



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 127-0174-0393

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

The owner would like to complete a rehabilitation of the Lee Medical Office Building using state and federal historic tax credits. He requests that DHR staff evaluate whether the property meets the National Register Criteria for individual listing. The building is a landmark with a prominent site on Lee Circle in the Monument Avenue Historic District. Its Colonial-Revival architecture was recognized by DHR architectural historian David Edwards, but it was constructed in 1950-1952 after the historic district's period of significance.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes [x] No

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes No [x]

1. General Property Information

Property name: Lee Medical Office Building (127-0174-0393)

Property address: 1805 Monument Avenue

City or Town: Richmond

Zip code: 23221

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

Richmond (Independent City)

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

Building [x] Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: .3979

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban [x] Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural

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

The Lee Medical Building was constructed on a pie-shaped parcel in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Monument and Allen avenues. The intersection is named Lee Circle for the large roundabout and the equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee, the oldest and most prominent of the monuments in the historic district. The building's faceted footprint is adapted to the shape of the parcel. The center bay and main entry are on axis with the Lee Statue. Site features include a rounded drop-off paved in Belgian blocks and defined by a molded stone curb, planting beds and low brick walls.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: W. Harrison Pringle, Architect

If the builder is known, please list here: Franklin A. Trice, Owner and Contractor

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1952

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, 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 architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

Summary Description

The Lee Medical Building is a 6-story brick and limestone office tower built on axis with the Robert E. Lee Monument. This historic property has one primary resource and no secondary resources. It is the second-largest building in the Monument Avenue Historic District (the largest is W. L. Bottomley's 1927 Stuart Court Apartments, located one block east) and it was constructed in 1952 to house doctors' and dentists' offices. It continues to serve this purpose. Its symmetrical, V-shaped mass accentuates its orientation to Lee Circle and conforms to the shape of its highly prominent site. The roof is flat with built-up roofing, protected by parapets, and interrupted by a brick elevator penthouse and a brick stair enclosure. The Colonial Revival ornament, rendered in limestone, includes a rusticated base and shallow Tuscan pilasters topped with an entablature whose fascia is punctuated with dogwood blossoms, a ramped parapet, and a shield bearing the symbols of the medical and dental professions. Above the ramped parapet, the "attic", or 6th floor is decorated with stylized Confederate flag panels alternating with dogwood blossom medallions. The façade brick is laid in Flemish bond; the brick on the rear is laid in 6-course American bond. Most of the windows are 6-over-6 double-hung aluminum sash. Windows on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors have molded limestone surrounds. Denticulated pediments top the 2nd floor windows. The ground floor's window muntins form a Roman lattice.

Contextual References

The most striking aspects of the facade are the architectural references to the Monument Avenue and Lee Circle context. The centered front entry is on axis with the Robert E. Lee statue. The ornament echoes Neoclassical and Colonial Revival elements found throughout the surrounding neighborhood. The limestone dogwood medallions, repeated at different scales in the façade, celebrate Virginia's state flower. The façade is capped by a bullnose limestone cornice and molded stringcourse below which "hang" the flag-like aluminum panels, like architectural bunting. The X-pattern with the star centered in the panels is an interpretation of the Confederate stars and bars. Limestone panels below 4th floor windows are shaped like banners. This ornament is a quiet but overt response to the Lee Monument.



Entry and Lobby

The front entry, a pair of non-historic glass and aluminum doors, is centered in the rusticated limestone base. Paired cast bronze plaques illuminated by carriage lamps on either side of the entry announce the building name and address. The lobby has coffered plaster ceilings and Tuscan pilasters, repeating the façade's classical order. The lobby floors are rose-colored terrazzo banded with black marble. The walls are Confederate gray marble with a black base and cap. The fronts of the paired elevators are brass with rounded brass jambs. The elevator doors are embossed with the symbols of the medical and dental professions. The elevator lobbies and corridors are decorated with 1950s framed prints illustrating Civil War battles.

Interiors

The roughly symmetrical plans for floors 1-6 are close to identical, with the exception of the 1st floor's entry and larger lobby. Each of these floors has a center elevator lobby leading to double-loaded corridors centered in the two wings that parallel Monument and Allen Avenues. The corridors open into medical and dental office suites, which have been renovated since the 1950s for a series of tenants. A bathroom, service stair and elevator core occupy the center of the building. A second stair is located adjacent to the lobby. The stairs are steel and concrete with cast iron railings. The basement has a small maintenance office, storage, and the boiler room.

The historic interior materials on floors 2-6 include plaster walls with molded chair rail, flat plaster ceilings (some have been altered with dropped acoustical tile), and carpeted floors in the public spaces. The historic office entries are flush panel steel doors with prismatic glass lights and molded steel frames. Most bathrooms retain original black and white tile as well as original porcelain lavatories.

The building is an accomplished mid-20th-century interpretation of traditional office design that very specifically responds to its monumental setting.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are no outbuildings or secondary resources. In addition to the office building the only other structures on the property are the fenced in cooling tower on grade at the rear of the building. Neither the pressure-treated wood fence nor the cooling tower is historic.

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

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

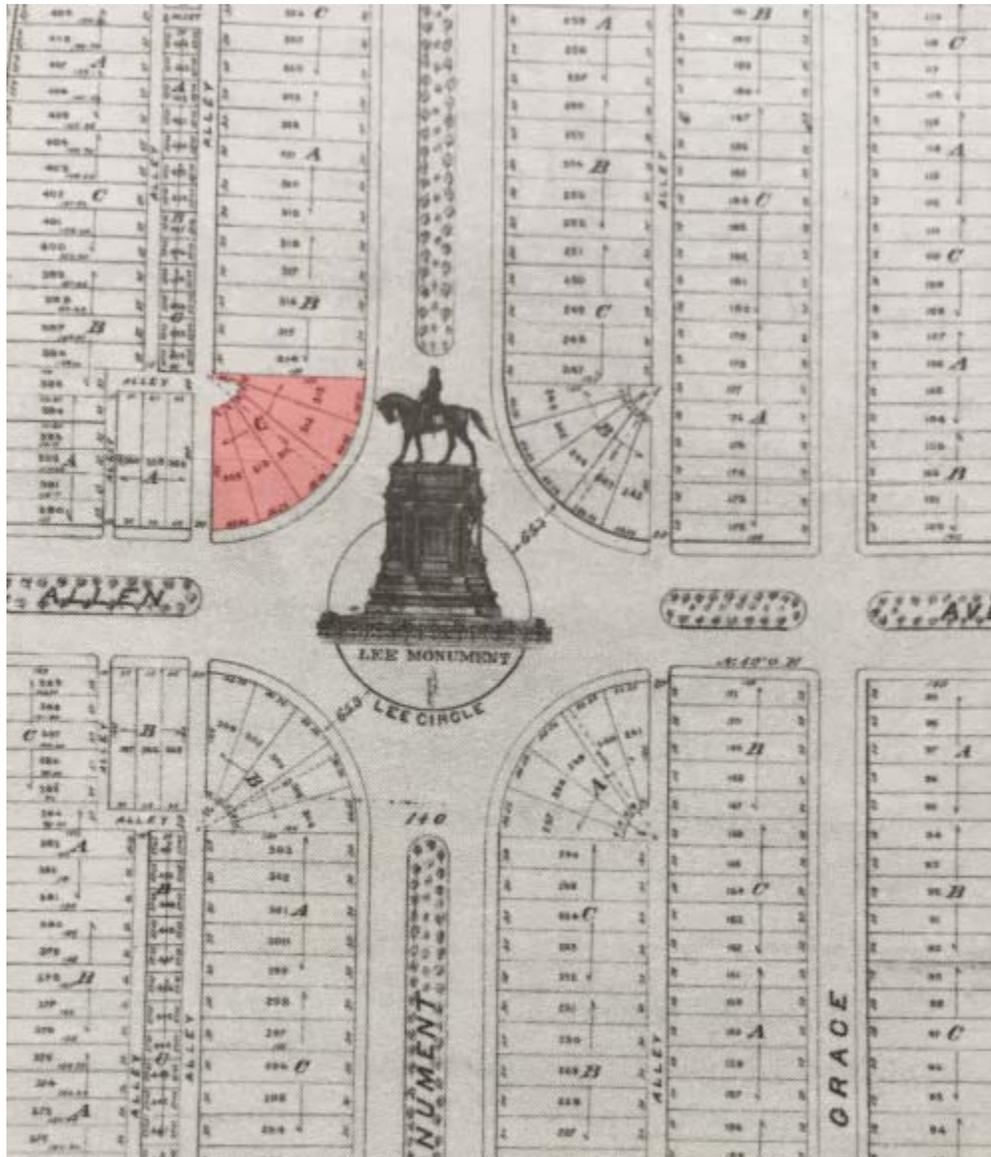
Statement of Significance

The Lee Medical Building at 1805 Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA is architecturally and historically significant at the local level. It meets National Register Criterion C because it is the most prominent project of builder and developer Franklin A. Trice and the most ambitious design of a prolific architect W. Harrison Pringle. It is sited in a highly conspicuous location, a corner lot facing the Robert E. Lee statue on Monument Avenue, the city's most celebrated street. The building was speculatively developed with plans for providing offices, laboratories and outpatient medical facilities for doctors and dentists. The 1928 Medical Arts Building (127-0957-0066) at 2nd and Franklin Streets in Downtown Richmond, in the Grace Street Commercial Historic District is an understated earlier example of the same building type, sited in a commercial area. What sets the Lee Medical Building apart is its prominent site facing the Lee Monument at the heart of the City's most prestigious residential neighborhood. It is the only office tower in the historic district. The Period of Significance is 1952, the year that construction of the Lee

Medical Building was completed after a sustained battle between the building's owner and tenants who fought for its construction and the neighboring homeowners who bitterly contested its development.

Historic Background

The Lee Medical Building was constructed on a pie-shaped lot in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Allen Avenue and Monument Avenue. The building's history is inextricably tied to development of the neighborhood. The building site was originally platted in 1888 as 5 lots forming a fan-shaped quadrant. Monument Avenue's easternmost blocks were conceived in a collaboration between the heirs of William Allen and the Lee Monument Association, with guidance from C.P.E. Burgwyn, the city's engineer. The Lee Monument was visualized as a grand equestrian statue surrounded by a circular park at the intersection of the two boulevarded avenues. The tree-lined medians of both Allen and Monument Avenues centered on Lee Monument. The intended architectural effect of the street fronts was that the 4 corners facing the monument would form a continuous residential backdrop to the statue.



The 1888 Plat of the William C. Allen Addition shows the lots at the corners of the Monument and Allen Avenue intersection as quadrants subdivided into 5 separate lots. The Lee Medical Building lot is shaded. This Valentine Museum document was published in *Monument Avenue History and Architecture* (HABS: 1992). The plat is oriented with north at the right.

The original intent of William Allen and his heirs was never realized. Neither the Lee Medical Building site, nor the quadrant diagonally opposite the Lee Medical site, were developed as home sites. The northeast quadrant was developed as a parking lot for the Shenandoah Apartments (whose entry was on W. Grace Street). The other two corners were developed for larger houses and their side yards. Ironically, in light of the protracted neighborhood

protest against Franklin Trice's 1950 development, Trice's is the only building whose façade was on axis with the monument and whose architecture directly responds to this venerated site.

Despite the hopes of Monument Avenue's first speculators and the city leaders who agreed to grade the streets and extend city services west of Lombardy Street, the Panic of 1893 chilled development. Monument Avenue didn't receive curbs and gutters until 1901, which prompted construction of the first house. Monument Avenue's asphalt paving blocks were installed starting in 1908, the year after the Stuart and Davis Monuments were unveiled. The same type of pavers, an important feature of the Avenue, were later used in the Lee Medical Building drop-off area.

The city's building codes in the late-19th and early-20th century were focused on building safety. Restrictions on what was built on Monument Avenue were found in the original developers' deed covenants. The Allen heirs who developed the blocks around the Lee Monument stipulated front and side yard setbacks. All buildings had to be constructed of brick or stone. The covenants also specified that the only black people who could occupy the neighborhood were live-in servants. Original covenants also limited construction projects to single-family houses.

The lots occupied by the Lee Medical Building were not purchased or developed with houses or other construction until 1950. During World War 1, the lot was planted in tobacco as part of an exhibition of the state's top cash crop (p. 55). For decades the Lee Medical lots were simply defined by a low hedge. As noted by author Kathy Edwards, "Such haphazard development of the very lots that should be complementing the avenue's premier monument reflects Monument Avenue's origin as a collection of speculative real estate ventures."



During World War I the Lee Medical site was planted in tobacco as an exhibit of the state's top cash crop. This Virginia Historical Society photograph was published in *Monument Avenue History and Architecture* (HABS:1992).

Monument Avenue was speculatively developed at the large and small scale; at the level of the neighborhood blocks and at the level of individual and groups of houses. The first spec house was constructed in 1903 in the 1600 block, at the Avenue's east end. Franklin Trice was part of a decades-long tradition of speculative development on Richmond's most hallowed street. In 1950 when Lee Medical Building's permit was under review, the city's updated multi-family zoning for the lot allowed construction of an office building, but the permit application had to specify that the building

would have only white tenants. Although there was some flexibility with the building materials, the owner's use of limestone trim on a Flemish bond brick façade, was an obvious nod to the expectation that building materials used on Monument Avenue would be of superior quality.

Franklin A. Trice, Builder and Developer

King William County native Franklin Trice (1905-1957) was a successful builder and developer whose previous projects were residential. Trice developed successful multifamily housing in popular West End Richmond suburbs. He collaborated frequently with residential developers Muhleman & Kayhoe, whose developments advanced Richmond's westward expansion. Trice's garden apartment complexes, Kent Road Village (1942, NRHP 127-6514) and Malvern Manor (1946), were FHA-funded developments that excited significant neighborhood protests. Neighbors protested that the presence of apartments would reduce their property values. The city's desperate need for housing trumped concerns about loss of neighborhood character.

Soon after Trice purchased the undeveloped property in the southwest quadrant of Allen and Monument Avenues in early 1950, he applied for a building permit to construct a 5-story medical office building. The need for doctor's offices was demonstrated by the success of the nearby Stuart Circle Hospital (1913, 127-0174-0361) and the Medical Arts Building at 2nd and Franklin Streets (1928, 127-0857-0066). Monument Avenue's prestige had been dulled by economic downturn and the city's westward expansion. There had been very little new construction on Monument Avenue after the Great Depression, and many grand houses had been converted to apartments, boarding houses, or served as doctor's offices.

Trice saw an opportunity to build an office tower especially designed for the convenience of doctors, dentists and their patients. He planned medical suites that would accommodate receptionists, waiting rooms, operating rooms, recovery rooms and laboratories. Trice's proposal was met with civic outrage over the proposed size and function, and he was denied a permit by city authorities because of inadequate setbacks. An April 6, 1950 Richmond Times-Dispatch article described the project's opponents as "Slashing the air with metaphors...to protest [the] proposal." One attendee at a Board of Zoning Appeals hearing claimed that, "...in our cities today we have very little beauty. Richmond and Virginia do have General Lee. Please let him stand serene and beautiful there as he has for so many years."

When Trice adjusted his plans in order to meet the setback requirement, he returned to the city with a proposal to lease part of the first floor to a pharmacy, a use not permitted by zoning, but clearly desirable to Trice's future tenants. The neighborhood continued its vehement protests, as reported on the Times-Dispatch's front page: "Lee's Circle with a soda fountain would become a haven for 'teen-agers and bobby-soxers', said Stuart G. Christian, who as attorney represented 14 owners in the vicinity. 'They would be hanging out up and down the street-some on roller skates-creating racket and scattering trash until homeowners would be ruined,' he declared." Despite a several-year-long effort—including repeated appeals and a court hearing—Trice was never able to overturn the City's denial of his pharmacy proposal.

William Harrison Pringle, Architect

Trice chose a veteran architect, William Harrison Pringle (1893-1970), who was born in Brookneal, VA, to design the Lee Medical Building. Like Trice, Pringle had been affiliated with local builder/developers Muhleman & Kayhoe, and was skilled in executing plans for speculative development. A 1940 Times-Dispatch newspaper advertisement announcing Pringle's association with the City Building Corporation noted that Pringle had designed over 1,400 Richmond homes. Pringle had previously worked as an inspector for the Federal Housing Administration. He and Trice had offices in the same building at 601 E Franklin Street. His wide-ranging projects included a handsome Colonial Revival house at 1633 Monument (on Lee Circle, DHR 127-0174-0386), FHA-funded apartment buildings in the West of the Boulevard Historic District (DHR 127-742) on Park Avenue and Kensington Avenue, and houses in Stonewall Court in Richmond's post-World II West End suburbs. Like many of his contemporaries, Pringle worked in a broad spectrum of styles, including Art Deco (304 E Grace Street, DHR 127-0857-027) and Dutch Colonial (Laburnum Park Historic District, DHR 127-5895).

At the Lee Medical Building, Pringle designed a 5-story Colonial Revival office building with a Tuscan pilasters and a ramped parapet. When his client, Franklin Trice, added a 6th story to the building while it was still under review, Pringle accommodated the additional height by adding an attic with a unique abstraction of Confederate flags. Among the building's tenants were Richmond's most highly respected doctors and dentists. One of the first tenants,

Dr. Elmer Bear later built his own medical office at 2016 Monument Avenue (designed by Frederic Hyland in the mid-1950s, this building also inspired fierce neighborhood protest).

Conclusion

A year after construction was complete, Trice sold the Lee Medical Building to a group of doctors, some of whom lived in the neighborhood. The Lee Medical Building continued to serve its original purpose, though doctors' increasing need for space rendered the medical suites obsolete except for mental health professionals, massage therapists and small practices. The current owner plans to rehabilitate the building for use as market rate apartments, a use the 1950s neighbors would have applauded.

In an age when the appropriateness of the Confederate Monuments is passionately debated, it is fascinating to consider the fervor with which the sanctity of the Lee Monument was argued by those protesting construction of the Lee Medical Building. The building now functions as a quiet, respectful backdrop to Monument Avenue's grandest traffic circle.

Bibliography

City of Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals records and meeting minutes from March 21, 1950, April 5 1950, May 7, 1952, July 7, 1952

Edwards, Kathy and Esme Howard and Toni Prawl. *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources, HABS/HAER, 1992.

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955*. Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1997.

Advertisement, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 10, 1940.

"Lee's Forces March to see Zoning Board," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 6, 1950.

"Lee Medical Building Work Advances Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 7, 1951.

"Plan for Drugstore Near Statue of Lee is Cause of Zoning Row," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 8, 1952.

"Lee Medical Building Sold for \$750,000," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 11, 1953.

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: Yasser Aramin, Manager

organization: Aramin Properties LLC

street & number: 4504 Wythe Avenue

city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23221-1154

e-mail: lee.medical@yahoo.com and matt.raggi@thalhimer.com telephone: 804-677-2321

Legal Owner's Signature: _____ Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

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

Contact person: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

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

name/title: Mary Harding Sadler

organization: Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC

street & number: 726 West 33rd Street

city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23225-3531

e-mail: sadler@sadlerandwhitehead.com telephone: 804-231-5299

6. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

name/title: Selena Cuffee-Glenn, Chief Administrative Officer

locality: City of Richmond

street & number: City Hall, 900 East Broad Street

city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23219-1907

telephone: 804-646-7978

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: Yasser Aramin, Manager

organization: Aramin Properties LLC

street & number: 4504 Wythe Avenue

city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23221-1154

e-mail: lee.medical@yahoo.com and matt.raggi@thalhimer.com telephone: 804-677-2321

Legal Owner's Signature:  Date: 5/23/17

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

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

Contact person: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

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

name/title: Mary Harding Sadler

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Lee Medical Building
1805 Monument Avenue
Richmond, VA
Preliminary Information Form
Location Map



