

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

NATIONAL REGISTER  
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This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the required information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission

☐ Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Streetcar Suburbs in Northside Richmond, Virginia

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Speculative Real Estate Development and the Street Railway in Northside  
Richmond, Virginia, 1880 to 1949

**C. Form Prepared by**

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**D. Certification**

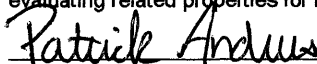
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria.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

  
Signature and title of certifying official

3/12/02  
Date

VA. DEPT. OF HISTORIC RESOURCES  
State and 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

5/29/2002  
Date of Action

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

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(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

See continuation sheet

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements)

See continuation sheet

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**G. Geographical Data**

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The geographical area known as the Northside in the city of Richmond, Virginia is bounded roughly by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad line on the east, the 1867 city boundary on the south, the Seaboard AirLine Railway on the west, and the 1914 corporate limit on the north.

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## H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

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(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The multiple property listing of the early twentieth-century streetcar suburbs of Richmond, Virginia's Northside is based upon the review of two major Reconnaissance level surveys, a Preliminary Information Form and a National Register Nomination. Under the auspices of Neighborhood Housing Services of Richmond, Vanessa Gilmore Hicks and Brian Cox conducted the larger of the two surveys between 1998-2000. This survey of the greater Barton Heights community documented 2,187 properties. The properties were then grouped by the historic subdivisions in which they were developed; by age; and by architectural styles. The recently completed Reconnaissance level survey of approximately 600 properties in Chestnut Hill and the accompanying survey report add tremendously to the understanding of the impact of the electric streetcar on the development of the Northside. Gibson Worsham prepared this survey and report for the City of Richmond. The remainder of Highland Park, over 800 properties, has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The National Register nomination report for Ginter Park was also consulted. The analysis of Barton Heights, Ginter Park and Highland Park and the related documentation served to focus the discussion on the impact of the streetcar, speculative development and the architectural response to mass production and suburbia. After establishing the local importance of these trends, a search was made to place the events in Richmond into a broader national context. It was this study that firmly placed Richmond ahead of the national trends in the development of an electric streetcar system and related suburban development.

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## I. Major Bibliographical References

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(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

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- Ryan, David D. with Wayland W. Rennie. Lewis Ginter's Richmond. Richmond, 1991.
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**SPECULATIVE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND THE STREET RAILWAY IN  
NORTHSIDE RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, 1880 TO 1949**

Just as Richmond led the nation in the development of the first electric street railway system, its Northside suburbs were among the earliest speculative real estate developments in the United States that were tied to the new technology. Richmond, Virginia made history on May 4, 1888 when it placed the world's first commercially successful electric street railway or trolley system in full service. Neither the location nor the date was an accident. The location and the timing of this world-shaking event were the result of very deliberate political planning and extensive community cooperation. Community tensions were high after the annexation of 1867 that more than doubled the size of the city and created three new suburban wards: Clay, Jackson and Marshall. Access to other parts of the city by residents of the new wards was greatly limited by poor street conditions and an inadequate horse drawn streetcar line. These bitter struggles for political power, social reform and civic improvements led to the formation of the Richmond Union Passenger Railway. "John Wise (a political activist) and a small group of Republican businessmen developed the idea of constructing a new (electrified) street railway system designed to permanently link the new wards with the rest of the city."<sup>1</sup> The proposed twelve-mile circuit ran from 29th and P streets in Marshall Ward on the eastern end of the city westward through Monroe and Clay Wards to Reservoir Park in Henrico County. Two additional lines-Valley and Fifth Street-extended north into the heart of Jackson Ward. The Fifth Street line would serve the Northside suburbs.

It is believed that John Wise met with Frank Julian Sprague, a pioneer in the field of street railway electrification, during one of his many trips to New York. Frank Julian Sprague (1857-1934), a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, had honed an inventive mind while working with Thomas A. Edison. In 1884, he formed the Sprague Electric Railway and Motor Company with financial backing from New York financier Jay Gould and his son; Frank J. Gould.<sup>2</sup> Sprague signed a contract in May 1887 to build Richmond's new system in 90 days. On May 25, 1887 ground was broken at 12th and Franklin Streets. On May 4, 1888 the entire twelve miles of track were being serviced under the ownership of the Richmond Railway and Electric Company.<sup>3</sup> "Sprague's

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success in Richmond began the most extraordinary revolution in transportation up to that time."<sup>4</sup>

The introduction of "an electric streetcar system began to change the physical landscape of the city and to shift attention from the old wards to new suburban sections."<sup>6</sup> Streetcar companies and land speculators were often one and the same. They bought suburban tracts and often placed amusement and picnic sites at the end of the trolley lines as an inducement to potential homeowners. The most popular was Forest Hill Park at the end of the Richmond, Manchester and Woodland Heights Line, south of the James River. Other popular sites were Reservoir or Byrd Park and Gamble's Hill, to the west, Jefferson Park to the east, and Lakeside Park to the north. The streetcar was the "transportation system of an enlarged middle class that included bank cashiers, insurance agents, teachers and builders."<sup>7</sup>

The tranquility of Richmond's Northside was a tremendous lure for citizens, especially the upper and middle classes, who were growing dissatisfied with the declining quality of life in the inner city. The area was also extremely attractive to a new breed of businessman, the real estate speculator. Northside refers to a large plateau, once a part of Henrico County, rising above Bacon's Quarter Branch to the north of the city proper. It is bounded roughly by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad line on the east, the 1867 city boundary on the south, and the Seaboard AirLine Railway on the west. The northern boundary was established in 1914 when this large area was annexed into the city of Richmond. Isolated from the city by the ravine carved by Bacon's Quarter Branch, prior to 1880 the district was largely undeveloped with the exception of some scattered estates and farmsteads. A single road, the Brook Turnpike extended north from the city to the town of Ashland. The valley between Northside and the city was committed to industrial development and railway tracks, which further separated the two areas. The heights themselves were described as "a region of unsurpassing beauty. The high plateau, the undulating hills, the gentle slopes, at the feet of which sparkling streamlets dance and play in hundreds of eddies and dainty waterfalls as they busily pursue their flower-strewn ways through shadowy vales and sunny meadows, combine to make a landscape of almost unequaled loveliness."<sup>8</sup> James H. Barton, a successful real estate speculator from Little Rock, Arkansas, was drawn to the natural beauty of the Northside and its close proximity to the city. Barton also recognized the need to

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bridge the ravine separating the two and foresaw the electric streetcar as a possible solution.

For the most part, development of Northside was not tied to the amusement park enticements associated with other suburban developments around the city. Rather it was a profit-oriented real estate venture tied to the development of the new streetcar system. The first of two viaducts to cross Bacon's Quarter branch and the industrial area was completed on April 23, 1891 by James H. Barton's Brookland Railway and Improvement Company and connected First Street to the bottom of Monteiro Street. The developers of Northside were also principals in the new technological enterprise. Company officers were Barton, E. H. Gay vice president, W. R. Miller secretary and treasurer. Barton was also vice president of Gay & Lorraine, coal dealers.<sup>9</sup> When Barton left town in 1896 to escape his creditors, H. Lee Lorraine became president of the Railway. The incorporators of the Brookland Railway were also involved in The Northside Land Company, which was simultaneously developing Chestnut Hill and Highland Park, accessed by the Fifth Street Viaduct (Northside Viaduct), which was completed in 1892.<sup>10</sup> In 1927 the two viaduct entities finally merged to form the Richmond Viaduct Company. In 1932 the latter was itself absorbed into the Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO).<sup>11</sup>

Northside contains a collection of suburban developments that were the result of real estate speculation by a number of individuals, beginning in the late nineteenth century. The three earliest subdivisions, Brookland Park, Chestnut Hill and Barton Heights, were created in February, September and December of 1889. Together they represent a good cross-section of early twentieth-century middle-class housing and reflect the nationwide pattern of private development spurred by the introduction of commuter railway lines to outlying districts of the city center. Entrepreneurs offering home sites and ready-designed homes to a growing middle and professional class created these new neighborhoods. With James Barton, a new type of developer was arriving on the scene, one whose principal occupation was land development. This phenomenon was in contrast to the familiar type of developer who typically sidelined in real estate sales while practicing other professions. Alliances within the business community permitted these new developers to trade on advances in technology, like the electric streetcar, to promote their new towns and suburbs. Richmond's Northside developments were the

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first of the nation's "streetcar suburbs," predating well-known national examples such as Chevy Chase, Maryland, and Oakland and Los Angeles, California, by four and six years, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

Brookland Railway and Improvement Company's First Street viaduct crossed Bacon's Quarter branch into the heart of Northside, an area collectively known as Barton Heights. In 1889, James H. Barton acquired two large tracts of land. Brookland Park was the general designation for Barton's properties at the intersection of North Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard, and the property of another Northside developer Joseph M. Fourqurean. Barton Heights, the other tract of Barton's land, was situated on an impressive bluff at the conjunction of two ravines. Barton Heights met with instant success, but Brookland Park was sparsely developed until 1910. Barton Heights was so successful that in 1896 it was incorporated as a town in Henrico County. In 1895, the Brookland Railway line (First Street Viaduct) was extended westward along Brookland Park Boulevard, into Lewis Ginter's suburbs, then northward up the median of Chamberlayne Avenue. At Laburnum Avenue, the line turned west to Hermitage Road also called Lakeside Avenue, where it turned north leading to Lakeside Park. The service extension of the trolley line spurred commercial development at the intersection of Brookland Park Boulevard and North Avenue. The expansion also guaranteed the success of additional suburbs to the north and west. The Oak Park subdivision was laid out in 1890 as part of Joseph M. Fourqurean's North Street subdivision. The Highland Park Realty Corporation, another interest of Joseph M. Fourqurean, laid out the first phase of Battery Court in 1906. Between 1910 and 1911, three more subdivisions-Parkland, Norwood and Belrose-were laid out and Battery Court was expanded. North Richmond Terrace, Roland Park and Alvista Heights followed in 1913 and 1914. The last of the streetcar-influenced subdivision was Woodrow Park in 1924. The larger area referred to as Barton Heights was substantially developed by the 1930s.

The area at the eastern most edge of Northside, at the confluence of Bacon's Quarter and Cannon's branches, is collectively known as Highland Park. In July of 1889 the Northside Land and Improvement Company purchased 135 acres, known as Mount Comfort, from Dr. Francis Deane. Joseph M. Fourqurean and N. V. Randolph were principals in the company. The street pattern of the city was extended across the ravine and blocks were subdivided into lots. In 1891 the name of the area was changed to

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Chestnut Hill. In 1890, the Highland Park Company purchased a 150-acre subdivision, to be known as Highland Park, some distance to the north of Chestnut Hill. Jointly, the Northside Land Company and the Highland Park Company sponsored the construction of the Fifth Street Viaduct that opened in 1892. In 1908, the Highland Park Realty Company acquired the plateau separating Chestnut Hill and Highland Park for development. The Fifth Street trolley line was extended to the north where it made a loop at Meadowbridge Road, Highland and Melton streets before heading south back into the city. By 1901 there were approximately 60 dwellings in Chestnut Hill and by the 1930s the entire Highland Park community was substantially developed.

Unlike the other Northside developers, Lewis Ginter was of the old school. He was a founder of the American Tobacco Company and his real estate interests were more altruistic in nature than profit oriented. Ginter himself observed that it was not important if he saw a return on his real estate investment.<sup>13</sup> Ginter's venture also differed from the other Northside developments in that it was geared toward the upper middle class and linked to an amusement park. In 1883 Ginter made the first of his Northside land acquisitions: the 418-acre Westbrook plantation. Ginter constructed his mansion-house around the 1815 mansion of William Young. Ginter made additional land acquisitions in 1888 and 1889 and in 1891 he formed the Sherwood Land Company to advance his dream of suburban estates. Joseph Bryan, Ginter's personal attorney, was vice president, and John Pope, Ginter's adopted son, was treasurer and secretary. Directors were Dr. Hunter H. McGuire, Ginter's personal physician; George Arents, Ginter's nephew; and Albert Young, the husband of Ginter's niece, Minnie Arents.<sup>14</sup> Planning for Sherwood Park began in 1891, but this residential development was not started until 1928, thirty-one years after Ginter's death. The first houses were constructed in Ginter Park during 1895, and in 1896 Ginter established the Lakeside Wheel and Country Club at the end of the trolley line. When Ginter died in 1897, much of his vision had not been realized and was left to others to complete.

John Pope, Lewis Ginter's adopted son, began developing plans for Bellevue prior to his death in 1896 on property that he and Ginter purchased in 1883. Pope's sister Margaret who sold the property to J. Lee and C. W. Davis in 1919 eventually inherited the land. "The property consisted of 165 acres. About one-half of the property had been laid out in building lots of nice size for a high-class suburban development.



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Sewers, water and lights had been run into this property."<sup>15</sup> In 1921 Lee Davis began construction on his personal residence, now the New Community School, on a fourteen-acre parcel. The remainder of the Bellevue subdivision, which includes areas known as Monticello Place, Virginia Place and Brookdale, was principally developed in the 1920s and 30s.

John Stewart and Jonathan Bryan, sons of Joseph Bryan, began the adjacent Laburnum Park, in 1911. Joseph Bryan had built his own country estate, Laburnum, nearby in 1883, quite probably the catalyst for Ginter's interest in creating a Northside development. Jonathan Bryan built his own home, Nonchalance, on the property in 1911. The rest of the houses in the neighborhood were built in the 1920s and '30s.

The next major revolution in transportation, the introduction of the automobile to the American landscape, would herald the demise of the trolley in Richmond. "By noon on Friday, November 25, 1949, the last streetcar, 'Old No. 408,' had completed its final run on the Hull Street-Highland Park (in Northside) line. The Virginia Transit Company allowed the public to come to its railyard on Chimborazo Hill to take away 'souvenirs.' All the trolleys were then burned to remove the wood from the steel frames, and the metal was sold for scrap."<sup>5</sup> By the time the streetcar meet its demise the Northside suburbs were fully developed and suburban growth pushed further out into the surrounding counties.

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**DOMESTIC (Single and Multiple Dwellings)**

The predominant building type found in the Northside suburban areas is residential in nature. These dwellings range from the simple workers cottages found in Ginter Park to the suburban estates that line Seminary Avenue and Hermitage Road. "Unlike the rigid town house, which was restrained by the straightjacket of small city lots, the suburban house could be free and informal, with sun porches and verandas opening onto gardens on all sides. The townhouse was a simple rectangular box; the suburban house could have wings disposed in a free form manner. While the town house was typically brick, the suburban house could be wooden."<sup>16</sup> The size and exuberance of the buildings were restricted only by lot size. The typical lot in Ginter Park had 100 feet of road frontage while in the other neighborhoods fifty feet was more common. The further one moved away from the trolley line the smaller the lots became. The suburbs also witnessed the introduction of the apartment building in the 1920s. Unlike their modern mass-produced offspring, the 1920s apartment buildings were sophisticated examples of a variety of architectural styles.

The new neighborhoods had a new look about them: their of-a-piece development gave them the predominantly homogeneous styles, which would characterize most subsequent twentieth-century American suburban building. From late nineteenth-century Queen Anne and Stick Style to the Colonial Revival and American Foursquare, Northside suburbs follow a distinctly American, rather than Virginia or local patterns. Suburban development schemes were made possible by a new method of residential construction. "Indeed, the balloon frame was as important as mass transportation in making the private home available to middle-income families and even to those of more marginal economic status."<sup>17</sup> In these Northside neighborhoods the American Foursquare became a framework upon which to hang the stylistic embellishments of the eclectic, revival styles of the early to mid-twentieth century. Interspersed are examples of Craftsman Homes as well as later Colonial Revivals from the mature years of the neighborhoods. The years of neighborhood decline have introduced a number of poorly designed in-fill structures as well as lot subdivisions and demolitions.

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**INSTITUTIONAL (Churches and Schools)**

Interspersed with the dwellings are a number of public buildings, namely schools and churches. Built during the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of these structures are masonry and either Classical Revival or Gothic Revival in style. Many of these provide focal points in the early suburban grid. The historic district's two public schools are monumental buildings in the Classical Revival style: Northside Junior High School (now Chandler Middle School) at 201 East Brookland Park Boulevard and J. E. B. Stuart Elementary School at 3101 Fendall Avenue. The 1923 St. Paul's School Building number 18 (2811 Fendall Avenue) was constructed in the Colonial Revival style. Brookland Park's 1920s churches hold prominent places in the district. St. Philip's Episcopal Church, built for Epiphany Episcopal Church, is an English Gothic structure at 2900 Hanes Avenue. The First African Baptist Church was built in 1922 as the Barton Heights Baptist Church, at the intersection of Hanes and Norwood Avenues. Repeating a pattern established in Richmond's other historic Baptist churches, this is a temple-form Classical Revival building. The Garland Avenue Baptist Church (built as Barton Heights Methodist Church) at 2700 Garland Avenue shows the influence of Scottish Architect James Gibbs and forms an impressive terminus to the Norwood Avenue axis.

**COMMERCIAL**

At the heart of Northside, the intersection of North Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard, is a commercial district. The area is anchored by two handsome masonry buildings on the south side of Brookland Park Boulevard: the Northside Branch building (2928-2930 North Avenue) and the two-story Brookland Inn (2927 North Avenue). On the north side of the intersection, at 2 East Brookland Park Boulevard, a one-story Moderne structure faces the corner with a curved front and an aluminum canopy projecting over the entryway. At North Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard, many one- and two-story commercial structures represent a pared-down commercial vernacular, as seen in the former A&P grocery store (2921 North Avenue). Other commercial buildings incorporate Spanish Colonial features (101-113 West Brookland

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Park Boulevard) or Classical Revival elements, as seen in the former bank building (201 West Brookland Park Boulevard).

**PROPERTY TYPE SIGNIFICANCE**

The dwellings, schools, churches and commercial buildings found in the Northside suburbs are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. These suburbs were made possible by the introduction of the electric streetcar line as well as the vision of profit-oriented real estate speculators, both of which were revolutionary concepts at the turn of the twentieth century. The streetcar made it convenient for the growing middle class to escape the confines of the city and it was the real estate developer who capitalized on the new technology. The narrow streets announce all three districts as streetcar creations, the avenues not being designed for automobile traffic. The introduction of public and commercial buildings speaks to the success and expansion of the residential development. James Barton, one of the earliest developers, had in the previous thirty-five years in Little Rock and Memphis refined a scheme to provide the middle class with housing on easy terms. The earliest dwellings in the district are large, frame Queen Anne-style houses that display the high level of workmanship available to the speculative builder. They represent the arrival on the scene of balloon framing, a construction method that was to feed the speculative building industry of the period. Barton's successors used the later American Foursquare and Bungalow styles to the same end in Brookland Park and Battery Court, continuing to refine the business plan with stylistic variation and the offer of attractive amenities like parklands.

**PROPERTY TYPE REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

Because the various suburbs that compose Northside were developed as separate and distinct units, the individual buildings retain a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling to qualify for registration. Further, the buildings and their settings reflect the of-a-piece development that gave them a homogeneous character of development. The districts exhibit a remarkably intact

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assemblage of middle-class housing of the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the plans of the subdivisions remain much as designed by the original developers, and record in their street layouts the advance of suburban planning from model late nineteenth-century town to Edwardian Garden Suburb. The Queen Anne style dominates the oldest (1883-1890) districts: Ginter Park, Barton Heights, Brookland Park, Chestnut Hill, Highland Park and Oak Park. The American Foursquare, differentiated by various Revival styles, places the other districts squarely in pre-World War II America: The Plateau, Laburnum Park, Parkland, Norwood, Belrose, Roland Park and Bellevue. The various subdivisions also demonstrate the ranking of middle-class housing, through their stock of measurably larger, more substantial (masonry versus wood frame) and more varied styles. The density also differs in response to their original planning: some were designed as spacious rural villages with simple services and connected to the metropolis by streetcar. Others (North Richmond Terrace and Alvista Heights) expected to attract a less affluent member of the same middle class, being originally further from the streetcar terminus. These subdivisions had narrower lots, creating the denser catchment for the commercial hub that formed at the intersection of the principal north-south and east-west streets. Battery Court was seen as Garden Suburbs.

**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> W. Earl Long, *Dawn of the Electric Street Railway Era*, (Richmond, Virginia: Lady Liberty Press, 1988), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Jay Gould had a controlling interest in 1904 of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company. Gould's greater resources enabled him to acquire the assets of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company, the Richmond Railway and Electric Company, and the Richmond Traction Company (all of which were in receivership) to incorporate the Virginia Railway and Power Company in 1909. In 1925, Gould sold his interest in the company to Stone and Webster and the name was changed to the Virginia Electric and Power Company. The name was changed in 1985 to Virginia Power.

<sup>3</sup> The Richmond Railway and Electric Company was the result of a 1890 court ordered merger between Richmond Union Passenger Railway, the Richmond City Railway

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Company, the Virginia Electric and Power Company, the Richmond-Schuyler Electric company and the Old Dominion Light and Power Company.

<sup>4</sup> Carlton Norris McKenney, *Rails in Richmond*, (Glendale, California, 1986), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, p. 294.

<sup>6</sup> Marie Tyler McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia, & Its People* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p 200.

<sup>7</sup> McGraw, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Jarrard Anderson, *A People Called Northminster: The History of Barton Heights and Northminster Baptist Churches, 1891 - 1978* (Richmond, Va.: 1979), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *City on the James* p.69

<sup>10</sup> Louis Manarin and Clifford Dowdy, *The History of Henrico County* (Charlottesville: 1984) p.353.

<sup>11</sup> Carlton N. McKenney *Rails in Richmond* (Glendale CA: 1986) *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 118-124.

<sup>13</sup> David D. Ryan with Wayland W. Rennie, *Lewis Ginter's Richmond*, (Richmond, 1991), pgs. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Ryan and Rennie, pgs. ii and 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan and Rennie, pg. 41.

<sup>16</sup> Robert P. Winthrop, *Richmond's Architecture*, (The Richmond Times-Dispatch Sunday Real Estate Section, August 9 through October 11, 1981), p 13.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> St. Paul's School building is now the K. D. Turner Memorial Building, a Sunday school Building for Trinity Baptist Church