

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 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.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Restaurant, 2108 Jefferson AvenueOther names/site number: Ajax Restaurant, Grant's Restaurant, E&F Restaurant, Nannie's Grill, Pearlie's Grill, Pearlie's Restaurant, DHR ID#121-5669Name of related multiple property listing: The Negro Traveler's Green Book in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility (DHR ID# 500-0009)

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 2108 Jefferson AvenueCity or town: Newport News State: VA County: Independent CityNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

 Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> Date <u>5/28/26</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria. Signature of commenting official: Date Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial
Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; BRICK; STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

2108 Jefferson Avenue is located on a 0.06-acre, rectangular parcel on the east side of Jefferson Avenue in the East End of Newport News, Virginia. The rectangular, one-story, Commercial-style building was constructed c.1951 and is situated in the center of the block between Hampton Avenue and 21st Street. It is constructed to the lot lines on the north, west, and south, and is attached to the adjoining commercial buildings to the north and south. The building fronts a public concrete sidewalk along Jefferson Avenue that includes city-owned streetscaping such as planting beds, trash cans, and light posts. A City of Newport News historic marker commemorating Pearlie's Restaurant and its history is located within one of the city-owned planting beds. A small concrete pad is located behind the building and connects to a shared rear drive. The immediate surrounding area is primarily commercial, and the neighborhood was historically and is presently a majority African American neighborhood. Although there have been alterations to the building's materials, workmanship, and design, 2108 Jefferson Avenue retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, as well as its general form and massing.

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Narrative Description

SETTING

2108 Jefferson Avenue is located in the historically African American East End neighborhood in Newport News, Virginia. Situated in the middle of the 2100 block on the east side of Jefferson Avenue, 2108 Jefferson Avenue is located in the only relatively intact section of the historic African American commercial corridor along Jefferson Avenue. Other early- to mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings remain immediately to the north and south of the building, as well as across Jefferson Avenue to the west, such as the Moton Theatre (DHR ID# 121-5320). The surrounding area's built environment has been largely altered due to redevelopment projects beginning in the 1950s and extending to the present day; however, the building remains within the historically African American commercial strip that is adjacent to historically African American residential neighborhoods.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

2108 Jefferson Avenue, c.1952, Contributing Building

Exterior

2108 Jefferson Avenue is a one-story, rectangular, cinderblock Commercial-style building that was constructed c.1951 as a restaurant. The building adjoins neighboring early- to mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings on the north and south and is located across Jefferson Avenue from historic commercial buildings including the Moton Theatre (DHR ID# 121-5320). After purchasing the building in 2007, the current owners completed significant renovations to remedy extensive damage and deteriorating conditions in the building caused by vandalism and years of vacancy. The building retains its flat roof and flat parapet, and metal coping has been added to the top of the parapet. Overall, the façade generally reflects the intentions of its historic design, though changes have been made to accommodate its continued use as a restaurant and to bring the building into compliance with modern building codes. The façade retains its brick veneer, including the decorative brickwork signband and brick pilasters flanking the storefront. The previously painted-on sign was replaced with a backlit sign reading "Pearlie's" in a script font, and the brick within and around the signband was painted red. In order to protect the building from vandalism, an automatic metal rolldown door was installed above the storefront and a red awning installed to obscure the door when it is not deployed. Historically, the recessed storefront angled in toward a central, narrow, single-door entry that was flanked by large storefront windows above stuccoed bulkheads. To provide greater accessibility into the restaurant, the current owners replaced the single door with a central double-door entry, which required the storefront windows and bulkhead to be reduced in length to accommodate the larger opening. Replacement storefront windows flank the new double-door entry, and the bulkhead is now clad with square, black tiles. The previously concrete-covered ground in front of the recessed angled entry is now covered with multi-colored flagstone.

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C.2008, the current owners also constructed a rectangular concrete block addition onto the rear elevation of the original building to accommodate much-needed additional restroom, office, and storage space. At this time, the rear elevation was clad with brick veneer and designed to include a steel, single-leaf door. The ground behind the restaurant was also paved with concrete to allow for deliveries, staff parking, and easy access from the shared drive behind the building. The rear addition is not visible from the front of the building and can only be seen from the shared rear drive.

Interior

At the time of this nomination, the only identified interior photo of 2108 Jefferson Avenue that shows its previous interior configuration is a photograph that accompanied a 1980 *Daily Press* article on the restaurant (Figure 1). Based on the 1980 photo, the building historically included an open kitchen design, where the primary kitchen space was located along the south wall within the same space as the dining room, allowing customers to see the food being prepared. An interior wall appears to have divided some portion of the eastern end of the building from the dining room and kitchen space, and the ceiling appears finished, possibly with gypsum board.

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Figure 1: View through the storefront window of 2108 Jefferson Avenue as Pearlle's Grill, 1980. Cynthia Skove, "Dawn Breathes Life Into Day," *Daily Press* (June 26, 1980).

Much like the exterior, the interior was the subject of renovations to repair the dilapidated condition of the building c.2008. Prior to renovations, much of the building's interior finishes had been removed or were damaged beyond repair due to the years of vacancy and vandalism. During renovations, the roof was repaired and stabilized, and an acoustic drop ceiling was added to provide space for the stabilized roof structure, as well as electrical and mechanical equipment. Due to damage and modern building code requirements, the interior walls separating the primary public space from private spaces such as bathrooms and back-of-house areas were removed and new walls were constructed to provide code-compliant bathrooms and kitchen space to accommodate the new restaurant's needs. It was also during this time that the rear addition was constructed to provide space for an additional bathroom, dish room, office, and storage. Today, the primary dining space remains open on the southwest (front) end of the building, as it did historically. An L-shaped bar has been added in the southeast corner of the dining space along the west wall of the kitchen. The central hallway leads straight through the building to the rear door and provides access to bathrooms, an office, and storage on the north side of the hallway, and the kitchen, dish room, and additional storage on the south side. Due to flooding caused by a neighboring building, the previous flooring has been removed, exposing the historic concrete floors.

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INTEGRITY ANALYSIS

2108 Jefferson Avenue is located in the City of Newport News in an area that has experienced various waves of development and redevelopment since the mid-twentieth century. 2108 Jefferson Avenue is demonstrative of the ongoing campaigns of demolition, new building, and extensive renovation of buildings in the area; the extant building itself replaced an earlier mixed-use commercial building on the parcel when the purpose-built restaurant was constructed c.1951. Although much of the Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor has experienced redevelopment since the 1950s, a handful of other early- to mid-twentieth-century buildings remain in this area, including the Moton Theatre (DHR ID# 121-5320) on the west side of Jefferson Avenue, which is the last Black theater in Newport News.¹ This commercial area was historically part of the East End African American commercial corridor that served the surrounding African American community, that, according to census data, still exists today. As described in “*The Negro Traveler’s Green Book in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility*” Multiple Property Document (MPD), it is not atypical for commercial resources associated with the Green Book “to be in a location affected by the types of extensive demolition, displacement, new construction, and/or incompatible land uses and activities” that resulted from urban renewal and redevelopment projects in the mid- to late-twentieth century.² So, while the larger Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor setting has been impacted by decades of redevelopment, 2108 Jefferson Avenue retains integrity of **setting, location, feeling, and association**. The building remains in its historic location, surrounded by other remaining early- to mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings in the historically African American commercial corridor adjacent to a historically African American residential area, and continues to function as a restaurant. Additionally, the resource is one of only five extant Green Book sites in Newport News identified through the 2024 MPD survey, and it is the only identified Newport News Green Book site that is used today for the same purpose listed in the Green Book (Commercial: Restaurant).

Physical changes to the building have resulted in a loss of integrity of **materials, workmanship, and design**; however, these changes have contributed to the continued use of the building as an African American-owned and operated restaurant. The building retains its historic primary public circulation space, as the front-of-house dining area remains open. The rear addition and reconfiguration of interior walls provided restroom, kitchen, dish room, storage, and office space that was needed to operate a modern restaurant in compliance with modern building codes. Although the façade’s materials have been largely replaced and the storefront slightly altered, it still reflects the overall historic design intent. Though they have been re-painted, the façade retains the historic brick pilasters flanking the storefront, as well as the brick signband and decorative brickwork. While the storefront has been altered to accommodate a new central double door, in place of the historic single door, which required the storefront windows and bulkhead to be reduced in length, this change provided the restaurant with a more accessible

¹ “The Moton: not just a place to go,” *Daily Press* (August 14, 2019).

² Kayla Halberg, Ashlen Stump, and Lena McDonald, “*The Negro Traveler’s Green Book in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility*,” Multiple Property Document Form (MPD), 2024. On file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond; draft pending review by the State Review Board and Virginia Board of Historic Resources.

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entry to support its continued operation. The new design retained the angled, recessed storefront with a central entry and the use of large storefront windows above bulkheads, though with a different bulkhead cladding material. Lastly, the rear addition was constructed of the same materials as the original building (concrete block with brick veneer), and does not overwhelm the original building, nor is it visible from anywhere other than the rear shared drive. Overall, from the historic commercial corridor, 2108 Jefferson Avenue continues to convey the setting, location, feeling, and association of an African American-owned business in an historically African American area in Newport News and retains its overall historic design intent.

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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.)

- ☐ 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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK
COMMERCE
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

c.1951 – 1968

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

2108 Jefferson Avenue in Newport News, Virginia is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in association with “*The Negro Traveler’s Green Book* in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility” Multiple Property Document (MPD) under the MPD resource category Commercial: Restaurant. Constructed c.1951 as a purpose-built restaurant building, 2108 Jefferson Avenue has housed a variety of African American-owned and operated restaurants since its construction, including multiple African American women-owned restaurants, and it replaced an earlier commercial building that had housed African American businesses since the 1920s. In 1962, 2108 Jefferson Avenue was listed in *The Green Book* as Grant’s Restaurant.³ 2108 Jefferson Avenue is locally significant under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Ethnic Heritage: Black, Commerce, and Social History** as one of the last remaining historically African American-owned and operated restaurants—including ownership and operation by African American women—in the historically African American, East End Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor. Serving the Newport News East End community during and after segregation, 2108 Jefferson Avenue is one of only five extant *Green Book* sites in Newport News that were identified during the 2024 MPD survey, and it is the only identified Newport News *Green Book* resource that continues to operate with the same use as its *Green Book* listing (Commercial: Restaurant). 2108 Jefferson Avenue has a period of significance beginning c.1951 with the building’s construction and ending in 1968 when the restaurant became Pearlie’s Grill, opened by Pearlie B. Rice.

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

History

2108 Jefferson Avenue, currently known as Pearlie’s Restaurant, is located in the area known as the East End in Newport News, Virginia. Although the existing building was constructed c.1951, the site itself has historically been the location of primarily African American-owned and operated businesses.

Newport News’s East End

The area that became known as Newport News’s “East End” developed on the east side of the Chesapeake & Ohio (C & O, now CSX) rail lines and was considered a suburb of the Newport

³ Although Grant’s Restaurant was listed in the Green Book at 2108 Jefferson Avenue between 1962 and 1967, research has shown that Grant’s Restaurant was only located at 2108 Jefferson between 1961 and 1962, after which time it moved to another location in Newport News.

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News downtown city core that was located along the James River.⁴ Development in the East End began around the 1880s to 1890s but saw a significant increase in the early 1900s following the construction of three bridges across the C & O main line railroad tracks.⁵ In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many of the city's Jewish and African American residents lived in the East End around Jefferson Avenue. According to the "Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, Virginia" report by Roberta G. Reid with Martha W. McCartney,

"The pattern of racial distribution in Newport News appears to have been established early on, for Collis P. Huntington selected the western part of the town (abutting the James) as the area in which he invested the bulk of his money. It is also significant to note that in 1880, when the Old Dominion Land Company donated land upon which separate schools were to be built for blacks and whites, the black children's school was on the eastern side of the railroad tracks."⁶

By the 1930s, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) grading maps (known as "redlining maps") identified the East End area roughly surrounding Jefferson Avenue between 36th Street and 15th Street as having a 95% African American population.⁷ The East End's physical separation from Downtown Newport News by the C & O railroad tracks led to the area's retention of a "somewhat separate identity," and likely further contributed to the area's racially segregated development patterns.⁸ This also led to the development of the African American commercial corridor along Jefferson Avenue to serve the East End's African American community, while the city's White population was served by the Washington Avenue commercial corridor. Based on the 1930s HOLC redlining maps, this commercial corridor stretched along Jefferson Avenue from 25th Street to 19th Street (Figure 2).

⁴ Roberta G. Reid with Martha W. McCartney, "Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, Virginia," for the City of Newport News (September 30, 1990), 23. Accessed October 14, 2025. https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/SpecialCollections/NN-030_Recon_Survey_Historic_AH_Newport_News_1990_DHR_report.pdf; City of Newport News Communications Department, "History of Consolidation," City of Newport News. Accessed October 14, 2025. <https://www.nnva.gov/282/History-of-Consolidation>.

⁵ Reid with McCartney, "Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, Virginia," pg. 23, 91-92.

⁶ Reid with McCartney, "Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, Virginia," pg. 91-92.

⁷ University of Richmond, "Newport News, Virginia," Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America. Accessed October 14, 2025.

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/VA/NewportNews/areas#loc=16/36.9758/-76.4195&adview=full>.

⁸ Reid with McCartney, "Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, Virginia," pg. 68.

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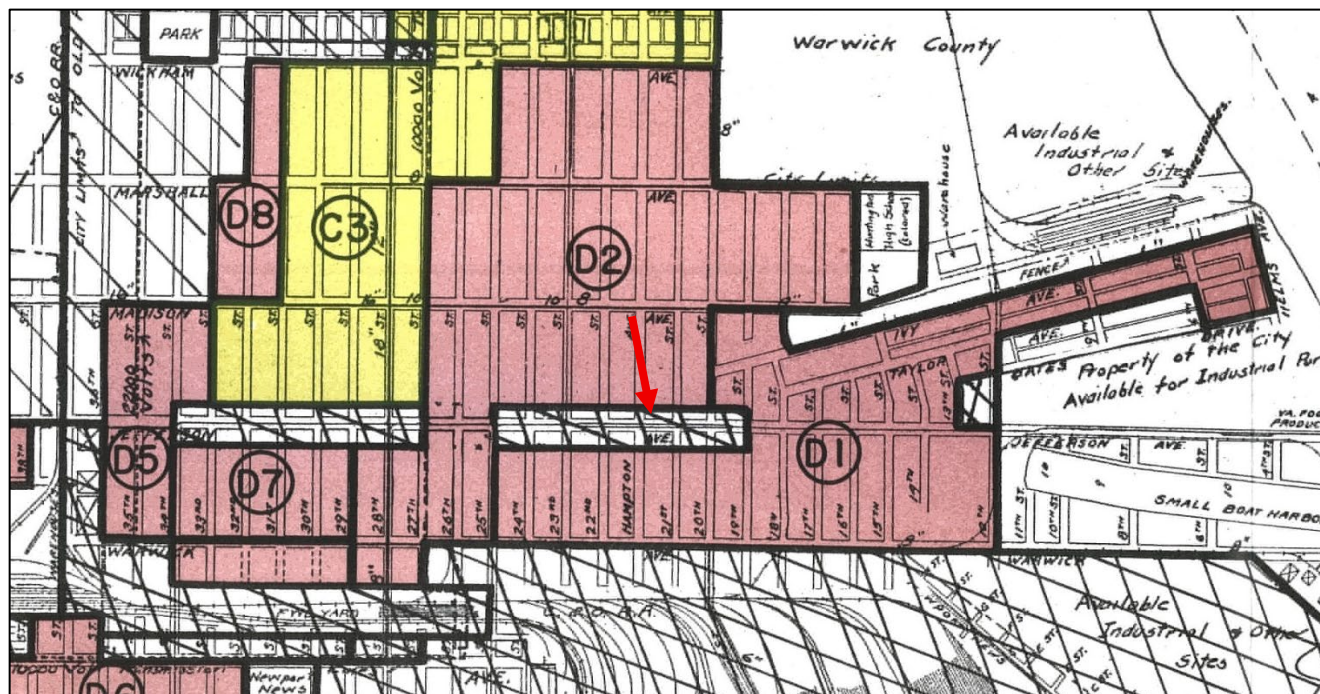


Figure 2: Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) map showing a portion of East End Newport News. In this map, the areas shaded red had a predominately African American population. The areas marked by the crosshatch were commercial areas. The red arrow marks the location of 2108 Jefferson Avenue. For more information and full HOLC maps, visit: "Mapping Inequality: Redlining In New Deal America," University of Richmond. <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>.

2108 Jefferson Avenue

Located within the historic commercial corridor along Jefferson Avenue, 2108 Jefferson Avenue first appears on Sanborn maps in 1926 as a two-story building labeled as a store with a one-story addition on the rear (Figure 3).⁹ According to Sanborn maps and city directories, the first floor of this building served at varying times as a restaurant, barber shop, and grocery or market, and the second floor included residential apartment space. Between 1923 and c.1950, the building housed primarily, if not exclusively, African American businesses and residents. Tenants in the first-floor commercial space included Carrington's Café (c.1923-c.1926), the Tavern Restaurant (The Tavern, c.1927-c.1931, 1933-c.1941), Blue Goose Café (1933), Cozy Inn Dinette (c.1944-c.1945), Henderson Grocery (c.1946-1947), Gilman's Market (c.1949), and Andrew's Barber Shop (1950-1951).¹⁰

⁹ Sanborn Map Company, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Newport News, Virginia," (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), page 41.

¹⁰ Hill Directory Co.'s *Incorporated Newport News, Kecoughtan, Hampton, Phoebus and Old Point, VA. City Directory, 1923*. (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc. Publishers, 1923). Ancestry.com. *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Welcome to our City, Elks," *New Journal and Guide* (May 15, 1926); *Hill's Newport News (Virginia) City Directory, 1927*. (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers, 1927). Ancestry.com. *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; *Hill's Newport News (Virginia) City Directory, 1929*. (Richmond:

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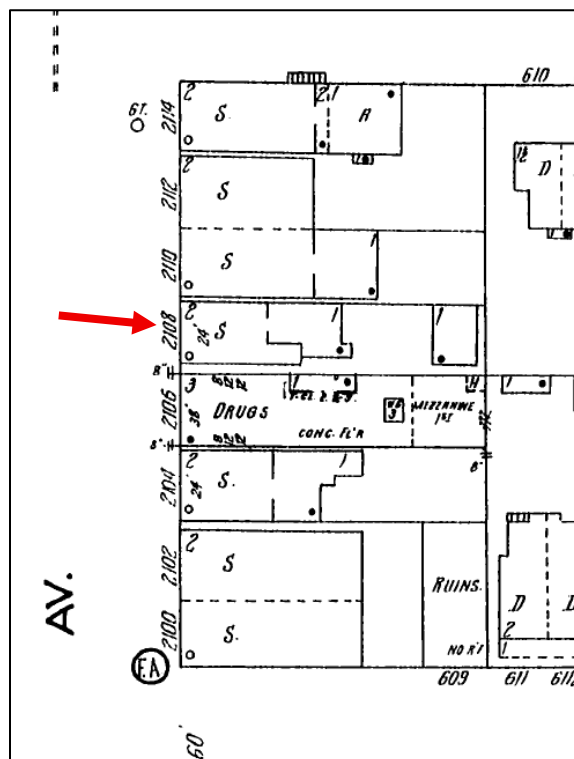


Figure 3: 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (page 41). In this map, 2108 Jefferson Avenue (red arrow) is labeled a two-story store ('S') with a one-story rear addition.

c.1920 2108 Jefferson Avenue Building			
Years of Occupation	Business Name	Type of Business	Owner Name(s), If known
c.1923 – c.1926	Carrington's Café	Restaurant	
c.1927 – c.1931	Tavern Restaurant	Restaurant	William A. Thomas; Violet Morton; William A. Ford
1933	Blue Goose Café	Restaurant	Henry E. Harrington
c.1933 – c.1942	Tavern Restaurant	Restaurant	John W. Cross; C. H. Cross; Lillian Hughes
c.1944 – c.1945	Cozy Inn Dinette	Restaurant	Ivory Mitter
c.1946 – c.1947	Henderson Grocery	Market	
c.1949	Gilman's Market	Market	
1950 – 1951	Andrew's Barber Shop	Barber Shop	

Table 1: This table identifies the businesses that occupied the c.1920 building located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue before it was demolished c.1951. Information in this table is based on Newport News City Directories and Newspaper Advertisements.

Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers, 1929). Ancestry.com. *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Visit The Tavern," *New Journal and Guide* (May 30, 1931); "Blue Goose Café," *New Journal and Guide* (June 3, 1933); "Restaurant Man Opposes Repeal of 18th Amendment," *New Journal and Guide* (July 22, 1933); "Now Open Under New Management The Tavern," *New Journal and Guide* (October 14, 1933).

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The 1951 Newport News City Directory is the last year to list 2108 Jefferson Avenue as having a second-floor tenant; in 1952, the address is listed as the “Ajax Restaurant” and there is no entry indicating a second-floor tenant.¹¹ By 1955, the Sanborn Fire Insurance map for this block depicts a one-story, cinderblock building with concrete floors that is labeled as a restaurant at 2108 Jefferson Avenue (Figure 4).¹² Since city directory entries beginning in 1952 no longer list a second-floor tenant, and the commercial tenant also changes to the Ajax Restaurant in this year, it is estimated that the new one-story building was constructed c.1951.

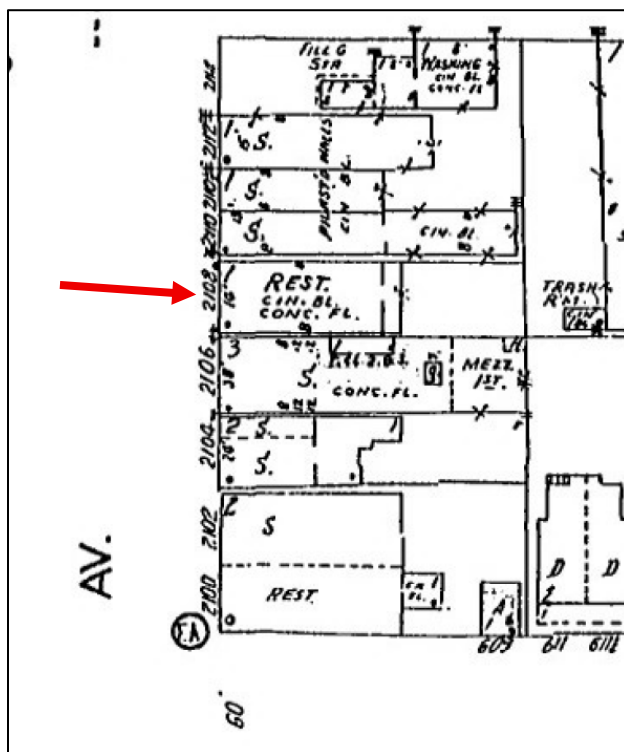


Figure 4: 1955 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (page 41). This map shows 2108 Jefferson Avenue as a one-story, rectangular, cinderblock (“CIN. BL”) restaurant (“REST.”) with concrete floors (“CONC. FL.”). The map also depicts the historic commercial nature of the block.

¹¹ *Hill's Newport News (Warwick County, VA.) City Directory, 1951* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc. Publishers, 1951). Ancestry.com. *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; *Hill's Newport News (Warwick County, VA.) City Directory, 1952* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc. Publishers, 1952). Ancestry.com. *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹² Sanborn Map Company, “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Newport News, Virginia,” (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926 Republished 1955), page 41.

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Based on Newspaper advertisements and City Directories, the Ajax Restaurant remained located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue until 1961. During this time, the restaurant was listed for sale numerous times; however, if the property did change ownership during this period, the name remained the same through early 1961. At the time of this nomination, the ownership of Ajax Restaurant has not been identified, but the restaurant appears to have had an African American staff and was located within the historically African American East End neighborhood. Newspaper advertisements sought “colored” men and women at various times for restaurant work, and one sale advertisement listed the restaurant as being located in the “colored district.”¹³ During this time, the restaurant was advertised as having air conditioning, freezers, seating for 50 guests, and a “good steady,” “most profitable business.”¹⁴

After being advertised for sale again in October 1960, the property was listed as Grant’s Restaurant in a newspaper advertisement in April 1961.¹⁵ At the time of the 1961 advertisement, Mildred Ann Futrell Grant, an African American entrepreneur, was listed as the sole owner of Grant’s Restaurant.¹⁶ According to Grant’s obituary, she was a member of the First Baptist Church East End congregation and she continued to own and manage Grant’s Restaurant until her death in 1998; later in her life she owned and managed the restaurant with her son Robert Lee Grant, during which time the restaurant was not located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue.¹⁷

c.1951 2108 Jefferson Avenue Building		
Years of Occupation	Business Name	Owner Name(s), If Known
1951 – 1960	Ajax Restaurant	
1961 – 1962	Grant’s Restaurant	Mildred Ann Futrell Grant
1964 – 1965	E&F Restaurant	
1965 – 1967	Nannie’s Grill	Lulu R. Clark
1968 – c.2000	Pearlie’s Grill	Pearlie B. Rice Viola B. & Sylvester Fooks
2007 – Present	Pearlie’s Restaurant	Evelyn & Mikel Azeem

Table 2: This table identifies the businesses that occupied the existing c.1951 building located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue. Information in this table is based on Newport News City Directories and Newspaper Articles and Advertisements.

¹³ “Colored Girl for Restaurant Work,” *Daily Press* (February 17, 1953); “Help Wanted, Female...,” *Daily Press* (July 6, 1953); “Help Wanted, Female...,” *Daily Press* (March 31, 1954); “Help Wanted, Male...,” *Daily Press* (August 16, 1954); “Help Wanted, Female,” *Daily Press* (March 3, 1957); “Help Wanted, Female,” *Daily Press* (October 29, 1959); “Business Opportunity,” *Daily Press* (August 8, 1960).

¹⁴ “Business for Sale,” *New Journal and Guide* (December 25, 1954); “For SALE!” *New Journal and Guide* (January 18, 1958); “Business Opportunity,” *Daily Press* (October 22, 1960).

¹⁵ “Business Opportunity,” *Daily Press* (October 22, 1960); “Beer and Wine Notices,” *Daily Press* (April 5, 1961).

¹⁶ “Mildred A.F. Grant,” *Daily Press* (September 26, 1998); “Beer and Wine Notices,” *Daily Press* (April 5, 1961).

¹⁷ “Mildred A.F. Grant,” *Daily Press* (September 26, 1998).

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The Green Book & 2108 Jefferson Avenue

As described in more detail in the MPD, *The Negro Traveler's Green Book*, also published as *The Negro Motorist Green Book* and *The Travelers' Green Book*, was first published in 1936 by Victor Hugo Green and his wife, Alma Green. The *Green Book* advertised itself with slogans such as "Assured Protection for the Negro Traveler" and "Vacation Without Aggravation" and included listings of tourist homes, guest houses, hotels, motels, restaurants, night clubs, tailors, vacation resorts, stores, beauty parlors, and barber shops, by state and city. "That Victor Green chose to include businesses such as golf courses, country clubs, state and national parks, and other recreational pursuits also celebrated activities beyond just basic survival. [He] tried to elevate the traveling experience from survival to enjoyment, and eventually to social action."¹⁸

Both the c.1920 and c.1951 buildings located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue were listed in *The Green Book*. From 1939 to 1950, the c.1920 iteration of the 2108 Jefferson Avenue building was listed in *The Green Book* as "The Tavern" or "The Tavern Rest" (Restaurant). Following the construction of the extant c.1951 building, and for its duration as "Ajax Restaurant," 2108 Jefferson Avenue was not listed in *The Green Book*, despite its continued use as an African American restaurant. Beginning in 1962, and lasting until 1967, Grant's Restaurant at 2108 Jefferson Avenue was listed in *The Green Book* as a Newport News restaurant, often with the advertisement "Best in Home Cooked Food" (Figure 5).¹⁹ Despite this listing in *The Green Book* until 1967, Grant's Restaurant was only located at 2108 Jefferson Avenue from 1961 to 1962; after this time the restaurant relocated to another commercial space in Newport News, but *The Green Book* listing was not updated with the restaurant's new address.

¹⁸ Halberg, Stump, and McDonald, "The Negro Traveler's Green Book in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility," National Park Service, African American Civil Rights Network, "Green Book Historic Context and AACRN Listing Guidance," no date, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/green-book-historic-context-and-aacrn-listing-guidance-african-american-civil-rights-network.htm>.

¹⁹ Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, "Green Book: 1962: Guide for Travel & Vacations" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2025. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9ab2e8f0-1a73-0132-95bd-58d385a7bbd0>; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, "Travelers' Green Book: 1963-64 International Edition: For Vacation Without Aggravation" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2025. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c4391ba0-1a76-0132-7cae-58d385a7bbd0>; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, "Travelers' Green Book: 1966-67 International Edition: For Vacation Without Aggravation" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2025. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/fdb5a8d0-1a75-0132-d947-58d385a7bbd0>.

Restaurant, 2108 Jefferson Avenue

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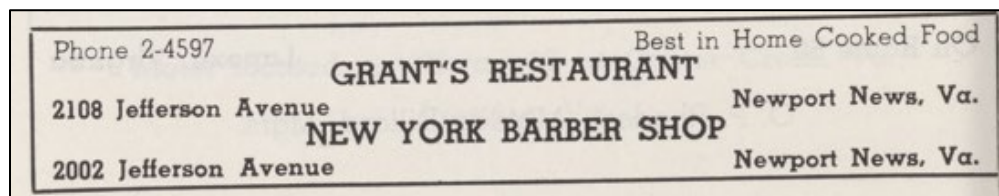


Figure 5: Grant's Restaurant “Best in Home Cooked Food” advertisement from the 1962 Green Book. “New York Barber Shop” listed at 2002 Jefferson Avenue is no longer extant.

Although only accurately listed in *The Green Book* for one year (1962), the advertisement for Grant's Restaurant not only advertised an African American-owned business, but an African American *woman*-owned business. As discussed in the MPD, women featured prominently among African American business owners who advertised in *The Green Book*, as operating their own small business provided them with a level of independence and autonomy that defied the limitations imposed on them by Jim Crow laws and White patriarchy. Many of the African American women business owners advertising in *The Green Book* owned businesses such as tourist homes and beauty salons, which were typically associated with women's roles in African American and wider American society in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Grant's Restaurant is notable, however, as at the time of its listing in *The Green Book* and its occupation of 2108 Jefferson Avenue, Mildred Ann Futrell Grant was the sole owner of the business (Figure 6).²⁰

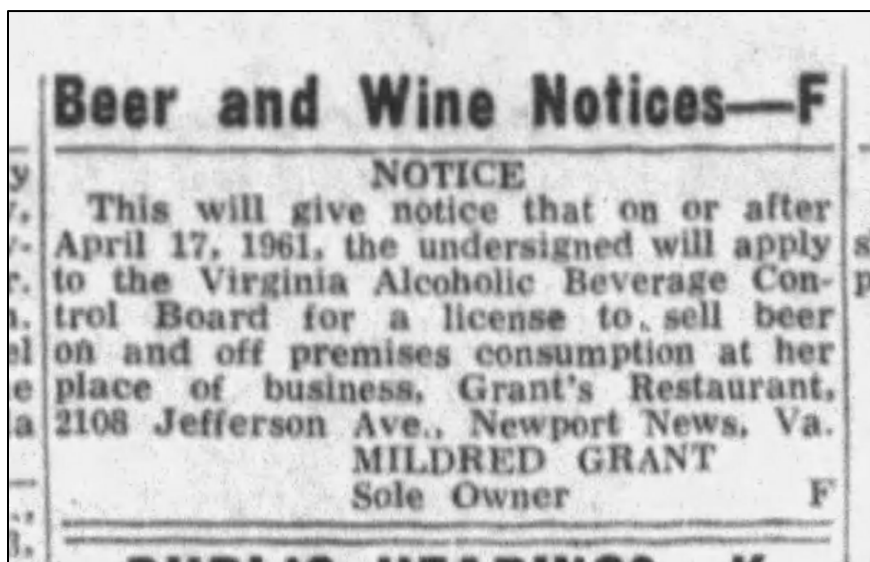


Figure 6: Advertisement listing Mildred Grant as the Sole Owner of Grant's Restaurant at 2108 Jefferson Avenue. “NOTICE,” Daily Press (April 5, 1961).

²⁰ "NOTICE," Daily Press (April 5, 1961).

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Women-Owned Restaurants in 2108 Jefferson Avenue

According to city directories and newspaper articles, after Grant's Restaurant relocated from 2108 Jefferson Avenue, the building then housed E&F Restaurant from 1964 to 1965, Nannie's Grill from 1965 to 1967, and Pearlie's Grill beginning in 1968. Like Grant's Restaurant (1961-1962) owned by Mildred Grant, both Nannie's Grill and Pearlie's Grill were operated by African American women. Owned by Nannie Rosetta Jones until her death in 1963, Nannie's Grill relocated to 2108 Jefferson Avenue in 1965 and was owned by Jones's sister, Lulu R. Clark.²¹ Clark operated Nannie's Grill at 2108 Jefferson Avenue until 1967, and in 1968, Pearlie B. Rice opened Pearlie's Grill in the building.

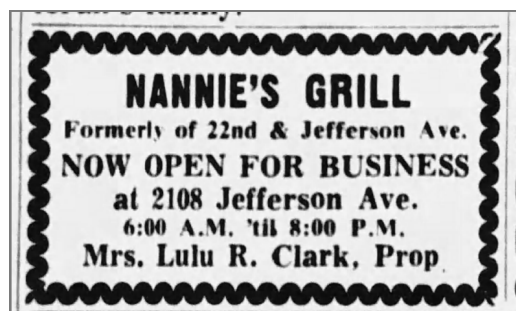


Figure 7: Advertisement for Nannie's Grill (left), and photo of Pearlie's Grill owner Pearlie B. Rice (right). "Nannie's Grill," *Daily Press* (September 26, 1965); "Pearlie B. Rice," *Daily Press* (September 28, 1999).

Pearlie's Grill became a staple in the East End neighborhood, serving longshoremen, shipyard and railroad workers, and other community members through the early twenty-first century. Pearlie B. Rice operated the restaurant until her death at the age of 79 in 1999, after which ownership passed to Rice's sister Viola B. Fooks and her husband, Sylvester Fooks. In the early 2000s, the restaurant closed and remained vacant until it was purchased by Mikel and Evelyn Azeem in 2007. Since Mikel's passing in 2022, Evelyn has continued operating Pearlie's, carrying on the legacy of African American women operating successful restaurants in 2108 Jefferson Avenue.

Urban Renewal & Redevelopment in the East End

Between c.1940 and c.1980, historic African American neighborhoods experienced "extensive demolition, displacement, and new construction...resulting from highway construction and urban renewal projects carried out by federal, state, and local governments."²² Beginning in the 1950s, the East End neighborhood, part of the Southeast Community (SEC), became an area of focus for

²¹ "Nannie's Grill," *Daily Press* (September 26, 1965); "Mrs. Nannie Jones," *Daily Press* (May 19, 1963).

²² Halberg, Stump, and McDonald, "The Negro Traveler's Green Book in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility."

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redevelopment efforts in Newport News.²³ Acres of land along Jefferson Avenue between 14th and 21st Streets were cleared for the Dickerson Courts (1953) and John H. Ridley Place (1954) housing developments.²⁴ Efforts for redeveloping the SEC continued through the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1976 the privately owned Walker Village Apartments (now Newport Harbor) were constructed on the east side of Jefferson Avenue between Hampton Avenue and 25th Street.²⁵ Interstate 664, connecting to the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel, was constructed through the area in the 1980s.²⁶ Gradually, dilapidated and/or vacant buildings have been demolished along the Jefferson Avenue corridor, some of which have been replaced by infill construction, while others have resulted in open lots. Despite the redevelopment, 2108 Jefferson Avenue survives within one of the few remaining areas in the historic commercial corridor that retains other early- to mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings.

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: Black, Commerce, and Social History

2108 Jefferson Avenue is significant at the local level under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black, Commerce, and Social History as one of the last remaining historically African American-owned and operated restaurants—including ownership and operation by African American women—in the historically African American East End, Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor. Serving the Newport News East End community during and after segregation, 2108 Jefferson Avenue is one of only five extant *Green Book* sites in Newport News that were identified during the 2024 MPD survey, and the only one that continues to function in its historic use.

As described in *The Negro Traveler's Green Book* in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility Multiple Property Document (MPD; DHR ID# 500-0009), commercial resources, such as restaurants, “represent the commercial success of African American businessmen and -women, as well as places that were identified as providing safe access to various business types in segregation-era Virginia. ... In urban areas, Commercial Resources were located within a segregated Black neighborhood, where the setting may have been entirely commercial in character or have included a mix of commercial and other uses, such as residential, recreational, educational, religious, and social.”²⁷

2108 Jefferson Avenue is located within the historically African American East End neighborhood along what was historically the local African American commercial corridor on

²³ John V. Quarstein and Parke S. Rouse, *Newport News: A Centennial History*, (Newport News, Va: City of Newport News, 1996), page 180.

²⁴ Quarstein and Rouse, *Newport News: A Centennial History*, 180.

²⁵ City of Newport News: Department of Development and Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority: Community Development, “Consolidated Plan for Housing & Community Development 2016 – 2020: Annual Action Plan: Year: One 2015 – 2016,” (Newport News: City of Newport News: Department of Development, 2015), pg 187. Accessed October 14, 2025. https://nnrha.net/docs/ConPlan_Draft.pdf.

²⁶ “Interstate 664 Virginia,” Interstate-Guide.com. Accessed October 29, 2025. <https://www.interstate-guide.com/i-664-va/>.

²⁷ Halberg, Stump, and McDonald, “*The Negro Traveler's Green Book* in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility.”

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Jefferson Avenue. The purpose-built restaurant building has been home to African American restaurants since its construction c.1951, and at least three of those restaurants (Grant's Restaurant, Nannie's Grill, and Pearlie's Grill) were owned and operated by African American women. During its time as Grant's Restaurant, the building was listed in *The Green Book* (1962), providing African American travelers with a safe location to eat in segregation-era Virginia. During and after segregation, the restaurants located in 2108 Jefferson Avenue served the local East End African American community, local longshoremen, shipyard and railroad workers, and African American travelers, providing warm, home-cooked-style meals. Although, like many African American neighborhoods, the surrounding area has changed significantly due to redevelopment beginning in the 1950s, 2108 Jefferson Avenue continues to operate as a locally-, African American-owned restaurant along Jefferson Avenue. The restaurant continues to serve the East End neighborhood and, as described in the MPD, its history is "illustrative of the many challenges overcome by Black individuals and communities prior to and during the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation and establishment of civil rights for African Americans at a level unprecedented in the nation's history."²⁸

Registration Requirements:

2108 Jefferson Avenue meets the registration requirements of Commercial Resources as developed in *The Negro Traveler's Green Book* in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility Multiple Property Document (MPD). While the architectural details of Commercial Resources associated with *The Green Book* vary, 2108 Jefferson Avenue embodies the architectural and thematic elements of the resource type. The one-story, brick, purpose-built restaurant building includes a central entry flanked by large storefront windows, signage advertising the business's name above the storefront, and a low sloped roof behind a simple brick parapet. The building retains its historic primary public circulation space, as the front-of-house dining area remains open. Although there have been physical changes to the building that have resulted in a loss of integrity of materials, workmanship, and design, these changes have contributed to the continued use of the building as an African American-owned and -operated restaurant and the building retains the general design intent. The building retains integrity of setting, location, feeling, and association. 2108 Jefferson Avenue has historically been, and continues to be, used as a restaurant in a historically segregated, African American commercial corridor adjacent to a historically African American residential area. It has housed a variety of African American-owned and -operated restaurants since its construction, including multiple African American women-owned restaurants, and in 1962 it was listed in *The Green Book* as Grant's restaurant. Additionally, the resource is one of only five extant *Green Book* sites in Newport News identified through the 2024 MPD survey, and it is the only identified Newport News *Green Book* site that is used today for the same purpose listed in *The Green Book*. With its intact representative features, 2108 Jefferson Avenue meets the registration requirements of the MPD under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, Commerce, and Social History.

²⁸ Halberg, Stump, and McDonald, "*The Negro Traveler's Green Book* in Virginia: Race, Space, and Mobility."

Restaurant, 2108 Jefferson Avenue
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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/fdb5a8d0-1a75-0132-d947-58d385a7bbd0>

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Sanborn Map Company. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Newport News, Virginia." New York: Sanborn Map Company. 1926, Republished 1955.

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Name of Property

City of Newport News, VA
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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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia;
City of Newport News Public Library; Property Owner's Files

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 121-6559

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.06

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 36.978642 Longitude: -76.419031

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

The 2108 Jefferson Avenue boundary includes all of parcel 312030209 as recorded by the City of Newport News, Virginia, and as noted in the City's real estate assessor's records. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached scaled location and sketch maps.

Restaurant, 2108 Jefferson Avenue
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The 2108 Jefferson Avenue boundary is the current legal parcel boundary associated with the property. The boundary is also historically associated with the nominated property throughout the building's period of significance. The property's historic setting and all known historic resources have been included within the nominated area's boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ashlen Stump
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group
street & number: 536 W 35th Street
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508
e-mail: admin@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com
telephone: 757-923-1900
date: November 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Restaurant, 2108 Jefferson Avenue
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Photo Log

Name of Property: 2108 Jefferson Avenue

City or Vicinity: Newport News

County: N/A

State: Virginia

Photographer: Ashlen Stump (AS)

Date Photographed: October 15, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo # of 20	Description	Camera View	Photographer
1	Façade (SW elevation)	NE	AS
2	Façade and adjacent properties	SE	AS
3	Façade and adjacent properties	N	AS
4	Rear (NE) elevation	NW	AS
5	Interior, dining room	SW	AS
6	Interior, dining room	N	AS
7	Interior, dining room	NE	AS
8	Interior, dining room	E	AS
9	Interior, dining room	SE	AS
10	Interior, dining room and hall	N	AS
11	Interior, dining room and hall	SW	AS
12	Interior, kitchen	NE	AS
13	Interior, kitchen	SW	AS
14	Interior, dish room	NE	AS
15	Interior, dish room	E	AS
16	Interior, bathroom	NW	AS
17	Interior, bathroom	NE	AS
18	Interior, hall	NE	AS
19	Interior, hall	SW	AS
20	Interior, storage room	N	AS

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Embedded Images Log

Figure Number	Caption
1	View through the storefront window of 2108 Jefferson Avenue as Pearlie's Grill, 1980. Courtesy of the Daily Press. Cynthia Skove, "Dawn Breathes Life Into Day," <i>Daily Press</i> (June 26, 1980).
2	Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) map showing a portion of East End Newport News. In this map, the areas shaded red had a predominately African American population. The areas marked by the crosshatch were commercial areas. The red arrow marks the location of 2108 Jefferson Avenue. For more information and full HOLC maps, visit: "Mapping Inequality: Redlining In New Deal America," University of Richmond. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/ .
3	1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (page 41). In this map, 2108 Jefferson Avenue (red arrow) is labeled a two-story store ('S') with a one-story rear addition.
4	1955 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (page 41). This map shows 2108 Jefferson Avenue as a one-story, rectangular, cinderblock ("CIN. BL") restaurant ("REST.") with concrete floors ("CONC. FL."). The map also depicts the historic commercial nature of the block.
5	Grant's Restaurant "Best in Home Cooked Food" advertisement from the 1962 Green Book. "New York Barber Shop" listed at 2002 Jefferson Avenue is no longer extant.
6	Advertisement listing Mildred Grant as the Sole Owner of Grant's Restaurant at 2108 Jefferson Avenue. "NOTICE," <i>Daily Press</i> (April 5, 1961).
7	Advertisement for Nannie's Grill (left), and photo of Pearlie's Grill owner Pearlie B. Rice (right). "Nannie's Grill," <i>Daily Press</i> (September 26, 1965); "Pearlie B. Rice," <i>Daily Press</i> (September 28, 1999).

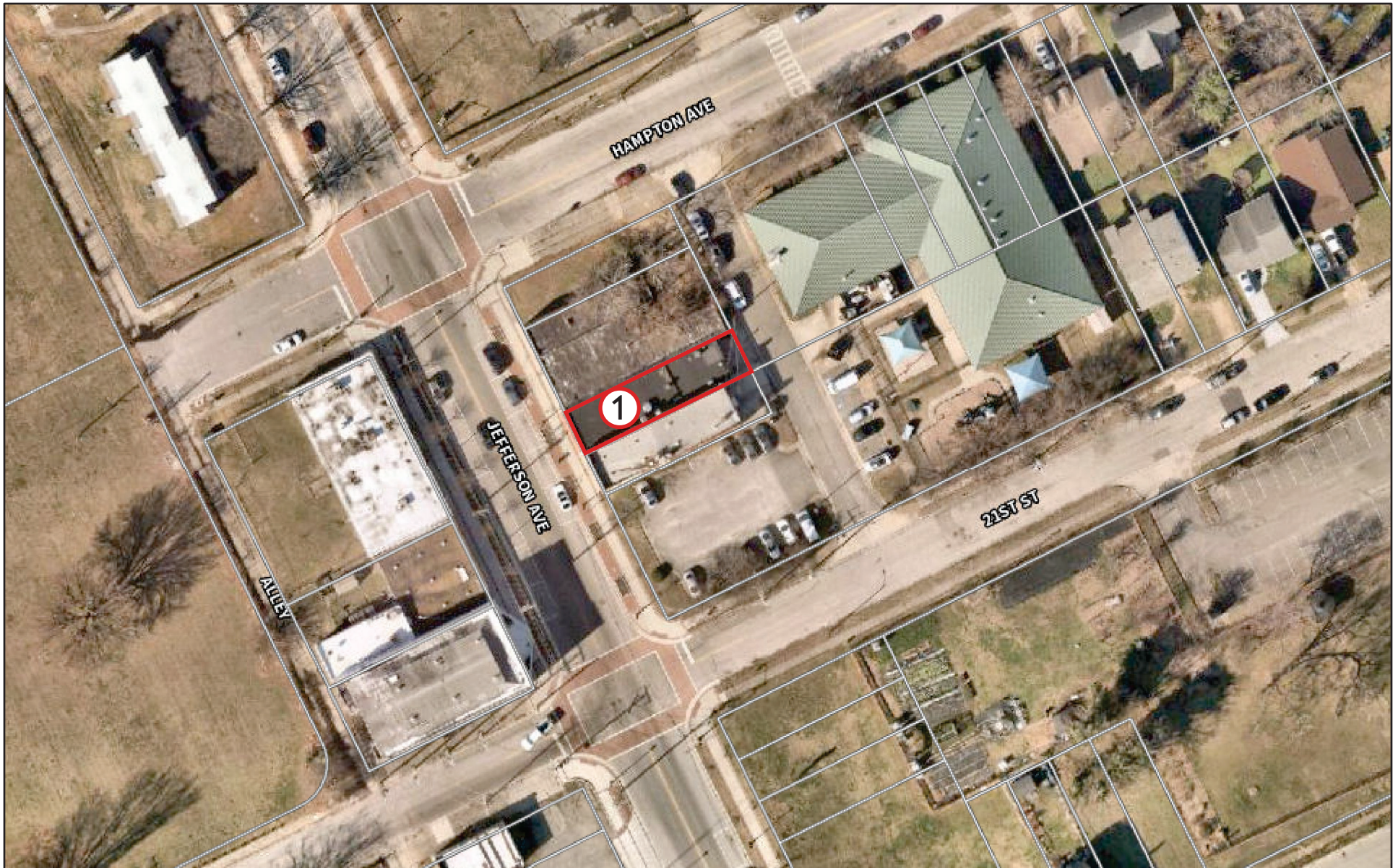
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

2108 Jefferson Avenue Location Map (DHR ID # 121-5669)



10/20/2025, 10:26:41 AM

 Parcel

 2108 Jefferson Avenue Boundary

1) Coordinate Points: 36.978642, -76.419031

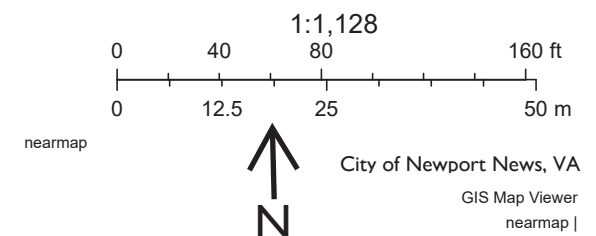
Parcel ID: 312030209

2108 Jefferson Avenue

Newport News, Virginia

DHR ID# 121-5669

2025



2108 Jefferson Avenue Sketch Map (DHR ID # 121-5669)



10/20/2025, 10:28:25 AM

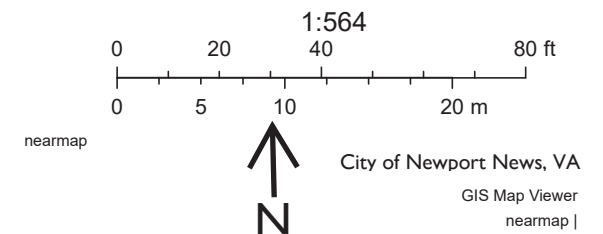
-  Parcel
-  2108 Jefferson Avenue Boundary

2108 Jefferson Avenue

Newport News, Virginia

DHR ID# 121-5669

2025



2108 Jefferson Avenue Exterior Photo Key (DHR ID # 121-5669)



10/20/2025, 10:28:25 AM

-  Parcel
-  2108 Jefferson Avenue Boundary

 Photo Number & Direction

2108 Jefferson Avenue
Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID# 121-5669
2025

