

VLR - 11/5/68 NRHP - 6/4/69 NHL - 6/7/88

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Governor's Mansion  
other names/site number Executive Mansion

### 2. Location

street & number Capitol Square N/A  not for publication  
city, town Richmond N/A  vicinity  
state Virginia code 51 county Richmond (city) code 760 zip code 23219

### 3. Classification

| Ownership of Property                            | Category of Property                            | Number of Resources within Property |                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
|  |   | Contributing                        | Noncontributing     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> private                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <u>3</u>                            | <u>1</u> buildings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local            | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> sites      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal          | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> objects    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>3</u>                            | <u>1</u> Total      |

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

H. Bryan Mitchell 24 March 1988  
Signature of certifying official Date  
H. Bryan Mitchell, Director, VA Division of Historic Landmarks  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

United States Department of the Interior  
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| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local            | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> sites      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal          | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <u>0</u>                            | <u>0</u> objects    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>3</u>                            | <u>1</u> Total      |

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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H. Bryan Mitchell  
Signature of certifying official

24 March 1988  
Date

H. Bryan Mitchell, Director, VA Division of Historic Landmarks

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC - single family  
SECONDARY STRUCTURES- Kitchen, carriage  
house

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC- Single family  
SECONDARY STRUCTURES- Guest house,  
garage/office

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC- Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
roof Slate/metal  
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY**

The Executive Mansion, located within the Capitol Square in Richmond, Virginia, is a finely proportioned, rectangular, two-story brick residence constructed between 1811 and 1813 from a design by Alexander Parris (1780-1852), a native of Maine who after three years in Richmond became a successful Boston architect. Federal in inspiration, this sophisticated and influential Virginia landmark, one of Parris's few surviving works, has served as the official residence of governors since its construction. Of great importance is the structure's unique proximity to the State Capitol, a relationship originally envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. A rear addition made in 1906 is the only notable alteration to the exterior. A highlight of the interior are the front hall, parlor and library, each of which has distinguished period woodwork and plaster ornamentation. A dignified example of domestic Federal design, the mansion eloquently reflects the changes in functional demands that correspond with the evolution of the governor's role in state government.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Applicable National Historic Landmark Criteria- 1, 2

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1811-1938

Significant Dates

1811-1813

1906

1926

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alexander Parris, architect

Christopher Tompkins, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Executive Mansion, in Richmond, Virginia, is eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark because it meets two of the criteria used in the official evaluation of such properties (36 CFR 65.4[a.1-2]). First, it is closely associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, are identified with, and outstandingly represent the broad national patterns of United States history; from these events an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained. Second, the mansion is associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.

The mansion is associated with several themes and subthemes related to the ongoing National Historic Landmarks Survey. Under the theme of Political and Military Affairs, 1783-1860, it is associated with the subtheme of Jacksonian Democracy, 1828-1844, because of Governor John Floyd's role both in Nat Turner's Rebellion and in national political affairs during the Jacksonian era. The mansion is associated--also under the same theme--with the subtheme The Rise of Sectionalism, 1840-1859, because of the response of Governor Henry A. Wise to John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Governor John Letcher, who led Virginia through the secession crisis and into the early part of the war, is associated with the Civil War theme and the subtheme The Nation Divides, 1860-1861. Another governor, Francis H. Pierpont, is associated with the Civil War subtheme concerning the Political and Diplomatic Scene for his efforts to create the state of West Virginia and to establish a loyal government in Virginia. Pierpont also is associated with the theme of Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939, in relation to the subtheme of The Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877. James L. Kemper was a governor whose tenure in office also relates to two subthemes: The Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877, and The Republican Era, 1877-1900. Finally, Governor Harry Flood Byrd is associated generally with the theme of Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939. He was a product of The Progressive Era, 1901-1914 (which continued in Virginia for some years beyond 1914), but

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Primary Sources**

Driggs, Sarah Shields. A Preliminary Outline of the History of the Governor's Mansion. 1987. Unpublished notes.

Hening, William Waller, ed. The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. . . . 13 vols. Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York, 1809-1823.

Jefferson, Thomas. Papers of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Julian P. Boyd et al., 19 vols. to date. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950-.

See continuation sheet

**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 # 1957, 1987—numbers unknown
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:**
- State historic preservation office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other

**Specify repository:**  
VA Division of Historic Landmarks  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property approx. 1 1/6

**UTM References**

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at a point on the W side of Governor Street approx. 350' S of the intersection of Governor St. with Broad St.; thence extending approx. 200' NW; thence approx. 200' SW; thence approx. 300' SE to a point on the W side of Governor St.; thence approx. 300' along said side of said street to point of origin.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The bounds have been drawn to include three contributing buildings and one non-contributing building contained within the iron fencing and brick walls enclosing the mansion grounds.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John S. Salmon, Historian and Julie L. Vosmik, Architectural Historian  
organization VA Division of Historic Landmarks date March 1988  
street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3143  
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

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ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

During the session begun in May 1779 the General Assembly passed an act authorizing the removal of the state capitol from Williamsburg to Richmond.<sup>1</sup> The same act also proposed the construction of a state government building complex in Richmond, to include a capitol, hall of justice, jail, offices for "executive boards," public market, and two lots for the use of the governor. Although the location now known as Capitol Square soon was selected as the site of this complex, it was many years before any building but the Executive Mansion was constructed.

At first there was no house officially designated for the governor's residence. Thomas Jefferson, author of the act of removal<sup>2</sup> and the first governor to serve in the new capital city, was compelled to rent for himself a house on Broad Street near Thirteenth Street from a kinsman, Thomas Turpin.<sup>3</sup> After Thomas Nelson was elected governor in June 1781, he may not even have lived in Richmond. The first governor to live on the site of the present Executive Mansion was Benjamin Harrison, who took office on 1 December 1781 and moved into a house that already was standing in the northeast corner of Capitol Square.

The first governor's house in Richmond appears to have been a two-story frame dwelling constructed over a brick foundation and cellar that was located slightly northwest of the existing structure. This modest structure apparently was owned by Dr. Philip Turpin and rented from him by the state until at least 1788.<sup>4</sup> Despite continuous efforts to keep the house in repair, it never was satisfactory as a governor's residence. Between 1785 and 1811 a succession of structures were added to crowd the property: an office, kitchen, servant's quarters, wood house, carriage house, stable, well house, spring houses, chicken coop and cow house.

Although Thomas Jefferson, in 1785, had proposed replacing the residence with a mansion modeled after the Villa Rotunda, it was not until December 1810 that Governor John Tyler, Sr., finally declared the house beyond repair.<sup>5</sup> Following a recommendation by a joint House and Senate committee, the General Assembly approved the construction of a new governor's residence, with the existing structure to be sold and the profit applied to the new building. Charles Copeland bought the old house for \$530 and agreed to move it off the property.<sup>6</sup> As originally envisioned by the General Assembly, the new residence was to provide for the "comfort and conveniency of the Governor" and the "honor and dignity of the State."<sup>7</sup>

A three-story house that belonged to William Moncure and stood at the southeast corner of Twelfth and Marshall streets served as the governor's residence for the next two years. The Moncure house was first rented by the state on 1 July 1811, probably about the time that work began on the mansion.

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Seven prominent citizens were appointed to oversee the removal of the existing structure and the erection of a suitable governor's residence. Among those appointed was William McKim who served as superintendent, a responsibility for which he was paid three hundred dollars. Christopher Tompkins was engaged as the contractor with the understanding that he would supply all materials and labor.

Alexander Parris, a Boston architect, was hired to draw up the plans for the Executive Mansion. Parris was born on 24 November 1780 in Halifax, Massachusetts. Most of his early career was spent in Portland, Maine; later he worked in New York, Boston, and Richmond. Parris was motivated to travel not only by his desire to study the architecture of different cities, but also by economic necessity.

Before 22 December 1807, when President Thomas Jefferson's embargo of trade with Great Britain went into effect, the New England states and cities such as Portland were prospering. New construction was under way along the coast and the demand for the services of architects was great. The Embargo Act changed all that. Merchants were bankrupted and new building stopped. Alexander Parris was fortunate enough to be hired for two federal construction projects, both of them forts, in Portland harbor.<sup>10</sup>

On 15 March 1809 the Embargo was lifted. New construction was slow to resume, however, and Parris moved first to New York and then to Boston to find steady work. He also visited Philadelphia before he settled in Boston. The time he spent in these cities, particularly Philadelphia and Boston, was more rewarding statistically than financially. In Philadelphia he would have seen Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Bank of Pennsylvania, his Pump House, and several private dwellings.<sup>11</sup> In Boston in which he had arrived by November 1809, Parris could have studied Charles Bulfinch's Suffolk County Courthouse, his enlargement of Faneuil Hall, and fashionable house. Soon, however, Parris moved south to Richmond, a city of greater opportunity. In 1810, according to Parris,

I was engaged (in Boston) by the late Jonathan Mason, Esquire, to go to Richmond, Virginia, and plan and superintend the building of a large dwelling house for John Bell, Esq. During my stay there, I planned and superintended, also, the building of a dwelling-house for John Wickham, Esq.<sup>12</sup>

In between these two commissions, Parris also designed the Executive Mansion. Perhaps he omitted the mention of it because he furnished only the plan and did not superintend the construction.

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Little is known of Bellville, Parris's house for John Bell, which burned in 1841. Bell certainly was pleased with it (he wrote a letter of recommendation for Parris in 1817) and a newspaper account of its destruction suggested that it was a solid, and imposing edifice that reflected Parris's New England background.<sup>13</sup> The John Wickham house (now called the Wickham-Valentine House) has survived to form the core of the Valentine Museum complex. The first plan for the house was revised after Wickham submitted it to Latrobe for a critique, and the house as built differed from both plans. The Wickham house is considered one of the most important of its type in the country.<sup>14</sup>

Though his involvement has been clearly documented, circumstances surrounding the arrangement for design services with Alexander Parris are sketchy. Mere comparison of his fifty dollar fee with that received by McKim suggest that his role was limited. All that survives of Parris's efforts is a first-floor plan that differs in several ways from the way in which the building was actually constructed. These differences, coupled with the comparatively low fee he received, hint strongly that Parris's involvement was brief and that he did not participate in the project during actual construction. This arrangement makes good sense in light of the fact that Parris was already committed to other projects, most importantly the Wickham-Valentine House. There is no question, however, regarding Parris's involvement. The plan is clearly signed by him, expense vouchers document his fee, and comparison between this building and others by him reveal distinct similarities.

Three houses in Richmond may have influenced Parris's design for the Executive Mansion. The first of these was the creation of Benjamin Henry Latrobe and was built for John Harvie between 1798 and 1799.<sup>15</sup> Among its features was an entrance door with a fanlight and sidelights. Another house of significance was built in 1810 by Christopher Tompkins, contractor for the mansion's construction, who was a prosperous Richmond builder.<sup>16</sup> The Tompkins' house was four bays wide instead of five, but its windows were similar in treatment to those of the mansion; the house's most obvious resemblance to the mansion was in the use of recessed panels on the facade between the upper and lower windows. A particularly interesting feature of Parris's plan for the mansion is the two doors at the end of the central hall that lead to the drawing room and dining room (see enclosed plan). The same plan was used for the William C. Williams House, also in Richmond and built in 1810. Parris was undoubtedly familiar with this unusually fine Richmond residence and its owner, who, coincidentally, was on the furnishings committee for the mansion.

The overall room arrangement of the Executive Mansion closely parallels the plan by Parris; however, two significant differences exist between the building as drawn and as constructed. Parris's four-room central hall plan did not include the north and south side porches that are

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original features of the building. Another difference is that Parris's plan features end chimneys, whereas the mansion has interior chimneys placed on lateral interior walls. In a report to the General Assembly the commissioners reported that they had caused the principal story of the building to be "finished off in a style rather superior to that originally contemplated" and that they added "two plain porches on the north and south fronts of said building."<sup>17</sup> Evidently the commission was still not completely satisfied with the result, for they made recommendations for the addition of a terrace to surround the eaves, a front portico, and marble fireplace surrounds. Each of these recommendations was carried out, but not until nineteen years later. Another significant discrepancy between the building as constructed and its current appearance is the absence of inset rectangular stone panels embellished with bas-relief swags that were originally located between the first and second-floor windows. The reason for their removal is likely to have been their deteriorated condition.

By March 12, 1813, the house was ready for occupancy. As built the mansion had a centrally located entrance hall that extended halfway through the ground floor. Two front rooms, a library to the left and a parlor to the right, opened off the entrance hall, as did two stair halls behind the front rooms. Opposite the front door, at the back of the entrance hall, doors opened into two large rooms that extended across the rear of the house; a drawing room on the left and a dining room on the right. As completed the governor's complex consisted of the principal residence, a kitchen, smokehouse, necessary, stable (dating from 1792 and replaced in 1835), granary, ice house, cannon house, carriage house, and garden. Throughout the 19th century all of these, with the exception of the kitchen, were replaced with various combinations of stable and carriage house, tool house, coal house, cow house, ice house, and greenhouse. Today the original kitchen, a carriage building, and a greenhouse remain.

Modifications were made over the years to enhance the original structure as advised by the commissioners and to accommodate the expanded entertaining function to which the building was put. In 1823 a balustrade was added connecting the four chimneys and louvered shutters were added to the windows. Invoices dating from 1830 reflect work to the roof and side porches, as well as the addition of a balustrade around the roof, a front portico, and such interior refinements as returning dado, paneled wainscoting, and chair rails. The balustrade, which remained in place until sometime after 1865, consisted of a solid wood parapet with sections of balusters corresponding to the pattern of fenestration. It was also in 1830 that the elliptical fanlight above the front door was replaced with a rectangular transom. In 1846 tin roofing replaced the original slate and sometime between 1865 and 1880 the balustrade, which is known to have been badly damaged by fire in 1865, was removed.

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Minor remodeling occurred in 1840 when sliding pocket doors were added to the interior wall separating the two rear rooms. This modification allowed the two distinct spaces to be combined when necessary to accommodate large groups. Also, at this time the basement was modified to accommodate a cook room, dining room, pantry, and closets. Sometime before 1860 a washroom and servant's room were also added to this lower floor. In 1906 a dining room and kitchen were added to the rear of the building thus providing the increased space for entertaining. Above this dining room addition were added two bedrooms and a bath in 1914.

In 1926, following a serious fire, much of the first-floor interior had to be repaired and/or reconstructed. Documenting the extent of damage and subsequent reconstruction is complicated by several factors. Newspaper coverage and photographs show extensive water and smoke damage but do not definitively indicate the extent of major damage to the walls and floors. It is clear that the damage was limited to the interior and concentrated on the first floor and that none of the exterior walls or roof were effected. Expense vouchers for the repairs are not itemized and the total expenditure includes a significant amount of redecorating rather than solely major repairs to the building. Because every effort was made to restore the interior to its pre-fire appearance, a comparison of photographs before and after the fire fail to reveal any significant differences. It is clear that repairs to the stairs, which are known to have been damaged by the fire, included extending them slightly and changing the flat arched openings at the end of the foot of each to round arches. It was also at this time that the fireplace was removed from the east wall of the 1906 dining room and several other mantels were moved or replaced.

Despite the sequence of minor alterations that have occurred over the years, the mansion remains today essentially intact. The exterior has a high degree of integrity, with the loss of the roof balustrade, inset stone panels, and the entrance fanlight, being the only elements missing from the antebellum period. Because additions have been limited only to the rear of the building, the facade and side elevations remain as constructed. The principal spaces of the interior--the entrance and stair halls, library and parlor--each retain their original appearance.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Executive Mansion is a dignified and suitably monumental two-story painted brick Federal-style residence. Facing west towards the State Capitol with an axial view of the statue of George Washington, the mansion and its associated outbuildings are placed within the official state government complex of Virginia. Occupying the northeast corner of Capitol Square, the mansion occupies a protected landscaped portion of the square as specified in Jefferson's original draft of the removal act. Later revisions to this act clarified his intent and allocated two

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squares--one for the residence and another for a garden and dependencies. At the time construction commenced in 1811, the square was still intersected by streets and a ravine. The positioning of the governor's residence to a great extent influenced the future arrangement of the square.

A front gate permits access to the circular brick drive in the center of which is located a fountain. A secondary gate and drive are located to the north off what once was Capitol Street. Though originally enclosed by a simple plank fence, today the perimeter of the mansion grounds is encircled by a combination of iron fencing and brick walls. The iron fencing at the north and east sides encircles the entire square and was added in 1820. The east edge of the site is raised above the level of Governor Street and enclosed by a brick retaining wall on top of which runs the iron fencing.

Rectangular in plan, the mansion's symmetrical facade is divided into five bays with a slightly projecting center entrance bay. The slate-covered hipped roof is pierced by four interior chimneys connected by a wood balustrade. The entrance portico, originally balustraded when added in 1830, is supported by an elevated foundation with steps and features a full entablature and four columns of the Temple of the Winds order. It protects an entrance which consists of double wood paneled doors, designed by Duncan Lee in 1906, set within a richly carved frame and surrounded by sidelights and transom. These latter features, embellished with ornate tracery, replaced the original sidelights and fanlight sometime after 1865. Also added after that year is the iron railing around the portico. The windows, with the exception of the center second-floor window, are six-over-six double-hung with stone sills. Stone lintels top the second floor and basement windows while those lintels on the first floor are embellished with a keystone. Modest modillion blocks ornament the simple cornice.

The north and south side elevations each consist of four bays with a symmetrical pattern of fenestration. The side entrances are topped with elliptical fanlights and lack sidelights. The porticos, which have never been balustraded, are more simply detailed than that found on the principal facade, as their cornices lack dentils and the columns are fluted Doric.

As originally built, the east rear elevation mirrored the front with the exception of having no rear entrance. Today this elevation is dominated by a two story polygonal projection, the first floor of which was added in 1906 and the second floor added in 1914. Contained within the 1906 addition is an oval dining room on the first floor with a kitchen below, designed by Duncan Lee and Associates, though a newspaper article of that year credits only his associate Captain M. J. Dimmock and does not mention Lee.<sup>18</sup> In 1914 two bedrooms and bathrooms were added above the

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dining room and in 1938 a back hall and breakfast balcony addition was made to the southeast corner resulting in a blind window on the original rear wall. Sometime between 1958 and 1962 another small addition was made to this corner, this time containing a breakfast room on the first floor and a library on the second floor.

The front half of the interior of the structure possesses a central hall, off of which are located two front rooms. A focal point of the interior, the largely intact front hall is beautifully detailed with arches that span its width, a plaster frieze of palmettes and urns, and a plaster cornice and decorative ceiling. Located off of this hall are the two intact front principal rooms, each possessing a fireplace and secondary entrance in the lateral interior wall. Behind these rooms and at the middle of the first floor are two staircases, the placement of which is characteristic of Parris's work. As designed, the principal stair was located to the north and the service stairs to the south. Following the fire in 1926, both stairs were extended and their openings off of the hall changed from flat to arched. The south front parlor, which is more decoratively detailed than the corresponding library or office to the north, has a Federal mantel with matching door surrounds, as well as a decorative plaster ceiling and cornice. A door to the right of the mantel leads to the south stair hall. The north room, also possessing a period mantel, is more simply detailed. Both rooms have simple chair rails.

The north end of the hall leads into the ballroom, a single large room divided by two pairs of columns. As originally constructed, two distinct and separate rooms, a drawing room and dining room, accessed individually off of the main hall, occupied this space. In 1846 sliding pocket doors were added to the interior wall separating the two rooms and in 1906 this wall was completely removed and the columns and two arched openings between the hall and the dining room were added. The ballroom has two fireplaces flanked on the north and south by doors to the stair hall, a simple plaster cornice and ceiling medallions, and paneled wainscoting.

The arched opening to the 1906 oval dining room is on axis with the center hall and repeats the two arches located there. It is detailed with paneled, wainscoted walls, a deep plaster cornice, and corniced door and window surrounds. A small elevator is located between the dining room and ballroom and two doors lead to secondary stairs to the basement. The breakfast room is accessed through a door in the south wall.

The second floor is reached by the paired staircases. Corresponding in location to the first-floor hall is an open sitting area, distinguished by a square, paneled opening and a decorative plaster frieze of swags and pendants. Off of this area are located two front rooms of equal size and secondary halls that lead to several bedrooms, bathrooms, and the family living quarters which include a library, two dressing rooms, a dining room, and a small kitchenette. The arrangement of the second floor has

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been altered over the years, most recently in 1982 during the Charles S. Robb administration. A single set of stairs lead to the attic, which is partitioned into smaller rooms, several of which contain mechanical equipment.

The basement has been modified over the years to accommodate offices, storerooms, pantries, and a kitchen. The latter two areas have not been significantly altered since they were added in 1906. A covered connection leads from the southeast corner of the basement to the detached 1811-1813 kitchen, which is positioned perpendicularly to the main house. The top of this brick connection is railed and functions as a walk between the second-floor porch of the kitchen and the south side entrance of the mansion.

The kitchen is a two-story, central hall, single pile brick building with two end chimneys and a standing-seam metal hipped roof. The building still retains its brick floor. The central entrance consists of a single-leaf paneled wood door with transom. Paired six-over-six double-hung windows flank the entrance on the first floor, whereas on the second floor the pattern of fenestration differs; a window is located at the center and flanked by doors. The rear or south elevation also has five bays with a center entrance flanked by a pair of windows; the second floor has five windows. Each of the two floors is identically arranged with single rooms located on either side of the central hall, in which is located a simple wood stair. The east room was originally used as a laundry and the west room, which is nearest the mansion, was used as a kitchen until 1906.

During recent years this building has been used as an office and guest house. A second-floor porch with cast-iron supports and railings, attached to the connection with the mansion, was added to the north facade. A brick patio area was added between the kitchen and the walled garden to the rear of the mansion. At its north end the kitchen is connected to a greenhouse addition.

A late-19th-century brick carriage house at the rear of the complex faces the mansion and is connected at its south end to the greenhouse. Two of three double-doored bays on the south half of the building have been extended to accommodate cars. To the left of these are three arched windows and two doors. This north end of the building has had partition walls added and is now used as office space.

The formal gardens at the rear of the mansion and the brick walls were added in the 1950s. The guardhouse at the front gate was added in 1961.

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Current plans for the Executive Mansion include the replacement of the inset stone panels between the windows and the roof balustrade. Historic photographs have been used to document the details for these features which have been missing since the late nineteenth century.

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served as a Democratic governor during the period of Republican Prosperity, 1920-1929.

Collectively as well as individually, successive residents of the mansion exerted an influence that extended far beyond the borders of the commonwealth. They inherited a tradition of national leadership begun during the Revolution: the federal government itself, like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, was largely a creation of Virginians. After the election of Thomas Jefferson as president in 1800, Virginians controlled the executive branch of that government; they also provided leadership in the Congress. It could be said of the early republic as it was said of the Old Dominion, that its political leaders "were accustomed to operating within a frame of reference that was peculiarly Virginian."<sup>1</sup> Part of the reason for the state's dominance was the fact that until 1830 Virginia was the most populous state in the Union; then it was the third most populous. Although its influence declined through the remainder of the antebellum period, Virginia's national political power, which was based upon tradition as much as numbers, remained stronger than that of most other states.

The mansion served as the physical center of power--particularly during the antebellum period--from which the governors exercised their influence upon national politics or conducted their office during events of national importance. Notable events to which the mansion is directly linked include Nat Turner's Rebellion, the John Brown raid, Virginia's leadership in the secession crisis and the war that followed, Reconstruction and the ultimate restoration of the commonwealth to the Union, and the development of the political machine.

The Executive Mansion is the oldest executive residence in the United States still used for its original purpose, with the sole exception of the White House. Its historic setting and location on Capitol Square in close proximity to the State Capitol building of Thomas Jefferson's design has been preserved. That setting reflects the mansion's association with developments in American politics and government to which the governors who resided there largely contributed.

The governors' involvement in national affairs while holding state office reflects in part the political tensions of the decades following the Revolution, when the fear of executive tyranny resulted in weak governors and strong legislatures. This result was not peculiar to Virginia, but rather was part of a national phenomenon that is still brilliantly reflected in the "republican simplicity" of the mansion's design and location on Capitol Square. Similarly, the struggle for primacy between the executive and the legislative branches, and the growing ascendancy of the executive in the Progressive period--political developments that occurred at both the state and the national level--are clearly exemplified by the mansion's continuum of historic use, which spans the period from James Barbour's tenure as war governor in 1813 through

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Virginia's entrance into the modern era during the governorship of Harry Flood Byrd, Sr.

The mansion's association with events, developments, and persons of national importance, therefore, make it the most fitting national landmark for interpreting the changing role and importance of the governor's office in the American federal scheme of government.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

From its inception the Executive Mansion had a dual role: it served "as well the honor and dignity of the state, as the expediency of the Chief Magistrate."<sup>2</sup> It probably fulfilled its former function more effectively than the latter, given its location in a public square. The governor likewise served two conflicting roles, first as a "Chief Magistrate" expected to give the state government the leadership and direction it needed, and second as a creature of the legislature, subservient to the Council of State. This dichotomy between the governor's responsibility and his lack of authority proved frustrating to early executives. The dichotomy was also deliberate and widespread among the states.

The Virginia Constitution of 1776 severely limited the authority of the governor. He was elected annually by the House of Delegates, had no veto power, and could make no independent executive decisions: every action could be taken only with the advice and approval of the Council of State. As governor-in-council, he did have the authority to grant pardons, embody the militia, and make appointments to a host of local and state offices. That his power was so circumscribed was due largely to the Revolutionary generation's distrust of executive authority.

As if by design, the location and orientation of the Executive Mansion reinforced the submission of the executive to the legislative authority. Although the mansion could have been oriented toward Capitol Street, to the north, or Governor Street, to the east, it was built instead to face Eleventh Street and the State Capitol, to the west. Thus the governor, whenever he walked out the front door, was confronted with a building that was the symbol of legislative power, Jefferson's Capitol. It was to the Capitol, too, that the governor went to exercise his official duties: to meet with the Council of State and with the various boards of which he was an ex-officio member. His office or library in the mansion, therefore, became the symbol of his unofficial activities: meeting with state and national political leaders and composing the correspondence that extended his influence beyond Virginia's borders.

In 1829 and 1830 a state constitutional convention was held in Richmond. The principal topic of debate was representation in the House of Delegates, not gubernatorial power, however, and the new constitution adopted in 1830 left the executive-legislative relationship as it had

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been for the past fifty-four years. It was not until the adoption of Virginia's third constitution in 1851 that the Council of State was abolished and the governor was popularly elected. And not until the constitution of 1870 was approved did the governor acquire the veto power.<sup>4</sup> Despite the limitations on their authority, however, several 19th-century governors had crucial roles in events of national significance.

### The Governors

The occupants of the Executive Mansion, besides reflecting the general national trend from weaker to more powerful chief executives, have been associated with other historical events as well. Among these events are Nat Turner's Rebellion, the John Brown raid, the secession of Virginia, Reconstruction and the ultimate restoration of the commonwealth to the Union, and the development of the political machine.

### John Floyd

John Floyd was governor of Virginia when every slave owner's nightmare--slave insurrection--became a reality with Nat Turner's Rebellion. On 23 August 1831 Floyd recorded in his diary,

This will be a very noted day in Virginia. At daylight this morning the Mayor of the City put into my hands a notice to the public, written by James Trezvant of Southampton County, stating that an insurrection of the slaves in that county had taken place, that several families had been massacred and that it would take a considerable military force to put them down.<sup>5</sup>

Floyd was frustrated in his initial attempts to deal with the crisis by the constitutional requirement that he consult with the Council of State before dispatching the militia, because all of the councillors were out of the city. At last, one of them returned; Floyd consulted with him briefly, then ordered the militia to march. The rebellion was quickly suppressed and the ringleaders captured and executed.

Although Floyd generally approved of the swift trial and execution of the insurgents, he did not--as did many legislators--encourage the passage of harshly repressive slave laws. Instead he resolved that "before I leave this Government, I will have contrived to have a law passed gradually abolishing slavery in this State, or at all events to begin the work by prohibiting slavery on the West side of the Blue Ridge Mountains."<sup>6</sup> On 26 December 1831, after the General Assembly convened, Floyd wrote in his diary,

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The question of the gradual abolition of slavery begins to be mooted. The Eastern members, meaning those east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, wish to avoid the discussion, but it must come if I can influence my friends in the Assembly to bring it on. I will not rest until slavery is abolished in Virginia.

Despite Floyd's efforts to guide the debate toward abolition, the eastern members of the General Assembly finally brought it to an end and engineered the passage of oppressive slave-control laws. Abolitionists throughout Virginia were hushed and the public debate of the slavery question effectively was over. At the national level, attitudes hardened as the abolitionists in the North and the pro-slavery forces in the South drew their battle lines. John Floyd's initiative marked the last time the abolition of slavery was discussed seriously in Virginia or the South, and the national trauma of the Civil War drew a step closer.

The Executive Mansion is the landmark that best represents the nationally significant rebellion of Nat Turner and his followers. Little remains in Southampton County to mark the event; it was in the library of the mansion that John Floyd planned his tactics to suppress the rebellion and guide the legislative debate on abolition. It was in the mansion that he fumed and scribbled in his diary his expressions of frustration over the limits placed on his power by the Constitution of 1830.

It was also in the mansion--and in his diary--that Floyd sought to channel his energies into national politics. Floyd's diary entries well illustrate his role behind the scenes: for instance, his efforts to secure the nomination of John C. Calhoun for the presidency in lieu of Andrew Jackson. Floyd had been a supporter of Jackson's but eventually turned against him. When Calhoun stopped at the mansion on his way to South Carolina, he and Floyd stayed up far into the night to plot strategy against the president.

Henry A. Wise

Governor Henry A. Wise (1856-1860) assumed a key role in the aftermath of John Brown's raid, which was an attempt to liberate and arm slaves. Wise ordered the militia to Harpers Ferry in hopes of capturing Brown, but was disappointed when United States Marines under the command of Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee succeeded in taking the abolitionist and his men prisoner first. The hanging of John Brown, which Wise approved despite his admiration of Brown's courage, served to polarize public opinion still further and harden the resolve of abolitionists on the one hand and pro-slavery spokesmen--of which Wise was one--on the other. John Brown became a martyr to the abolitionist cause and his death hastened the schism between the North and the South.

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Like John Floyd before him, Henry A. Wise worked behind the scenes in national politics. Wise was influential in securing the nomination and election of presidents William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Franklin Pierce, and, most notably, James Buchanan. In 1855 he was elected governor after a campaign against the nativist Know-Nothing party that "broke the momentum of the nativist movement nationally."<sup>10</sup> When the Civil War began, Wise was out of office. Although he had opposed secession initially, Wise quickly joined the Confederate Army and by war's end had attained the rank of brigadier general.

### John Letcher

The Executive Mansion served as the center of state leadership during the Civil War, when Richmond was the capital of the Confederate States of America. The mansion was inhabited by a strong chief executive whose effective leadership furthered the progress of the Confederate military front in Virginia.

Governor John Letcher (1860-1864) was opposed to secession until Lincoln's call for troops.<sup>11</sup> It became his lot to organize the state for war and complete a smooth transition from state to Confederate control over the army. Letcher gave Robert E. Lee command of the state's army in the early days of the war; he "had unlimited confidence in Lee, allowing him to run the state's military machine without interference. Lee used his unhindered power fully to accelerate mobilization."<sup>12</sup> Letcher also appointed Thomas J. Jackson commander of the captured arsenal at Harpers Ferry over the strong objections of Jackson's opponents, thereby launching the career of one of the Confederacy's greatest generals. In February 1862, when Jackson resigned during a dispute with Confederate secretary of war Judah P. Benjamin, Letcher personally intervened; he persuaded Jackson to stay on and he administered a tongue-lashing to Benjamin and the Confederate cabinet.<sup>13</sup>

Letcher provided leadership for a divided state in a time of national crisis:

His wartime administration was basically a success. It directed the power and spirit of one of the key southern states into the mainstream of the rebel war effort. . . . He was a man of force and character, a key figure in the Confederate experiment. . . . [A] few state leaders were able to rise above the narrow, negative political doctrines of Dixie and exercise the pragmatic flexibility so necessary in modern war. John Letcher<sup>14</sup> was such a leader . . . a strong rebel war governor.

Letcher's leadership as governor, therefore, contributed to the four-year survival of the Confederacy and the protraction of the Civil War.

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Francis H. Pierpont

The political career of Francis H. Pierpont (1865-1868) spanned the antebellum period, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. From 1844 to 1860 he was involved in Whig politics in western Virginia, and he supported Abraham Lincoln in 1860.<sup>15</sup> After Virginia seceded in 1861 Pierpont organized a loyal provisional government in Wheeling--the so-called Restored Government of Virginia--and he served as its governor. Due largely to his efforts the state of West Virginia was formed in 1863; Pierpont moved his Virginia government first to Alexandria, then to Richmond after its capture. He continued to serve as governor until 1868, when he was replaced on order of the commander of the Virginia Military District by Henry H. Wells.<sup>16</sup> During his tenure as governor Pierpont's attempts to assist in the state's recovery from the effects of war were hampered both by conservatives who believed his social program too radical, and by radicals who thought he was not doing enough. He was an able administrator who lacked the political talent to secure the passage of his ambitious programs. In this way,<sup>17</sup> he typified the moderate Southern politician of the Reconstruction era.

James L. Kemper

James L. Kemper (1874-1878), the last of Virginia's Reconstruction-era governors, was a former Confederate general who was wounded in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. In post-war politics he became a spokesman and writer for the Conservative cause; he opposed the ratification of the Underwood Constitution and worked for the election of William Mahone's candidate for governor in the campaign of 1869. In 1873 his own election as governor dealt a death blow to radical Republicanism in the state. Once in office--to the surprise of many--he proved himself an independent and pragmatic politician.<sup>18</sup> In race relations, for instance, Kemper "sought to demonstrate to the North and to the federal government that Virginia recognized the equality of the races before the law and would defend the rights of black Virginians . . . [as well as seek to] promote black education and personal development, and to treat black citizens with kindness, fairness, and magnanimity."<sup>19</sup> Kemper also did what he could to put the new, fragile public school system on a better financial and legal footing.

Kemper was the first man to serve a full term as governor after the end of military reconstruction. The spirit of Reconstruction lived on, however, in the Underwood Constitution; Kemper strove to adhere to the letter of the new law while preserving the spirit of older traditions.

Harry F. Byrd

Like many other states, Virginia entered an era of machine politics by the last years of the nineteenth century. The first successful statewide machine of this era was created by Virginia Senator Thomas S. Martin when

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he took office in 1894. The Martin machine controlled Democratic Party politics in Virginia until Martin's death in 1919. Virginia politicians either struggled against the machine or sought its support.

Populism, which proved a potent force in much of the South, was never very strong in Virginia. Progressivism proved more effective, although the Martin machine blunted its attack by adopting some of its programs. The first Progressive politician to secure the governorship by opposing the machine was Andrew Jackson Montague (1902-1906), who campaigned on a platform<sup>20</sup> of disfranchisement of black voters, good roads, and good schools. Early in Montague's term as governor--in 1902--a new constitution was adopted that effectively disfranchised most blacks and many poor whites.

Four years later, however, Montague failed in his attempt to unseat Martin from the Senate. The Martin machine proved too strong for him and it was never seriously challenged again. Martin's choice for governor in 1901, Claude A. Swanson, was elected to the governor's office and later to the Senate. Martin's machine did not survive him.

The longest-lived political machine in Virginia was the creation of Harry Flood Byrd, Sr., who served as governor from 1 February 1926 to 15 January 1930. His machine was known euphemistically as the "Byrd organization."

During the 1920s, with Senator Claude Swanson increasingly engrossed in national politics, Harry Byrd cultivated a personal following throughout the state, installing loyal men in county and city offices and in key positions in Richmond. . . . Using the powers of his office with great skill, Governor Byrd built a powerful base from which he intended to challenge Swanson's primacy within the Democratic Party organization. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him secretary of the navy in 1933, Swanson broke his ties with state politics. Succeeding Swanson in the Senate, Byrd remained until his resignation in 1965 the dominant figure in Virginia politics.<sup>21</sup>

As governor, Byrd carried forward many of his predecessors' Progressive policies. Most importantly, Byrd oversaw the most thoroughgoing reorganization of state government since the Revolution. Byrd was instrumental in

reducing the number of state agencies, consolidating departments, and cutting operating expenses . . . [as well as securing the adoption of constitutional

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amendments] reducing the number of elected state officials, empowering the governor to appoint and dismiss most of the state agency heads, and for the first time giving the governor of Virginia control of the administration of state government.<sup>22</sup>

After Byrd's election to the Senate in 1932 he attempted to persuade the national government to follow Virginia's example of fiscal and managerial conservatism. He opposed the New Deal's spending policies; as the years passed his influence in the Senate grew and he became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. Even before he assumed the chairmanship, Byrd formed with other Southern senators and congressmen a coalition that effectively imposed fiscal conservatism at the national level. The coalition controlled the federal purse strings during most of the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations until Byrd's retirement in 1965.

If the bright side of Byrd's machine was its efficiency, its dark side consisted of racism, intolerance, and--eventually--a hidebound conservatism that stifled constructive change. The machine adhered to a states' rights ethic and to fiscal policies whose days were numbered at both the state and the national levels.

Under such practices and policies as the State Compensation Board, the circuit judge, massive resistance, and state bottle-only liquor laws, local powers and initiatives were severely undermined. The organization under its states' rights banner minimized opportunities for Negroes, labor, urbanites, Republicans, and other dissident elements. . . . In providing integrated schools, poll tax repeal, and a reapportioned legislature, the [Supreme] Court . . . gave to Virginia's underprivileged and underrepresented elements<sup>23</sup> the incentives which the Byrd machine had repressed.

Despite its shortcomings, Byrd's political machine--at least in its youth--proved itself an effective instrument of change. Under the leadership of Governor Byrd, the government of Virginia entered the modern era. Once so weak that a governor could exert more influence on the national political scene than upon his own state government, the office under Byrd completed the change of course toward which it had been evolving for the past century and a half.

### Conclusion

Many of Virginia's governors have exerted an influence far beyond the borders of the state. Of the thirty-five men who occupied the Executive Mansion between 1813 and 1938, nineteen held one or more federal elective

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offices (president, vice-president,<sup>24</sup> senator, or representative) either before or after serving as governor. John B. Floyd was secretary of war. Francis H. Pierpont is regarded as the founder of the state of West Virginia. Henry H. Wells was a general in the Union Army. James L. Kemper, Henry A. Wise, and Fitzhugh Lee were Confederate army generals, and Frederick W. M. Holliday served in the Confederate Congress. Henry C. Stuart and John G. Pollard were appointed to federal boards by presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, respectively. Harry Flood Byrd served as one of Virginia's senators for over thirty years. Only eight out of thirty-five of the mansion's inhabitants spent their entire careers within Virginia.<sup>25</sup>

Although the original design of the mansion has not survived wholly intact through the vicissitudes of 175 years of continuous use as a governors' residence, the building possesses a sufficiently high degree of integrity of location, association, setting, materials, feeling, workmanship, and design to qualify the mansion for designation as a National Historic Landmark. It maintains its unique location beside the State Capitol, a relationship originally envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. Its rich associations with notable statesmen, events, and developments of national importance are well documented and direct.

The homes of several of the most notable statesmen who played roles of national importance while residents of the mansion no longer survive intact. Francis H. Pierpont's seat, Fairmont, in Wheeling, West Virginia, was demolished. John Letcher's home in Lexington burned in the Civil War. Henry A. Wise built his residence, Rolleston, near the end of his term as governor; the house may no longer stand. John Floyd's house in Washington County has not been identified and located. James L. Kemper's home in Orange County, Walnut Hills, has been much altered since his death. Harry Flood Byrd's home, Rosemont, still stands in Clarke County, but soon may be sold by his family. The Executive Mansion, therefore, serves as the locus of historical association with these men in their active professional careers and as the most prominent national symbol of their public service during events of national significance.

While the larger setting of the building on Capitol Square has changed in the course of evolution through two centuries, the mansion continues to occupy a protected landscaped portion of the square as specified in Jefferson's original draft of the Removal Act. The positioning of the residence with its original dependencies and garden to a great extent influenced the future arrangement of the square, including its axial view of Crawford's equestrian statue of Washington.

Furthermore, the design, materials, and workmanship of the mansion possess sufficient integrity to preserve the authentic character of the property as a significant landmark in our national history. The addition made in 1906 is the only notable alteration to the exterior. Neither James Barbour nor Harry Byrd, were they alive, would have difficulty

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recognizing the mansion's salient features. Although the principal rooms at the rear were rebuilt after a fire in 1926, the front hall, parlor, and library, each of which has distinguished period woodwork and plaster ornaments, retain the original character of a dignified domestic Federal design. In these rooms the governors reflected, prepared state papers, and received official guests. As the oldest governor's mansion built as such in continuous use in the nation, this structure is uniquely qualified to represent the changes in functional demands that correspond with the evolution of the governor's office in our federal scheme of republican government.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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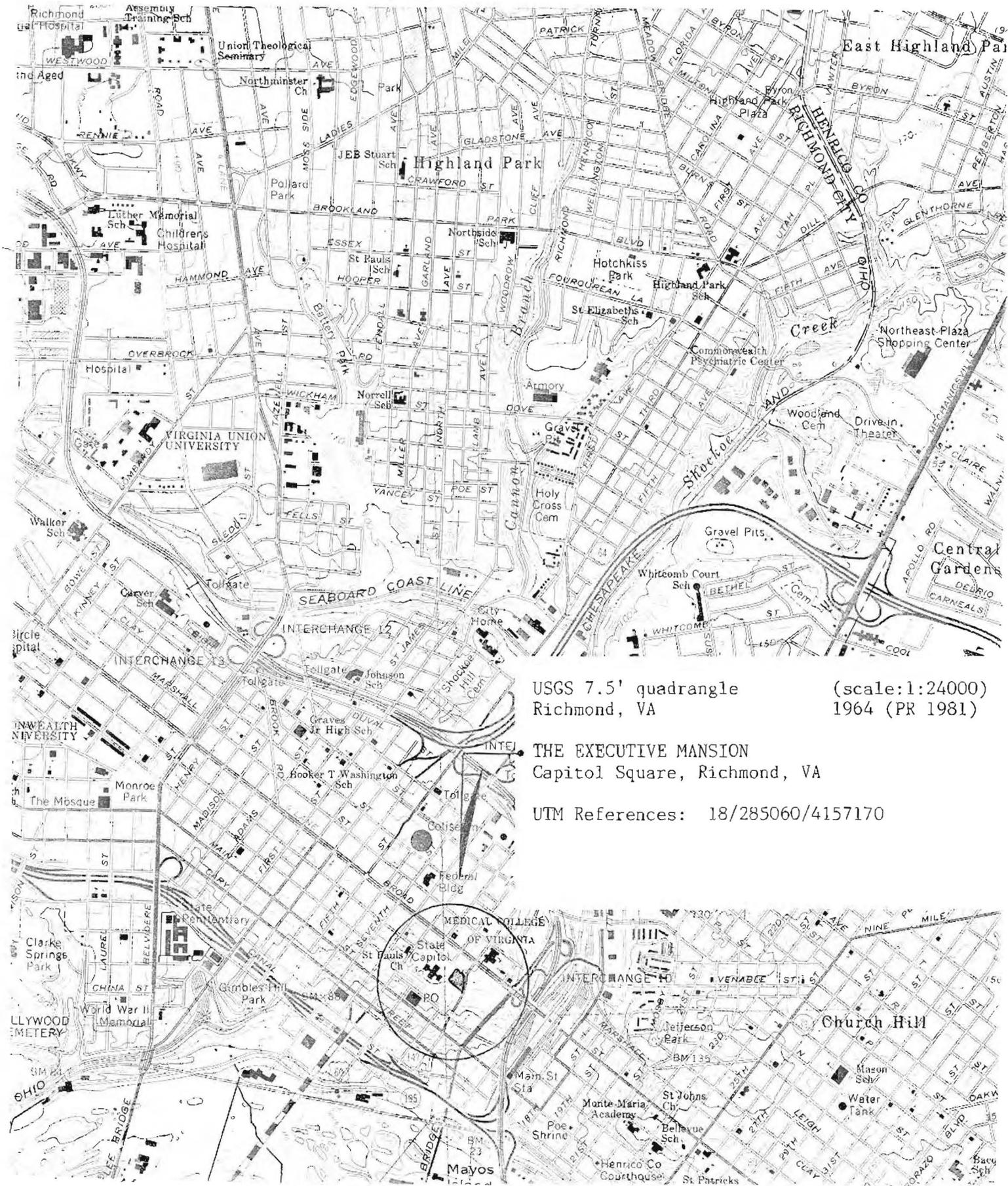
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