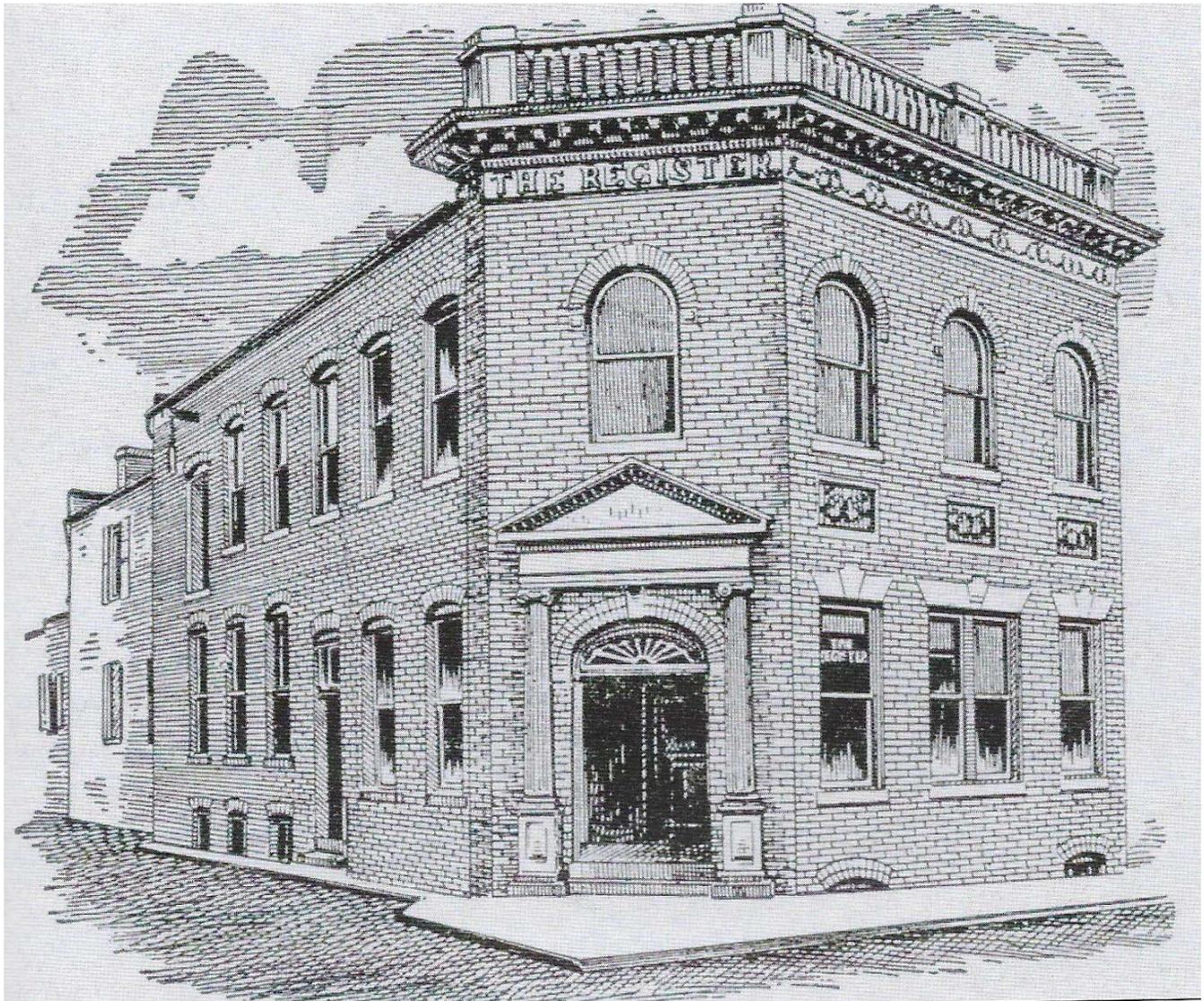


Photo 2: Historic Rendering, 115 S. Union Street, ca. 1903

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Photo 3: Historic Photograph, 115-117 S. Union Street, 1941

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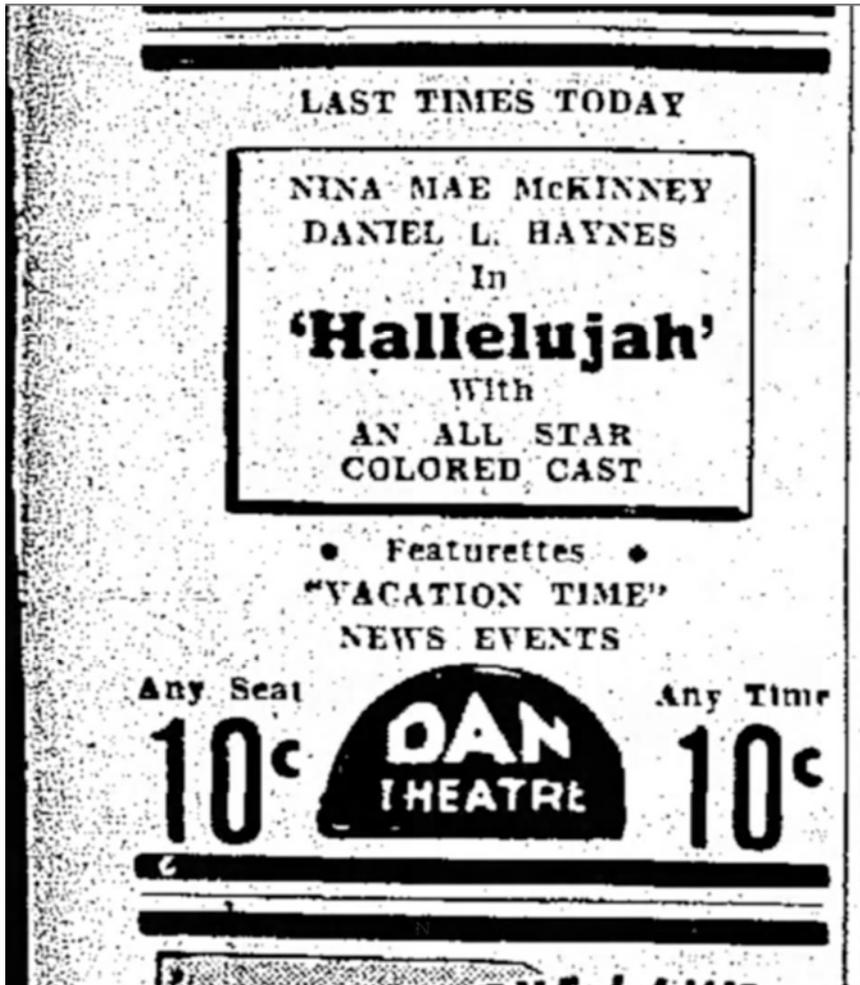
Newspaper Article 1: October 10, 1939 article in *The Bee* advertising items for sale from the building's original façade (Newspapers.com)

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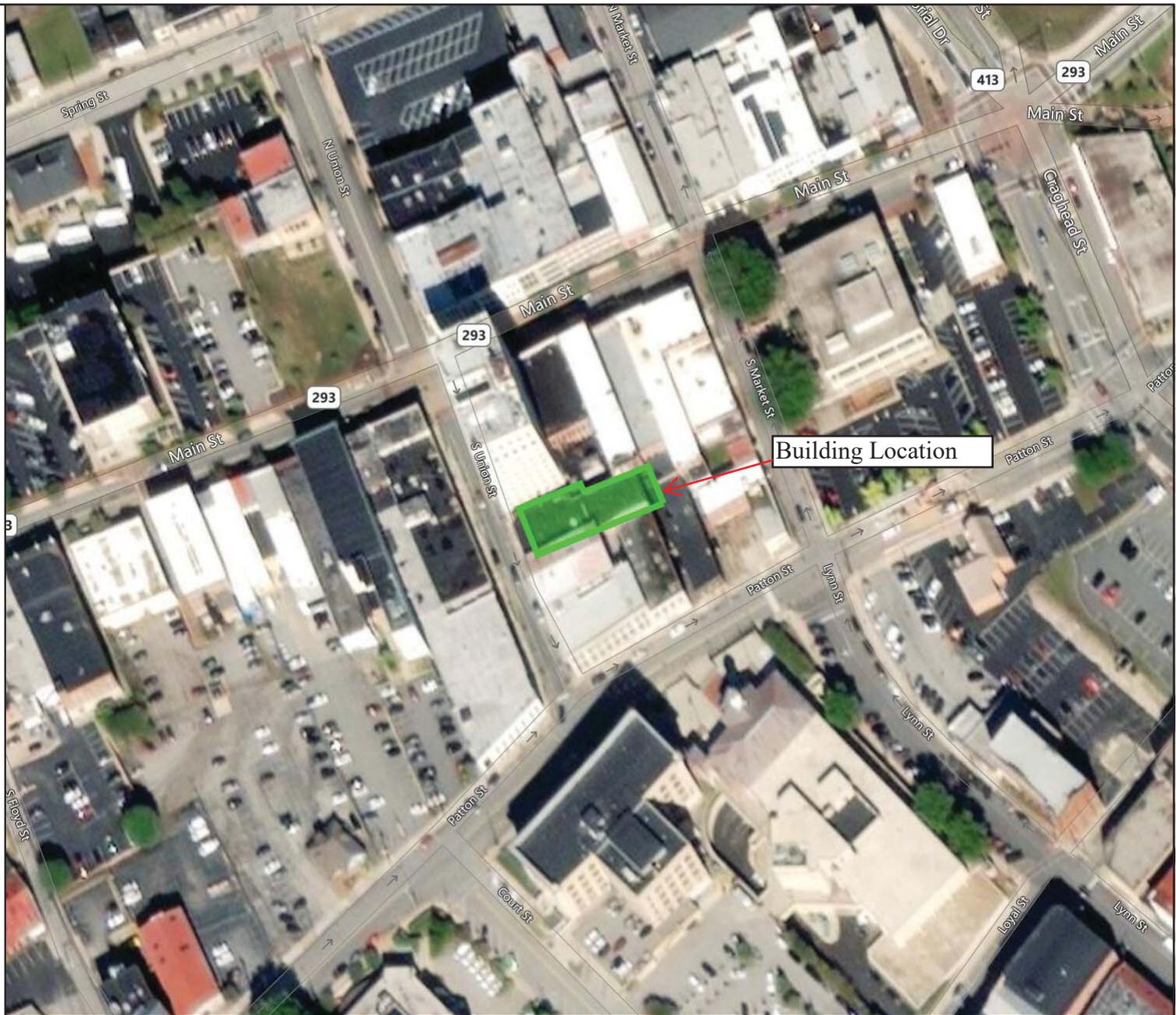


Newspaper Article 2: July 3, 1941 article in *The Bee* advertising the movie on the marquee in the historic photo (Newspapers.com)



**Location Map for 115-117 S. Union Street**

Downtown Danville Historic District  
City of Danville, VA  
DHR No. 108-0111



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 7/30/2019**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*