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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Public Schools of Richmond, Virginia, 1869-1930

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Public Education in Richmond, Virginia, 1869-1930
Public School Architecture in Richmond, Virginia, 1869-1930

C. Geographical Data

The Incorporated City of Richmond, Virginia

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Henry C. Miller — 6 July 1992

Signature of certifying official — Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date

SUMMARY

The Richmond Public Schools Multiple Property Group is locally significant and fulfills Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The properties included are associated with events and patterns of development significant to the development of public education in the City of Richmond during the period 1869 to 1930. The properties have additional significance as good examples of public school architecture. They frequently have further architectural significance for their detailing, embodiment of an important style or material, or their association with a significant architect.

As required by the National Register of Historic Places, the Multiple Property Nomination for the Richmond Schools is organized around historic contexts. Historic contexts define the time, place, and themes associated with a historic property. As additionally required under the guidelines, information about the historical and physical development of the city and the relationship between these developments and public education is included.

Historic Background: The Development of the City of Richmond

Richmond was founded in 1737 at a set of falls which marked the innermost navigable portion of the James River at the time. Because of its central location and significance as a distribution point, it was chosen as the capital of Virginia in 1779.

From 1779 until the Civil War, Richmond experienced continuous population growth and economic expansion, stimulated by its political importance and emergence as a center of commerce, industry, and transportation. Between 1800 and 1820 production of corn and wheat flour, cotton textiles, soap and candles, carriages, and tobacco processing became important local industries. During the 1820s important financial institutions were organized.

In the 1830s transportation improvements served as a catalyst for lively population and industrial expansion over the next two decades. In 1834 the first railroad reached

Richmond. The following year, the James River and Kanawha Canal Company expanded the local canal system, creating a system of navigable waterways which extended two hundred miles west. Docks along the river were improved and steamship transportation became available to Norfolk and Baltimore. Major industries included flour mills, iron and foundry works, and tobacco. The tobacco industry was the most important. By 1859 there were 59 factories in the city producing a variety of tobacco products.

The history of Richmond during the Civil War is well-known. As the capital of the Confederacy, the city remained a military objective throughout the war. Much of its commercial core was destroyed by the Evacuation Fire of 1865. The Reconstruction Period followed from 1865 to 1870.

Between 1870 and 1900 Richmond emerged as the second largest manufacturing city in the south. Following the war, railroads quickly supplanted the river as the principal avenue of transportation. By the 1880s there were six lines to the city. Rail connections were made to Washington and the industrial Northeast. The Chesapeake and Ohio reached the coal fields of West Virginia. Tobacco processing remained the major industry. An estimated 60 percent of the state tobacco crop was inspected at Richmond. Cigarettes, chewing and smoking tobacco were among the products manufactured in hundreds of local factories. Foundries and machine shops, fertilizer production, printing, publishing, and paper, wagon, and carriage manufacturing were other important activities. Population growth paralleled the rapidly expanding economy. In 1880 the population was 63,000. It increased by approximately twenty-five percent over the next decade to more than 81,000 in 1890. Population expansion fueled the local construction industry. Most building materials were produced locally from lumber mills and brick factories. Brick manufacturing became a major industry during the 1870s. Granite was quarried at the edge of the city.

Between 1890 and 1920 the population of Richmond more than doubled, reaching 171,667 in 1920. Adjoining Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover counties became part of metropolitan Richmond. Portions of Henrico County were annexed to the city in 1906 and 1912. Tobacco manufacturing continued as the leading industry. Major companies such as Liggett and Myers,

R.J. Reynolds, P. Lorillard, and American Tobacco Company were located in the city. Insurance and finance remained significant economic activities. Richmond's importance as a financial center was symbolized by its selection as a federal reserve district in 1914. The city also was a railroad hub served by six railroads, including the Southern Railway Company, the Atlantic Coastline, and the Seaboard Air Line, which was headquartered at Richmond.

During the 1920s the economy and population continued to expand. By 1930 the population of Richmond was 182,929 and that of the metropolitan area numbered over 256,000. Tobacco manufacturing remained the principal industry. The Phillip Morris Company began producing cigarettes in 1929, and expanded its production during the next decade. Also in 1929 the E.I. DuPont Company opened a huge rayon yarn plant in Chesterfield County, just beyond the present southern boundary of Richmond.

Richmond fared better than most cities during the 1930s. The expansion of tobacco manufacturing and new industries, especially DuPont, mitigated the effects of the Great Depression. Since World War II Richmond has remained a center of state and local government, education, commerce and industry, and Virginia's most populous city.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND

The city of Richmond is located in central Virginia along the James River. Its location was selected in 1737 because of its position at a series of falls which marked the innermost navigable point of the river at the time. From its founding to the early twentieth century, the concentrated development of the city spread in an east-west direction. Natural features, particularly hills, valleys, ravines, creeks, and ponds, frequently defined sections, neighborhoods, and subdivisions of the city. The major historic sections of the city are the East End, Central Richmond surrounding the state capitol, Jackson Ward, and West End. Following the Civil War, public schools became an integral part of the development of historic sections and neighborhoods in Richmond and often contributed to their identity.

The East End of Richmond includes the oldest sections of the city. The Shockoe Valley is the historic heart of Richmond and separates the East End from central Richmond. Topographically, it is defined by Church Hill to the east and Shockoe Hill to the west. In 1737, the original town plan was laid out in Shockoe Valley. This area extended west to east from 17th to 25th streets and south from Broad Street to the James River. The town plan was grid-pattern in form, consisting of thirty-two squares, four wide by eight long. North-south streets were numbered and east-west streets were organized alphabetically. This area defined the original limits of the city when it was incorporated in 1742.

Although many of the oldest buildings in the city remain in Shockoe Valley, fire, floods, the passage of time, and commercial and industrial development have resulted in the removal of much of the historic building stock. No historic schools remain in this historically important section of the city.

East of Shockoe Valley arose the historical sections of Church Hill, Union Hill and Shed Town. Church Hill developed as a continuation of the original plan to the east. Church Hill is the section concentrated around St. Johns Church and is roughly bounded by Franklin Street on the south, Jefferson Avenue and Leigh Street on the north, and 21st and 31th on the west and east respectively.

Part of Church Hill was annexed into the city in 1780 and the remainder in 1867. Most of Church Hill developed from 1819 until the Civil War, by which time few vacant lots remained. It, together with Union Hill, contains one of the finest concentrations of early to mid-nineteenth century domestic architecture in the United States. Moreover, three historic schools (Belleview, George Mason, and Bowler (Springfield)) remain there.

Union Hill is closely associated with Church Hill. It is bordered on the west by Shockoe Valley, on the south by Jefferson and M Streets, on the north by the corporate limits of the city and O Street, and on the east by an alley between 27th and 28th streets. Union Hill originally encompassed several hills which were gradually integrated into a single physical entity. It was originally separated from Church Hill

by a deep gully, running from 20th and Broad streets to 25th and M streets. A portion of Union Hill was laid out in 1805. Only limited development occurred, however; and as late as 1845 it remained largely undeveloped. Between 1845 and 1865 it became well-settled. It was incorporated into the city in 1867. No historic schools remain in Union Hill.

The final area on the East End of Richmond where concentrated development occurred prior to the Civil War was Shed Town. This area was laid out by the Adams family, owners of much of what today is the East End, following the original street pattern of the City of Richmond. Shed Town intersected Union Hill on the west, between 27th and 28th streets. It is roughly defined by the 1867 corporate limits on the north, Leigh Street on the south, and 32th Street on the east. Shed Town was incorporated into the city in 1867. Shed Town has been heavily impacted by the George Mason Urban Renewal Project, which removed large numbers of historic buildings, including several schools, and created concentrations of vacant land.

Other significant historic neighborhoods on the East End of Richmond include Chimborazo, Oakwood, and Fairmount. Chimborazo began developing after the Civil War, but concentrated construction occurred during the first decade of the twentieth century and the 1920s. It continued the logical development of the city east from Church Hill and Shed Town, bordering these sections along 31th, 32nd, and 33rd streets. It was annexed by the City of Richmond in 1906. The Nathaniel Bacon School, constructed 1915, and surrounding grounds dominate the northeast section of Chimborazo. Chimborazo Elementary Schools and East End Junior High are other historic schools in the neighborhood.

Fairmount, located to the north of Union Hill, developed after the Civil War as a prosperous suburb of Richmond. Its concentrated development dates to the years 1889 through 1901, when most of Fairmount was surveyed and subdivided. It was incorporated as a separate municipality in 1902, but annexed by the City of Richmond in 1906. Large frame residences in the Queen Anne, Italianate, and Eastlake styles dominate Fairmount. Fairmount Elementary School, a fine example of the Italianate style, remains in the neighborhood.

Oakwood is the final East End neighborhood with a significant concentration of historic residences. Located at the northeast corner of this section of the city, it borders Shed Town and Chimborazo on the east and south respectively. Although some concentrated development occurred during the late nineteenth century, most of Oakwood was surveyed and subdivided during the first decade of the twentieth century. Because it developed over an extended period of time, the architecture of Oakwood is mixed. Nonetheless, it, together with Chimborazo and Fairmount, is among the most architecturally significant turn-of-the century neighborhoods in Richmond. Oakwood was served by the Nathaniel Bacon School in nearby Chimborazo and consequently contains no historic schools.

Central Richmond developed west of Shockoe Valley and Shockoe Creek on Shockoe Hill, spurs of Gamble and Oregon hills, and the now largely obliterated Council Chamber Hill. It spread west to the Sydney area, where the West End of Richmond begins. The origins of Central Richmond date to 1768, when William Byrd, II subdivided the area and began selling lots. The following year the Town of Richmond annexed this section of the city. Additional sections of Central Richmond were annexed in 1780, 1793, and 1810.

The principal stimulus for the development of Central Richmond was the selection of Shockoe Hill as the site of the state capitol in 1780. Shockoe Hill dominated the skyline of Richmond and commanded a panoramic view of the river valley. Since that time Central Richmond has been the setting of state and local government, commerce, and education. It has been the location of the major public buildings, churches, commercial buildings, hotels, and until World War I, many of the finest residences in Richmond. Historic governmental buildings were located around Capitol Square, areas of commerce from Main Street to the James River, and residential areas west of Capitol Square to Monroe Park. Many of the first public schools were concentrated in this area as well.

Central Richmond has also been subject to the greatest changes of any historic area of the city. In 1865 the Evacuation Fire destroyed the commercial district between Main Street and the James River. Commercial buildings in the area have often been replaced because of rising property values and changing markets and standards of commercial design. Expansion

of commerce, government, and education have led to the removal of many historic buildings, particularly some of the most significant private residences in the city. The city's skyline has risen upward, even obscuring much of the capitol from view. Much of the residential area west of Capitol Square has been displaced by commercial construction in the twentieth century. All but two of the buildings in Central Richmond used as schools have been demolished, including John Marshall High School. One of the two remaining is the Brockenbrough Mansion or Confederate White House, which served as the Central School during the 1870s.

North of Central Richmond is Jackson Ward. Jackson Ward is located north of Broad Street to the Petersburg Turnpike and west of Eighth Street along Clay, Leigh, and Marshall streets and several shorter streets to Smith Street. It was defined on the east and north by Bacon Quarter Branch and Shockoe Creek. It also includes the historic Shockoe Cemetery to the north. It has traditionally been the major black residential neighborhood in Richmond. Jackson Ward was absorbed into the city through annexations in 1793 and 1810. Definable neighborhoods that developed within Jackson Ward were French Garden Hill and Navy Hill, which again were defined in large part by the topography of the city.

In 1950, Jackson Ward contained a majority of the extant ante-bellum residences in Richmond. Transportation expansion, the construction of the downtown coliseum and convention center, and deterioration have taken a heavy toll on the historic building stock of the neighborhood. Still many significant individual buildings and streetscapes remain. The Jackson Ward Historic District has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark. Many of the most significant schools in Richmond were located in Jackson Ward. Three of these survive. These are Benjamin Graves Middle School, Carver, and Booker T. Washington (Leigh) School. Leigh School, constructed in 1872, is the oldest extant building in Richmond designed as a public school.

Major historic sections of the West End of Richmond are Oregon Hill, Sydney, and the Fan. Oregon Hill was a bluff overlooking the James River, just west of Gamble's Hill. Separated by a ravine from Gamble's Hill and the rest of Central Richmond, it was initially isolated and slow to

develop. It was, however, quickly integrated into the city following the construction of Tredegar Iron Works in 1838. It rapidly developed prior to the Civil War as a working class neighborhood, primarily for employees of the Tredegar Works. The southern portion of Oregon Hill was largely obliterated during the 1950s by construction of the Virginia War Memorial. The remainder of Oregon Hill has been subject to slow deterioration and neglect, although substantial portions of the northern section remain. The Grace Arents School is an important remnant of the historic development of Oregon Hill.

Sydney is a roughly rectangular shaped residential area, extending northward from the James River to Main Street and west from Oregon Hill to Hollywood Cemetery. The first subdivision occurred in 1817 and was called Sydney, from which the area derives its name. Like Oregon Hill, Sydney developed as primarily a working class neighborhood during the mid-nineteenth century. Sydney has been largely spared contemporary development and generally retains its overall integrity. The West End (Cary) and Randolph schools remain in the Sydney area.

The last major historic area of west Richmond is the Fan. The Fan is a primarily residential area extending west from Monroe Park to Boulevard. It derives its name from its form. The area spreads in a series of diagonal lines radiating from Monroe Park, along Monument Avenue, Main, Franklin and other streets. Portions of the Fan were first annexed to the city in 1867. As development spread west, additional areas were annexed in 1892 and 1906. Intensive development began during the 1880s and continued until the 1920s. After World War II, considerable revitalization occurred in the area. The Fan is noted for its continuity of facades and the picturesqueness of its street patterns, which follow the natural contours of the area. The Fan contains the largest concentration of historic public schools in Richmond. These are Robert E. Lee, Albert Hill, William Fox, Stonewall Jackson, and Binford Junior High.

Additional historic schools are located in sections of the City of Richmond annexed during the early twentieth century. In north Richmond these are Jeb Stuart, Chandler, and Highland Park. South of the James River are Bainbridge (Mathew Maury), Franklin (Swansboro), and Blackwell.

Public Education in Richmond, 1869-1930

Institutionalized public education in Virginia dates to the state constitution of 1869. The creation of a state school system symbolized growing awareness of the value of public education to society, espoused by national educational reformers such as Thomas Mann and Henry Barnard. The public school system was part of a trend toward institutionalized and professionalized governmental services and regulation both at the state and local level. In addition to the local board of education, the City of Richmond created a Board of Health in 1870, a Board of Police Commissioners in 1877, and a Fire Commission in 1888. Public education added to the quality of life in Richmond and served to promote the community as an attractive place to live, work, and invest.

Driven by rapid population growth, its importance as one of the major urban industrial centers of the South, and compulsory attendance, the City of Richmond built a large number of schools between 1869 and 1930. By 1930 the monumental school had become the most common public structure in the city and a source of civic aspirations and pride. The onset of the Great Depression in 1930 and World War II effectively ended historic school construction in Richmond. Not until after the war were schools constructed on a comparable scale. The resignation of Charles M. Robinson in 1930 as Public School Architect further signaled the end of a period of significant historical development.

A statewide system of public education did not exist in Virginia until after the Civil War. This was due in large part to a reluctance of taxpayers to fund such a system and a strong tradition of private schools, academies, and colleges, reserved in great part for white males from well-to-do families.

The first state support for public education began in 1851, following the revision of the Virginia Constitution, when certain state taxes were earmarked for local primary schools. As a result, the City of Richmond initiated a modest public school program. In 1851 the Richmond City Council voted to establish free ward schools where needed. By February, 1853 there were primary schools in Monroe, Madison, Jefferson, and Marshall wards. Virginia educational conventions at Richmond in 1856 and 1857 probably stimulated expansion of the local

school system. By January 1860 Monroe Ward had three schools. Funding was, however, modest. City Council records indicate that teachers were at times purchasing books, supplies, and other needed items from their salaries. Classes were held in rented space or city owned property. It appears from the historical record that no buildings specifically designed as public schools were ever constructed in Richmond prior to the Civil War.

In 1869 the new Virginia constitution provided for a segregated system of public education for blacks and whites. The Freedmen's Bureau and northern missionary societies had provided several schools for black children following the war, including one housed at the Confederate Arsenal. On June 9, 1869 the Richmond City Council established a local public school system, creating a seven member board. Andrew Washburn of Massachusetts was appointed the first superintendent. The Freedmen's Bureau schools were quickly incorporated into the city schools. In attendance the first year were 1,008 white and 1,769 black students. Two years later the local system was fully integrated into the state system. Funding support was derived from the poll tax, property taxes, and local taxes. The Peabody Fund, founded in 1867 by George Peabody of Massachusetts to provide financial for primary schools and teacher training in the South, matched the initial appropriation of the city council.

The Richmond School Board launched an acquisition and development program in 1870. Between 1870 and 1909 capital outlay for school construction was modest. Most schools were small and of modest construction. Their design was simple and utilitarian, the product of builders working from standard plans. The board acquired or leased additional buildings not originally designed as schools. Many of these buildings were used to alleviate overcrowding, housed short term programs, or served as temporary classroom space while schools were being constructed. Additional schools were brought into the system in 1906 through annexation of parts of Henrico County.

The school board initially purchased three buildings and constructed three others. The first three schools constructed were Belleview, Baker Street, and Leigh School (later Armstrong High School and Booker Washington Elementary School) completed in 1872. Two other buildings, the former Bethel Church and the

Brockenbrough Mansion, also known as the Confederate White House, were purchased by the city and served as the Bethel and Central schools respectively. The school board acquired another building, the Valley School, in 1871. The Valley School was designed as an educational facility and constructed in 1816 as a Lancastrian free school. The school board also rented buildings for use as schools during the 1870s. These include the Brook or Clay School and the Twelfth and Leigh School.

Other schools operated by the City during the 1870s included the Colored Normal School, formerly funded by the Freedmen's Bureau and acquired in 1876; and Navy Hill, another black school supported by the Freedmen's Bureau, acquired in 1877. The school board also rented buildings for use as schools during the 1870s. These include the Brook or Clay School and the Twelfth and Leigh School.

The first public high school in the city was established in 1871. Initially, classes were held in a rented room near 10th and Clay Streets and later in the Brockenbrough Mansion. In 1872 high school classes were moved to rented rooms of a building located on Broad Street, between Eighth and Ninth street. In 1873, the Richmond High School was completed at 805 East Marshall Street. It remained the principal high school in Richmond until construction of John Marshall High in 1909.

During the 1880s construction of schools proceeded at a modest pace. Five additional schools were built. These were Moore (later Carver), Elba, West End (later Stonewall Jackson), Springfield (later demolished and replaced by a second school of the same name), and East End (later George Mason).

Only three new schools were built during the 1890s. These were Nicholson, 1893; Randolph, 1896; and Central (later Ruffner), 1894, which replaced the original Central School housed in the Brockenbrough Mansion. In 1899 the School Board acquired an armory which had been used by black troops during the Spanish-American War. It was converted to the Monroe School.

Only two new schools were built during the first decade of the twentieth century. The first was Chimborazo, completed in 1905. The second was John Marshall High School, designed by Richmond architect Charles K. Bryant. John Marshall High

subsequently became the most prestigious public school in the state. It was the first public school in Richmond documented to have been designed by a formally trained architect. In 1906, an additional six schools were brought into the Richmond system through annexation of parts of Henrico County. These were Fairmount (later Helen Dickenson); Louisiana Street; Newtown; Sidney; and Twenty-ninth Street.

By 1909 the school system of the City of Richmond faced a crisis. Between 1870, when the Board of Public Instruction launched its initial acquisition and development program, and 1909, capital outlay for school construction and maintenance was modest. Twenty-seven buildings were used as public schools during this period. Fourteen of these were designed and built as schools. Many of these were small and poorly constructed. An additional thirteen buildings were acquired by the school board either through purchase or annexation. Some of these were non-school buildings, acquired or leased as educational facilities. Many of the existing schools were in poor condition or functionally obsolete.

In 1909, Dr. J.A.C. Chandler was named Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools. Dr. Chandler soon initiated an ambitious construction program which was overseen by Charles M. Robinson, appointed Public School Architect that same year. School facilities dating from the period 1909-1930 were generally designed and built specifically as schools. They were more numerous, larger, and superior to the earlier schools through their design, materials, and methods of construction. Most of the extant historic school buildings in Richmond were constructed during the following two decades.

During Dr. Chandler's term as superintendent (1909-1919) twelve new schools were constructed, nearly equalling the total of the previous forty years. All but two of these were completed by 1915, during the first six years of his term. The first three junior high schools in the city were completed under the Chandler administration. These were Bainbridge, Belleview, and Binford. Another thirteen schools were brought into the system through annexation, primarily from former areas of Henrico County. Major additions were also made to several existing schools during the period.

Seven new schools were constructed during the 1920s. Charles Robinson remained supervising architect of these projects. Four of these buildings were large structures, serving upper division students. These were the Chandler, Albert Hill, and East End junior high schools and Armstrong High School built for black students. As part of the segregated system of education, a separate school, probably in leased space, was established for Indian students in 1928. The Indian School operated for two years before being discontinued in 1930 when families of the students moved from the city. Thomas Jefferson High School completed in 1930 was the last school in Richmond designed by Robinson as public school architect.

Little school construction, other than scattered federally funded projects, occurred during the years spanning the Great Depression and World War II. Maggie Walker High School, completed in 1938, was the major school completed during the period. Even building maintenance was diminished during this bleak period. In 1942 an additional six schools were brought into the system through annexation. Similar to the early twentieth century, schools were overcrowded and in poor condition at the conclusion of the war. In 1946 Dr. H.I. Willett became superintendent. His administration, like the Chandler administration, was associated with an intense period of school construction. Unlike Chandler, the Willett administration obtained architectural services on a project basis rather than appointing a school architect such as Charles Robinson.

Over the past several decades many of the Richmond schools which pre-date 1930 have been closed and a number of these demolished. The reasons for closing local schools have been varied and consistent with national trends. Among them are declining enrollment; contemporary building and life-safety codes; new theories about school design; desegregation plans; and a trend away from the neighborhood school toward larger, more centralized and specialized schools. Although the usefulness of many of these building to the educational system has diminished or ended, many of these buildings remain structurally sound and handsome. They embody a significant period in the historic development of Richmond.

Public School Architecture in Richmond, 1869-1930

Period of Significant Development

The period associated with the development of public education in Richmond can be divided into two significant sub-periods: 1869 to 1909 and 1909-1930. The earlier period is associated with pioneering efforts in public education, when funding, programs, and personnel were still in their developmental stages. Schools dating from this earlier period were smaller, less numerous, and not as well constructed and designed as those dating from the following period. Buildings not specifically designed as schools were frequently purchased or leased to satisfy the demands for classroom space. Additional schools were annexed into the Richmond system from Henrico County in 1906.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the years before World War I, Richmond experienced considerable economic and population growth. The prosperity of the period is embodied in the quality and scale of much of the architecture produced during these years. Government and commercial buildings, churches, many residences, and schools reflect the prosperity, confidence, and civic pride of this era.

In 1909, Dr. J.A.C. Chandler was named Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools. Dr. Chandler soon initiated an ambitious construction program which was overseen by Public School Architect Charles M. Robinson. Schools dating from the latter period were larger and constructed in greater numbers. As a result of the supervision of Robinson, a noted architect of educational facilities, their design and construction were of high-quality. They embodied the increasing importance of public education to the economic prosperity and quality of life in the City of Richmond.

Property Type

Buildings in Richmond specifically designed as public schools embody a specific structural type. They share a form and function common to thousands of others found throughout the country. While historic school buildings varied greatly in terms of their size, style, and materials, their designs did

adhere to certain standards. The earliest published standards for school buildings date to 1832 when William A. Alcott prepared a brief treatise on school design. Alcott stressed that fresh air, space, and light were necessary in promoting a healthy learning environment. He suggested the liberal use of large windows, classrooms providing a separate desk for each pupil, and open surroundings for recreation. For more than a century afterwards, school architects followed similar standards.

Most schools featured a basic classroom size of about 25 by 35 feet, expansive windows, high ceilings, and an open setting, usually with adjacent playgrounds and athletic fields. These characteristics were shared by schools ranging from one-room rural types to large urban schools. The extant public schools in Richmond share many of these traits and often are good examples of the adaptation of popular styles and locally significant materials to traditional school design.

The Richmond Public Schools further embody standard school design as applied to an urban setting. Although many of the first schools were in Central Richmond, the setting of schools in the city was generally in residential areas, free of noise, traffic and other disagreeable elements. Many schools were closely associated with Richmond's historic neighborhoods, often taking the name of the area in which they were located.

The schools constructed in Richmond were generally two-and-one-half to three-and-one-half stories high, frequently with a raised basement. They were of monumental scale. They were generally the largest buildings in the neighborhoods where they were located by measures such as height, width, mass, and square footage. Massing was regular, frequently with a centrally placed entrance within a projecting pavilion. The schools had regular ground plan, usually rectangular, H or U-shaped, with wings running perpendicular to the main block.

For several reasons, the size of public schools appears to have increased over time. The local schools constructed during the nineteenth century were mostly small grammar schools, generally only five bays wide and two-and-one-half stories in height. They contained as few as eight classrooms. Because of increasing demand and rapid population growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the local system

needed larger schools in greater numbers. Particularly after 1909, grammar schools became wider and more massive, resulting in a greatly increased number of classrooms. Beginning around 1914, junior high schools, which accepted students from several grammar schools, were built for the first time. These schools were larger by design and necessity.

School interiors also shared common features. The basic plan featured rooms of equal size located on either side of a central corridor. Most schools featured auditoriums, meeting rooms, or gymnasiums that served as community centers, further strengthening their links to neighborhoods. They included detailed spaces such as the principal's office or library and special purpose rooms. Decorative features and significant materials were usually concentrated at entrances and staircases.

Materials

Masonry was the material of preference for local school construction due to its durability and fire-proof characteristics. Brick, because of tradition and a highly productive local industry, was the most common material. Richmond granite was used as an exterior finish material on several schools and for decorative detailing, such as belt courses and window sills, on others. Poured and cast concrete became a common material during the 1920s.

Architectural Styles

While detailing was generally kept secondary to functional considerations, the Richmond schools, particularly those post-dating 1909, were well-built and exhibited significant design qualities and ornamentation. They embodied a variety of styles popular during the period when they were constructed. These styles included Italianate, Gothic Revival, Beaux-Arts, Neo-Classical, Colonial Revival, and Second Empire. Local schools frequently featured a cupola or bell tower, particularly those designed in the Italianate style.

The architectural styles associated with the extant public schools in Richmond closely reflect specific periods of construction. Seven schools remain from the nineteenth century, and all but one embody the Italianate style or exhibit

features closely associated with the style. The Italianate style began in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to the formal classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable for about two hundred years. The movement emphasized rambling, informal Italian farmhouses, with their characteristic square towers, as models for Italian-style villa architecture.

Identifying features of the style include two or three stories (rarely one story); low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath tall narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above; and windows that frequently exhibited elaborated crowns, usually of inverted U shape. Many examples featured a square cupola or tower.

The six Richmond schools embodying the Italianate style were constructed between 1887 and 1896 and four of them were constructed in 1887 and 1888. They feature the stylistic details outlined above. Fairmount and Randolph feature square bell towers.

The earliest extant public school in Richmond is the Leigh School, later known as Booker T. Washington School. Constructed in 1872, it is an example of the Second Empire style. Second Empire included many features also associated with the Italianate. The Second Empire style was popular in the United States between 1860 and 1880. It derives its name from the reign of Napolean III of France (1852-1870) who undertook a major building campaign and redesigned Paris into a city of grand boulevards and monumental buildings that were copied throughout Europe and the United States. The style found its widest popularity during the Grant administration when it was applied to public buildings as well as residences. The distinctive mansard roof (named for seventeenth century French architect Francois Mansart) was a popular feature of the style because it created an extra story of usable space for the building. Often, the mansard roof was added to existing buildings during renovations because of its utility.

Identifying features of the style include a mansard roof with dormer windows on the steep lower slopes; molded cornices with decorative brackets under boxed eaves; prominent projecting and receding surfaces, often in the form of central

and end pavilions; wrought iron roof cresting; and decorative window and door surrounds, often including classical pediments and pilasters. The Leigh Street School is readily identified as an example of the Second Empire style through its mansard roof, its form, and its cornice, eaves, and window detailing.

After 1900, reflecting national design trends, the styles common to earlier schools passed from fashion. They were replaced by the Beaux-Arts, Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, and, particularly during the 1920s, the Neo-Classical. The Beaux Arts style was popular in the United States between 1885 and 1920. The style was based upon classical precedents and drew from all of the classical revivals. The high cost of executing the highly decorative Beaux Arts style made it rare until scaled down versions with less ornament were introduced around turn of the century. This was particularly true when applied to school architecture where cost and utility were primary considerations. It was brought to the U.S. by architects who studied at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Among these were some of the greatest names in American architecture, such as Richard Morris Hunt, Louis Sullivan, H.H. Richardson, John Mervin Carrere, Thomas Hastings, and Addison Mizner.

Identifying features of the style include flat or mansard roofs; elaborate cornices; symmetrical facade with bays divided by pilasters with classical capitals; masonry walls adorned with decorative garlands, floral patterns, or shields; rusticated stonework; and quoins. The Beaux-Arts as applied to public schools was restrained when compared with high-styled examples. In many instances, it is little different from the Neo-Classical. Robert E. Lee Grammar School is the best example of the style among the extant public schools in Richmond.

The Neo-Classical style evolved from a renewed interest in the architectural forms of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The revival of interest in classical models in the United States dates from the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Many of the best known architects of the day designed buildings for the Exposition based on classical precedents. Examples were varied and ranged from monumental copies of Greek temples to smaller models, which drew heavily from designs of Adam, Georgian, and Early Classical Revival residences built in

the United States in the eighteenth century. The exposition was well attended and publicized and soon the Neo-Classical style became the fashion.

During the early twentieth century, the Neo-Classical style became a most popular style for commercial and governmental buildings, such as banks and courthouses, and also schools. Some of the characteristics of the style include a symmetrical facade dominated by a full height porch on classical columns, typically with Ionic or Corinthian capitals; gable or hip roofs with boxed eaves, frequently with dentils or modillions beneath the roof and a wide frieze band surrounding the building; doorways featuring decorative pediments; double-hung sash windows, usually with six or nine panes per sash; and roof line balustrades. Examples of the style in Richmond were monumental in scale and consequently applied to larger schools such as junior highs. Particularly good examples of the Neo-Classical are East End and Chandler junior high schools.

Colonial Revival is another popular early twentieth century style associated with the architecture of Richmond schools. The term "Colonial Revival" refers to a rebirth of interest in the early English and Dutch houses of the Atlantic Seaboard. The Georgian and Adam styles were the backbone of the Colonial Revival, which also drew upon Post-Medieval English and Dutch Colonial architecture for references.

The Colonial Revival style was introduced at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. The centennial of the Declaration of Independence sparked renewed interest in the architecture of the colonial period. Many of the buildings designed for the Exposition were based on historically significant colonial designs. Publicity on the Exposition occurred simultaneously with efforts made by several national organizations to preserve Old North Church in Boston and Mount Vernon. About the same time a series of articles focusing on eighteenth century American architecture appeared in the *American Architect*, *Harpers*, and the *New York Sketch Book of Architecture*. The publicity the Colonial Revival style received helped make it popular throughout the country, particularly in Virginia, where a tradition of high-quality colonial architecture existed.

Some identifying characteristics of Colonial Revival architecture include gable, hip, and gambrel roofs; an accentuated door, normally with a pediment or crown and pilasters surrounds; a fanlight over the door; simple entry porches supported by slender columns; symmetrical facade; double-hung sash windows, usually with multi-pane glazing in each sash; and windows that are frequently set in pairs. The Chimborazo and Nathaniel Bacon Schools are among the best examples of the style in Richmond.

Between 1913 and 1915 four schools embodying the Gothic Revival style were constructed. School board architect Charles M. Robinson either designed or supervised the design of all four. During the 1830s the Gothic Revival became fashionable principally through the work of Alexander Jackson Davis, the country's most prolific practitioner of the style. Davis's plans for houses and cottages were widely distributed in the popular books of Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing produced several pattern books which illustrated the suitability of the style to modest domestic architecture. Plans books for schools with Gothic Revival designs were also widespread by the mid-19th century. The Gothic Revival remained a popular building style for religious and educational buildings well into the 20th century.

The Gothic Revival was particularly important in Virginia, where Alexander Jackson Davis designed a number of buildings. The Barracks at Virginia Military Institute, designed by Davis, is the heart of a district unified by castellated examples of the style. The Cary (West End) School in Richmond is designed in this tradition. It and the Bowler (Springfield) School have extensive granite finishes, lending additional authenticity to the Medieval origins of the style.

Significant Architects

Several architects are significantly associated with the design of public schools in Richmond. Prior to 1909, school board records provide no information about the designers of local schools. The pre-1909 schools could well have been the products of skilled designer-builders working from standard plans issued by the Virginia State Board of Education or other sources.

By the early twentieth century, school boards in urban areas addressed school design in one of two ways. Either they contracted with a firm on a regional basis or hired a school architect. The Richmond School Board chose the latter approach, selecting Charles Robinson as school board architect in 1909.

Charles M. Robinson (1867-1932), one of the most important Virginia architects of the period, was particularly noted for his design of educational buildings. Robinson was born at Hamilton in Loudoun County, the son of James T. Robinson, also an architect. Robinson studied under D.S. Hopkins, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and John K. Peebles of Richmond. After practicing in Altoona and Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, Robinson returned to Richmond in 1906. Robinson was supervising architect for the Board of Public Instruction of the City of Richmond between 1910 and 1929. During that period, he designed or supervised the design of twenty-three new schools or additions to existing schools.

Robinson's design of educational facilities extended to the collegiate level. He prepared master plans for the campuses of James Madison and Radford universities and the College of William and Mary. He designed many buildings at the College of William and Mary, Mary Washington College, and Virginia State University. Robinson's campus planning for William and Mary, Mary Washington, Radford, and James Madison universities, his scholarly Georgian Revival designs, and his fluency in all styles and motifs earned him the respect of his peers and clients. In addition to his practice, Robinson served on the Virginia State Board for Examination and Certification of Architects.

Carneal and Johnston, Architects and Engineers, of Richmond, were a locally significant architectural firm. William Leigh Carneal was a native of Richmond and designed numerous buildings in the city. In addition to the Bowler and Nathaniel Bacon schools, he designed the Virginia State Library, Capitol Square. He was also associated with the design of educational buildings at Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg.

I. **Name of Property Type:**

Schools associated with Public Education in Richmond, 1869-1930

II. **Description:**

The historic schools of Richmond are grouped as a property type based on their shared physical and associative characteristics. The buildings submitted as part of the proposed nomination share a common form and function. Beyond their physical characteristics, they are further linked by events associated with the development of public education in Richmond between 1869 and 1930.

Public schools in Richmond share certain physical traits common to thousands of other schools found throughout the country. The schools were generally located in residential areas, free of noise, traffic and other disagreeable elements, in an open setting usually with adjacent playgrounds and athletic fields. The schools were closely associated with many of Richmond's historic neighborhoods.

The schools constructed in Richmond were generally two-and-one-half to three-and-one half stories high, frequently with a raised basement. The basic plan featured eight or more rooms of equal size located on either side of a central corridor. The schools had a basic classroom size of about 25 by 35 feet, coatrooms, chalk boards, expansive windows, and high ceilings. Most schools featured auditoriums or gymnasiums that served as community centers, further strengthening their links to neighborhoods. Many, particularly those dating from the late nineteenth century, had a cupola or bell tower.

Masonry was the material of preference due to its durability and fire-proof characteristics. In Richmond, local brick was the most common material. Virginia granite was used as a finish material on several schools. Cast concrete became common during the 1920s.

While detailing was generally kept secondary to functional considerations, the Richmond Schools, particularly those post-dating 1909, were well-built and exhibited significant design qualities and ornamentation. They were monumental in scale and embodied a variety of styles popular during the period when they were constructed. These styles included Gothic Revival, Beaux-Arts, Neo-Classical, Colonial Revival, Italianate, and Second Empire.

Beyond their physical qualities, the historic schools of Richmond share significant associative characteristics. They were associated with the rapid urban growth of Richmond and the development of compulsory public education in the city during the period 1869 to 1930. Furthermore, they were one of the major investments made by the residents of Richmond in their community.

The period associated with the development of public education in Richmond can be divided into two significant sub-periods: 1869 to 1909 and 1909-1930. The earlier period is associated with pioneering efforts in public education, when funding, programs, and personnel were still in their developmental stages. Schools dating from this earlier period were smaller, less numerous, and not as well constructed or designed as those dating from the following period. Buildings not specifically designed as schools were frequently purchased or leased to satisfy the demands for classroom space.

In 1909, Dr. J.A.C. Chandler was named Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools. Dr. Chandler soon initiated an ambitious construction program, which was overseen by Public School Architect Charles M. Robinson. Schools dating from the latter period were larger and constructed in greater numbers. As a result of the supervision of Robinson, a noted architect of educational facilities, their design and construction were of high-quality. They embodied the increasing importance of public education to the economic prosperity and quality of life in the City of Richmond.

The condition of the extant public schools range from excellent to deteriorated. Many schools have been closed for a number of years and declared surplus by the Richmond School Board. Demolition has been a serious problem. Of the

twenty-seven buildings used as schools prior to 1909, only eight remain. Thirteen of the twenty-five schools in use between 1909 and 1919 have also been demolished. Some schools, such as Stonewall Jackson and Highlands elementary schools, have been sold to private investors and sensitively adapted for new uses. A similar use is proposed for the West End (Cary), Bowler (Springfield), and Nathaniel Bacon elementary schools.

III. **Significance:**

Public schools in Richmond appear eligible for listing in the National Register under criteria A for their association with events and patterns of development important to public education in the city during the period 1869 to 1930. A particularly significant sub-period were the years between 1909 and 1930, when Dr. J.A.C. Chandler initiated an important program of construction under the supervision of Charles M. Robinson.

Schools submitted under the above referenced property type are further significant Under Criteria C for their architectural qualities. They embody an important structural type. They may have further architectural significance for their style, materials, and association with important builders or architects. Particularly important are buildings designed or supervised by Public School Architect Charles M. Robinson and examples of the use of a relatively rare building material, such as Richmond granite.

IV. **Registration Requirements:**

For schools to be eligible for nomination under this cover they must have been built between 1869 and 1930 and meet the following criteria:

1) Criteria A, Education: individual schools associated with events and developmental trends significant to public education in Richmond at the local level. Integrity requirements for schools with important historic associations should be less stringent than for those nominated for their architectural significance. Schools, however, that have been radically altered to the point where they exhibit little of

their original design are excluded from nomination under this criterion.

2) Criteria C, Architecture: individual schools that are significant examples of a structural type, embody an important style or material, or represent the work of a prominent builder or architect. Schools nominated under this area of significance must retain their original appearance to a high degree. A school that has been substantially altered by additions, the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which they were constructed, or the removal of significant architectural details may not fulfill this criteria.

3) Criteria of Integrity: the following features should be considered when evaluating the integrity of schools for eligibility to the National Register.

a) Exterior: original height, mass, materials, roof forms, and stylistic features should remain to a large degree;

b) Interior: significant interior features that should remain to a large degree are: main entrances; location and general configuration of corridors; floor-to-ceiling heights; auditoriums where significant architectural detailing is present; detailed space such as the principal's office or library; staircases, if prominent and of architectural interest; wainscotting along corridors and in classrooms; unusual ceiling treatments such as vaults or coffers; architectural features such as marble, beaded board, decorative plaster; windows; window and door trim; doors and transom.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

[x] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

[x] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [x] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: VA Dept. of Historic Resources, 221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul L. Weaver, III, Senior Consultant

organization Historic Property Associates date October 31, 1992

street & number P. O. Box 1002 telephone 904-824-5178

city or town St. Augustine state Florida zip code 32085

Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Historic Property Associates, Inc., St. Augustine, Florida conducted a thematic survey of public schools in the City of Richmond between May and October, 1991. The survey began with a background literature search focused primarily on properties identified in a 1973 study entitled "Sketches of the Richmond Public Schools." This invaluable manuscript identified and described all public schools in operation in Richmond since the local public education system was created in 1869. The study was based on extensive primary and secondary source research draw from minutes of the Richmond School Board, school directories, annual reports of principals, individual school histories, histories of Richmond, several histories of the public school system, newspaper accounts, and oral history interviews. The literature search provided the basic data used in determining the periods, activities, personalities, and properties significant to the development of public education in Richmond.

The literature search also allowed for the development of a working inventory of all schools known to have operated in Richmond between 1869 and 1930. In preparation for field survey, the inventory was further refined by eliminating schools known to have been demolished, based on documentary evidence or knowledgeable informants. The remaining schools on the inventory were field surveyed. Since much of the documentation dated to 1973 or before, it was assumed that additional schools had been demolished. This proved true upon visiting the school sites. As a result of the site visits, additional schools were removed from the inventory.

During the field survey a Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Architectural Survey Form was completed for twenty-four schools. Each school was photographed and mapped and its physical integrity was evaluated based on the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The survey data was used to evaluate and prepare National Register nominations for the Cary (West End), Springfield (Bowler), and Nathaniel Bacon schools. Through the multiple property format, additional schools can be added as appropriate in the future.

The present limits of the City of Richmond served to define the extent of the survey and historic context. The period of significant development was determined largely by important historical events. The public school system in Richmond was established in 1869, the initial year of the historic context. An important sub-period began in 1909, when Dr. J.A.C. Chandler was named superintendent and Charles M. Robinson Public School Architect. Over the next two decades most of the extant schools in Richmond were constructed as part of an ambitious building program.

Additional events define the terminal year of the period of significant historic development of the Richmond schools. The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and World War II effectively ended historic school construction in Richmond. Not until after the war were schools again constructed on a scale comparable to the 1909-1930 period. The resignation of Charles M. Robinson as Public School Architect in 1930 further signaled the end of an era.

The determination of significant property types was based on function and association with public education in Richmond between 1869 and 1930. The two property types identified were buildings specifically designed as schools and other structural types not specifically designed as such but through their use associated with the theme of public education in Richmond. Only one example of the latter property type, the Brockenough Mansion, in central Richmond, remains.

The integrity of buildings included in the survey was based on field inspection of the exterior of each building. The interiors of buildings proposed for nomination under the multiple property format were also field inspected. The integrity of each interior was evaluated on the basis of published standards of the National Park Service. The overall integrity of all the schools proposed for nomination was preliminarily evaluated by the staff of the Department of Historic Resources and the Philadelphia Regional Office of the National Park service during the course of review of Part I, Certifications of Significance, filed by the owner in 1991.

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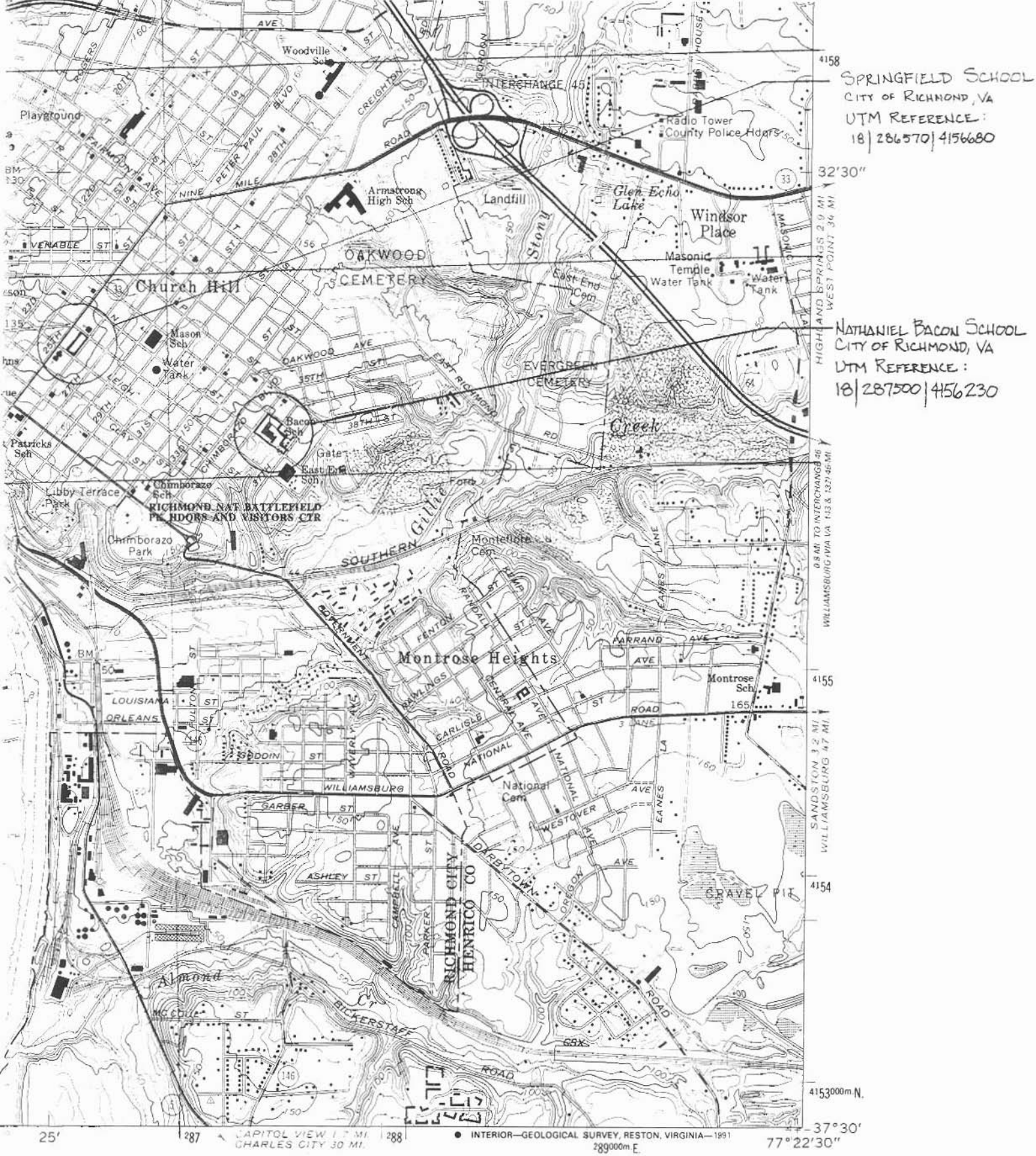
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Woodville Sch
Playground
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Radio Tower
County Police Hdqrs
Armstrong High Sch
Landfill
Glen Echo Lake
Windsor Place
Masonic Temple
Water Tank
OAKWOOD CEMETERY
Church Hill
East End Cem
Mason Sch
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EVERGREEN CEMETERY
Bacon Sch
Gate
East End Sch
Patricks Sch
Libby Terrace Park
Chimborazo Sch
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Montrose Heights
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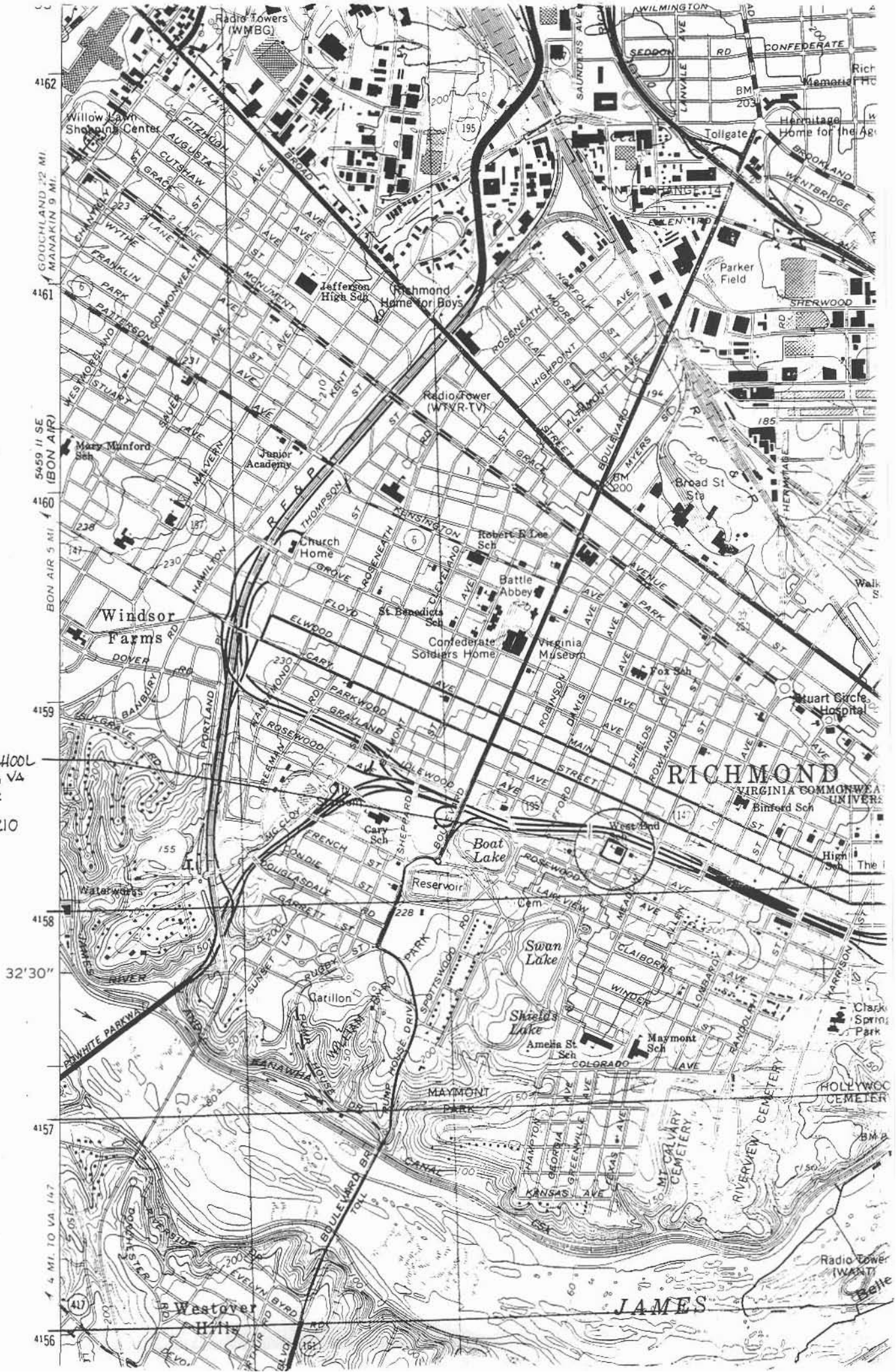

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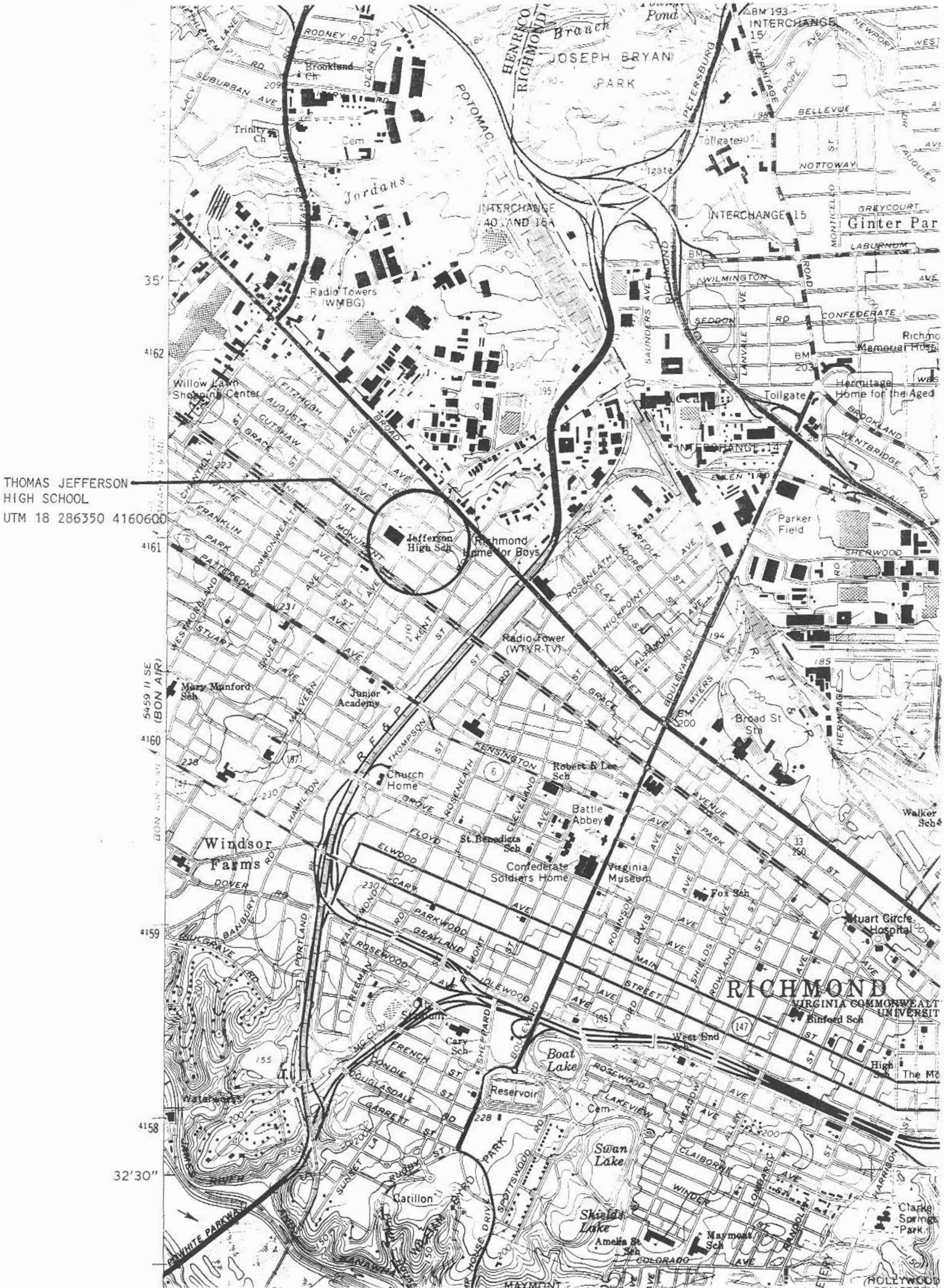
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Jordans
Radio Towers (WMBG)
Willow Lawn Shopping Center
Jefferson High Sch
Richmond Home for Boys
Radio Tower (WTVR-TV)
Junior Academy
Mary Munford Sch
Church Home
Robert E Lee Sch
Battle Abbey
St Benedicts Sch
Confederate Soldiers Home
Virginia Museum
Windsor Farms
Parker Field
Broad St Sta
Fox Sch
Stuart Circle Hospital
RICHMOND
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
Binford Sch
West End
Boat Lake
Reservoir
Swan Lake
Shields Lake
Carillon
Waterworks
Clarke Springs Park
Hermitage Home for the Aged
Tollgate
Ginter Par
Brookland Ch
Trinity Ch
Cem
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Maymont Sch
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POTOMAC
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RICHMOND
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MAIN
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MONUMENT
KENSINGTON
GRAVLAND
PARKWOOD
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FRENCH
CONDIE
DOUGLASDALE
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RUGBY
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