



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

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

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 127-6817

1. General Property Information

Property name: Virginia Steel Company

Property address: 2031 Westwood Avenue

City or Town: Richmond

Zip code: 23230

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

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

Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 4.760 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban X Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____

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

The Virginia Steel Company property sits in an industrial neighborhood of the City of Richmond near its border with Henrico County. Nestled between Westwood Avenue on the north, Rosedale Avenue on the east, and an adjacent parcel on the south, a notable feature of this setting is the rail line to the west. Historically, spurs of the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad entered the property to be used by Virginia Steel; remnants of these spurs remain inside and outside of the building. Through multiple expansions over the history of the company, Virginia Steel's plant fills the majority of the 4.76-acre parcel with small parking areas to its north and west. A chain link fence defines the original northern boundary of the parcel which follows the earlier, planned alignment of Westwood Avenue. Outside of the chain link fence north of the plant, sits a second building associated with the resource.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): No Discernible Style

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Carl Messerschmidt (one addition), otherwise unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc., James Fox & Sons, Inc.

Date of construction (can be approximate): Prior to 1925, 1947-1949, 1950, 1955, 1959, 1966, 1968, 1970

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

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

Numerous additions and building campaigns have resulted in the enormous Virginia Steel Company's plant having a wide and shallow U-form. The structure as a whole is constructed of metal, concrete block, and brick and features various roof and window types. The wings at either end are immense spaces clad in corrugated metal siding and protected by metal gable roofs. Long ribbons of metal industrial windows provide light to the spaces; the western wing features two rows of windows in the tall space. The wings have both pedestrian entrances and large, metal roll-up and sliding doors to accommodate trucks and rail cars.

The center portion of the building consists of four long blocks connecting the wings. The most notable feature on the north façade is the long Quonset hut block. Though the barrel roof is truncated where it meets the next building block, it clearly reflects the popular, post-World War II form. The center two blocks have little in the way of windows providing natural light to the large space. The northern section is protected by a gable roof while the southern section is protected by a flat roof. At the eastern end of these is an inset, two-story, concrete block office section at which the primary pedestrian entrance is located. The southern section consists of a concrete block, gable-roofed portion with steel windows between brick piers and a flat-roofed, concrete block portion devoid of windows.

The interior spaces of the plant continue to reflect their industrial past with immense open spaces lit by long ribbons of metal windows; the presence of industrial cranes; concrete and asphalt floors; large doors and ramps connecting different spaces; and rail spurs. At a more pedestrian scale are offices and employee areas in various sections of the building.

The Virginia Steel Company retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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

- Railroad Spurs – circa 1920 – Extending from the rail line west of the building, two rail spurs remain visible both in the asphalt west of the building as they run towards two large entrances, and within the buildings themselves.
- Office Building – 1970 – North of the building, sits the two-story office building constructed of structural steel and cinder blocks and faced with metal panels and brick laid in a common bond. The main entrance of glazed double doors is on the east façade, beside a bump out from the building which houses stairs. Ribbon windows extend along the elevations on each floor. A flat roof covers the building, on which a penthouse houses operational equipment. The interior is typical of office buildings with dropped acoustical tile ceilings and floors of linoleum and carpet.

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

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

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

The twentieth century saw steel making and the fabrication of steel parts become a major industry in the nation. In the City of Richmond, the broad growth of the steel industry is reflected in the Virginia Steel Company – in its establishment, its purchase by Bethlehem Steel, and its closure. Blair M. Boisseau began the Virginia Steel Supply Company in 1922 to fabricate reinforcing bars to a broad market in Virginia and North Carolina; the organization became the Virginia Steel Company in 1925.¹ Like many in that industry, the company quickly grew at the end of the Great Depression and onset of World War II.

Industrial growth in northwestern Richmond occurred near the Acca freight yard in the early twentieth century and in the late 1930s Virginia Steel began leasing property there that had formerly been occupied by the Richmond Forging Corporation.² At that time there was a brass foundry and storage building (constructed in 1915), a machine shop, and small storage buildings on the premises (construction dates unknown) (Figure 1).³ By 1940, city directories noted that the Virginia Steel's plant was located on Westwood Avenue at the Richmond, Fredericksburg, & Potomac Railroad (RF&P), though the main office for Virginia Steel was at a more pedestrian accessible location on Dock Street.⁴ The proximity of the RF&P led to the establishment of multiple rail spurs on the property and, later, within buildings themselves.

Like other manufactories throughout the country, Virginia Steel aided in the success of the Allied forces during World War II. Its early contracts were related to expansion and contraction joint assemblies and the company aided in the construction of the General Army Depot in southern Richmond.⁵ Their work later expanded into munitions with the production of bomb fins, trunnion bands, devices to support 500-pound bombs, wheels used to help move 57-mm gun carriages, and fragmentation bombs.⁶ Virginia Steel was among the first in the country to produce 90-pound fragmentation bombs after experimental work was completed.⁷ Part of the war-time industry continued afterwards with the Great Lakes Steel Corporation's appointment of Virginia Steel Company to be a distributor of the famed metal Quonset Hut. In peacetime a

¹ The company grew over time to open branches in Birmingham, Alabama in 1935 and in Miami, Florida in 1950. Later, the Alabama branch closed and one opened in South Carolina. Earle Dunford, "Virginia Steel Co. Reported Sold to Bethlehem Subsidiary," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 30, 1957, www.genealogybank.com; *Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Subsidiary Companies History – Volume III*. Syracuse, NY: McMillan Book Co., Inc. 1970; "The Steel Story," *World Steel Association*. <https://worldsteel.org/about-steel/steel-story/>.

² The Richmond Forging Company purchased 23 acres near Acca Station around 1910, and the majority of buildings associated with the company were south of present-day 2031 Westwood Avenue. It appears that the first building built within the study area may have been a brass foundry in 1915. Research is ongoing to determine the sequence of building and demolition efforts within the study area during its ownership by Richmond Forging Corp., Virginia Steel Co., and Bethlehem Steel. Richmond Property Assessment Records, 1934-1956.

³ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Richmond, Independent Cities, Virginia*. Sanborn Map Company, -1925 Vol. 4, 1925. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn09064_009/.

⁴ Throughout Virginia Steel Company's operation, the main office was separate from its plant and located in areas of Richmond that were more accessible including on Dock Street, E. Main Street, W. Cary Street, and later, under Bethlehem Steel, on W. Broad Street.

⁵ "Two Virginia Firms Get Army Contracts," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 23, 1941. www.genealogybank.com; "First Army Depot Warehouse Will Be in Use in February," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 6, 1941. www.genealogybank.com.

⁶ "6,000,000 War Contracts Lost in State," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 18, 1945. www.genealogybank.com; Theo Wilson, "'Easter Eggs' For Germany 'Hatched' Here," *The Richmond News Leader*, March 31, 1945. www.newspapers.com.

⁷ "City Plants Shift, War To Peace," *The Richmond News Leader*, August 16, 1945. www.newspapers.com.

smaller version was manufactured, and a Quonset Hut remains incorporated into the building on the property.⁸

With their ongoing success, Virginia Steel stopped leasing the land and officially purchased the Westwood property in 1945; the company built its first addition in 1947 (Figure 2).⁹ By 1952, the facility on Westwood Avenue consisted of a metal storage building, a metal fabricating shed with attached partial Quonset hut structure, and a long concrete block storage building with an office addition (Figure 3). A rail spur entered the property and extended between the buildings, as well as entered the fabricating shed thereby easing the transport of large items.¹⁰

After World War II, the steel industry as a whole shifted again to meet consumer demands for automobiles and home appliances, and to create materials for the construction of buildings to house and serve the ballooning population.¹¹ Virginia Steel was integral in this by fabricating reinforcing steel for concrete structures such as buildings, bridges, and dams; load transfer units for concrete roads and airport pavings; steel joists; metal lath; expansion joints; metal windows; and wire mesh.¹² In the post-World War II era building boom, Virginia Steel provided these materials for homes, businesses, and government buildings alike. Among the more high-profile projects were Richmond Motor Company, the Alexander Mack Library at Bridgewater, Fort Hunt High School in Fairfax County, and Building 56 at Fort Monroe.¹³

As the company's success grew, its complex was enlarged by multiple additions between 1948 (with the first addition of a Quonset hut) and 1959 (with the western wing) (Figure 4).¹⁴ In the mid-1950s, Virginia Steel had a tangible net worth of \$2,989,562 and employed approximately 400 people at its three locations, about 150 employees in Richmond alone.¹⁵ With Virginia Steel's success, Buffalo Tank Corporation, a subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel Company, purchased Virginia Steel in 1956 for \$3,750,000, including all land and machinery. Bethlehem Steel Corporation directly acquired Virginia Steel in 1962 for \$4,513,857.¹⁶ Virginia Steel was among the only companies in Virginia purchased by Bethlehem Steel.

It was in the era following World War II that Bethlehem Steel reached the pinnacle of its success, as exemplified by its purchase of many companies in the 1950s and 1960s and its products influenced nearly every aspect of the American consumer's life.¹⁷ Under Bethlehem, Virginia Steel's facilities on Westwood Avenue continued to grow with more additions to the plant (Figure 5). The last expansion to the plant consisted additions to the eastern wings in 1968. An ancillary office building was built in 1970 on land that had not historically been associated with the Virginia Steel Company's parcel but rather had been along the planned alignment of Westwood Avenue.

⁸ "Quonset Hut Distributor Named Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 10, 1946. www.genealogybank.com; Advertisement – The "Quonset 40," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 January 1947. www.genealogybank.com.

⁹ Richmond City Deed Book 449D:317, Bank of Commerce & Trusts to Blair M. Boisseau, January 10, 1945; Richmond City Building Permits. On file, Library of Virginia.

¹⁰ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Richmond, Independent Cities, Virginia*. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 4; Republished 1952. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn09064_019/.

¹¹ "The Steel Story," *World Steel Association*.

¹² Wilson 1945; "City Plants Shift, War To Peace," 1945; Dunford 1957.

¹³ *Virginia Record*, no. 12 (Dec. 1959): 31 <https://www.usmodernist.org/AIAVA/AIAVA-1959-12.pdf>; *Virginia Record*, no. 8 (August 1964): 30, 68; Rebecca Peeling, "Fort Monroe," National Historic Landmark Nomination, April 2020, <https://npshistory.com/publications/fomr/nr-fort-monroe.pdf>.

¹⁴ Richmond Property Assessment Records, 1934-1956, 1957-1977.

¹⁵ Dunford 1957; "Established Industry Forms Backbone of Local Economy," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 23, 1958. www.genealogybank.com.

¹⁶ *Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Subsidiary Companies History – Volume III*.

¹⁷ Jacob Roth, "Bethlehem Steel: The Rise and Fall of an Industrial Titan," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, no. 2 (2020):393 <https://pa-history.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Roth-Marcus-prize-pdf.pdf>.

However, as Bethlehem Steel focused on expanding capacity, such as with the purchase of Virginia Steel Company, in lieu of updating technology in its plants, it faced increased competition from abroad as well as employee welfare issues. By the early 1980s Bethlehem Steel was no longer showing a profit.¹⁸ Bethlehem Rebar was formed to buy and operate the reinforcing bar division of Bethlehem Steel.¹⁹ As such, Bethlehem Rebar purchased Virginia Steel in 1986.²⁰ The company held onto the Richmond property for only a couple of years before selling it to Willie O. and Frances B. Grubb.²¹ City directories indicate that in the 1990s, the building was used by Transend Corporation, a company that collected and recycled waste materials.

The Virginia Steel Company is a microcosm of the national steel industry as an example of a locally owned steel manufacturer that grew in the mid-twentieth century to be purchased, first, by a subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel, and then by Bethlehem Steel itself, only to fall with that company's decline. As such, the resource is locally significant for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Industry, and the period of significance extends from when the Virginia Steel Company first began leasing the property and fabricating steel parts there circa 1939 and to the last additions made to the plant in 1968 thereby increasing capacity of the work done there one last time.²²

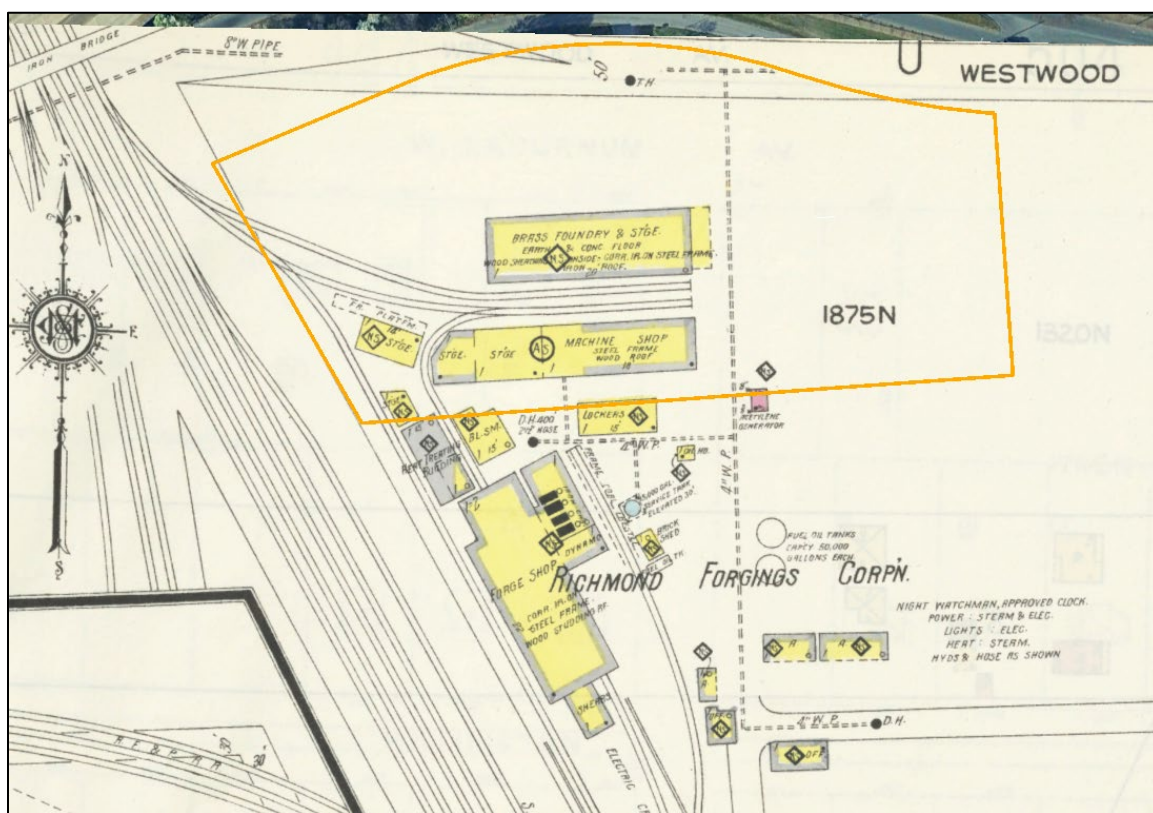


Figure 1: Detail of the 1925 Sanborn Map depicting the Richmond Forgings Corp. property with 231 Westwood Avenue (orange). Source: Library of Congress

¹⁸ John Strohmeyer, "The Demise of Big Steel," *The Alicia Patterson Foundation*. August 14, 1984.

¹⁹ "Ford joins Bethlehem Rebar board," *UPI*. May 22, 1986. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/05/22/Ford-joins-Bethlehem-Rebar-board/9406517118400/>.

²⁰ Richmond City Deed Book 84:1538, Bethlehem Steel Corporation to Bethlehem Rebar Industries, June 27, 1986.

²¹ Richmond City Deed Book 172:1054, Bethlehem Rebar Industries, Inc. to Willie O. Grubb and Frances B. Grubb, July 7, 1988.

²² As the more public facing office had historically been located elsewhere in the city and the current office remains visibly separate from the plant by a fence and had been on a separate property, it is not included in the period of significance which is centered on the resource's use in the production of steel products.

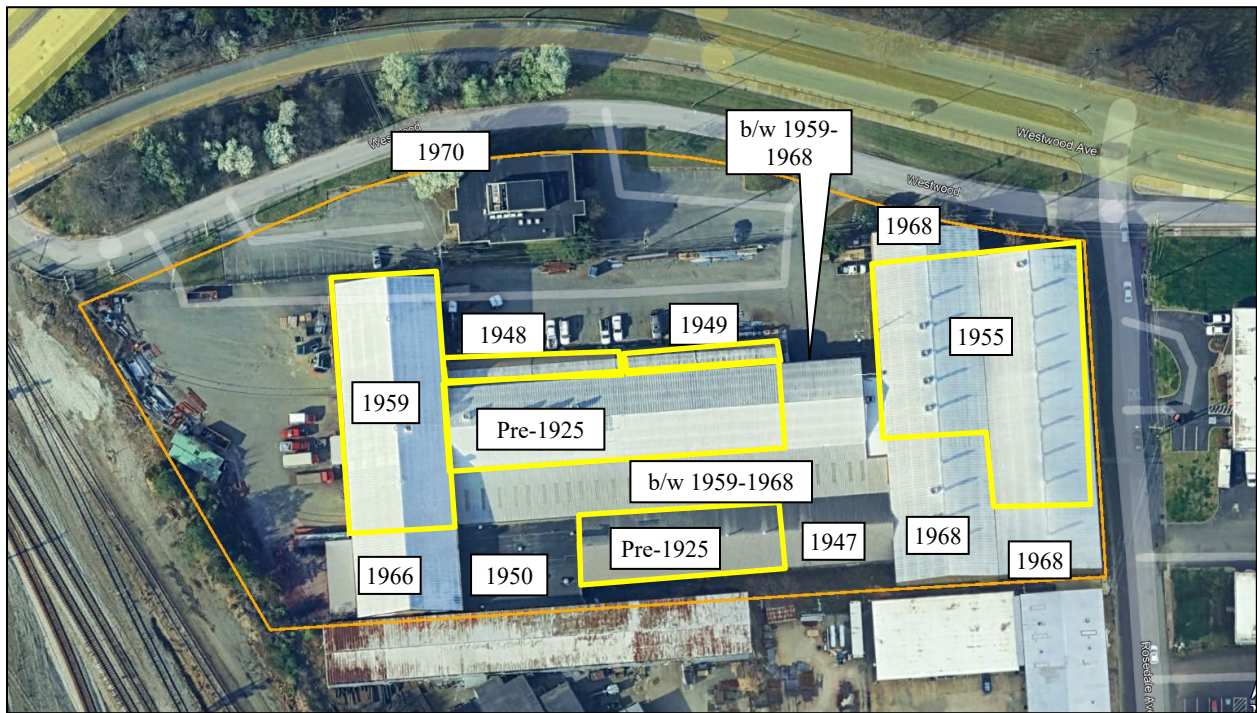


Figure 2: Likely building sequence at Virginia Steel Company.

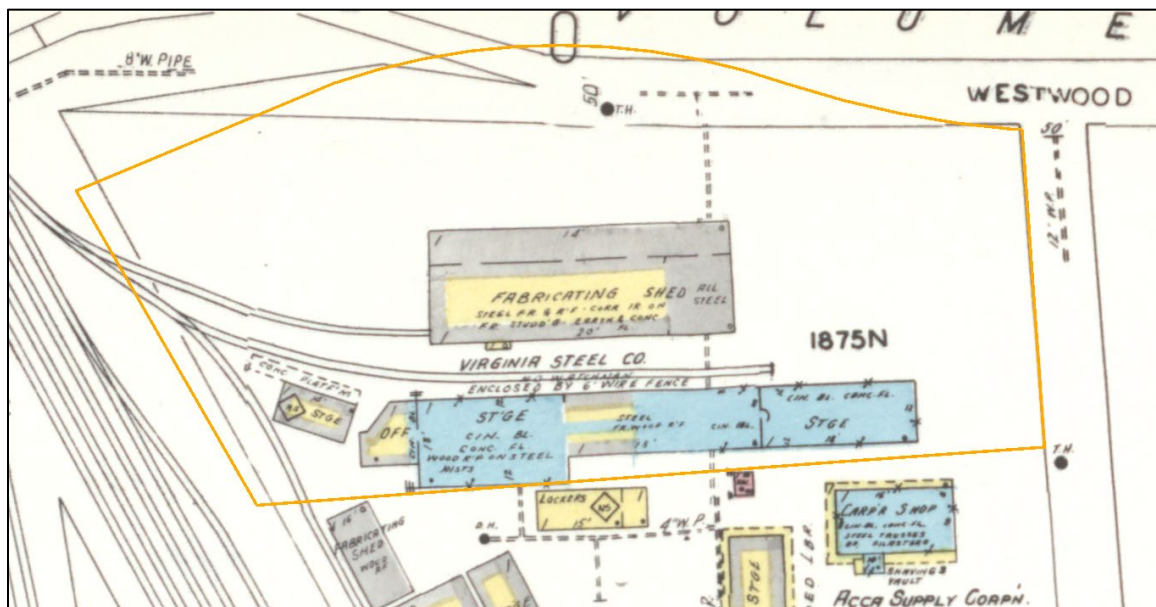


Figure 3: Detail of the 1952 Sanborn Map depicting the Virginia Steel Company. Source: Library of Congress

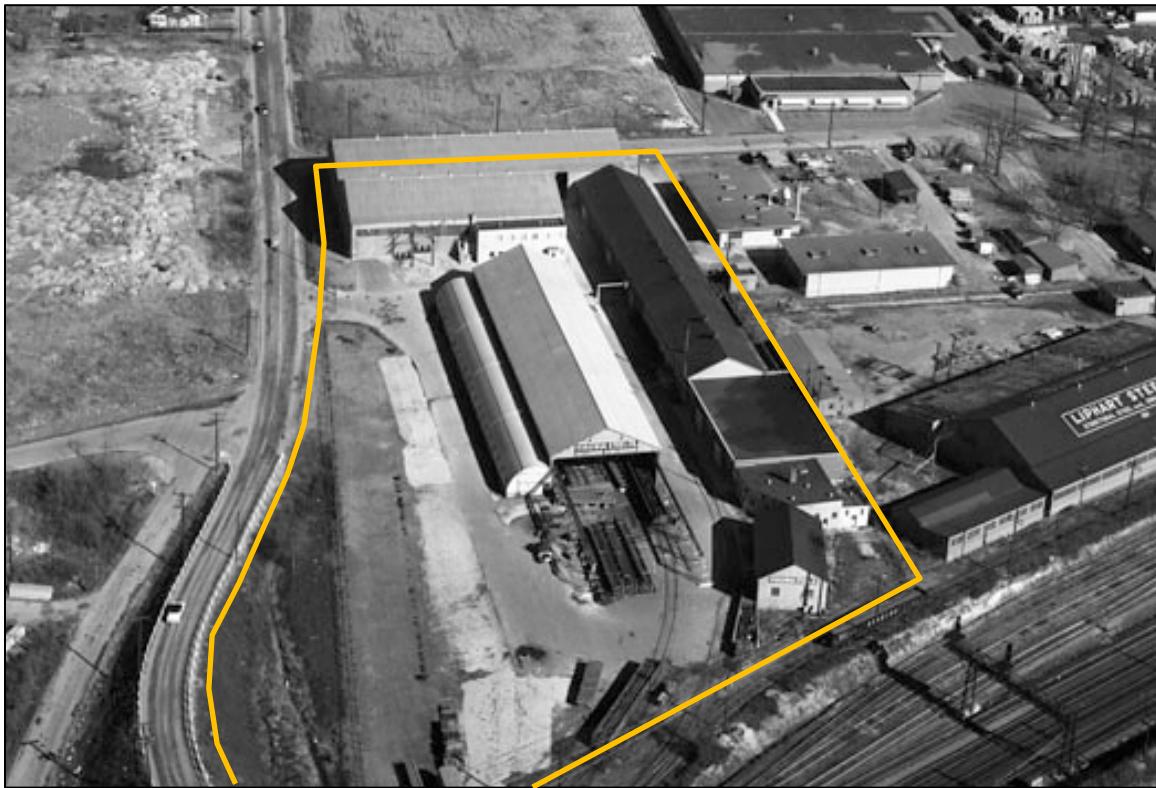


Figure 4: View of the Virginia Steel Company (orange) in 1956. Source: Library of Virginia

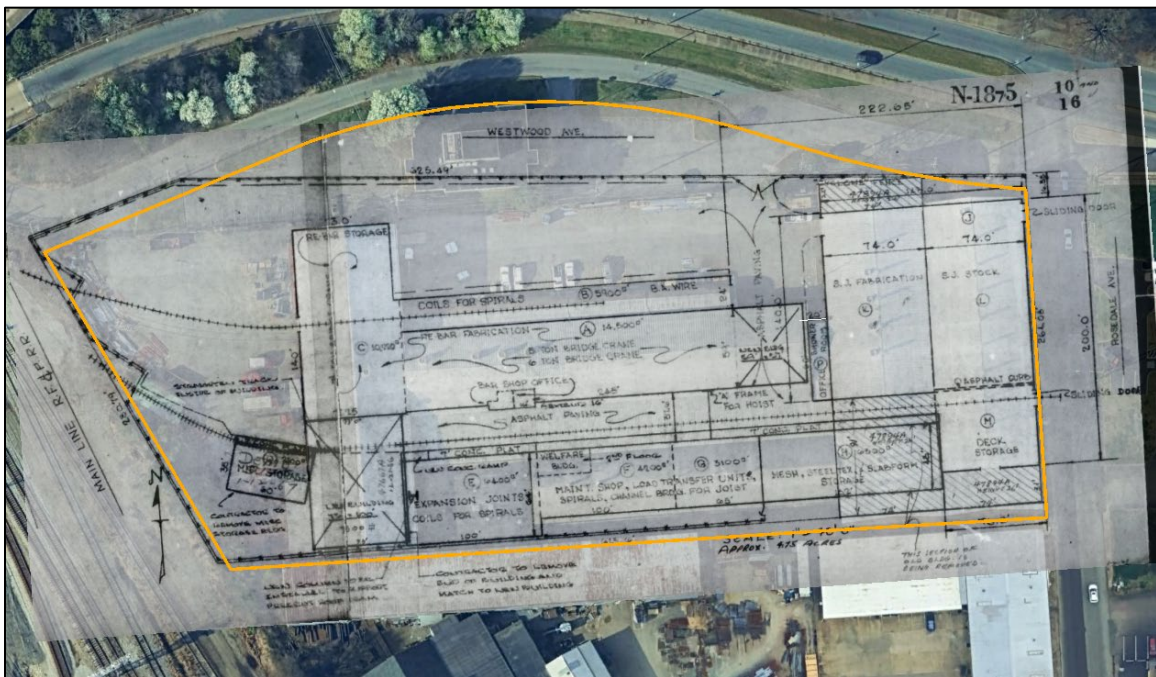


Figure 5: Circa 1968 Drawing of Virginia Steel complex. Source: City of Richmond Property Assessment Records

Photo Log

Name of Resource: Virginia Steel Company

Photographer: Dara Friedberg

Date Photographed: July 2026

Photo 1 of 10: Exterior, view west.

Photo 2 of 10: Exterior, view southeast.

Photo 3 of 10: Exterior, view west.

Photo 4 of 10: Exterior, view east.

Photo 5 of 10: Exterior of Office, view southwest.

Photo 6 of 10: Interior, view southeast.

Photo 7 of 10: Interior, view west.

Photo 8 of 10: Interior, view west.

Photo 9 of 10: Interior, view east.

Photo 10 of 10: Interior, view north.

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

“6,000,000 War Contracts Lost in State,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. August 18, 1945.
www.genealogybank.com.

Advertisement – The “Quonset 40.” *Richmond Times Dispatch*. January 26, 1947. www.genealogybank.com.

Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Subsidiary Companies History – Volume III. Syracuse, NY: McMillan Book Co., Inc. 1970.

“City Plants Shift, War To Peace,” *The Richmond News Leader*, August 16, 1945. www.newspapers.com.

City of Richmond Building Permits. On file, Library of Virginia.

City of Richmond Deed Books.

City of Richmond Directories. Various years. On file, Library of Virginia.

City of Richmond Property Assessment Records, 1934-1956. Records on file, Library of Virginia.

---, 1957-1977. Records on file, Library of Virginia.

Dunford, Earle. “Virginia Steel Co. Reported Sold to Bethlehem Subsidiary.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. July 30, 1957. www.genealogybank.com.

“Established Industry Forms Backbone of Local Economy,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. March 23, 1958.
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“First Army Depot Warehouse Will Be in Use in February,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. November 6, 1941.
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“Ford joins Bethlehem Rebar board,” *UPI*. May 22, 1986. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/05/22/Ford-joins-Bethlehem-Rebar-board/9406517118400/>.

“Quonset Hut Distributor Named Here.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. November 10, 1946.
www.genealogybank.com.

Peeling, Rebecca. “Fort Monroe,” National Historic Landmark Nomination. April 2020.
<https://npshistory.com/publications/fomr/nr-fort-monroe.pdf>.

Roth, Jacob. “Bethlehem Steel: The Rise and Fall of an Industrial Titan,”. *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*. Vol. 87, no. 2, 2020. <https://pa-history.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Roth-Marcus-prize-pdf.pdf>.

“The Steel Story,” *World Steel Association*. <https://worldsteel.org/about-steel/steel-story/>.

Strohmeyer, John. “The Demise of Big Steel,” *The Alicia Patterson Foundation*. August 14, 1984.

“Two Virginia Firms Get Army Contracts.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. October 23, 1941.
www.genealogybank.com.

Virginia Record. Dec. 1959, Vol. LXXXI, No. 12. <https://www.usmodernist.org/AIAVA/AIAVA-1959-12.pdf>.

---. August 1964, Vol. LXXXVI, No. 8. <https://www.usmodernist.org/AIAVA/AIAVA-1964-08.pdf>.

Virginia Steel Co. plant. Adolph B. Rice Studio. March 4, 1956. Photograph on file, Library of Virginia.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_virginia/4990236803/in/photolist-8AYgxz-csScFq-GtgYWL-erPKiG-2FiAZ7-2epAQcQ-9dDhyb-sbjvqc-2hL2AMq-bTMUhp-2FiyTU-2FiDtQ-2FeSFG-cQoX7-91njeE-919dta-91bZXQ-2oGLQ4V-47aX4w-91R96a-to7kjS-9yCWsp-njTm7P-doLUTB-wPfbtK-x7hBEx-2oGPTv2-eum5Lb-eum5PG-8shLX8-2jqdDcX-6CrGzh-7iJk8h-euhVwP-67TDfU-4t3ocQ-4pFvLT-67TDfS-cbqvcA-aKL6LK-87DTFz-4pKyGL-4pFvTa-4pKyAq-cbqw2C-5CzG5L-dLs56f-2rwNHkV-J8NRM-99HPTd//

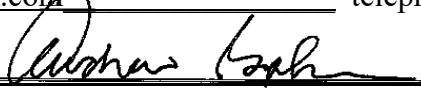
Wilson, Theo. “‘Easter Eggs’ For Germany ‘Hatched’ Here,” *The Richmond News Leader*. March 31, 1945.
www.newspapers.com.

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

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

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

name/title: Andrew Basham/Manager
organization: SR Westwood Avenue, LLC
street & number: 1810 Mactavish Avenue
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23230
e-mail: andrew@spy-rock.com telephone: (703) 863-0950

Legal Owner's Signature: 
Date: 8/3/26

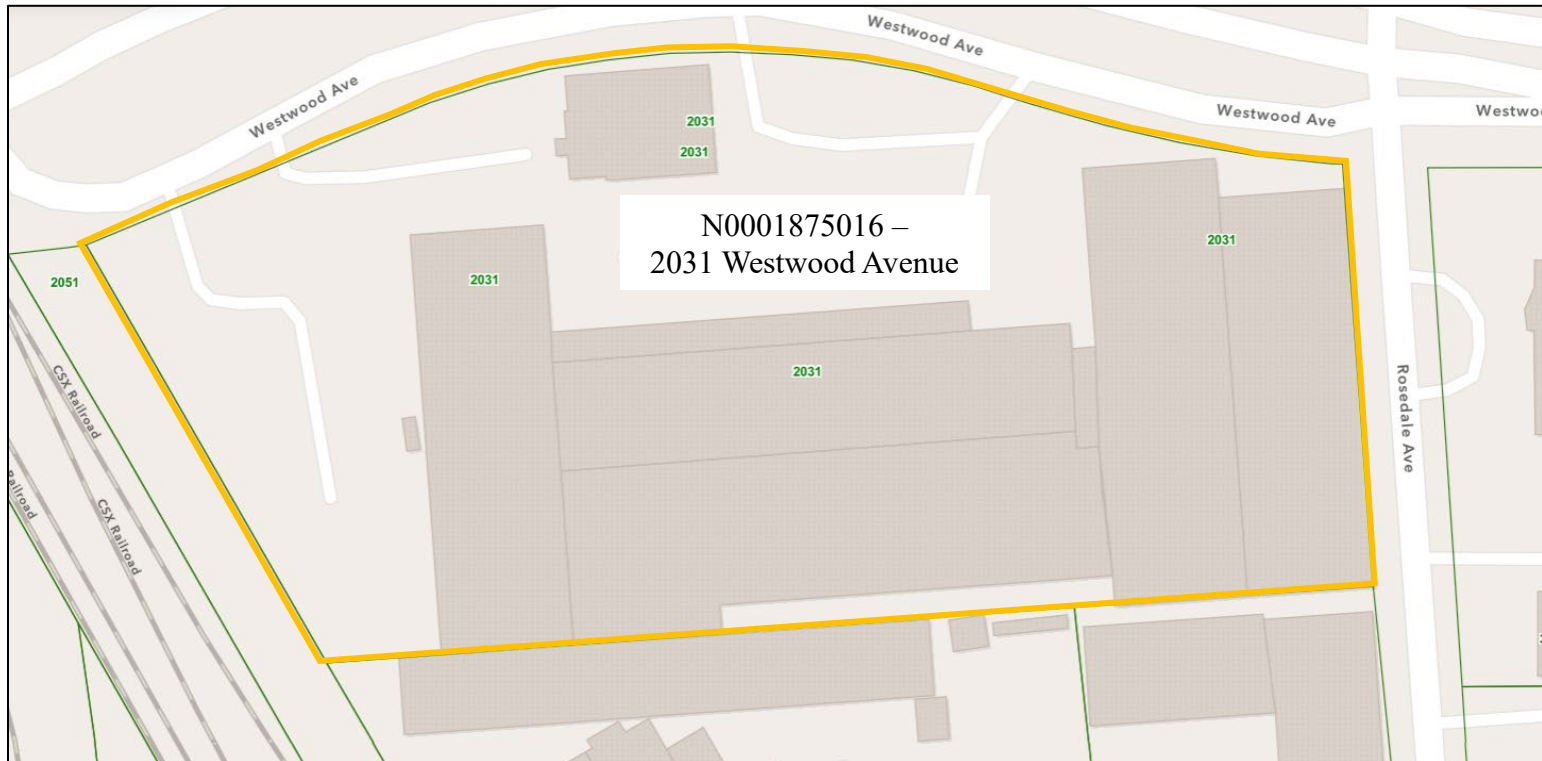
• • *Signature required for processing all applications.* • •

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

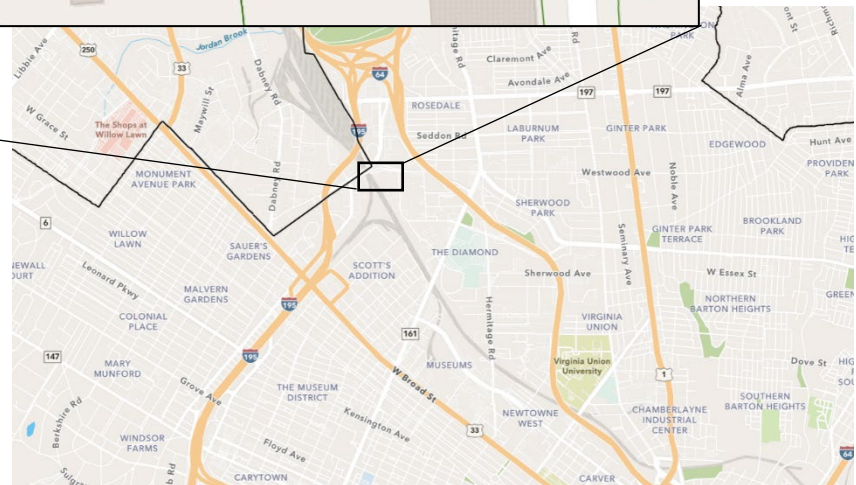
Contact person: Justin Olderman
Daytime Telephone: (404) 797-8066

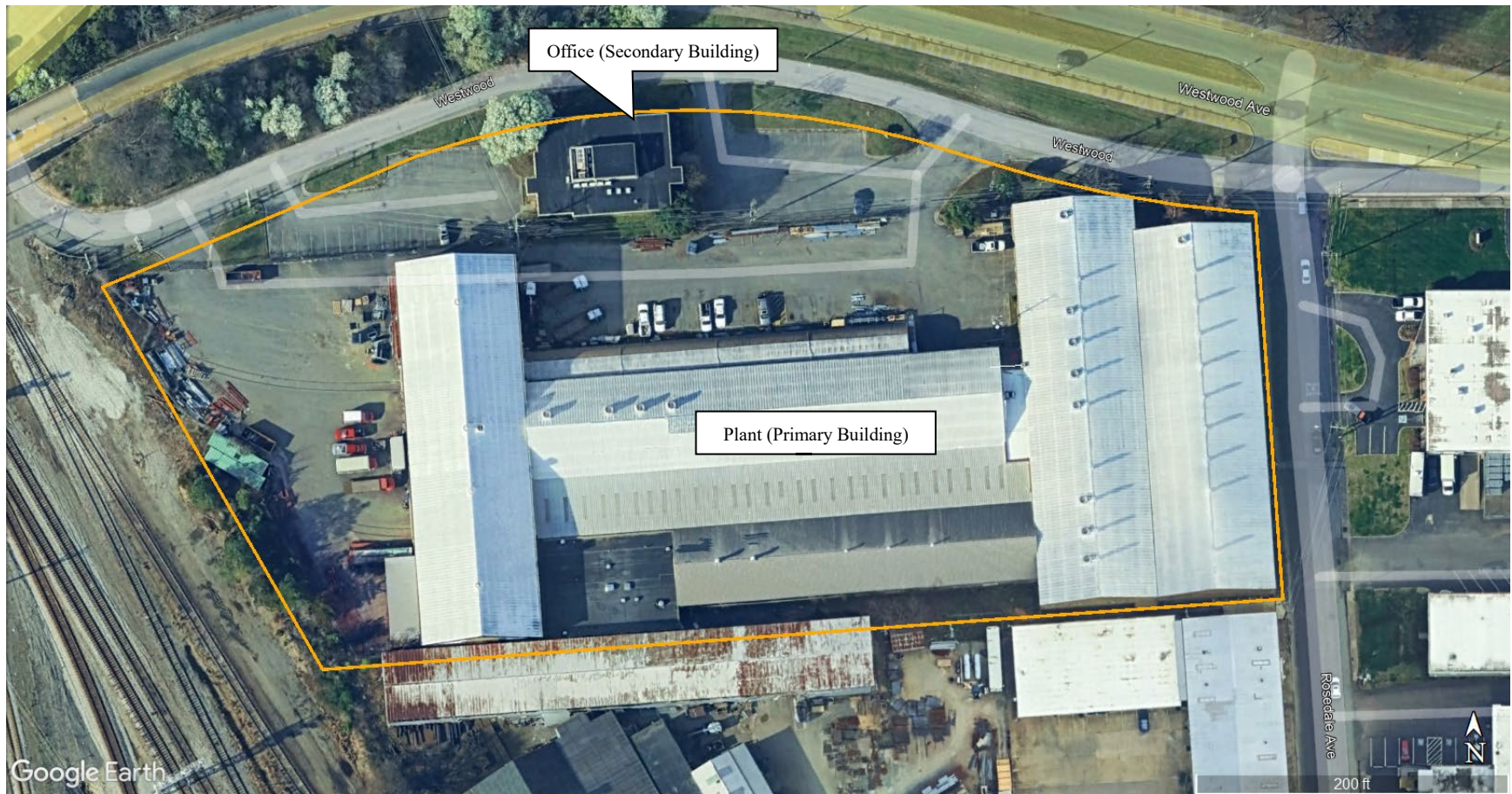
Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Dara Friedberg/Research Historian
organization: Dutton + Associates, a Timmons Group company
street & number: 1001 Boulders Parkway, Suite 100
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23225
e-mail: dfriedberg@dutton-associates.com telephone: (804) 897-1960
Date: August 2026



**Virginia Steel Company
City of Richmond, VA
VDHR #127-6817**





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Photo Locations**



















