



Historic Context Statement

Project PRISM

Richmond, CA

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Prepared for
City of Richmond Planning Department

Prepared by
PAGE & TURNBULL, INC.
724 Pine Street, San Francisco, California 94108
415.362.5154 / www.page-turnbull.com

DONNA GRAVES

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INTRODUCTION

Forward

“To speak or write about Richmond in a historical way is exceedingly difficult, for as it is a record of achievement from beginning to end, and this achievement has been so truly marvelous, it must sound to the uninitiated more like romance than history.”¹

So boasted Henry Colman Cutting in his chapter on Richmond for the 1917 volume, *The History of Contra Costa County, California*. Mr. Cutting, namesake of one of Richmond’s major thoroughfares, Cutting Boulevard, was obviously in tune with the effusive boosterism that such publications produced. Yet, when surveyed from nearly a century later, it is not difficult to argue that Richmond’s past merits such dramatic language. Richmond’s dynamic history, particularly its associations with the World War II home front, has been the subject for a flood of scholarly attention that far outstrips the scale of its geography or population. Likewise, its heritage has become the focus for local, regional and national efforts to understand, preserve and interpret the complex social history of the American home front.

In 2000, the U.S. Congress authorized the National Park Service to create a new national park in Richmond devoted to telling the complex history of the World War II home front. Richmond was selected for this honor because of its significance as the location of the Kaiser Shipyards, and over fifty other defense-related industries. Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park (Rosie the Riveter National Park) was established:

“ ... in order to preserve for the benefit and inspiration of the people of the United States as a national historical park certain sites, structures, and areas located in Richmond, California, that are associated with the industrial, governmental and citizen efforts that led to victory in World War II ...”²

The establishment of the national park greatly enhanced Richmond’s existing historic preservation efforts. The City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, which had been established in 1982, was expanded in 1999-2000 to strengthen its policies, and to establish a Historic Preservation Advisory Committee. Recognizing the community benefits of cultural heritage tourism, the City of Richmond and Richmond Chamber of Commerce partnered in 2005 to develop the Richmond Visitors and

¹ F.J. Hulaniski. *The History of Contra Costa County, California* (Berkeley: The Elms Publishing Co. Inc., 1917), p. 327

² National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park: General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment*, 2009, p. 6.

Convention Bureau, which focuses on the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park and other local cultural and historic attractions in marketing Richmond to regional and national audiences.³ In 2007, the City achieved Certified Local Government status from the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service. The City is currently updating its General Plan, which will include a Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Element for the first time.

Due in large part to the increased recognition that Richmond received through its new national park, the community's 2006 application to be designated a Preserve America Community was successful.

Preserve America is a federal initiative that:

“... encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our priceless cultural and natural heritage. The goals of the program include a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities.”⁴

As of this writing, only twenty-six neighborhoods and cities in California have received Preserve American designation, which in addition to honorific status and identifying signage, offers eligibility for the Preserve America grant program.

Objectives & Goals

Project PRISM (Preserve Richmond to Interpret & Support Memories), which is funded through a Preserve America grant, was initiated by the City of Richmond to expand knowledge of the historical and physical development of three of the city's oldest neighborhoods, as well as identify additional resources that could be incorporated into the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. As stated in the Project PRISM Request for Proposals (2008), “The importance of this project will be that Richmond residents and visitors will better understand the critical role these neighborhoods played during the World War II Home Front effort, while also providing a foundation for preserving and protecting the neighborhoods.”

The PRISM historic resource survey and context statement provide an important foundation for understanding, preserving and interpreting Richmond's historic core. They will assist the City, property owners and the general public in assessing potential impacts of new development on historic properties. They will also facilitate activities such as landmark designation at the local, state

³ City of Richmond. “Preserve America Community Application,” 2006.

⁴ Preserve America Overview accessed at <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/overview.html>

and national levels, eligibility for various preservation incentives such as historic tax credits, and use of the California historic building code for qualifying properties. Finally, they will expand the possibilities for interpretation by Rosie the Riveter/World War II National Historical Park through such means as visitor tours, interpretive markers, exhibits etc.

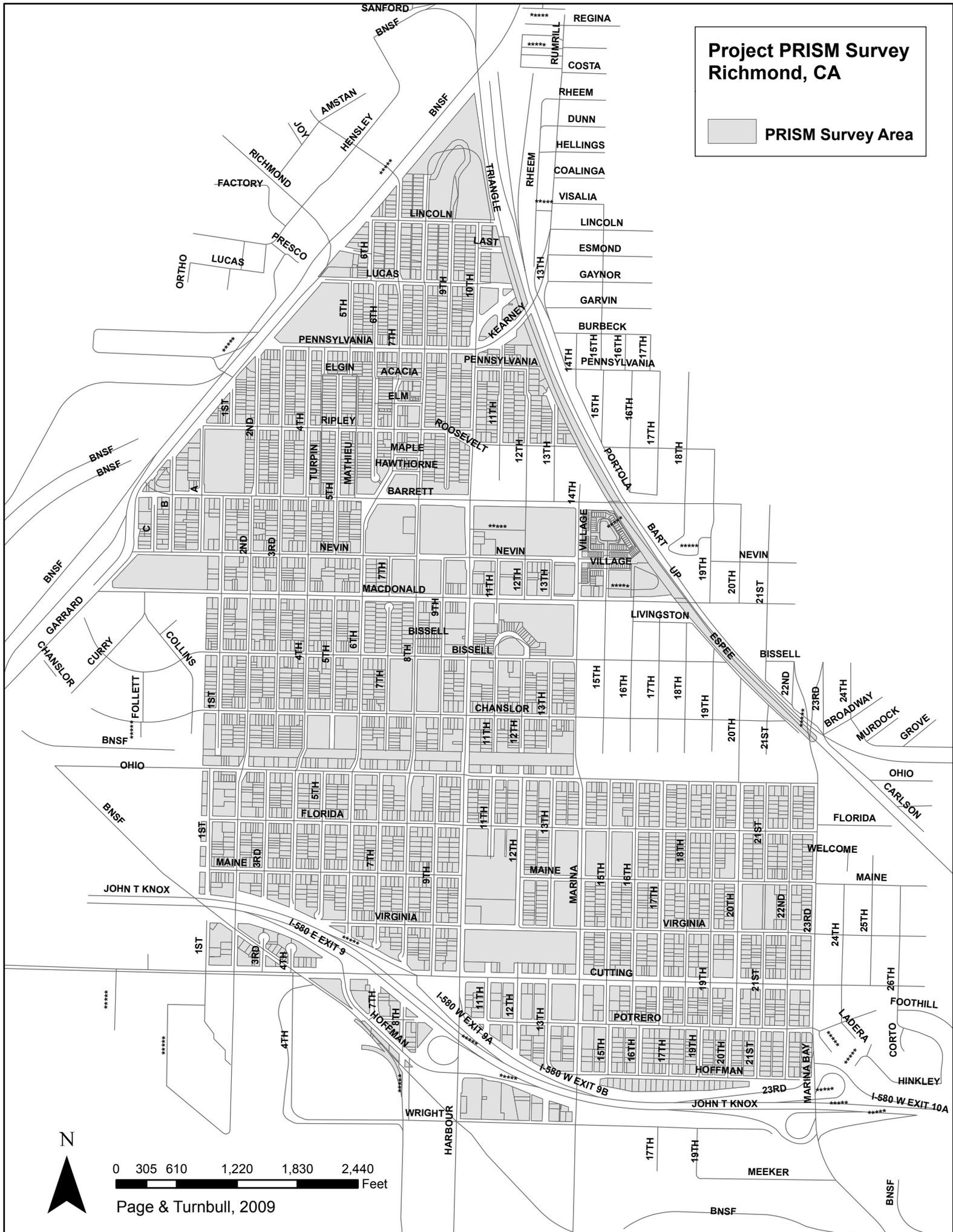
Project Area

The study area for this context statement encompasses three neighborhoods currently known as the Iron Triangle, Santa Fe and Coronado neighborhoods. These neighborhood boundaries and names were not in effect for most of the period under study, but were selected by the City of Richmond as the spatial boundaries for the PRISM project. North of Macdonald Avenue, the study area is bounded by two historic rail lines that intersect at the northernmost point of the Iron Triangle and the Project PRISM area. South of Macdonald Avenue, the project boundaries follow the irregular edges of the Coronado and Santa Fe Neighborhoods. The study area is made up of residential neighborhoods, scattered industrial areas and commercial corridors including an important section of Richmond's historic "Main Street," Macdonald Avenue (**see map on the following page**).

In many ways, the Project PRISM area represents the historic heart of Richmond. Its early development is powerfully tied to the industries that led to the birth of the "Pittsburgh of the West" and the city's incorporation in 1905. During the first decades of the 20th century, the area was firmly established as Richmond's commercial and civic center. As the area in closest proximity to the Kaiser Shipyards, it was the part of Richmond most dramatically affected by the wartime boomtown and the community's post-war evolution.

Project PRISM Survey Richmond, CA

 PRISM Survey Area



0 305 610 1,220 1,830 2,440 Feet

Currently Designated Historic Resources

Richmond's inventory of historic and cultural resources includes many structures already listed on local, state and federal registers.⁵ Within the Project PRISM area, five properties are designated landmarks. The former Kaiser Permanente Field Hospital at 1130 Cutting Boulevard and Fire Station 67A at 1131 Cutting Boulevard, as well as the Maritime Child Development Center at 1014 Florida Avenue are listed as city resources. All three of these properties are considered resources for their association with the WWII home front period and are listed in the authorizing legislation for the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. In addition, the Maritime Child Care center has been nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The historic Richmond Public Library (now the Richmond Museum of History) at 400 Nevin Avenue is a City Landmark, as is the New Hotel Carquinez (now the Hotel Don) at 410 Harbour Way. In addition, the Hotel Don is listed on the California Register and National Register of Historic Places.

Two properties in the project area were included in the study *Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey of California* conducted in 1985 by the California State Office of Historic Preservation: La Hispano Store at 201 Macdonald Avenue, and the "Japanese Camp" associated with the Santa Fe rail yards on Garrard Boulevard.⁶ Additional historic resources have been identified and documented by studies conducted for Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park in 2004, and in the Nystrom neighborhood in 2004 and 2008.⁷

⁵ City of Richmond Planning Department. Master Historic Resources Inventory, 2008. Accessed at <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentView.asp?DID=2107>

⁶ *Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey for California* accessed at: http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views.htm.

⁷ These studies include: Graves, Donna. "Mapping Richmond's World War II Home Front," 2004; Architectural Resources Group, "Nystrom Neighborhood Report, Richmond, California," 2004; Carey & Co., Inc. "Historic Resources Evaluation report for Nystrom Village, Richmond, California," 2008.

Context Statement Methodology

This historic context statement organizes the history and development of the PRISM project area into a framework that facilitates identification and evaluation of historic properties based on themes, chronological periods and associated property types. In addition to providing a foundation for identifying, evaluating and registering property types or specific properties, Project PRISM's historic context will support ongoing historic preservation activities so that a more comprehensive understanding of local heritage can inform planning and development decisions.

The organization and content of this historic context are consistent with federal, state and local guidelines for registering historic properties and developing historic contexts. These include the guidelines found in the following publications:

- National Park Service: National Register Bulletin No. 15 *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (rev. 2002)
- National Register Bulletin No. 16A *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (1997)
- National Register Bulletin No. 16B *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* (rev. 1999)
- State of California, Office of Historic Preservation *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources* (1995)
- *California Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2006-2010*

Research Methodology

Numerous and varied sources of information were synthesized and organized to create this context statement. Primary source documents (or reproductions of such documents) that originated within the historical period include official reports and records, media accounts, U.S. Census records, records of building construction, firsthand narratives, maps and photographs. Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps of Richmond from 1903, 1905, 1909, 1916, 1930 and 1930-51 illustrate lot-by-lot, building-by-building development during most of the period under discussion. Historical maps such as these and photographs proved especially helpful in understanding the broader patterns of development within the project area.

Secondary sources were those that conveyed historical information through analysis, summary or reproduction of primary materials. These included later accounts of Richmond history in books and journals, existing historic resource studies and landmark nominations, as well as scholarly papers and research. Richmond, especially its associations with World War II, has been the subject of a number of published works and professional studies in history and culture that contributed to this study.

Outreach materials for the PRISM project state that “the history of Richmond is best told by the people who have lived and worked here.”⁸ Richmond is fortunate to have an unusually robust collection of oral histories gathered from diverse residents over the last two decades. Most of these interviews, such as those generated by the City and National Park Service’s partnership with the University of California at Berkeley’s Regional Oral History Office, illustrate a range of experiences associated with Richmond’s WWII home front.⁹ For project PRISM, additional interviews were conducted to illuminate some aspects of Richmond’s post-war development, particularly neighborhood demographic changes and African American civil rights activism. Collectively, these interviews have been invaluable in literally giving “voice” to these neighborhoods.

⁸ Flyer for Project PRISM Photo Scanning Event, January 31, 2009.

⁹ Interviews conducted through this partnership for the Rosie the Riveter WWII American Homefront Project can be accessed at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/rosie/index.html>. The Bancroft Library has also posted interviews from an earlier set of interviews conducted in 1985 titled “On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond.” These can be accessed at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/ics_movements/richmondcc.html. Additional interviews conducted in 1998-1999 by the author for the Rosie the Riveter Memorial project, and in 2003 for a project titled “Not at Home on the Home Front: Japanese Americans and Italian American in Richmond During World War II” are in the Rosie the Riveter National Park archives.

DOCUMENTING HISTORIC RESOURCES

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s most comprehensive inventory of historic resources. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level.

The primary guidelines for the identification and evaluation of potential historic resources are established by the National Park Service’s publication: *National Register Bulletin Number 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Although the bulletin is geared specifically to the evaluation of properties for the National Register of Historic Places, its guidelines may also be used to evaluate properties for the California Register of Historical Resources, as well as local historic registers.

Perhaps the most critical feature of applying the criteria for evaluation is establishing the relationship between a property and its historic context, which is defined as “those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history or prehistory is made clear.”¹⁰

Significance

Typically, resources over fifty years of age are eligible for listing in the National Register if they meet any one of the four criteria of significance (A through D), as well as retain sufficient historic integrity. However, resources under fifty years of age can be determined eligible if it can be demonstrated that they are of “exceptional importance,” or if they are contributors to a potential historic district. The California Register of Historical Resources follows nearly identical guidelines to those used by the National Register, but identifies the Criteria for Evaluation numerically.

The four criteria under which a structure, site, building, district, or object can be considered eligible for listing in the National (Criteria A – D) or California (Criteria 1 – 4) registers are:

¹⁰ National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin Number 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, p. 7.

- Criterion A/1 (Event): Properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- Criterion B/2 (Person): Properties associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- Criterion C/3 (Design/Construction): Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; and
- Criterion D/4 (Information Potential): Properties that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The City of Richmond’s historic preservation ordinance (known as the “Historic Structures Code”) states that “...a structure, site, or other improvement, not already designated as such, may be designated a historic resource within the City or may be designated an historic district if it meets any of the following criteria:

1. It exemplifies or reflects valued elements of the City’s cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, archaeological, or architectural history;
2. It is identified with persons or events important in local, state, or national history;
3. It reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning;
4. It embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship;
5. It is representative of the notable work of a builder, designer, or architect whose style influenced the City’s architectural development; or
6. A structure, site, or other improvement which meets any of the above criteria at the highest level, and whose loss would be a major loss to the City, may be designated an outstanding historical resource.”¹¹

¹¹ City of Richmond Municipal Code Chapter 6.06.060 accessed at <http://bpc.iserver.net/codes/richmond/index.htm>

Integrity

In addition to qualifying for listing under at least one of the National Register/California Register criteria, a property must be shown to have sufficient historic integrity. The concept of integrity is essential to identifying the important physical characteristics of historic resources and in evaluating adverse changes to them. Integrity is defined as “the authenticity of an historic resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance.”¹²

The process of determining integrity is similar for both the California Register and the National Register. The same seven variables or aspects that define integrity—location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association—are used to evaluate a resource’s eligibility for listing in the California Register and the National Register. According to the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, these seven characteristics are defined as follows:

- *Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed.
- *Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plans, space, structure and style of the property.
- *Setting* addresses the physical environment of the historic property inclusive of the landscape and spatial relationships of the building(s).
- *Materials* refer to the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form the historic property.
- *Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history.
- *Feeling* is the property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- *Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

¹² California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistant Series No. 7, How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historic Resources* (Sacramento, CA: California Office of State Publishing, 4 September 2001) p.11

PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT & PROPERTY TYPES

This historic context statement utilizes themes and periods of development as its primary organizing principle. “Themes” are ways to organize and understand information about events, activities, people, communities, and patterns of change that have influenced historic and cultural development of an area. The PRISM project area is associated with themes that relate to the broader history of Richmond, as well as with themes that relate to the historic and cultural development of these specific neighborhoods.

The National Park Service revised its framework for historic themes in 1994, replacing a more chrono-centric approach with eight over-arching themes intended to capture “the full diversity of American history and prehistory.”¹³ These themes, which contributed by varying degrees to the PRISM context statement, are as follows:

- *Peopling Places* examines population movement and changes through prehistoric and historic times. Among the topics that define this theme are: family and life cycle; health, nutrition and disease; migration from outside and within; community and neighborhood; ethnic origins; encounters, conflicts and colonization.
- *Creating Social Institutions and Movements*: focuses on varied formal and informal structures through which people express values and that shape their daily lives. Among the topics that define this theme are: clubs and organizations; reform movements; religious institutions; recreational activities.
- *Expressing Cultural Values*: focuses on people’s beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit, as well as the means through which people communicate their moral and aesthetic values. Among the topics that define this theme are: educational and intellectual currents; visual and performing arts; literature; mass media; architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design; popular and traditional culture.
- *Shaping the Political Landscape*: This theme encompasses tribal, local, state, and federal political and governmental institutions that create public policy and those groups that seek to shape both policies and institutions. Among the topics that help define this theme are: political parties, protests, and movements; governmental institutions; military institutions and activities; political ideas, cultures, and theories.

¹³ Revision of the National Park Service’s Thematic Framework, 1994, accessed at <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/categrs/thematic.htm>

- *Developing the American Economy:* This theme reflects the ways Americans have worked, including slavery, servitude, and non-wage as well as paid labor. It also reflects the ways they have materially sustained themselves by the processes of extraction, agriculture, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Among the topics that help define this theme are: extraction and production; distribution and consumption; transportation and communication; workers and work culture; labor organizations and protests; exchange and trade; governmental policies and practices; economic theory.
- *Expanding Science and Technology:* This theme focuses on the physical sciences, the social sciences, and medicine -- modern civilization's way of organizing and conceptualizing knowledge about the world and the universe beyond. Technology also encompasses the application of human ingenuity to modification of the environment in both modern and traditional cultures. Among the topics that help define this theme are: experimentation and invention; technological applications; scientific thought and theory; effects on lifestyle and health.
- *Transforming the Environment:* This theme examines the variable and changing relationships between people and their environment. Among the topics that help define this theme include: manipulating the environment and its resources; adverse consequences and stresses on the environment; protecting and preserving the environment.
- *Changing Role of the United States in the World Community:* This theme explores diplomacy, trade, cultural exchange, security and defense, expansionism and imperialism. Among the topics that help define this theme are: international relations; commerce; expansionism and imperialism; immigration and emigration policies.

The periods of development in this context statement combine specific timeframes with themes that encompass related events, patterns of settlement and construction, activities of people important to the area, and the socioeconomic character in the project area. Each of the periods of development will also be associated with specific property types that originated within or characterize the period. Generally, examples of these property types may be found currently in the project area as known and potential historic resources. The periods of development represent potential periods of significance for resources associated with the respective contexts. A period of significance is the time span within which an example of a property type attained its historic or cultural significance.

The periods of development utilized for the Project PRISM Historic Context Statement are consistent with the Richmond Planning Department's draft Cultural Resources Chapter of the

forthcoming General Plan for Richmond. They are:

- *Native American & Mission Periods (4000 BCE – 1821)*

This period combines the City of Richmond’s draft General Plan “Native American Period (4000BC – 1803)” and the “Spanish Mission Period (1776 – 1821).”

- *Mexican Period (1821 - 1846)*

- *Early American Period (1846 - 1895)*

- *Industrial Era (1895 - 1940)*

- *Wartime Boomtown (1940 - 1945)*

- *Reshaping the City (1947 - 1969)*

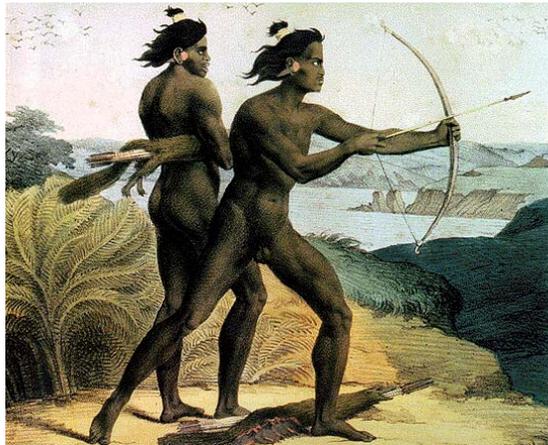
This period includes the draft General Plan’s “Post World War II (1945 – 1960)” and a portion of the “Modern Richmond (1960 – present)” periods.

Each section includes an illustrated historical narrative of the period, followed by a description of associated property types, general distributions and occurrences, and requirements for resource registration such as eligibility criteria and integrity considerations.

NATIVE AMERICAN & MISSION PERIODS (4000 BCE TO 1821)

Native American Period

As early as 4000 BCE, the East Bay region is known to have been inhabited by a Native American group known as the Ohlone. Within this language-based group, a tribe known as the Huchiun lived in the area where the City of Richmond is presently located, ranging from Temescal Creek (on the present-day Oakland/Berkeley border) on the south, to Rodeo Creek (in present-day north Richmond) on the north. These waterways, as well as San Francisco Bay itself, served as important geographic features for the Huchiun who fished, hunted waterfowl and harvested shellfish along their banks. Like many Native Americans throughout California, the Huchiun lived in semi-permanent seasonal villages and constructed shelters known as wikiups from branches and tule reeds. They are also known to have built sweat lodges, known as *temescals*, which subsequently became a local place name.¹⁴



Native Americans near San Francisco Bay, painted by Louis Choris.
(Courtesy of the California Historical Society)

Shell mounds, of which approximately 400 once existed along the East Bay shoreline, are also attributed to the Huchiun. One of these mounds, perhaps among the largest, measured 460' x 250' and stood in Richmond at the southern terminus of 11th Street near its present intersection with Cutting Boulevard. Referred to as the Ellis Landing Shell Mound, it was created by the accretion of shells, rocks, ashes, human remains, house pits, and miscellaneous artifacts deposited by Native Americans over thousands of years. The mound served as both a refuse pit and a high-ground

¹⁴ Friends of Temescal Creek. Creek History. Internet <<http://www.temescalcreek.org/history.html>> Accessed 6/1//09.

campsite for the Huchiun community. The Ellis Landing Shell Mound was largely destroyed between 1907 and 1924 to make way for street grading.¹⁵

Spanish Mission Period

The earliest European presence in the present-day Richmond area was a 1772 visit to the East Bay by Spanish explorers Captain Pedro Fages and Father Juan Crespi. This soon led to Spanish occupation and settlement, as only four years later Mission San Francisco de Asis, or “Mission Dolores,” was founded on the San Francisco peninsula. This was followed by the establishment of Mission Santa Clara de Asis in 1777 (in present-day San Jose); Mission San Jose in 1797 (in present-day Fremont); Mission San Rafael (in present-day San Rafael), and finally Mission San Francisco de Solano in 1823 (in present-day Sonoma). With missions ringing the Bay, the Catholic missionaries enforced a rigid program of indoctrination to mission life and religious conversion of the local peoples.



**Native Americans at Mission Dolores, painted by Louis Choris in 1816.
(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley)**

The Huchiun people were initiated into the Catholic mission system at Mission Dolores. Here, various native groups were intermingled, eventually resulting in the dissolution of distinct tribal entities. At the mission, natives were not only introduced to European religious practices, but European ways of living and working. Their daily lives were structured around the schedule of Catholic masses and enforced conformity to the language and doctrine of religious activities. In place of their traditional hunting and gathering practices, Native Americans were taught to grow crops and raise stock animals as a means of subsistence. To this end, priests from Mission Dolores established a

¹⁵ Hoover, Mildred Brooke, et al. “Historic Spots in California.” Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

ranch at Wildcat Creek, which runs from the Berkeley Hills through Richmond, in 1817. Here they employed Native American converts known as neophytes in agricultural labor in order to ensure food supplies for the mission in San Francisco. In a similar manner, women's skills were turned to wool production, spinning, and the production of cloth, rather than basketry.

Native American family life was severely disrupted by the mission system, with men and women largely separated. Single women were particularly cloistered, though it was as much for their protection from the advances of the soldiers garrisoned at the missions, as it was to maintain propriety. Often children were taken from their parents and raised by the mission priests in an effort to more effectively indoctrinate them into Catholicism by separating them from the native influences of their parents.

With the arrival of Europeans, the spread of diseases for which the Native Americans had no immunity decimated the native population. In 1795, an epidemic, thought to be typhus, swept through Mission Dolores, and in 1806, a measles epidemic killed 343 people (out of 850) within a period of 36 hours, including every child under the age of five.¹⁶ It is estimated that by 1815, over three-quarters of the region's native peoples had perished. Those that survived under the auspices of the missions lived in conditions of poverty and near starvation. Though other Ohlone sub-groups survived, it is believed that the impact of Spanish colonization and the mission system drove the Huchiun to disappear as a distinct tribal entity.

Property Types & Registration Requirements

The Native American period in Richmond is not represented by any extant built resources. The structures constructed as dwellings, sweat lodges, and other elements of Huchiun villages were seasonal and temporary. Over two centuries of Euro-American presence in the area have removed most traces of native occupation. It is possible that archeological resources, such as the remains of shell mounds, middens, or other deposits, may still be present in the Richmond area. Any archeological artifact dating to the Native American period found in the area may have the potential to yield information important to prehistory and make a property significant under National Register of Historic Places (NR) Criterion D/ California Register of Historical Resources (CR) Criterion 4/ and City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 6.

¹⁶ "Milestone for S.F. Mission," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/12/04.

Although portions of present-day Richmond may have been used for agricultural purposes under the auspices of Mission Dolores, no extant built resources remain to indicate Spanish occupation of the area. Any built resources would likely have consisted of simple wood or adobe structures; small in plan, no more than one story in height, and incorporating minimal framing in roof and wall structures. Buildings might have functioned as dwellings, barns, storage buildings, or other agricultural support facilities, and possibly religious buildings.

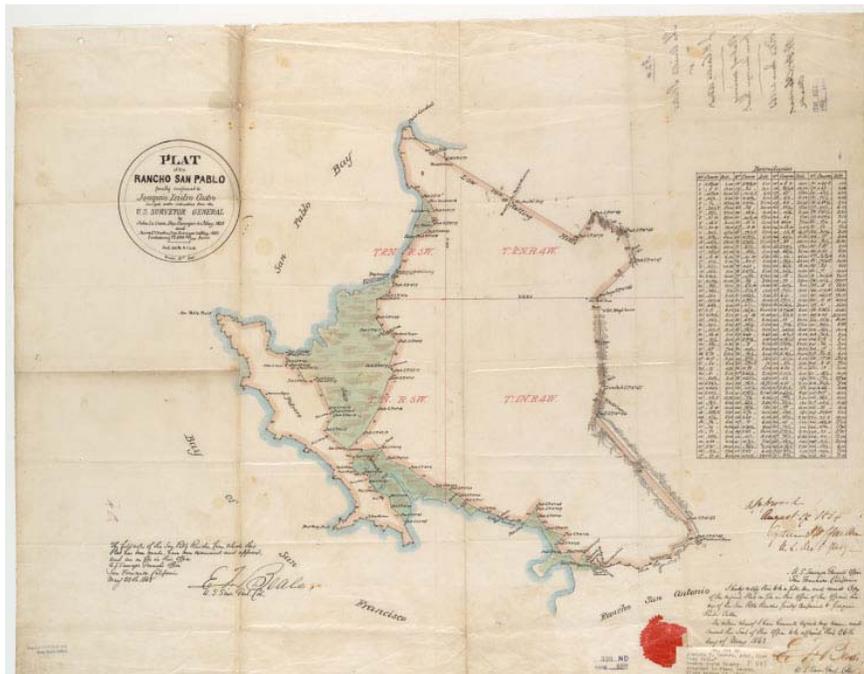
Despite the assumed non-existence of any remaining Mission era resources, if any such resource should be identified, regardless of physical integrity, it would likely be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Code 1 and/or 3 for association with the themes of Spanish settlement and Mission development. If such a property were found to be connected with an important historical figure, such as a Franciscan priest, the resource might be eligible under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history.

As no Mission era buildings are currently known to exist, it is unlikely that any newly identified resource, such as an adobe structure, would retain much physical integrity (as it would likely have been drastically altered and adapted to more modern uses). However, since the existence of adobe construction is rare in the Richmond area, any evidence of such construction techniques might qualify as significant under Criterion C/3/4 for displaying distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region and method of construction.

Finally, as with resources associated with the Native American period, any archeological artifact dating to the Spanish Mission period found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. A property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

MEXICAN PERIOD (1821 TO 1846)

In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain and all former Spanish territory in California came under Mexican jurisdiction. The Mexican government subsequently disbanded, or secularized, the Spanish missions. Intended to encourage colonization and make land more accessible to the average “Californio” (as Mexican citizens in California were called), the process of secularization involved the redistribution of Church land and property. It allowed for the distribution of mission property to the Native American neophytes and released them from servitude. However, rampant corruption often led to the dispersal of Church land to powerful local families, or to men that had won favor during Mexico’s bid for independence from Spain. With an economic system based primarily on livestock ranching, these huge “ranchos” led to a stratified society where the average Californio, as well as the newly independent Native Americans, were typically forced to settle for work as rancho laborers.



Plat of the Rancho San Pablo as finally confirmed to Joaquin Isidro Castro in May 1863.
(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley)

One recipient of a large land grant was Don Francisco Castro, who had served as a soldier at the San Francisco Presidio, as well as a member of the governor’s council and as *alcalde* of the pueblo of San Jose. In 1823, Castro was a member of an exploration party lead by Father Jose Altamira in the

Contra Costa County region and was subsequently given 18,000 acres of land in that area, becoming the first European settler in present-day Contra Costa County.¹⁷

Castro's land grant, called Rancho San Pablo, included most of present-day Richmond, as well as all of the land located within the PRISM survey area. Castro's rancho supported horses, sheep and basic farm crops, but was primarily a cattle ranch that secured Castro's position in the growing hide and tallow trade. This trade, where cattle hides and tallow (fat) used for candles were exchanged for imported goods, emerged as the basis of California's economy under Mexican rule. Castro also operated a ferry service between Point Isabel in present-day Richmond and the settlement of Yerba Buena, later renamed San Francisco. Castro's own adobe house, a former mission-owned building, was located in the present-day city of San Pablo, while his son, Victor, established a hacienda in present-day El Cerrito. The majority of the ranch property, including what is today the City of Richmond, consisted of vast swaths of open land and was simply maintained as cattle range.

After Castro's death in the 1830s, half of the Ranch San Pablo was left to his wife, and the rest to his eleven children. Family squabbles over title to the lands, as well as competing interests from squatters, led to ownership disputes that were left unresolved for decades.

Property Types & Registration Requirements

The area of present-day Richmond was primarily rural and undeveloped during the Mexican period. None of the rancho buildings associated with Rancho San Pablo are known to have existed on the portion of the ranch that is now the City of Richmond. Any built resources would likely have consisted of simple adobe structures; small in plan, no more than one story in height, and incorporating minimal wood framing in roof and wall structures. Buildings might have functioned as dwellings, barns, storage buildings, or other agricultural support facilities. Likewise, no buildings associated with Castro's ferry operation at Point Isabel are believed extant. Any built resource might include piers, boat slips, and associated support facilities.

Significance

Despite the assumed non-existence of any remaining Mexican era resources, if any such resource should be identified, regardless of physical integrity, it would likely be significant under NRHP Criterion A, CHRC Criterion 1, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Code 1 and/or 3 for

¹⁷ Bastin, Donald. *Images of America: Richmond*. San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Books. 2003. 9.

association with the theme of Mexican settlement. If such a property were found to be connected with an important historical figure, such as Don Francisco Castro, the resource may be eligible under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history.

As no Spanish or Mexican resources are known to exist, it is unlikely that any newly identified resource would retain much physical integrity (it would likely have been drastically altered and adapted to more modern uses). However, since the existence of adobe construction is rare in the Richmond area, any evidence of such construction techniques might qualify as significant under Criterion C/3/4 for displaying distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region and method of construction.

Finally, as with resources associated with the Native American period, any archeological artifact dating to the Mexican period found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. A property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

EARLY AMERICAN PERIOD (1846 TO 1895)

The American period in California began in 1846 when the Mexican-American War resulted in the ceding of California to the United States. Prior to this date, numerous Americans had already settled in the region, often as squatters, which contributed to the unrest between Mexicans and Americans in California. When California officially came under American control, land grants, deeds and titles to property became even more confused—a situation that took nearly 50 years to resolve. Thus, despite the acute demand for land, many areas with disputed ownership were slow to develop. Such was the case of Rancho San Pablo, which was additionally complicated by the distribution of land between Castro's wife, Gabriela, and their 11 children and numerous grandchildren. Though the land remained primarily under the ownership of the Castro family, disputes were not settled nor ownership confirmed until 1894.¹⁸ Eventually, the Castro family was reduced to owning only small parcels of land around the adobes constructed by Castro and his sons.

When the Gold Rush struck California in 1849, Castro's Point Isabel ferry provided ready transportation to miners traveling from the port of San Francisco to the gold fields of the Sierra foothills. In 1859, a new ferry operation opened at Ellis Landing, located at the end of Harbour Way in present-day Richmond. This venture was operated by George Ellis, who ferried passengers and freight aboard two schooners, the *Sierra* and *Mystery*. In addition to moving passengers across the bay, the ferry operation at Ellis Landing provided a mode for East Bay farmers and ranchers to transport their produce to the budding markets in San Francisco. Ellis' ferry ran until the 1890s, and during its later years was managed by John R. Nystrom, who became one of Richmond's first school board members.¹⁹

Another early industry tied to the waterfront was a village of Chinese shrimp fishermen at Point Molate Beach. From 1865 to 1912, this village caught, processed and distributed shrimp both locally and abroad.²⁰ In 1873, the East Brother Lighthouse was constructed on East Brother Island just west of Point San Pablo, and was operated by the Stenmark family for 20 years.²¹ Later, the lighthouse was operated by the U.S. Coast Guard from 1939 until 1969, when an automated light and sound beacon was installed.²² Today it is the oldest of three remaining wood-frame lighthouses on the West Coast (California Historic Landmark #951 and NRHP listed).

¹⁸ Bastin, 9

¹⁹ Richmond General Plan, 14.7. Bastin, 16.

²⁰ Richmond General Plan. Historic Resources Element. 2009. 14.7 Bastin, 18.

²¹ Bastin, 17.

²² Richmond General Plan. 14.7-8

One of the first heavy industrial works to be established in the Richmond area was the Giant Powder Company, reputed to be the first company in America to produce dynamite. After devastating explosions occurred at the company's earlier San Francisco and Berkeley sites, operations were moved to an isolated location on Point Pinole. There, the large local Croatian community of Sobrante was incorporated to form one of the region's largest company towns and industrial centers. Until 1960, Giant Powder Company produced explosives that were essential to mining, dam building, and other construction projects around the world.²³

Much of the land in present-day Richmond was marshy and sparsely developed until the city was established in the early 20th century. However, during the late 1880s it was occupied by various ranchers and scattered settlers. One was John Nicholl, whose ranch was located along Macdonald Avenue, east of 23rd Street. Present-day Nicholl Park was once a portion of this ranch. Another rancher, George Barrett, owned a tract of land west of Tenth Street adjacent to the major traffic thoroughfare that now bears his name. This tract was later expanded with the addition of land between Tenth and 23rd streets. The Barrett house was located at the current intersection of Tenth Street and Macdonald Avenue, but no longer stands.²⁴



**The house of John Nicholl, circa early 1900s.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

²³ Richmond General Plan. 14.8

²⁴ Griffins, Evan. "Early History of Richmond," December 1938. Internet information accessed on 6/29/09 from: <http://elcerritowire.com/history/pages/EarlyRichmond.htm>.

Richard Stege created a small town on his ranch, which was located in the area of present-day 46th Street and Potrero Avenue. East Shore Park now encompasses the former location of the Stege house and frog pond, where Stege produced approximately 15,000 frogs a year to supply upscale San Francisco restaurants, as well as customers across the country and in Hawaii.²⁵ Meanwhile, the town of Stege itself boasted the facilities of the California Cap Company, Tonite Powder Works, and the Western Mineral Company, as well as a post office and railroad station. In 1869, a school was moved from the Victor Castro homestead in El Cerrito to Stege and operated there until 1912. Though the town of Stege was apparently well-appointed, many residents in the Richmond area also commonly traveled to the neighboring settlement of San Pablo for goods and services, such as those found at the Belding Store, which was in operation from 1885 to the 1930s.²⁶ Stege's home and frog pond were demolished in the 1930s by the Eastshore and Suburban Railway Company.



Stege Ranch (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley)

Property Types & Registration Requirements

Accounts and general reconnaissance appear to indicate that no resources from the Early American period survive in the PRISM survey area. Most have been demolished and the land developed. Architecture of the period would commonly have consisted of wood frame, vernacular farmhouses, outbuildings and a few commercial structures with simple designs that referenced East Coast architecture of the day. Simple front-gable or gable-and-wing forms would have been common, and

²⁵ Stege Sanitary District of Contra Costa County, "The Endeavor", vol XI, no. 1, Spring 2003.

²⁶ Bastin, 18.

styles like Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Folk Victorian, Queen Anne and—in the case of commercial buildings—Western False-Front style, would have proliferated. Parcels would have been large, with houses surrounded by open land. Though outbuildings and agricultural structures may have been located nearby, the setting was certainly rural, with neighboring residences few and far between.

If any extant Early American period resources are identified, they would most likely be found singly and surrounded by other more recent development. Historical accounts are the most reliable source for identifying possible locations of extant resources, as no firm patterns influenced the placement of farmsteads within the landscape.

Significance

Any extant properties dating to the Early American period may be significant under Criterion A/1 or the City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the themes of American settlement and the establishment of early agricultural, commercial, and residential development in the Richmond area.

A property known to be connected with any prominent pioneer, landowner, or entrepreneur, such as John Nicholl or George Barrett, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history.

A property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods.

An archeological artifact dating to the Early American period found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

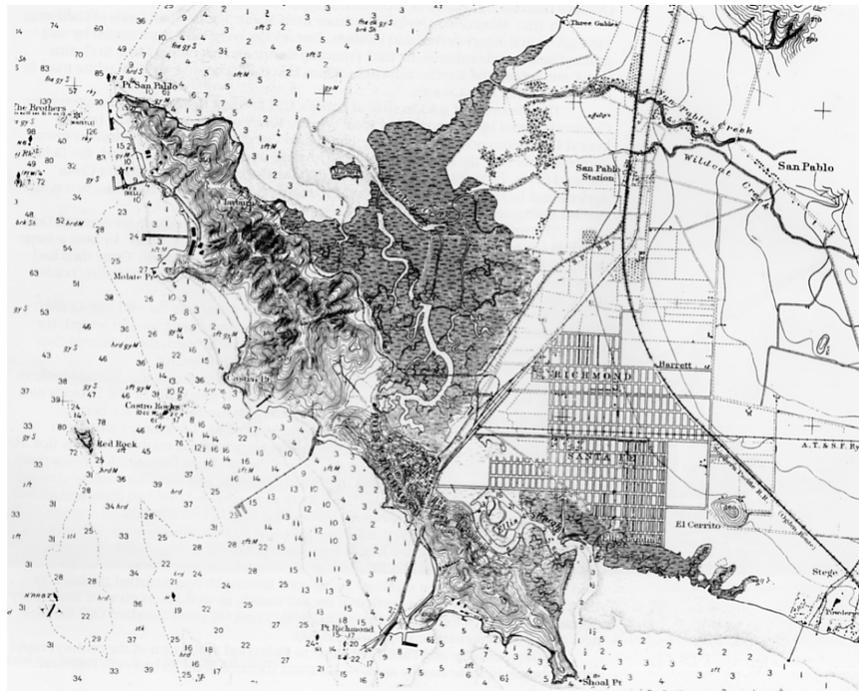
In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the Early American Settlement theme. Properties dating to the Early American period should be considered significant due to the fact that they are extremely rare within the current built environment and therefore, some leniency should be granted when considering the issue of integrity. Nevertheless, the most important aspects of integrity

that properties from this period should retain are location, design, and association. Less important are the aspects of setting, materials and workmanship, and feeling.

INDUSTRIAL ERA (1895 TO 1940)

“Pittsburgh of the West” and the Birth of Richmond, 1895 -1924

The 1894 settlement against the Castro family’s forty-year legal battle to retain their rancho pushed open the door for the development of Richmond. The following year, Bay Area developer Augustin Sylvester Macdonald drove from Oakland to Point San Pablo for a duck hunting excursion and saw possibilities for expanding beyond the early settlement in what became known as Point Richmond. From the top of Potrero Hill he marveled at the vistas and “wondered why such a delightful spot had been neglected for either pleasure or profit. Not alone its beauty but its commercial possibilities appealed to me at once.”²⁷ Macdonald recognized the advantageous connection between land and navigable deep water in the area and calculated that ferry service to San Francisco would shave twelve miles off of travel for freight or passengers from Oakland.



1917 U.S.G.S. map of the Richmond area

Macdonald proposed his idea for a transcontinental rail terminus and ferry service in Richmond to a handful of railroad magnates, and by 1899 the Santa Fe Railroad had established its western terminus there for commercial traffic between the San Joaquin valley and the San Francisco Bay Area. In the

²⁷ *A History of Richmond, California*. Richmond Chamber of Commerce, 1944, p. 29.

meantime, Macdonald and a syndicate of executives from the railroad, along with oil well developers Edward Canfield and Joseph Chanslor, purchased the closest developable land from George Barrett, which Macdonald described as “550 acres of perfectly level land, one of the most desirable pieces of the old San Pablo Rancho.”²⁸ Macdonald surveyed the area, subdivided it into a standard urban grid and filed his plan for a new city named Richmond with the County in 1899.²⁹ The area, bounded by Barrett Avenue, Ohio Street, Garrard Boulevard and 23rd Street, makes up the central swath of the PRISM project area. Within a decade, the old Barrett home and surrounding fields of hay and grain were dotted with new homes and commercial developments. A.S. Macdonald and his partners divided the area into business, commercial and residential lots flanking the main east-west thoroughfare, Macdonald Avenue.



**Macdonald Avenue in 1906
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

The establishment of two major industries around the turn of the century, the Santa Fe Railroad and Standard Oil, ensured Richmond’s development as the thriving city Macdonald had envisioned. The first passenger train arrived in Richmond from Chicago in July 1900. Six months later, the Santa Fe Railroad moved its shops from Stockton, California to a location in Richmond, west of Garrard Boulevard between Cutting and Pennsylvania. From its earliest days in Richmond, the Santa Fe employed a substantial number of ethnic minorities. Summarizing Richmond’s early development, local historian, Dr. Eleanor Ramsey, described the company’s racial composition: “Santa Fe, the non-

²⁸ Ibid p. 30

²⁹ Michael R. Corbett, “Draft History and Evaluation of the Winters Building,” 2007, p. 13.

white pioneers' major employer, relied so heavily upon these laborers to lay rails and cook in the workers' camps that by 1902 nonwhites constituted more than half the company's work force." The company provided segregated housing for these workers, with specific areas dedicated to Mexican American, Japanese and Native American workers.³⁰

By contrast, Richmond's Standard Oil refinery reportedly hired very few workers who were not of European ancestry even as it became the community's largest source of jobs. Within one year of its establishment in 1901, the refinery grew to be the largest on the entire west coast, transforming crude oil into heating fuel and kerosene for lighting.³¹ Rapid expansion soon made the refinery the second largest in the world, with a yearly payroll of \$200,000.³² In addition to jobs and workers, these industries brought other changes to the city. Colonel George S. Rheem, president of the Standard Oil refinery, completed a deal begun by A.S. Macdonald to provide a transit line to the growing community. Trolley service from the East Shore and Suburban Railway Company began in 1904. Three more lines, including one along Macdonald Avenue, were running within one year.³³ By August 1905, local voters affirmed that it was time for the community, which had been administered by the county seat of Martinez, to be formally incorporated as the City of Richmond.

By 1907, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce touted the new city as "The Pittsburgh of the West" based on the strength of the new railroad and oil refinery facilities. Within a few years, more industries located in the city. The California Wine Association built the Winehaven plant on forty-seven acres purchased in Point Molate after the San Francisco earthquake and fire. Workers at American Standard foundry forged and enameled plumbing fixtures in North Richmond, and the Pullman Company hired hundreds of laborers to refurbish the famed railroad sleeping cars at their new facility on Carlson Avenue.

Early Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show a range of additional industries that employed Richmond residents in the PRISM area, including commercial laundries, feed shops, breweries, stables and mills. One of the oldest structures in the survey area standing at 117 South Fifth Street appears on the 1903 Sanborn map as a planning mill. By 1909 it is shown as the McEwen Bros. Water Company. This type of private water company was common to the era, when many houses still utilized private wells and water towers, such as those still extant in the rear of houses located at 120 11th Street and 133

³⁰ Eleanor M. Ramsey, *Richmond, California: 1850 – 1940, Investigation of Cultural Resources Within the Richmond Harbor Redevelopment Project 11-A* (Richmond: California Archaeological Consultants, 1981), 5.11. – 5.13.

³¹ Susan D. Cole, *Richmond -- Windows to the Past*. Richmond; Wildcat Canyon Books, 1980. pp. 47-48.

³² Moore, p. 14.

³³ Ramsey, 5.20

Seventh Street.³⁴ According to subsequent maps, 117 S. Fifth Street served as a storage facility in 1930, and a cabinet shop by 1951.

Many of the extant buildings from this period have undergone changes in use and form as decades passed. According to the 1909 Sanborn map, 308 Ohio Avenue functioned as a post office and drug store with a dwelling in the rear; by 1930 the storefront had been removed. 460 B Street appears as a two-story “clubhouse” at the rear of the lot on the 1916 Sanborn map, becoming a mixed-use building by 1930 with the addition of a commercial storefront to what was now a residential building. One block west stands another survivor at 116 Barrett Avenue. Built in 1914, the two-story structure housed a shop, a saloon and a dining room that presumably fed boarders in the rooms upstairs. By the 1910s, those seeking entertainment in Richmond could be found at numerous pool halls, the Richmond Theater at the corner of Fifth and Macdonald, and filling the grandstand on the baseball grounds that stood between Macdonald and Nevin Avenues just west of First Street.³⁵

The residents that built Richmond in succeeding years included migrants from the East Coast, as well as immigrants from Europe, Japan and China. The city grew five-fold in short order, counting approximately 10,000 inhabitants in 1912. The 1910 and 1920 U.S. census show that, during the 1910s, the proportions of first or second-generation European Americans in Richmond was greater than that of native whites of native parentage. These same records show that the number of “other races” (primarily Asian and Native American), grew from 124 to 182 inhabitants. The number of African American residents was quite small at this time, only growing from 22 to 29 persons.³⁶

Early residences developed to house Richmond’s diverse population were primarily single-family homes, generally scattered across blocks with numerous vacant lots. A 1910 issue of the *Pacific Graphic* rhapsodized about housing prospects for Richmond workers:

“Steady employment at good wages cause the workingmen to think beyond the present day and to the future. Here the employee learns that beautiful city property can be bought cheap, on a lot which he bought on easy payments he finds competition among banks and capitalists as to who shall loan him money to build his home which he can pay for same as rents [sic], providing the house is artistic and a credit to its surroundings.”³⁷

Illustrations for this article did not focus on the more common small cottage that was beginning to

³⁴ Information on water towers from PRISM survey historian, Jonathan Lammers.

³⁵ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1903, 1905, 1909 and 1916. DPR form for 116 W. Barrett Avenue for PRISM Survey.

³⁶ Moore, p. 12.

³⁷ “Richmond as a Home Center,” *Pacific Graphic*, October 1910, p. 204.

line Richmond streets, but featured larger and more ornate structures similar to the handsome Queen Anne home built between 1903 and 1909 that still stands at 203 South 13th Street. Though less ornate, other fine homes include 234 and 300 Bissell Avenue, constructed in 1906 and 1905 respectively, which appear to contribute to a potential historic district centered along Bissell Avenue identified by the PRISM survey team.

While Richmond's economic elite are represented by downtown commerce and civic facilities, most of the PRISM survey area is comprised of working class residential neighborhoods that began with workers who settled in Richmond during this period. The PRISM survey team identified a spike in residential construction between 1906 and 1915, with GIS parcel information showing that 556 houses were constructed during those years. This rapid rate of construction was not approached again until the World War II period.

A representative cluster of very small, simple, worker cottages built just after the turn of the century still stands at 106 - 112 Chanslor Avenue. Other early homes were typically small Queen Anne or Craftsman cottages with wood shiplap or bevel siding. Examples of groups of houses from this period identified by the PRISM survey include the Queen Anne cottages at 606 - 624 Maine Avenue (1905), and a cluster of nearly identical Craftsman cottages at 640 - 648 Fourth Street (1913).

Boarding houses and residential hotels provided additional dwellings for Richmond workers. The 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the Union Hotel at 66 Ohio Avenue, as well as the Santa Fe Hotel, which still stands, at the Southeast corner of Ohio and Railroad Avenues (now First Street). Commercial and social structures were also built to serve the growing population. The 1905 Sanborn map shows that the ornate building still extant at the southwest corner of Ohio and Pacific (now Third Street) was occupied by a general store, saloon and banquet room on the ground floor, and a meeting space named Maple Hall on the second floor.

North of Macdonald, the Manhattan Hotel and Golden West Hotel stood on Atchison Avenue (now Garrard) between Nevin and Barrett Avenues. Both hotels featured dining rooms, kitchens and saloon or bars, indicating they served the needs of workingmen. In between these establishments stood a two-story boarding house. Macdonald Avenue between First and Fourth Streets held the offices for the Richmond *Daily Record*, grocery and hardware stores, a butcher shop, barbershops and a pool hall, along with several saloons. Some multi-story buildings shown on early Sanborn maps indicate lodgings or offices above commercial spaces on the ground floor. Churches near the corner of Fifth and Bissell, and public schools at Sixth and Florida and Second Street near Macdonald,

demonstrate that the needs of youth and the spirit were beginning to shape the city as it grew.³⁸

Immigrant Communities

Italian immigrants comprised the largest ethnic community in Richmond. Many had first settled in San Francisco, but joined other refugees from the 1906 earthquake and fire in seeking new lives across the Bay. Within a few years, residents from Italy found work with major employers such as Standard Oil and Winhaven, but dozens of others ran saloons, boarding houses, groceries and bakeries. The Barbieri brothers and other fellow countrymen started the largest early Italian owned business as Richmond Scavenger. Later renamed Richmond Sanitary, this enterprise is among the handful of “legacy” businesses in Richmond.³⁹ The first residential enclaves of Italian families appeared in North Richmond and Point Richmond, where both urban and agricultural amenities could be enjoyed. By the 1930s, Macdonald Avenue included commercial areas with a strong Italian presence between Fourth and Seventh Streets and around Fifteenth Street, which included barber and shoe repair shops, grocery stores, and other small businesses, often with the proprietor and family living on or near the premises. Another cluster of Italian families lived in the area near the Galileo Club, which was established in 1932 and completed its still extant clubhouse at South 23rd and Virginia in 1938.

While Italian Americans represented the largest single ethnic group in Richmond’s early decades, immigrants from across Europe found their way to Richmond. Carl Overaa and Julia Pederson arrived in San Francisco from Norway just after the turn of the century. By 1907, the couple had married and Carl Overaa Builder was established in San Mateo. The family and business moved to Richmond in 1911, and Carl began constructing stores, houses and apartment buildings for the growing city. In 1915, the Overaas built a boarding house on Nevin Avenue that sheltered and fed many of their workers who had also emigrated from Norway.⁴⁰ Overaa Construction still operates from offices on Parr Boulevard in Richmond a century after it was founded.

Immigrants from Japan first found work in Richmond at the Santa Fe yards, where they resided initially in boxcars inside the yards. They later moved to a two-story wooden barracks building at 453

³⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1903 and 1905.

³⁹ Lawrence DiStasi, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Biographical information from www.overaa.com, accessed November 2008. Although the company website states that the Overaa family lived in the Nevin Avenue boarding house, Carl’s 1918 draft registration card states 1808 Roosevelt as the family address and the 1920 U.S. Census places them at 731 Bissell Avenue.

C Street that housed workers and their families for several decades. Ramsey reported that Japanese immigrants made up over half the Santa Fe labor force as early as 1901.⁴¹ A handful of small businesses run by Japanese immigrants were established along Macdonald Avenue as Richmond grew, but the largest segment of the Japanese immigrant community developed and ran cut flower nurseries in two areas: one near the intersection of Wall Avenue and South 47th Street, and the other in North Richmond along what is now Brookside Drive.⁴² Chinese immigrants had established a fishery in Point Molate as early as 1870, and developed areas for shrimp fishermen there and along the Santa Fe channel in later years.⁴³

New immigration laws curtailed the flow of migrants from Asia by the 1910s, causing labor shortages in agriculture, mining and railroad work. Native Americans from the Laguna and Acoma pueblos of New Mexico arrived to work at the Richmond Santa Fe yards during the 1920s, the result of negotiations between the railroad and the pueblo governments dating back to the 1880s. Boxcars within the yards were partitioned and modified to become living quarters and served as residences for over fifty years. “Hornos,” traditional beehive-shaped ovens, stood outside the remodeled boxcars, which were reportedly painted red in the Acoma section and yellow in the Laguna area of what became known as “Indian Village.” While none of the Village structures now stand *en situ*, a home built at the yards by Lawrence Sanchez, one of the residents, is reported to have been moved during the 1970s near the intersection of 14th Street and Roosevelt Avenue and is still standing.⁴⁴

Early 20th-century Mexican land reform policies removed property rights from much of that country’s rural population, adding a “push” to the “pull” of employment opportunities north of the border. The Mexican revolution of the 1910s increased this flow as family members and friends joined earlier migrants in the U.S. The majority of Richmond’s early Mexican American community was employed by the Santa Fe rail yards in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. As California historian Carey McWilliams stated in the 1940s: “Wherever a railroad labor camp was established, a Mexican colonia exists today.”⁴⁵ Sal Chávez, a longtime resident of Santa Fe housing, recalled the complex as several rectangular one-story structures without electricity that housed between fifteen and twenty families.⁵ Located across Garrard Boulevard from the yards, residents were easily accessible in case they were needed to work on short notice.

⁴¹ Ramsey, 5.12-5.13

⁴² Donna Graves, Historic Context Report for the Sakai and Oishi Nurseries, 2004.

⁴³ Ramsey, 5.15-5.16.

⁴⁴ Ramsey, 5.23-5.28. Richmond resident Michael Husser, who spent many hours of his youth at the Village, shared the story about the relocated home of his “Indian father.”

⁴⁵ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948), 157.

While a few families lived in Point Richmond or North Richmond, by the late 1910s most of Richmond's Mexican community was clustered in an area between Macdonald and Pennsylvania Avenues on A, B, C and First Streets. To supplement their wages, some residents raised chickens and grazed cows and goats in the open fields off lower Macdonald where Atchison Village now stands.



**La Hispano-Americana store in 1930. The proprietor, Luis Dias, is at far right.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

Other Mexican American residents worked at American Standard and American Radiator, Stauffer Chemical, Tepco Pottery, Certainteed, Ford and Pullman.⁴⁶ Culturally specific commercial enterprises appeared as the community grew. Luis Dias, a native of Spain, ran the Spanish-American Grocery Store at 201 Macdonald Avenue in the 1930s offering a variety of goods that appealed to Latino customers including avocados and Spanish language books. The city building permit for this structure is dated June 1929 and lists J.T. Narbett as the architect.⁴⁷

Catholic churches served the needs of several immigrant groups in Richmond, and were central to Mexican community. St. Mark's church, constructed circa 1911 in the Mission Revival style, still stands at the corner of Tenth Street (now Harbour Way) and Bissell.⁴⁸ Like Mexican American communities throughout the United States, locals formed the Sociedad Guadalupana in 1924 to

⁴⁶ Text from exhibition "Siempre Aqui," at Richmond Museum of History.

⁴⁷ Richmond Planning Department building permit #8274. Narbett later formed a partnership, Narbett, Bangs & Hurd, which designed the wartime housing projects at Triangle Court and Nystrom Village.

⁴⁸ Willy Morris, "St. Mark's Celebrates Its Future," *West County Times*. 29 September 1990. The article describes St. Mark's as a "79-year-old building."

observe the feast day of the Virgin of Guadalupe and as a *mutualista* or mutual aid society. The Richmond Sociedad was noted by the California State Office of Historic Preservation's statewide ethnic site survey from 1985. This document described the organization as "indispensable to the community's religious and social life" and "significant because unlike most Sociedades Guadalupanas, which are exclusively women's organizations, it is composed of both men and women. In 1974, on celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, the Sociedad Catolica Regional Guadalupana, Inc. counted 800 active members."⁴⁹ While most Mexican American worshipped among the diverse members of St. Marks Catholic Church, a smaller group formed the congregation for the First Mexican Baptist Church sometime around 1940 at the corner of Barrett and B Streets. This structure was in the process of being demolished at the time of the PRISM survey.

Creating a Downtown: Macdonald Avenue

By the mid-1910s, the center of gravity for Richmond had definitively shifted from its earlier location in Point Richmond to the area developed by A.S. Macdonald. This turn of events was symbolized when a pair of prominent developers fought the "Battle of the City Halls" to determine who would erect a new structure to replace the old administrative offices at the Point. As a later account described, "each of these men had a tract of land with lots for sale and the one who could attract a City hall and keep it would certainly enjoy a great enhancement of his realty values."⁵⁰ George Wall's initial offering at Twentieth and Maine Streets served briefly as city offices until John Nicholl's grander (and free) building at 26th Street and Nevin Avenue was selected by voters. By the time the new Greek Revival-style City Hall opened in 1917, Macdonald Avenue was the commercial, civic and recreational heart of Richmond.

Comparison of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show that the pattern of development along Macdonald and the surrounding blocks moved east from the time of the city's incorporation into the 1920s. Macdonald's dirt road was replaced by paved macadam in 1909, and Sanborn maps from that year show the principal commercial development to be on Macdonald west of Fourth Street, with modest development between Fourth and Eighth streets and scattered development to the east.

⁴⁹ "Sociedad Catolica Regional Guadalupana, Richmond, Contra Costa County" From *Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey for California, 1988*. Accessed at http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views.htm.

⁵⁰ *A History of Richmond*, p. 46-47.



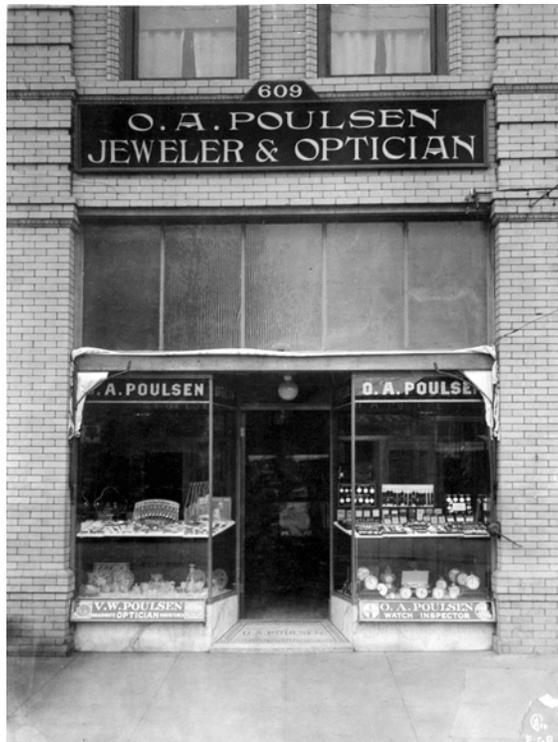
**Harbour Creamery and Richmond Market at 510 – 514 Macdonald Avenue, 1914.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

One of the few commercial structures dating from this period still stands at 510 - 514 Macdonald. Built in two phases between 1904 and 1916, the structure appears as a candy shop and creamery, sausage factory and butcher shop in the 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. By approximately 1920, the ground floor was known as Richmond Meat Market, one of three butcheries owned by O.R. Ludwig on Macdonald Avenue.⁵¹ Over time this structure was associated with a number of uses and several of the ethnic communities that made up pre-war Richmond. Ludwig, who was presumably from Germany or Austria, appears to have leased a portion of the building to Japanese immigrant N. Asaro, proprietor of the Richmond Sea Food Market. By the 1930s, the building was owned by the Italian American Banducci brothers, who retained the property for four decades as the Gordon Hotel and Base Hit Bar.⁵²

By the time the Richmond Meat Market building was completed in the mid-1910s, much of Macdonald Avenue up to 13th Street was developed with a variety of shops and stores, offices and services, movie theaters and a skating rink. New businesses were also opened near Macdonald Avenue on connecting side streets, such as the Clark Company Funeral Directors at 265 Fourth Street. Though its commercial storefront has been removed, the building still stands.

⁵¹ Information on Otto Ludwig's meat stores is found in the photo archive of the Richmond Public Library.

⁵² Richmond City Directories for 1923, 1942 and 1960. San Francisco: R.L. Polk's Co.



**O.A. Poulson Store at 609 Macdonald Avenue, 1914.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

Optician and jeweler Otto Poulson's shop at 609 Macdonald proclaimed their services in advertisements that described the shop as "watch inspectors" for the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads. Poulson's storefront façade was typical of the time, with windows flush to the sidewalk and a slanted vestibule leading to the door. Shops along Macdonald Avenue were often situated next to one another and reached back for most of the ground floor of a larger building that might have dwelling units or offices above. As historian Paul Groth notes, this arrangement served shoppers by grouping services and real estate developers by protecting their cash flow through multiple sources.⁵³

Hotels and rooming houses on or near Macdonald Avenue offered room and board by the "day, week or month." Advertisements in the 1912 - 13 City Directory show that E.F. Schumaker, proprietor of the Germania Hotel at 332 - 336 2nd Street, offered meals at 25 cents and a "bar in connection – Wines, Liquors and Cigars." The Hotel Bonear (later known as the Hotel Richmond) at 1214 Macdonald Avenue was run on the "American and European Plan," by Mrs. A.F. Bonear with amenities such as steam heat, electric lights and telephone.⁵⁴ By the late 1910s, flats and apartment

⁵³ Paul Groth, "Ordinary Storefronts of the Twentieth Century: Articulating the Lines between Shoppers and Retailers," 2005, draft manuscript shared by the author.

⁵⁴ *Richmond, San Pablo and Martinez Directory, 1912-13*. San Francisco: R.L. Polk and Co.

buildings provided an additional form of housing, augmenting hotels and single-family residences. A pair of two-unit flat buildings built circa 1912 still stands at 408 - 416 Bissell Avenue. Nearby stands an 8-unit apartment building dating to 1920. These larger structures were generally of wood frame or concrete construction, clad in stucco or brick and designed in Edwardian, Spanish Colonial Revival and Renaissance Revival styles. Several of these structures still stand within the PRISM survey area.



The Hotel Richmond, 1914.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)

Alongside these residences and commercial establishments, new civic spaces were appearing. The Richmond Women's Improvement Club received a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation and secured a site at Fourth Street and Nevin Avenue for the Richmond Public Library, which opened in 1910. The following year, the group decided they needed a clubhouse, and began raising funds for a Mission Revival style building that was dedicated in 1915 at the corner of 12th Street and Nevin Avenue.⁵⁵ Several elementary schools were operated under the Richmond School District by this time, including three in the PRISM project area. Peres School stood on Fifth Street near Pennsylvania, Lincoln School occupied most of the block along Tenth Street just south of Macdonald, and Nystrom School was located on land donated by John Nystrom, who served on the district's first board.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bastin, 42, 56. Cole, 56.

⁵⁶ Bastin, pp. 38-39. *A History of Richmond*, pp 59-60.



**Scenes Along Macdonald Avenue, about 1930.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

By the 1920s, four large buildings concentrated around Tenth Street (now Harbour Way) and Macdonald showed that this intersection had become the business center for Richmond. Although the Elk’s Club building (completed in 1914) was later demolished, three of the four still stand: the American Trust Building at 1001 Macdonald, the New Carquinez Hotel at 1000 Nevin Avenue, and the Winters Building at 1031 Macdonald. The Winters Building was completed in June 1923 with a flower shop and music business on the ground floor and mezzanine. The upper floor held a ballroom outfitted with a stage and balcony that was announced by a marquee above its entrance on 11th Street. Shoppers entered from Macdonald Avenue through a U-shaped vestibule with glass display cases and terrazzo floor in the latest style. The interior surfaces of the commercial spaces were covered with glass and mirrors, “modern industrial materials that created an atmosphere of light and transparency.”⁵⁷

Immigrants from Germany, Adolph and Elisabeth Winters arrived in Richmond in 1911 and operated flower shops at several addresses on Macdonald Avenue prior to erecting their own building at the Northwest corner of 11th and Macdonald. According to a much later account, the Winters had long yearned for a location that would house their “businesses and provide a place for

⁵⁷ Groth, “Ordinary Storefronts...” Michael R. Corbett, “Draft History and Evaluation of the Winters Building,” 2007, p. 7.

people to enjoy flowers, dancing and music.”⁵⁸ However, the Winters’ plan to inaugurate their new building with a Sunday dance inspired a meeting at the YMCA of twenty “churches and civic organizations” who promised to take their protest to the city council. Opponents argued that a “single dance date of this kind for celebrating the completion of the city’s finest hall, would not in itself be so objectionable, except that granting this one request would open up the proposal to hold public dances in Richmond on Sunday, a practice that is opposed by practically all the churches, WCTU, women’s clubs, and other civic organizations.”⁵⁹ Despite the rough start, local celebrations and dances were held for decades at the Winters Building.

The New Hotel Carquinez was dedicated one block north of Macdonald Avenue on Tenth Street in 1926, three years after the Winters Building opened. At five stories, the structure stood out among the adjacent duplex dwellings and single-family homes. A consortium made up of prominent local businessmen including Edward M. Downer, founder of Mechanics Bank, conceived and built the hotel as the Richmond Community Hotel Inc. One contemporary account described the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, which operated out of the Elk’s Building one block south, as central to the hotel’s development.

“Among the achievements of...the past year has been the completion and occupancy of a splendid hotel – a community hotel, if you please, the New Hotel Carquinez. It was the united and wholehearted and co-operative support of the Chamber of Commerce membership that made this monument to civic pride a reality. The chamber of commerce pointed the way and led the issue to victory and accomplishment.”⁶⁰

In fact, a healthy number of structures near the historic intersection of Macdonald Avenue and Harbour Way still stand, although many have been remodeled to varying degrees over the years. 1009 - 1011 Macdonald, just east of the American Trust Building, was built ca. 1920 by John F. Galvin as home to the *Richmond Independent*, one of two daily papers of the era, which had outgrown rented space at 515 Macdonald Avenue. Within a few years, Galvin moved the Independent offices and printing plant into a larger building next door at 1017 - 1021 Macdonald Avenue.⁶¹ The last structure connecting the American Trust and Winters buildings was constructed at 1025 Macdonald Avenue in 1920 as a store with a residence above.⁶²

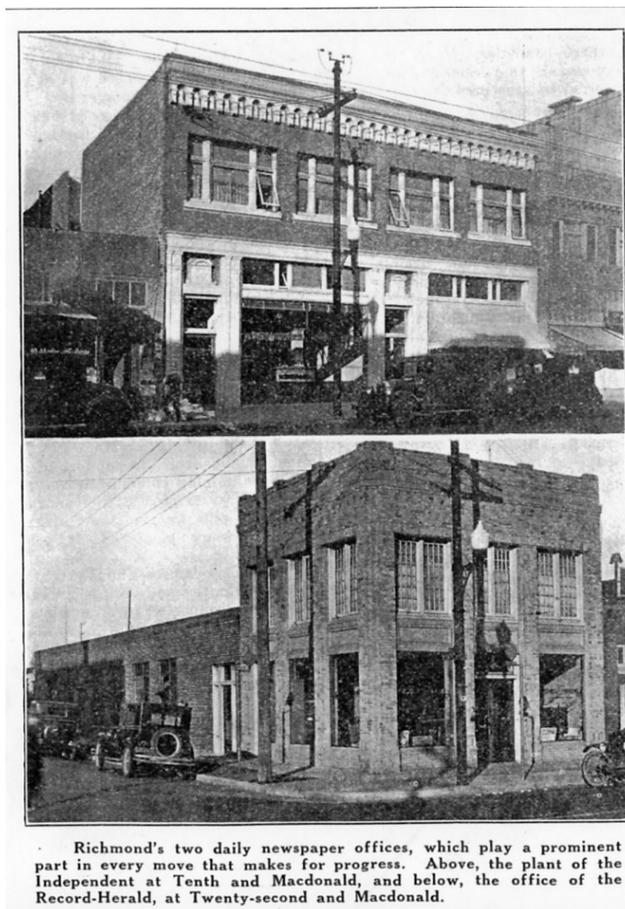
⁵⁸ Point Counterpoint. “Adolph Winters: The Man Who Loved Beauty.” 15 October 1978 cited in Corbett, “Draft History and Evaluation of the Winters Building.”

⁵⁹ Oakland Tribune 1923 cited by Corbett, p. 10.

⁶⁰ New Hotel Carquinez National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1992

⁶¹ David Lindeman, “A History of the Richmond Daily Independent Newspaper, September 1954.” Vertical files of the Richmond History Room at the Richmond Public Library.

⁶² DPR forms for 1009-1025 Macdonald Avenue. “Newspapers Play Vital Part in Aiding Community Progress,” *Richmond United*, January 1929, p. 6.



Richmond's two daily newspaper offices, 1929
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)

On the south side of Macdonald and west of Harbour Way sits another collection of structures that reflect pre-WWII Richmond. The two-story masonry building at 920 Macdonald was built in 1925 and had a corner drugstore with shops facing both Tenth and Macdonald by 1930. The two-story building at 912 - 916 Macdonald (now marked Milen's Jewelers) was originally built in 1916 as side-by-side shops. A smaller masonry commercial building at 910 Macdonald built in 1921 still stands. Other especially notable structures from this period are scattered to the west of this cluster. Among them are two handsome bank buildings: the terra cotta-clad Greek Revival Mechanics Bank Building built in 1920 at the corner of Ninth and Macdonald, and the brick Classical Revival First National Bank constructed in 1910 at the corner of Sixth and Macdonald.⁶³ The prosperity and optimism of the 1920s was also reflected in the construction of large, ornate apartment buildings near the downtown core, such as the 4-story, 21-unit apartment building at 144 13th Street, and the luxurious Spanish Eclectic flats building at 125 12th Street.

Richmond's economic vitality during the 1920s reflected national trends, but also a major local development. Urged on by the Chamber of Commerce, members of the City Council invited San Francisco entrepreneur Fred Parr to develop and manage a new facility for the Port of Richmond. A lease was signed in 1926 and the Parr-Richmond Terminal Corporation began dredging and grading land to provide expanded harbor area that would increase cargo flow and draw new businesses to Richmond.⁶⁴ A public ceremony inaugurated the Inner Harbor and Parr-Richmond Terminal Number 3 in 1929. Parr marketed Richmond's inexpensive land and deep-water port to industries looking to expand into the San Francisco Bay Area, and within two years a pair of major industries was located along this area of the waterfront.

This included the Filice and Perrelli Cannery, which found the rail and water transport facilities in the newly developed Inner Harbor attractive enough to support a new plant.⁶⁵ The Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant was completed in 1931 and dedicated with much fanfare. The handsome, mammoth structure, designed by famed industrial architect Albert Kahn, became one the city's largest employers. Workers at the Ford plant assembled and sold several different types of Ford cars until the facility converted to tank and jeep outfitting with the suspension of civilian auto production and the commencement of government contracts in February 1942.⁶⁶

According to a 1944 account by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, the city "muddled through the tough depression years." The Filice and Perrelli Cannery was not forced to close by the Depression's economic decline, as did many other California canneries, but the business "barely made it through the eight to ten years from 1930 to 1940," according to founder Joseph Perrelli.⁶⁷ Although no major industries closed, neither did any new industries open in Richmond, and others presumably struggled along in similar fashion as the cannery. Building construction dropped, as did new telephone connections and school enrollment.

As the impacts of the Great Depression became more severe and jobs were increasingly scarce, the U.S. Secretary of Labor authorized a "repatriation" program that swept up people of Mexican descent, even those who were American citizens. Raids and forced deportation to Mexico led to the

⁶⁴ *A History of Richmond*, pp 105-108.

⁶⁵ Marjorie Dobkin and Ward Hill, "Filice and Perrelli Canning Co, Inc. Richmond, California: Historic Resource Evaluation Report (San Francisco, CA, 1998), pp. 7-9.

⁶⁶ For a detailed understanding of the Ford plant, see Fredric L. Quivik, "The Ford Motor Company's Richmond Assembly Plant A.K.A. the Richmond Tank Depot," (Washington, DC: Historic American Engineering Record, 2003).

⁶⁷ Joseph Perrelli, "The Establishment of the Filice and Perrelli Canning Company," (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, University of California) p. 54.

exile of over 350,000 Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Fear and intimidation caused others to leave the country “voluntarily.” While not documented, many believe that some Richmond residents were part of this campaign.⁶⁸ Though times were certainly hard for many families and businesses, according to Richmond historian Donald Bastin “the worst effects of the stagnant economy were ... blunted by the ability of Richmond businesses to keep their factories running and employees working.”⁶⁹

Property Types & Registration Requirements

1895 – 1939 covers a significant period of development in Richmond, including the development of its oldest neighborhoods and the evolution of Macdonald Avenue as its commercial main street. In total, the PRISM historic survey area has identified approximately 1,240 buildings dating to this period, including a good representative collection of its earliest building types (**see map on following page**). According to survey data, the oldest surviving buildings in the survey area were constructed in 1900, and over 300 buildings constructed prior to 1910 are still extant. In addition, the survey area includes nearly 900 buildings constructed prior to 1920, including residential, commercial, industrial, and religious/social buildings.

Residential Buildings

The overwhelming majority of Richmond’s Industrial Era properties are residential, primarily consisting of small single-family residences, with a minority of duplexes, flats and apartment buildings. Architecture of the period encompasses a wide range of styles, with Queen Anne, Craftsman, Shingle (or First Bay Region) and vernacular cottages being the most popular from 1900 through approximately 1915. These older buildings are mostly concentrated in the Iron Triangle and Santa Fe neighborhoods, with the single densest cluster of pre-1910 buildings located in an area bound by MacDonald Avenue on the north; Chanslor Avenue on the south; First Street on the west; and Sixth Street on the east.

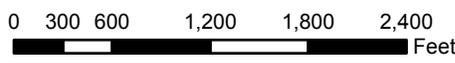
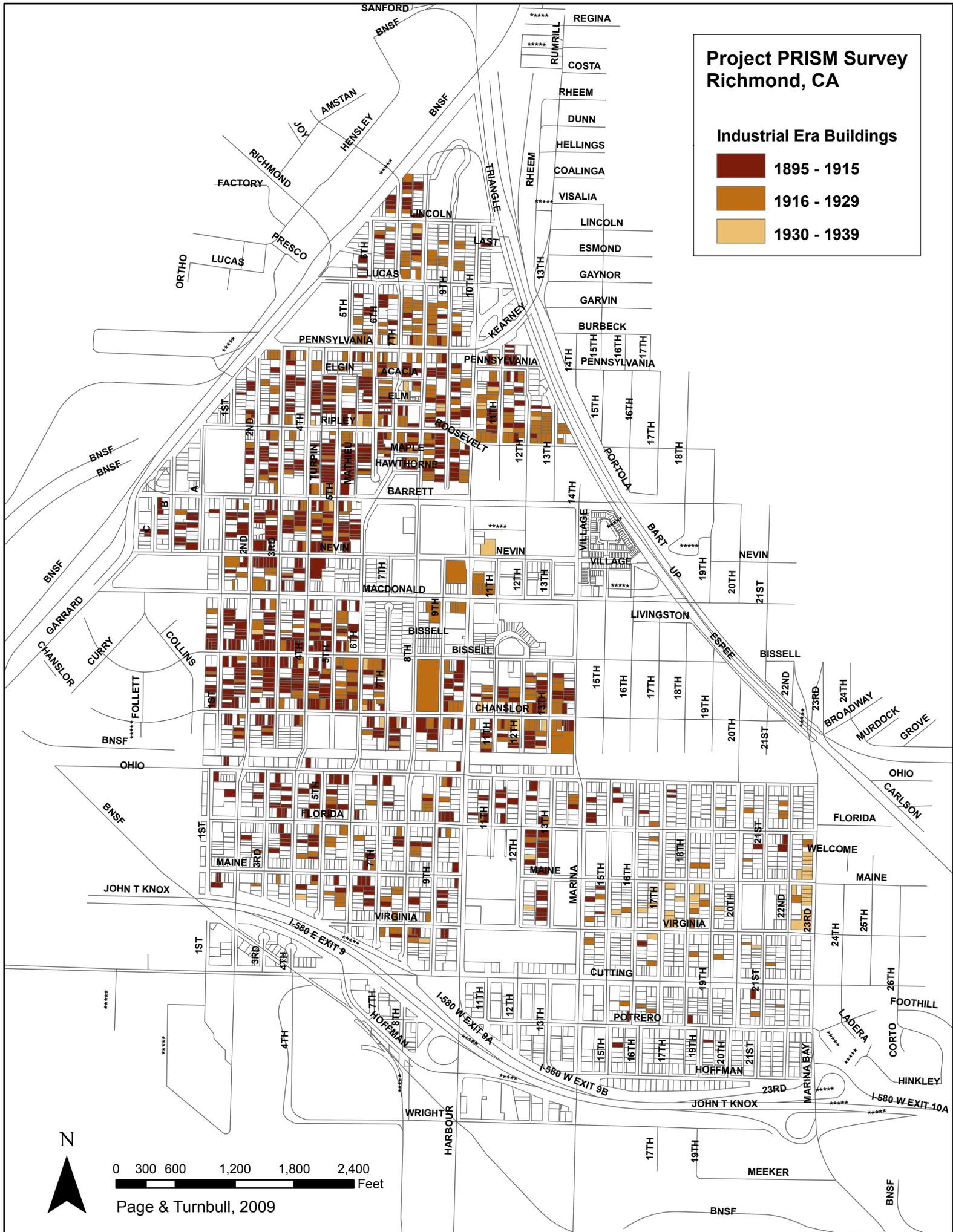
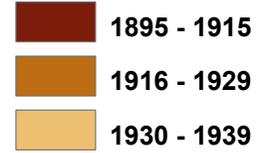
Early single-family residences are typically 1-story in height, and raised basements are not uncommon (sometimes as an alteration to insert a garage). Typical cladding originally consisted of wood shiplap, bevel, novelty or shingle siding, and the most popular roof forms were gable, hip or a combination of these two. Facades are often symmetrical, commonly featuring an angled-bay or boxed-bay window on one side and an entry porch on the other. Nearly all residential buildings dating to Richmond’s

⁶⁸ Text for exhibition “Siempre Aqui,” at Richmond Museum of History.

⁶⁹ Donald Bastin. *A History of Richmond*, p. 61.

Project PRISM Survey Richmond, CA

Industrial Era Buildings



Industrial Era would originally have had wood-sash windows, and the very earliest buildings often incorporate Folk Victorian stylistic elements, such as the use of decorative scrolled brackets, spindlework and patterned wood shingles. Early twentieth century houses are typically set back from the front and rear lot lines, allowing space for a yard or garden, and sometimes have associated ancillary structures, including storage sheds and detached garages.

The Craftsman style was the most pervasive and longest-used style in the PRISM survey area, remaining extremely popular from approximately 1910 to 1925, although 2-story examples of the Prairie-influenced American Foursquare style dating to this period are not uncommon. These buildings were most often clad with wood shiplap or novelty siding, although survey data has revealed that the majority of all pre-1920 buildings in the survey area were later altered with stucco, asbestos shingle, aluminum or some other replacement siding. Roof forms are typically gable or hip. Single-family residences are by far the most common, and the construction of multi-family residences, such as duplexes and small apartments, remains rare until about 1920.

Buildings constructed between 1910 and 1920 are mostly concentrated in the Iron Triangle neighborhood, with the largest cluster located between Lucas Avenue on the north, Barrett Avenue on the south; Fourth Street on the west; and Ninth Street on the east—as well as a small extension to the south along Fifth Street between Barrett and Nevin avenues. Another smaller cluster of buildings dating to the 1910s is located between 11th Street, Marina Way, Bissell and Ohio avenues.

Beginning in the mid-1920s and continuing through the eve of World War II, residential architecture within the survey area was dominated by the Spanish Eclectic style, most often marked by the use of stucco cladding, clay tile accents, arched entries, shaped parapets and flat roofs. Craftsman-influenced buildings also continued to be constructed throughout this time period, as well as examples of the Pueblo Revival style. One of the densest areas for 1920s buildings is located in the Iron Triangle neighborhood in the area bound by Pennsylvania, Ripley, Tenth Street and 13th Street.

Richmond's prosperity during the 1920s is also evidenced by a growing number of multi-family residences, most often in the form of duplexes and small apartment buildings. While the smaller-scale buildings typically conformed to the popular styles of the day, such as Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic inspired designs, the larger buildings might feature Classical Revival or Renaissance Revival detailing. Multi-family residences may be scattered throughout the survey area, but clusters exist on the south side of Bissell Avenue between Fourth and Seventh streets; along 13th Street between Bissell and Ohio avenues, and along Ohio and Florida avenues between 22nd and 23rd streets.

Buildings of the 1930s are largely concentrated in the Coronado neighborhood. During this period Tudor Revival style buildings are not uncommon, most often marked by steep, asymmetrical roofs, stucco cladding, and the use of decorative half-timbering. In some cases, buildings display an eclectic blend of both Tudor Revival and Spanish Eclectic influences. A cluster of late 1930s and early 1940s houses along 17th, 18th and 23rd streets between Florida and Virginia avenues appear largely to be the work of a single developer, Charles M. MacGregor. A native of Nova Scotia, MacGregor moved to Oakland in 1889, and soon found work constructing houses in Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Piedmont and San Francisco. With a reputation for thrift, MacGregor eventually assumed the presidency of an Oakland lumber company, and is perhaps best known for building over 1,500 homes in Albany, where he operated out of an office on Solano Avenue starting in 1936.⁷⁰

Significance

Residential properties dating to the Industrial Era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of residential development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate early development trends or strong patterns in the growth of residential neighborhoods. Residential properties may also be significant for association with other themes, such as company housing built for a specific enterprise, or housing that developed as part of an ethnic enclave.

A residential property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond such as a civic leader, prominent merchant or professional, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the residence should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A residential property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer, such as Charles M. MacGregor.

Archeological resources relating to the earliest development of Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a

⁷⁰ Daniella Thompson. "Charles Manning MacGregor, indefatigable builder." *Berkeley Daily Planet*, December 15, 2006.

property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the Industrial Era theme. For residential properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A residential property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred. For buildings deemed significant as part of a broad pattern of neighborhood development, the retention of basic character-defining materials, particularly the retention of original wood cladding (versus replacement stucco cladding), is crucial. This is because the retention of historic materials also influences the integrity of design, workmanship, feeling and association.

For residential properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For residential properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of early 20th century residential architectural style, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. Some latitude should be given for window replacement, as survey reconnaissance revealed that very few residential properties in the survey area still retain their original wood windows. Thus, the replacement of some historic materials can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property. For example, the replacement of a door should not significantly detract from a building's overall integrity. But a house that has been stripped of its original wood shingles and re-clad in stucco would not qualify.



224 South 4th Street, constructed in 1902



423 C Street, constructed in 1904



300 Bissell Avenue, constructed in 1905



108 Chanslor Avenue, constructed in 1907



324 South 9th Street, constructed in 1909



339 Chanslor Avenue, constructed in 1911



533 5th Street, constructed in 1912



619 11th Street, constructed in 1914



617 6th Street, constructed in 1917



539 Harbour Way, constructed in 1917



134 South 9th Street, constructed in 1922



616 13th Street, constructed in 1926



129 13th Street, constructed in 1927



346 South 15th Street, constructed in 1931



539 Harbour Way, constructed in 1936



2215 Maine Avenue, constructed in 1937



620 11th Street, constructed in 1938



207 South 18th Street, constructed in 1940
by the builder, Charles M. Macgregor



122 South 11th Street, constructed in 1910



1208 Florida Avenue, constructed in 1912



408 - 410 Bissell Avenue, one of two similar buildings constructed ca. 1912 on the same lot.



502 Bissell Avenue, constructed in 1920



1003 Roosevelt Avenue, constructed in 1922



125 12th Street, constructed in 1925



911 - 915 Chanslor Avenue, constructed in 1926



The survey area's largest apartment building,
144 13th Street, constructed in 1929



716 - 720 Acacia Avenue, constructed in 1938



167 South 6th Street, constructed in 1940



2218 Florida Avenue, constructed ca. 1940
by Charles M. Macgregor

Commercial Buildings

Historic commercial buildings in the PRISM survey area are typically small to medium in scale and concentrated along major traffic arteries, with scattered commercial buildings located on corner lots within residential neighborhoods. The single largest concentration of commercial buildings is centered on the intersection of Macdonald Avenue and Harbour Way, and extends for several blocks in each direction.

Historic commercial buildings in Richmond can typically be defined as one- to three-story structures with commercial space on all floors; one or more retail storefronts commonly occupy the ground floor, and offices, service-oriented businesses, or utilitarian space serving the retail establishment occupy the upper floors. Commercial buildings also include mixed-use buildings that combine both commercial and residential uses. They are typically two- to three-story structures with commercial space on the first floor, with residential or office units on the upper floors accessed by a first-story entrance. The upper-story residential units generally consist of flats in small-scale mixed-use buildings, and apartments in larger mixed-use buildings.

The architectural style and detailing of Industrial Era commercial buildings in the PRISM survey area is quite varied, evidencing changing tastes and trends as commercial design evolved during the first half of the 20th century. Early commercial buildings can be quite elaborate in their design and architectural detailing, especially since they were located in the heart of the city and intended to represent commerce and prosperity. High-style architecture is prevalent, and buildings designed with Classical Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Renaissance Revival style influences are common. The survey area also includes two examples of banking “temples” with Classical facades designed to evoke security and stability. The more substantial buildings of the downtown core are commonly constructed of brick masonry or concrete, and almost all have flat roofs.

Buildings from earlier periods that are located outside of the downtown core tend to be constructed of wood and are more modest and utilitarian in nature, but demonstrate their age and function clearly in their designs. This includes examples of the Western False Front or Twentieth-Century Commercial styles, as well as vernacular examples.

Storefronts on nearly all commercial buildings have been altered as a result of changing commercial tenants over the years. Plate-glass window assemblies, clerestories, and entries are most often subject to alteration, removal, and reconfiguration. It is also somewhat common to find older commercial

buildings that have undergone major remodeling, resulting in the removal of original decorative features and a stripped-down, utilitarian appearance. This was an attempt during the mid-to-late 20th century to update the detail-oriented aesthetic of earlier years with the clean lines of Modern and contemporary styles. There are also some former commercial buildings that have been altered for residential or religious use.

Significance

Commercial properties from the Industrial Era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of commercial development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate early commercial development trends or strong patterns in the growth of commercial corridors or clusters. Commercial buildings constructed during this era that later incorporated uses related to the World War II home front effort should be evaluated as having enhanced significance.

A commercial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a prominent merchant or professional, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the commercial building should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A commercial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological resources dating to the Industrial Era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1.

Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the Industrial Era theme. For commercial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity

of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A commercial property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred. For a commercial building deemed significant as part of a broad pattern of development, it should also retain features that allow it to convey its association with commercial development during this period. These include features such as clerestory windows, decorative brickwork or tiling, and prominent cornices or parapets. However, latitude should be given when assessing storefront alterations—particularly in multi-story commercial or mixed use commercial buildings where a storefront alteration may be subordinate to the overall character of the building.

For commercial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain the essential physical features that made up its character during the period when it was associated with a figure important to history.

For commercial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of an early 20th century commercial style, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the roofline/cornice; retention of original cladding, and the retention of historic commercial design elements. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property. Likewise, some latitude should be given for historic storefront alterations, which were common as commercial merchandising trends evolved over the course of the twentieth century. For example, a commercial building constructed in 1910 that has a circa 1950 storefront alteration can still retain integrity. But less latitude should be given for more recent storefront alterations, especially those that removed the original configuration of doors and display windows. Some latitude should also be given to multi-story commercial or mixed use commercial buildings where a storefront alteration may still be subordinate to the overall character of the building.



214 - 218 Macdonald Avenue, constructed ca. 1904



The former First National Bank
at 530 Macdonald Avenue, constructed in 1910



933 Maine Avenue, constructed in 1912



912 - 916 Macdonald Avenue,
constructed in 1916 and later remodeled



322 Harbour Way, constructed in 1924



Cotright Building at 432 Barrett Avenue,
constructed in 1939 and later remodeled

Industrial Buildings

Historic industrial buildings within the PRISM survey area are typically small to medium in scale and are most often located in proximity to current and former railroad corridors, such as Ohio Avenue, as well as along important traffic corridors. These buildings incorporate a variety of uses, including production, repair, warehousing and distribution functions. The PRISM survey area also features at least three public utility buildings.

Most industrial buildings of the Industrial Era are one- to two-stories in height and constructed of brick masonry or reinforced concrete, although the earliest examples may feature wood framing. Facades are usually arranged symmetrically, and often feature an overhead rolling door in the central or end bays. Ornamentation is usually quite restrained and often confined to a stepped Western False Front parapet, although some examples incorporate Classical Revival or Art Deco style detailing. Most buildings have industrial steel-sash windows, and roofs are typically flat or bow-truss.

The two largest clusters of historic industrial buildings (constructed before 1959) are located along Harbour Way between Bissell and Ohio avenues, and along Eighth and Ninth streets between Chanslor and Ohio Avenues. Although other large concentrations of industrial buildings are located in the southwest and southern portions of the survey area, most of these buildings appear to have been constructed less than 50 years ago.

Significance

Industrial properties dating of this period may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the themes of industrial development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate early development trends or strong patterns in the growth of industrial areas. Industrial buildings constructed during this era that were converted for uses related to the World War II home front effort should be evaluated as having enhanced significance.

An industrial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a civic leader, prominent business owner, or other important figure, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the industrial property should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

An industrial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. Industrial buildings, being utilitarian in nature, are most likely to exhibit characteristic forms that would make them significant. A property might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer, though this is not likely as industrial buildings were not typically architect designed.

Any archeological resources dating to the Industrial Era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the Industrial Era theme. For industrial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. An industrial property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For industrial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain the essential physical features that made up its character during the period when it was associated with a figure important to history.

For industrial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of early 20th century industrial architecture, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the roofline/parapet; and the retention of industrial design elements such as large vehicular openings and steel-sash windows. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property.



117 South 5th Street, one of Richmond's oldest industrial buildings, constructed in 1900 with later additions



Former PG&E substation at 573 Harbour Way, constructed in 1909



1 Harbour Way, constructed in 1911 as a wine storage facility



118 Nevin Avenue, constructed ca. 1920 as a warehouse for PG&E



119 Harbour Way, constructed in 1924 as an auto body garage



1015 Chanslor Avenue, constructed in 1930

Civic, Social & Religious Buildings

Civic, social and religious buildings consist of government facilities, schools, social or fraternal organization headquarters, dance halls, churches and other houses of worship. As the Industrial Era was a significant period of development for the City of Richmond, there are numerous examples of these types of buildings scattered individually throughout the PRISM survey area, often as a result of specific ties to historic social or ethnic patterns. Civic, social and religious buildings constructed during this era that were converted for uses related to the World War II home front effort should be evaluated as having enhanced significance.

Because these buildings were considered important symbols of the groups they represented, most feature a high level of ornamentation and/or distinctive design elements. However, there is no overarching architectural theme that unites these buildings; rather they were usually purpose-built and display the particular architectural themes that were common during the era they were constructed. Thus, earlier examples of these types of buildings may display Classical Revival or Craftsman design elements, while in the latter part of the Industrial Era they may display Art Deco or Art Moderne influences.

In scale, most of these buildings tend to range from one- to three-stories in height, and the earlier buildings are often of wood frame or brick masonry construction, while the later buildings are typically constructed of reinforced concrete. In some cases, buildings constructed during this era, such as Roosevelt Junior High (now Gompers High School), were remodeled or enlarged during subsequent time periods.

Significance

Civic, social and religious properties from the Industrial period may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of community development in Richmond, particularly if they reflect strong demographic patterns or other trends based on the population groups they served.

A civic, social or religious property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a prominent civic, community or religious leader, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the civic, social or religious building should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A civic, social or religious property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological artifact dating to this period may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity:

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the Industrial Era theme. For civic, social or religious properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For civic, social or religious properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain the essential physical features that made up its character during the period when it was associated with a figure important to history.

For civic, social or religious properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of an early 20th century architectural style, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the roofline/cornice; and the retention of the key ornamental features. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property.



101 South 3rd Street, originally constructed in 1904 as a saloon and general store with a theater and banquet room



The Richmond Museum at 400 Nevin Avenue, originally constructed in 1910 as a Carnegie library



St. Mark's Catholic Church at 159 Harbour Way, constructed ca. 1913



460 B Street, originally constructed as a clubhouse in 1916



First Christian Church (now Elisabeth Missionary Baptist Church) at 520 Bissell Avenue, constructed in 1917



Auditorium for Roosevelt Junior High (now Gompers High School), constructed in 1924



Evangelical Free Church (now Antioch Missionary Baptist Church) at 380 South 17th Street, constructed in 1937



The Galileo Club at 371 South 23rd Street, constructed in 1939



U.S. Post Office at 1025 11th Street, constructed in 1939

WARTIME BOOMTOWN (1940 TO 1945)

Beginnings and Development of Richmond Kaiser Shipyards

As World War II began in Europe, government leaders from the United States and England argued for robust support to Great Britain as it sought to defend itself from Germany. By fall of 1940, Henry Kaiser and the Six Companies (a joint venture of construction companies responsible for major New Deal projects such as Hoover Dam) were negotiating with the U.S. Maritime Commission to locate a shipyard in Richmond that could replace British merchant ships that were being rapidly sunk by German forces.⁷¹ Fred Parr, the long-time force behind the development of Richmond's waterfront, had reportedly been wooing Kaiser and his engineers since 1939, and by December 19, 1940, final arrangements for a shipyard on nearly 100 waterfront acres were in place.

The Richmond Chamber of Commerce organized a celebratory luncheon on December 26, 1940 at the New Hotel Carquinez to honor Henry Kaiser, president, and Steven Bechtel, vice-president, of the new Todd-California Shipbuilding Corporation, as well as Fred Parr.⁷² After the U.S. entered WWII in December 1941 and FDR declared the nation an "arsenal of democracy," the Kaiser Richmond Shipyard complex grew to ultimately include four shipyards and a prefabrication plant by 1943.⁷³ Richmond's shipyards pioneered the application of mass production methods for shipbuilding, setting speed and production records and producing twenty percent of the nation's wartime merchant marine fleet.⁷⁴

As a direct result of the Kaiser Shipyards, Richmond became an icon of wartime mobilization's impact on American communities. From a centralized hiring hall in the former Montgomery Wards Department Store at the northeast corner of Ninth and Nevin, Kaiser staff screened applicants and made preliminary placements for workers. The Kaiser Shipyards were the largest defense employer, but fifty-five other industries fed the city's transformation into a wartime boomtown. While several new industries, such as the Kaiser Shipyards, helped win Richmond its status as a "Purple Heart City," it was most likely through pre-war industries' wartime conversion and securing of government contracts for their goods that the figure of fifty-six was reached. As the Chamber of Commerce

⁷¹ Fredric L. Quivik, "Kaiser's Richmond Shipyards with Special Emphasis on Shipyard No. 3: Historical American Engineering Record," 2004, p. 21-23

⁷² New Hotel Carquinez: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1992.

⁷³ Quivik, p. 63

⁷⁴ Wayne Bonnett, *Build Ships! San Francisco Bay Wartime Shipbuilding Photographs*. Sausalito: Windgate Press, 1999, p. 32.

stated in 1944: “A large percentage of local plants were able to go into manufacture of war goods without conversion by simply producing their regular line of goods and turning them into war and lend-lease channels.”⁷⁵ For example, California Steel Products manufactured parts for the Navy from its five-acre site on A Street.⁷⁶ With the war, the dismal unemployment figures of the Great Depression, which stood at 17.2 percent in 1939, dropped precipitously. By 1942, the unemployment rate was 4.7 percent and reduced to 1.2 percent in 1944.⁷⁷ During those same years, Richmond’s pre-war population of just over 23,000 quadrupled—overwhelming the city’s housing stock, schools, infrastructure and fire, police and health services.

Municipal facilities were swamped. City Hall continued service in its 1917 building at Twenty-fifth Street and Nevin Avenue. Despite increasing its force from 36 men to 110 men and one woman, the Police Department remained in its 1910 Station and Jail at 49 Park Place in Point Richmond. In 1944, the Fire Department, which grew from 53 to 105 employees, was still operating out of its pre-WWII headquarters. Their operations were squeezed as precious space was devoted to a civilian defense control center and a room dedicated to holding “Japanese contraband goods.”⁷⁸ The Fire Department was able to add a new facility with U.S. Maritime Commission funds near the shipyards at 1131 Cutting Boulevard (still extant). The Richmond Public Library added four one-room branch libraries scattered through the city, but was still swamped as it added new programs for defense workers and youth. As City Manager James McVittie described; “Richmond was literally bursting at the seams. Each time a seam was repaired by bringing one facility up to bare minimum requirements, a break occurred elsewhere.”⁷⁹

Housing Wartime Richmond

Given overcrowded public transit, gas rationing and shortage of tires, most workers preferred to live near the shipyards, putting an enormous strain on Richmond’s limited supply of housing. As a first step, Richmond residents housed migrants in rented rooms, garages, barns and even chicken coops. Irene Bianchini lived in a home on Cutting Boulevard built by her grandfather in 1912. The spacious

⁷⁵ *Handbook of Richmond California, 1944* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 18.

⁷⁶ Richmond Chamber of Commerce, *Richmond News*, August 1942.

⁷⁷ Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park; General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment, US department of the Interior: National Park Service, 2009, p. 24.

⁷⁸ J. A. McVittie, *An Avalanche Hits Richmond*, p. 59.

⁷⁹ McVittie, p. 135, p. 57. “Library to Open in Mornings For School Children,” *Richmond War Homes Weekly*, 27 November 1943. McVittie, p. 10.

house allowed her to take in seventeen roomers and cook for thirty-two boarders.⁸⁰ Richmond's Chamber of Commerce likewise established a room registry that connected migrants with available living quarters. The PRISM survey indicates that several houses in the survey area were raised in order to insert an additional floor at ground level for an additional unit. Yet such efforts did little to address the severe housing shortage that caused single workers, and even those with families, to camp along creeks or seek shelter in abandoned buildings. Some shared "hot beds" rented on 'round the clock shifts timed to those at the shipyards. Others curled up on seats at all-night movie theaters. Among the luckiest were those who rented boats moored on the Santa Fe channel near Shipyard One. "I'm not running a boat harbor anymore," stated the dock owner, "just a floating hotel for shipyard workers."⁸¹

The critical need for housing migrant defense workers was evident even before the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. A full year earlier, Richmond residents were already demanding that their City Council do something to house the thousands of newly hired shipyard workers. But the City of Richmond did not have the resources, expertise or infrastructure to create housing and community services for a population four times its current size. Support from the federal government was a necessity.



**"Defense Home" at 233 South 17th Street, constructed in 1942
(Photo by Page & Turnbull)**

The Federal Housing Administration's first attempt to relieve wartime housing shortages was through partnerships with local housing developers. Although the War Production Board Limitation

⁸⁰ Banks, et al. "Investigation of Cultural Resources Within the Richmond Harbor Redevelopment Area 11-A," p. 5.45-5.46.

⁸¹ Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) p. 85.

Order of April 1942 put a halt to all private construction not essential to war needs, defense housing was exempted. The FHA's Title 6 program provided federal guarantees for loans to private developers and records show that over 500 private "Defense Homes" were built in the Project PRISM area between 1940 and 1945. Most of these homes were small, single-story, rectangular or L-shaped structures with hip roofs, wood shiplap siding and double hung windows. They fit a contemporary description offered in 1941 by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce: "This is a good example of the small home, sold at a low figure, and much in demand by mechanics and other defense workers who have invaded Richmond by the thousand this year."⁸²



**117 South 18th Street constructed by Charles M. MacGregor in 1941.
(Photo by Page & Turnbull)**

Local contractor and developer C.M. MacGregor developed a substantial number of homes in Richmond of a more distinctive architectural character during the early war years. With stucco facades, these residences feature a distinctive split-level profile with pitched roofs and bedrooms located above an integral garage. McGregor constructed and sold a number of such projects along South 17th, South 18th and South 23rd streets north of Cutting and along Florida, Ohio and Virginia.⁸³

⁸² *Richmond News*, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, December 1941.

⁸³ MacGregor developed hundreds of homes throughout the East Bay in the first half of the 20th century. Not all of the "MacGregor-type" houses (as they are known among East Bay realtors) on 23rd Street date from the war years. The addresses listed above were confirmed with building permits, but a few permits for similar buildings nearby date to the pre-war period.

Figures for private residential development throughout Richmond during the war years vary from 2,257 to 6,000.⁸⁴ In either case, these numbers represent an astronomical jump from the total number of 104 homes constructed during the 1930s, but were nowhere near what was needed to house the flood of war workers. The pressure of an expanding populace, without access to adequate housing, required rapid action by the federal government and local officials. On January 20th, 1941, the Richmond City Council passed a resolution officially creating the Richmond Housing Authority (RHA), which could administer housing programs funded by the U.S. government.⁸⁵ The 1940 Lanham Act provided approximately \$150 million to the Federal Works Administration, allowing it to build over 600,000 housing units in partnership with local authorities across the nation. Despite lingering associations of public housing with “socialism,” Richmond and other communities were forced to turn to the federal government to help provide vital defense housing. Ultimately, the Richmond Housing Authority received funds for various wartime housing projects from the Lanham Act, the United States Maritime Commission, the Farm Security Administration, and the Federal Public Housing Administration, becoming stewards for the largest program of defense housing in the United States.⁸⁶

The Richmond Housing Authority’s early years have been described as “business-dominated” and controlled by the Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁷ Their committed opposition to construction of permanent housing projects that could address the severe housing shortage was mirrored in most other wartime boomtowns, whose longtime residents assumed that defense migrants would return to their home states when peace prevailed. Even establishing a housing authority met with intense opposition by the Richmond/El Cerrito Board of Realtors and other community leaders wary of building public housing projects they feared would depress real estate values, and whose residents might change the character of their community. Towns adjacent to Richmond fought hard to stop the location of defense housing within their city limits; the City of Berkeley successfully kept out all defense housing. This meant that even more pressure to provide for the housing needs of the huge shipyard work force was concentrated in Richmond. Such opposition was bubbling up across the country, and the federal government addressed it by assuring local control over projects and most importantly, by promising that the bulk of defense housing would be built as “temporary” and would be demolished within two years of war’s end.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ The smaller number appears in Richmond Chamber of Commerce, *A History of Richmond, California*. The larger from “An Avalanche Hits Richmond.”

⁸⁵ First Annual Report of the Richmond Housing Authority of the City of Richmond, May 1942.

⁸⁶ Carey & Co., National Register Nomination for Atchison Village, 2002, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, pp. 97-98.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-112.

Permanent and Temporary Defense Housing

On December 8th, 1941—one day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor—Richmond’s City Council passed Resolution #2833 approving construction of Atchison Village Defense Homes. About two miles from the Kaiser shipyards and close to Richmond’s downtown commercial core on McDonald Avenue, Atchison Village was the first defense housing project completed, and the first in the nation to be managed by a local agency under new policies established by the Division of Defense Housing. The project was built on land purchased from the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, which inspired the name “Atchison Village.” Designed by Carl I. Warnecke and Andrew T. Hass around a park and community center on winding streets, the simple one- and two-story buildings of Atchison Village reflect the “Garden City” design movement that shaped housing projects across the country, emphasizing the relationship between housing units and adjacent open spaces.

The PRISM project area included two of the three permanent defense housing projects built in wartime Richmond: Nystrom Village and Triangle Court. Plans for these projects were approved by the end of 1941.⁸⁹ All three projects were built as permanent housing and were constructed of higher-grade materials with more open space than later, temporary defense projects. Not surprisingly, these housing projects were reportedly reserved for higher-skilled workers and management at the shipyards. Although comparable to Atchison Village, Nystrom Village and Triangle Court were funded under the U.S. Housing Authority—a different federal program designed to house low-income Americans during the Great Depression. Nevertheless, Richmond officials granted the U.S. Housing Authority’s request that the units be devoted to housing defense workers “during the period of emergency.”⁹⁰

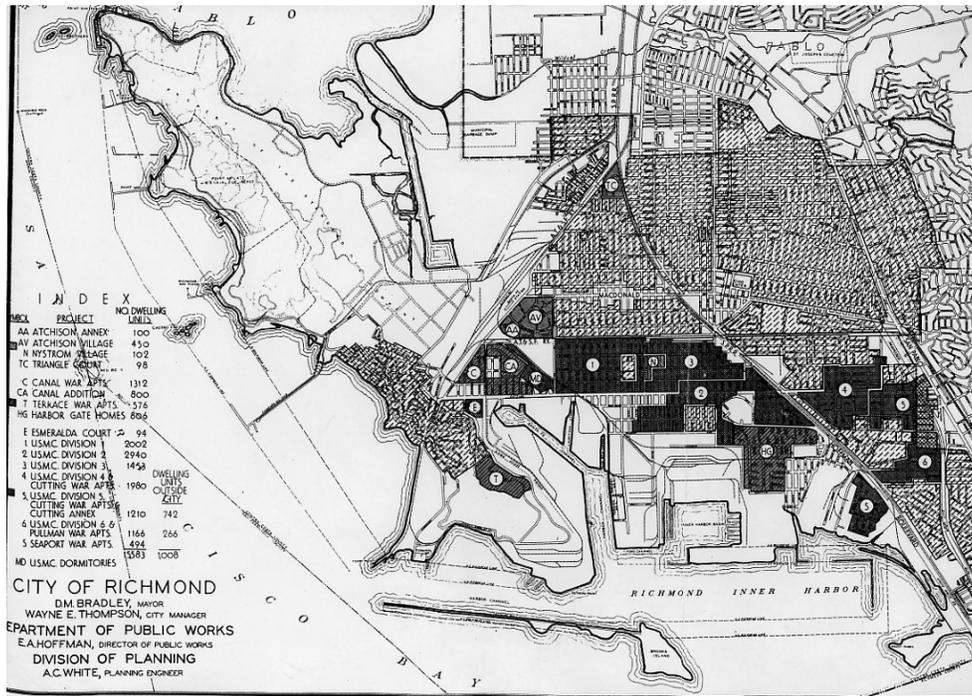
Named for its location at the apex of Richmond’s “iron triangle” of railroad tracks, Triangle Court was designed by local architects Narbett, Bangs & Hurd. The housing project was distinctively modernist in style, unlike the other two permanent projects at Atchison and Nystrom Villages. The original Triangle Court buildings were demolished in the 1980s to make way for a new low-income housing development that continues to be administered by Richmond Housing Authority under the same name.

With fifty-one single-story duplexes arranged around central open spaces, Nystrom Village shares many design attributes with Atchison Village, the only other extant defense housing project.

⁸⁹ First Annual Report of the Richmond Housing Authority of the City of Richmond, May 1942.

⁹⁰ Carey & Co., “Historic Resources Evaluation Report: Nystrom Village,” January 2008, p. 3, 30.

Comprised of stucco-over-frame dwellings with symmetrical facades and unadorned entryways, the complex of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units is largely intact and is administered as low-income housing by the Richmond Housing Authority. Most of Nystrom Village is currently scheduled for demolition with a small cluster of representative buildings to be preserved.



Map of Defense Housing in Richmond
(From an *Avalanche Hits Richmond*)

Initially, the Richmond Housing Authority's administrative staff worked out of the community center at Atchison Village.⁹¹ A purpose-built RHA administrative building erected at 271 Tenth Street to oversee the City's defense housing program was also utilized, but is no longer extant.⁹² Within a few short years the Richmond Housing Authority was overseeing the largest single public housing program in the nation, including over 23,000 units of housing. The higher density projects built after Atchison Village occupied swampy land closer in to the shipyards along the city's south side. Almost overnight, south Richmond's open fields and marshes were filled with apartment buildings, duplexes, dormitories and even a trailer court. Stanley Nystrom described the transformation of his neighborhood:

⁹¹ *Richmond News*, August 1942.

⁹² Various addresses for the Housing Authority are listed in wartime publications. The address on 10th Street appears on RHA letterhead dating from 1942, yet subsequent correspondence has different addresses.

“One day, a steady stream of dump trucks came and just dumped load after load of dirt for days and built up the height of that half-block. A private individual couldn’t afford to do that, but the government came in and did that all over the Southside. Wherever there was anything low, they built it up to street level.... Then they built these apartments on the graded lot.... These teams of carpenters would come, and they put the foundation in. Then they would lay a pre-finished tongue-and-groove oak floor over the entire thing. Then they would build the frame on top of that. In other words, the two-by-four studs and plates were nailed to this finished tongue-and-groove oak floor. It was the fast way of doing it. Speed was in essence in those days.”⁹³

A trailer camp identified as federal project CAL-4411 T was located directly north across the rail lines from the shipways at Yard 2. Bay Area cities, like those across the country, were concerned about the impact of wartime migrants on their communities, and for many trailer camps exemplified the worst blight that this mushrooming population would generate. Although the Richmond Chamber of Commerce announced in December 1942 that “the community has been opposed to such camps” and opined that there would not be a substantial need for trailer camps in Richmond, by the following year its *Richmond News* listed the Richmond Trailer Park as the location of 334 dwelling units.⁹⁴

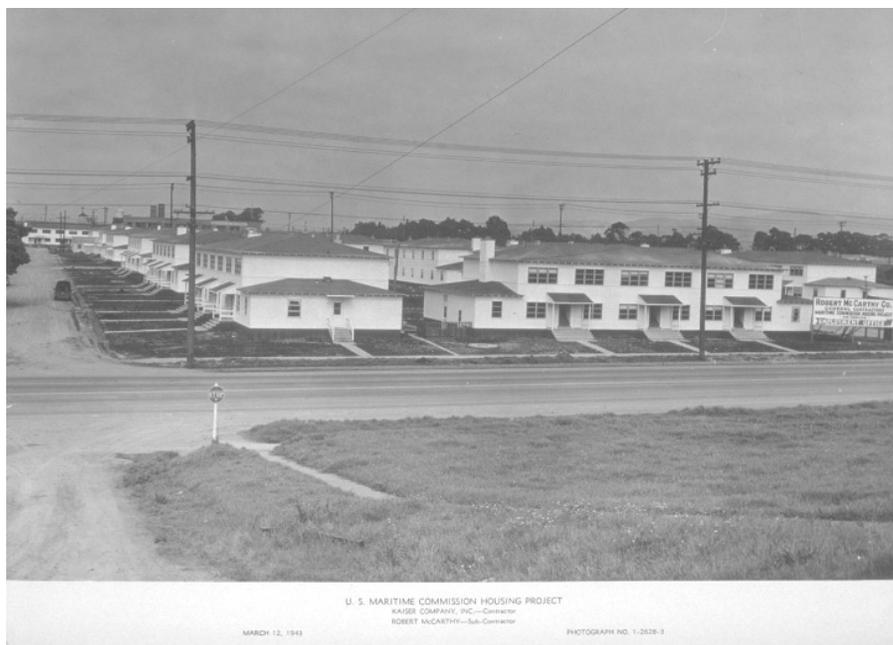
By far the most common type of housing built for local defense workers were the 2-story apartment blocks that flanked Cutting Boulevard from Fourth Street all the way to San Pablo Boulevard. Over 10,000 apartments of this type were built in Richmond by the U.S. Maritime Commission, which oversaw production of ships for WWII. Constructed as six separate projects, these apartment blocks cut a swath through the length of Richmond and comprised the largest number of defense housing units in the city. All of USMC Division 1 and portions of USMC Divisions 2 and 3 housing developments, which totaled 6,395 dwelling units, were erected within the PRISM project area. All of these apartments were built in similar style, typically in six-unit structures of two stories, which were described in a 1944 report as having “generally bad living conditions, and complete lack of insulation.”⁹⁵ The mass-produced monotony of these apartment blocks led, at times, to comical events. Edgar Monk recalled stepping into an apartment after a long day at work with a cheery “hello,” and realizing that he had walked into someone else’s home.⁹⁶

⁹³ Stanley Nystrom, “A Family’s Roots, in Richmond: Recollections of a Lifetime Resident.” Berkeley: The Bancroft Library, 1990, p. 54

⁹⁴ *Richmond News*, December 1942 and December 1943.

⁹⁵ McVittie, p. 34.

⁹⁶ Oral History Interview with Edgar Monk Conducted by Donna Graves, 2005.



U.S. Maritime Commission apartments
(Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1951 show that these apartments were sometimes integrated into existing neighborhood blocks, with the new apartments standing alongside older, pre-war houses. It also appears that some older homes may have been moved in order to accommodate construction of the apartments. Survey data from Project PRISM revealed numerous homes dating to the early twentieth century that were moved onto their lots sometime between 1930 and 1951.

Although the “temporary” projects were built quickly of flimsy materials, and often on swampy ground that flooded in rainy weather, migrant workers were happy to find shelter. For many, the projects represented a step up on the housing ladder. Antonio Medrano spent his early years in the Canal War Apartments while his relatives worked in the shipyards. His mother, who had left migrant farm labor in the Central Valley to seek defense work in Richmond, told Antonio: “We’d never lived near black and white people before. And that was my first home with hot, running water.”⁹⁷

Access to defense housing by African American workers was an on-going struggle. RHA policy was to reserve twenty percent of their units for African Americans, who were congregated in discrete areas and not allowed to live in the permanent housing complexes of superior construction. Although the twenty percent quota sounded fair on paper, reflecting the approximate percentage of

⁹⁷ Personal communication with the author, September 2005.

black shipyard workers, racial discrimination in private housing meant this quota was inadequate to meet actual needs. The *San Francisco Chronicle* pointed to “Richmond’s confused and politics-ridden housing situation” as one cause for picket lines surrounding seven public housing offices in April 1945 to protest evictions of African American tenants. The Federal Office of Price Administration placed an injunction against the RHA for illegal eviction and overcharging rents, confirming assertions of discrimination by the protestors.⁹⁸

A handful of defense housing-related structures were identified by the PRISM survey. One that appears to date to the World War II period is at 600 Ohio Avenue. The 1951 Sanborn map shows this building as a “US Housing Authority” warehouse. The only extant structure representing temporary defense housing in the PRISM project area sits at 1801 Cutting Boulevard. Constructed in 1943, the building was reportedly a location where housing assignments were made.⁹⁹ The building is labeled “U.S.M.C. Off” (US Maritime Commission Office) on the 1951 Sanborn map for Richmond, but it is doubtful that the Commission still administered this structure by that date. Correspondence from the office of the “Community Services Association of Richmond” lists their occupancy of 1801 Cutting Boulevard by 1948. The organization’s motto was “employment through better inter-racial relations.”



Former U.S. Maritime Commission housing office at 1801 Cutting Boulevard
(Photo by Page & Turnbull)

⁹⁸ “RHA Office Picketed in Richmond,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 April 1945.

⁹⁹ DPR form for 1801 Cutting Boulevard, 2009. Personal communication with Betty Hardison, 2003. Hardison worked for the Richmond Housing Authority during WWII.

“A Deluge of Humanity”

This description by photographer Dorothea Lange of the wave of migrants who arrived in Richmond hints at the complex impacts the war years caused for the city. Because the draft was siphoning off most able-bodied men from the workforce, and local labor pools could not meet shipyard needs, Kaiser and the City undertook a massive recruitment effort. At its peak, the Richmond Kaiser Shipyards employed over 90,000 people, many of whom had migrated from the South and Midwest to find the higher paying jobs offered by defense industries. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared in 1942 speech that: “In some communities employers dislike to hire women. In others they are reluctant to hire Negroes. We can no longer afford to indulge such prejudice.”¹⁰⁰



Richmond shipyard workers, photographed by Dorothea Lange
(Courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California)

Kaiser was among the first defense contractors to actively recruit women, African Americans and other people of color in significant numbers. As word spread of new job opportunities, the influx had a profound impact on Richmond’s demographics. By 1944, women made up over one quarter of the shipyard workforce and found non-traditional work in other local industries as well, such as the

¹⁰⁰ Sherna B. Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), p. 10.

Standard Oil plant. The iconic “Rosie the Riveter” appears as an attractive, young and presumably single white female. Yet, as historian Sherna Gluck's pioneering oral history project with southern California women aircraft workers revealed, “Rosie the Riveter” was young and old, from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, single and married. Contrary to popular mythology, she was more likely to have already held down a paying job than to be a homemaker newly recruited to the workforce.

Richmond’s pre-war African American population, which was centered outside the city limits in semi-rural North Richmond, grew from only 270 in 1940 to approximately 5,700 in 1944.¹⁰¹ Historian Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo describes African Americans as “relative latecomers” to the Second Gold Rush. Migrants fleeing Jim Crow restrictions and violence in the South came looking for a new life along with opportunities in defense work. Most arrived in the Bay Area between 1942 and 1945, with peak migration in the last year of the war. Lemke-Santangelo attributes this to discrimination in union policies and defense industry hiring felled only by acute labor shortages and growing African American protest.¹⁰²

While California held the promise of new freedoms, racial discrimination restricted black migrants in employment, housing and recreational activities. In 1944, Richmond’s branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was formed at the Harbor Gate defense housing project to address the issues.¹⁰³ The Richmond NAACP joined with the newly established United Negroes of America to fight against the segregated shipyard union and discrimination in housing. NAACP President Cleophas Brown and Secretary Margaret Starks (who published Richmond’s first black newspaper and booked musicians for the North Richmond blues club Tappers’ Inn) helped to organize the local branch, rallying newcomers from the defense housing projects and old-timers alike to address the gap between wartime rhetoric of social equality and the discrimination African Americans faced on the job and outside of work.¹⁰⁴ Black commercial institutions continued to be located primarily in North Richmond during the war years, but several African American churches put down roots in the Southside, close to members who resided in defense housing. In 1944, two new churches were established in the PRISM project area: Mt. Carmel

¹⁰¹ Rosie the Riveter /World War II Home Front National Historical Park; General Management Plan/ Environmental Assessment, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰² Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community*, University of North Carolina Press, 1996, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰³ Branch files in records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁰⁴ Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*, p. 132, 86.

Baptist at 529 South 15th Street and Antioch Missionary Baptist. Sometime after the war, Antioch Missionary moved to 380 South 17th Street, formerly home to the Evangelical Free Church.¹⁰⁵

Among the throngs of wartime migrants were Mexican Americans who joined the pre-war Mexican community in Richmond. Texan Eduardo Carrasco found work as a driller at the shipyards in 1942 after making \$14 a week at an El Paso dry goods store.

I went back to El Paso. I says, "I'm working in the shipyards. I'm making \$85 dollars a week." They says, "What?" You guess what happened. I emptied the whole store. Everybody from the store quit, and they all came to... Richmond, California to work.¹⁰⁶

Mexican American migrants to Richmond during the war boom came from throughout the Southwestern United States. As with African American migrants, most came to pursue shipyard jobs they had heard about from defense industry recruiters or more frequently, from networks of family, friends and church. Because the U.S. census at that time counted people of Mexican descent as "White," accurate figures on wartime migrants are impossible to ascertain. However, secondary sources on the Bay Area and WWII as well as oral histories conducted in Richmond indicate that the Mexican American population grew substantially.¹⁰⁷ The shipyards represented a step-up economically for Mexican Americans, especially women who had generally been confined to low-paid service jobs before the war.

Increasing numbers of migrants intensified crowding in Richmond's Mexican neighborhood, which had been centered between Pennsylvania and Macdonald Avenues, and from Garrard Avenue to Fifth Street. The neighborhood expanded its eastern boundary beyond Fifth Street to Tenth Street. The neighborhood was changed as well by the construction of Atchison Village Defense Housing Project, immediately to the south, where many Mexican American families had grazed livestock. Wartime housing pressures meant that Mexican Americans began to settle across the City, particularly in the defense housing projects constructed throughout south Richmond (as a completely segregated project, Atchison Village was not available to Mexican Americans).¹⁰⁸

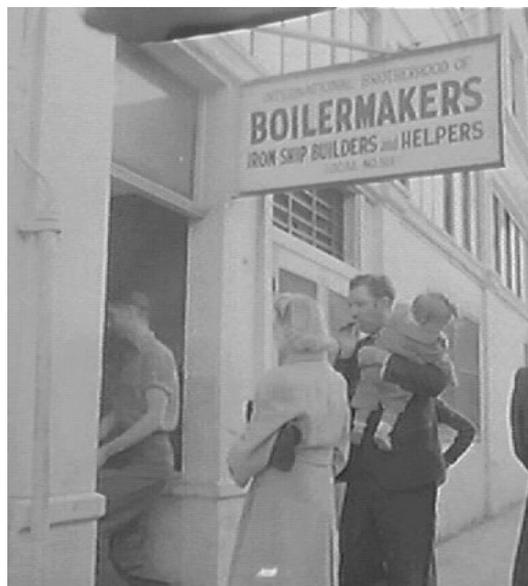
¹⁰⁵ Moore, p. 113. Polk's Richmond City Directory 1947-48, p. 1092. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951, p. 135. Plaque at 380 S. 17th Street.

¹⁰⁶ "Interview with Eduardo Carrasco," National Park Service, December 2000, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 56. Oral histories conducted for the Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front project by the Regional Oral History office, Bancroft Library.

¹⁰⁸ David Washburn, "The End of Town: Richmond's Mexican Colonia and the World War II Migration," (Berkeley, CA: 2003), pp. 16, 23-25.

Despite publicity campaigns and government policies mandating non-discrimination, workers in Richmond and throughout the country fought bitter battles to gain their full rights in defense industries. Richmond had a strong history of organized labor; the 1940 city directory lists thirty-five local unions and labor organizations. Nearly half of these are associated with the address of 257 Fifth Street, also known as Brotherhood Hall (no longer extant).¹⁰⁹ Although union participation by women and people of color increased rapidly during WWII, labor organizations themselves were often reluctant to include any but white men as full members. Many unions kept women and people of color out of higher-paying skilled jobs or reclassified their work to make them ineligible for new jobs. Others kept separate seniority lists for men and women.



**Boilermaker's Union Office at 707 Macdonald, photographed by Dorothea Lange
(Courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California)**

Locals such as the Kaiser Shipyards Steamfitters and Boilermakers Union, which controlled the majority of shipyards jobs, prohibited or restricted membership of men and women of color. According to historian Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, "It was not until 1943, following protests by Frances Albrier, a longtime East Bay activist, that the [Boilermakers] union established a black auxiliary at the huge Kaiser shipbuilding facility."¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, many such "Jim Crow" auxiliaries collected workers dues, but denied them votes in union elections and policy decisions. The office for Auxiliary A-36 was located at 1600 Barrett Avenue, while the main office of Boilermakers Local 513 stood in the center of downtown at 707 Macdonald Avenue. East Bay Shipyard Workers Against

¹⁰⁹ Richmond and Martinez Classified Business Directory, R.L. Polk, San Francisco, 1940.

¹¹⁰ Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) p. 113.

Discrimination, founded by Moore Dry Dock worker Ray Thompson, and the Richmond branch of the NAACP, worked to remake and finally dismantle the Jim Crow unions in Oakland and Richmond. They picketed Local 513's offices on Macdonald Avenue and joined a number of Bay Area civil rights organizations to file suit against the segregated locals.¹¹¹



**Boilermaker's Union Auxiliary A-36 at 1600 Barrett Avenue
(Courtesy of the Collection of Marguerite Rolls)**

Other ethnic/racial communities also experienced civil rights struggles during WWII. The most visible target for discrimination was Richmond's Japanese American community. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, FBI sanctions on Japanese Americans included confiscation of cameras, radios and other property; frozen bank accounts; restrictions on travel; and nighttime curfews. The February 2nd, 1942 edition of the *Richmond Independent* printed a map of the new "defense prohibited zone" which specifically barred "enemy aliens" and included the entire city of Richmond except for Alvarado Park.¹¹² All people of Japanese descent, including those were U.S. citizens, were required to register as enemy aliens at the main Post Office on Nevin Avenue. In April of 1942, all of Richmond's Japanese American residents were sent to Tanforan Assembly Center south of San Francisco. Most were then sent on to Topaz Relocation Center to live under armed guard and behind barbed wire in the Utah desert. All faced the extreme hardship of being uprooted, and of finding strategies for maintaining, or disposing of, their homes, property and businesses.

¹¹¹ Moore, p. 60-61.

¹¹² Lawrence DiStasi, "Not at Home on the Home Front: Italian Americans in Richmond During WWII in Graves et. al. *Not at Home on the Home Front: Japanese Americans and Italian Americans in Richmond During World War II*, Berkeley, 2004.

While the majority of Richmond's Japanese American community was engaged in cut-flower growing around 47th Street and Wall Avenues and in North Richmond, several residences within the PRISM project area were listed in a 1940 Japanese American directory, and at least three Japanese-owned businesses were located in downtown. The 7th Street Market at 634 Macdonald Avenue, part of a small chain owned by Oakland's Iino family, is no longer extant. Nor is the original Park Florist Shop founded by the Katayanagi family. The Katayanagis lost their thriving business at 1508 Macdonald when they were forced to leave Richmond in 1942.¹¹³ Oakland florist Dave Piazza bought the shop and soon added Frank Perata, whose family operated nurseries in the Colma area, as his partner. Under the new management, Park Florist provided the floral displays for many of the ship launchings at the Kaiser Shipyards.¹¹⁴ However, the structure that held the family-run Sonoda Shoe Repair Shop at 260 Tenth Street still stands just off Macdonald Avenue.¹¹⁵ Richmond native Tom Oishi, one of the few Japanese Americans who worked at the Kaiser Shipyards prior to internment, remembers taking his welding helmet to the Sonoda shop to have a leather flap attached to the neck to prevent sparks from burning his neck.¹¹⁶

By February 1942, many in Richmond's Italian community were among the 600,000 Italian Americans designated as "enemy aliens." Unlike Japanese Americans, in the case of Italian Americans, the term was restricted to individuals who had not gained U.S. citizenship. The Galileo Club history during the war years symbolizes the strangely schizophrenic place Italian Americans held in American society at the time. As residents who had lived in the U.S. and Richmond for several decades, most Italian Americans identified first as Americans and supported the broader war effort. Galileo Club members bought war bonds, served in Richmond's civil defense program, and organized gift mailings to service men. The Galileo Club itself served as one of twenty-two local sites for civil defense "fire guards."¹¹⁷ Yet members of their community were targeted as potential foes by local institutions such as the *Richmond Independent*, which described the announcement of sanctions as proof that "war makes possible enemies out of people whom we have considered friendly acquaintances for years ... All must go to eliminate from danger spots the ones who are really dangerous ..."¹¹⁸

¹¹³ *Interview with Tom Oishi* by Donna Graves and David Washburn (Berkeley, CA: Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley, 2002).

¹¹⁴ Personal communication with Bob Perata, February 2004. Park Florist moved to its current location at 2015 Macdonald in the 1950s. Park Florist later moved to 2015 Macdonald and the original building at 1508 Macdonald was demolished.

¹¹⁵ *Japanese American Directory*, San Francisco: Japanese American News, 1941, p. 92. The residences are listed at 460 C Street, 317 7th Street, 30 9th Street, 1424 Barrett Avenue and 940 8th Street.

¹¹⁶ Personal communication with Tom Oishi, July 2009.

¹¹⁸ "For Safety's Sake," *Richmond Independent*, 3 February 1942.

Although not as severe or long lasting as the more widely known incarceration of Japanese Americans, hundreds of Richmond residents suffered from these policies. Most non-citizens were elderly immigrants whose limited English was a major factor in their decision not to pursue U.S. citizenship. Establishment of the defense prohibited zone meant that hundreds of Italian Americans in Richmond were faced with the choice of separating from kin who fell under the sanctions, or relocating entire families in a period of extreme housing shortages. Many lost their homes and businesses during relocation; one despondent long-time resident, Martin Battistessa, owner of a locksmith shop at 518 Macdonald Avenue, took his life a few blocks away from the Galileo Club.¹¹⁹ Italian Americans lived with the irony shared by many Japanese American families of having sons fighting in the U.S. military or relatives working in the shipyards, while parents and grandparents were publicly identified as enemies.

New Infrastructure: Schools, Childcare, Recreation & Public Health

While federal dollars were flowing to build defense factories and support housing development, they were not as readily available to support the associated needs for building schools necessary to serve factory workers' children. As Richmond's population soared, the city's capacity for extracting tax revenues declined because the massive federal building program was not taxable. This created a significant impact on all public budgets, including that of the school district. School district administrators had closed Lincoln School's classrooms just prior to the war to conduct an earthquake survey and to retrofit the facility as needed, or move it from what had become a predominately commercial district.¹²⁰ The deluge of new children who accompanied the City's defense workforce compelled the district to reopen the school for the duration.

Richmond Unified School District built a new administration building in 1942 at 1108 Bissell, which still stands, yet funds for building classrooms were far more difficult to access. Richmond Superintendent of Schools, Walter Helms, made repeated requests for federal funding to help the district build schools that could address overcrowded conditions in which Richmond's youngest residents were placed. This shortage of space, time and teaching staff exacted a "permanent loss to the school children ... Here are twenty thousand future citizens who will have missed something in the way of adequate preparation to perpetuate what our armies are preserving," lamented

¹¹⁹ "Richmond Alien, Fearing Move, Takes Own Life," *Richmond Independent*, 17 February 1942. Dobkin, Marjorie. "The Richmond Galileo Club 1932-1952: Historic Context Report." Richmond, CA 2002.

¹²⁰ McVittie, p. 82.

Superintendent Helms.¹²¹ Finally turning to local funds out of desperation, Helms authorized the creation of Harbor Gate School entirely out of portable, temporary classrooms adjacent to Shipyard No. 2 and defense housing projects.¹²² A second new school of permanent construction, Mira Vista, was built in the Richmond hills.¹²³



**Richmond Unified School District administrative building
(Photo by Donna Graves)**

Nystrom School also developed a new complex during the war and grew from ten to forty classrooms.¹²⁴ Along with Pullman, Lincoln, and Stege Schools, Nystrom bore the brunt of wartime overcrowding by virtue of its proximity to the defense housing projects and the large proportion of new students who lived there.¹²⁵ Because of the inadequate number of new classrooms, Richmond schools went on double and even triple sessions.¹²⁶ According to historian Charles Dorn, “with a prewar total of 132 classrooms, average enrollment per classroom in the elementary district was twenty-three children. The construction of only sixty additional rooms by 1944 led the average elementary school enrollment to rise to sixty-seven children per classroom.”¹²⁷

Organized childcare for pre-school age children was a critical component for ensuring women’s access to defense jobs. WWII programs represented a huge advance from the earlier scattered

¹²¹ McVittie, p. 77.

¹²² Helen Pence, “Whatever Became Of...Harbor Gate and Seaport Schools?,” *The Mirror* (Richmond: Richmond Museum of History) Fall 1996, p. 8.

¹²³ *A History of Richmond, California*, p. 127.

¹²⁴ DPR Form for Nystrom Elementary School in “Architectural Evaluations for the Charter Schools Construction and Modernization and the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Community center and Park Renovation Project,” June 2008.

¹²⁵ Charles Dorn, *Education in a Time of War* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003), p. 185.

¹²⁶ McVittie, p. 77.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 73. cited in Dorn’s *Education in a Time of War*.

support offered to working mothers, first by settlement houses and later through WPA programs. Although the subject of continued wartime debate, childcare programs became a common and crucial component of urban defense centers during WWII. Richmond's program of childcare was funded by the federal government through the Lanham Act, which was designed to help relieve some of the strains felt by congested defense areas. Administered by the School District, the centers applied theories and methods of early childhood education shared by other programs of the time.¹²⁸

Childcare centers were integrated into a number of the defense housing projects, including the Canal and Terrace War Apartments and the Trailer Camp, and incorporated into several public schools. It might be argued that the first wartime childcare program was located at Peres School, which had operated a WPA-funded nursery school since 1936 and converted to serving defense workers in 1942.¹²⁹ The purpose-built Maritime Childcare Center at Tenth and Florida, and Pullman Child Development Center at 2730 Maine Street, were positioned as closely as possible to the shipyards and defense housing, creating a nexus of home, jobsite and childcare services for war workers who used these facilities. Historian Alicia Barber speculated that the children enrolled at the Maritime Child Development Center enrollment were primarily white, reflecting the "essential workers" who were given priority for units in adjacent USMC housing. "Evidently," Barber noted, "the child care centers in the war apartments near the shipyards, including Terrace and Canal, enrolled more non-white children, as this was where the families lived."¹³⁰

Contemporary accounts of Richmond's childcare program state that just over one thousand children were served at the centers, under the maximum program capacity of 1,400 children.¹³¹ Given the commonly cited statistic that over 25 percent of Kaiser's 100,000-plus workforce was female, it is safe to assume that only a fraction of their childcare needs were met through the Richmond program. Most working mothers used a range of strategies to meet their childcare needs during the war years. Many who labored at the Richmond Shipyards commuted from other communities in the Bay Area and often sought their childcare closer to home. The Shipyard publication *Fore 'N Aft* listed programs in El Cerrito, Albany, Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco in a September 1943 article encouraging women employees to avail themselves of these services.¹³² However, many women were

¹²⁸ Contemporary accounts of childcare programs in many defense centers discuss the importance of well thought-out curriculum, on-site health supervision, and creative play. For one example, see "Mare Island Has First Navy Sponsored Nursery School," *Berkeley Gazette*, 10/15/42.

¹²⁹ Alicia Barber, "Maritime Child Development Center," (Washington, DC: Historic American Building Survey, 2001). According to Barber, Erla Boucher, Director of Richmond's wartime childcare program, began as the head of this WPA nursery school, p. 8.

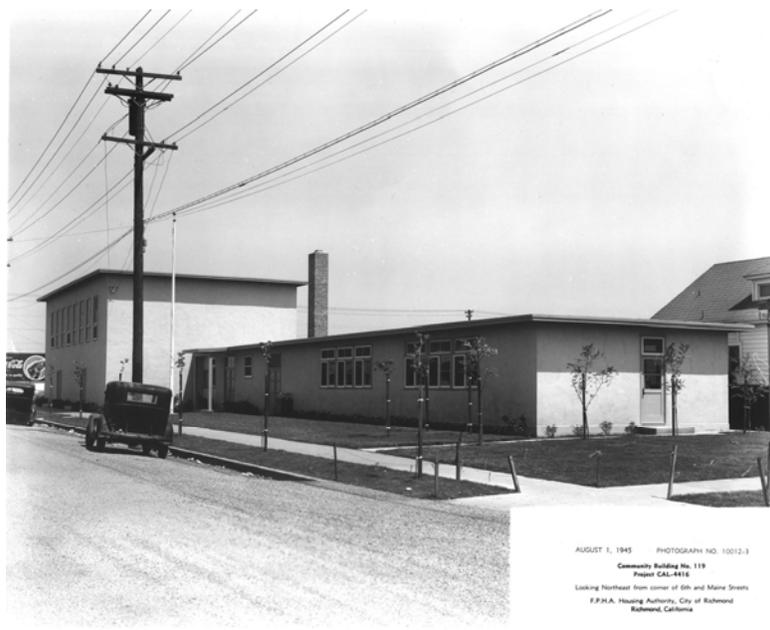
¹³⁰ Alicia Barber, Historic American Building Survey: Maritime Child Development Center, 2001, p. 29.

¹³¹ "Study of Youth Services in Contra Costa County." Sacramento: California Youth Authority, 1945, p. 11.

¹³² "Mothers By Day," *Fore 'N Aft*, 3 September 1943, p. 3.

wary of placing their children with strangers in daycare centers and instead used networks of family, neighbors and friends.

The Richmond Housing Authority (RHA), with a nudge from Kaiser Co., realized that new residents needed more than mere shelter, and helped see that new markets and schools were constructed close to some housing projects. The RHA and the City of Richmond Recreation Department also organized extensive recreation programs at parks, playgrounds, schools, and eight new recreation centers. The Department was staffed by about 80 employees and operated with a budget of \$229,000 for the fiscal year 1944 - 1945. By early 1944, estimates of average attendance were over 4,000 per month at recreation centers, which offered sports, performing and visual arts activities, and even a “Charm School” for women and girls.¹³³ In addition to City recreation centers, the Richmond Art Center at 942 Ninth Street offered a variety of classes for adults including weaving, sketching, painting, sculpture, flower arranging and other crafts. During the war, Lanham Act funding enabled the Center to train Recreation Department staff and other community members to share these skills with their own groups.¹³⁴



**Recreation Center at 6th Street and Maine Avenue, 1945
(Courtesy of the Richmond Housing Authority)**

¹³³ “Report of the Survey of the Organization and Administration of Richmond, California” (Richmond: Public Administration Service, 1944), pp. 83-85.

¹³⁴ *Handbook of Richmond California, 1945* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 23.

The new recreation centers were located within housing projects at Sixth and Maine, Terrace War Apartments, Canal War Apartments, Atchison Village, Seaport War Apartments, Pullman War Apartments, and Cutting War Apartments. Historic photos such as the image of the recreation center at Sixth and Maine indicate that the structures built for the various recreation centers were of similar design. The single extant recreation building at 27th and Virginia was converted to administrative and support functions for the Richmond Housing Authority in the early 1960s, and is now the location of the Richmond Housing Authority's maintenance department.

The Richmond Health Center opened a new facility at 240 Eighth Street in 1940, just in time to address the mounting public health issues that swamped the city along with the tidal wave of wartime migrants. This facility, through its visiting nurse program and health clinics, cared for many residents ineligible for coverage under the Permanente plan, which was limited to shipyard employees.¹³⁵ Jointly supported by the City of Richmond and Contra Costa County, the health center began in 1922 as a clinic offering health education and free medical care to “those unable to pay.” It provided medical, dental and surgical services for people who could not afford these services. A free immunization program offered protection from diphtheria, smallpox and other diseases of the time.¹³⁶ The new facility also served as the public health laboratory that tracked and treated communicable diseases, including venereal diseases—a prominent wartime concern.



**Contra Costa County Health Clinic
(Richmond Chamber of Commerce's *Richmond News*, August 1942)**

¹³⁵ *Handbook of Richmond California 1940* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 49. *Handbook of Richmond California 1943* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 46. "Study of Youth Services in Contra Costa County" (Sacramento: California Youth Authority, 1945), p. 12. "Report of the Survey of the Organization and Administration of Richmond, California" (Richmond: Public Administration Service, 1944), pp 51-63.

¹³⁶ *Richmond, California: Municipal Employees' Public Service Magazine* (January 1947).

The Kaiser Field Hospital at the intersection of Cutting Boulevard and 14th Street (now Marina Way South) represents the web of connected facilities established to serve healthcare needs of workers at the Richmond shipyards. The Field Hospital acted as the middle tier of care, between the six first aid facilities in the shipyards themselves and the Permanente Foundation Hospital in Oakland. The Field Hospital was constructed in 1942 with \$60,000 in funds from the U.S. Maritime Commission, which owned the property, while Kaiser contributed \$50,000 for furnishings and equipment.¹³⁷ By the time the building held 160 beds in 1944, the Permanente Health Plan had enrolled 92.2 percent of Richmond shipyard workers in the first health plan to feature prepayment, group medical practice, and a network of medical facilities. Health plan payments funded doctors' salaries, equipment, and the USMC rental fee for the building, with additional profits going into the Permanente Foundation. At WWII's end, the Permanente Health Plan split off from Kaiser Industries as an independent non-profit trust, opened to the public for membership by June of 1945.



Kaiser Field Hospital
(Courtesy of the Richmond Museum of History)

A separate healthcare program reminiscent of the Kaiser Permanente Plan was offered in spring of 1943 by the Richmond Housing Authority in partnership with California Physicians' Service. The March 26th issue of the *Richmond War Homes Weekly* reported that all residents of defense housing were eligible to enroll in the plan, which appears to have included routine and emergency medical care. RHA had tested the program at Harbor Gate Homes and reported that ninety percent of the residents signed up for the service, which cost \$2.50 per month for a single person, and \$5.00 for a family group of three or more. RHA announced its intention to convert apartments into clinics "with

¹³⁷ Kaiser Permanente Field Hospital Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, May 2004.

the idea of providing our residents with the highest type of collective medical services ever presented in any state of the Union ...”¹³⁸ Given that the Richmond Field Hospital had opened six months prior to this announcement, it seems clear that significant gaps in the health of the community—including that of defense workers—remained of great concern to local authorities. One of the primary omissions was coverage for workers’ dependents; the Permanente Health Plan did not include coverage for the families of shipyard workers’ until 1945.¹³⁹

Civic Mobilization

The national campaign for “Total mobilization” enlisted home front Americans to aid the war efforts with victory gardens, bond drives, scrap collections and other programs to support the troops and civilians affected by the war in Europe. The Richmond Defense Council headed up dozens of citizen efforts and formal committees, including: Advisory, Civil Protection, Resources & Skills, Health, Welfare & Consumer Interest, Transportation, Housing, Works & Facilities, Public Information, Industrial Resources & Production, Recreation, and the Home Front Unity Committee.¹⁴⁰ Hundreds of residents volunteered for local civil defense duty. Numerous buildings within the PRISM project area were designated air raid shelters, including St. Marks Church; the Elks Club; the Winters Building; the Main Library; the New Carquinez Hotel; the Main Post Office; the Shipyard hiring hall at Ninth Street and Nevin Avenue; Travelers Hotel at 521 Macdonald; Andersons Drugs at 600 Macdonald; Yager Apartments at 276 17th Street; Edenia Apartments at 825 Nevin Avenue; and Memorial Hall at 250 12th Street. Richmond had four Air Raid Districts divided into precincts, with a captain for each. Fifteen “Interpreters” for the local civil defense program were based at the Shipyard Field Hospital.¹⁴¹ Richmond Funeral Parlor at 332 11th Street, and the Wilson & Kratzer Funeral Parlor at 705 Bissell Avenue served among a list of “emergency hospitals.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ “Medical Care Important to All,” *Richmond War Homes Weekly*, 26 March 1943, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Alicia Barber, “Richmond Field Hospital” (Washington, DC: Historic American Building Survey, 2001), p. 25

¹⁴⁰ “Richmond Defense Council: Report for January-February-March 1944,” Richmond Collection/Richmond Public Library.

¹⁴¹ “Richmond Defense Council: Report for January-February-March 1944,” Richmond Collection/Richmond Public Library. The languages spoken by these men and women included Spanish, French, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Hungarian, Italian, German, and Finnish

¹⁴² “Civil Defense” file at the Richmond History Room, Richmond Public Library



**The Winters Building at Macdonald Avenue and 11th Street in 2009
(Photo by Donna Graves)**

Richmond's Chamber of Commerce was intimately involved with many aspects of Richmond's home front—whether in helping to coordinate the interests of local businesses and federal programs, or devising strategies to address issues such as defense worker recruitment or the critical housing shortage. Advertising placed in local papers by the organization was dedicated to various matters related to the war effort. The Chamber developed a new publication, *Richmond News*, in late 1941 to provide more information on its increasingly war-related activities. A few examples of the Chamber's home front work follow: The Chamber helped initiate a local census survey by Richmond's Postmaster in 1942, and the following year the organization provided office space for counters for a special 1943 Federal census.¹⁴³ A Chamber publication, "Job Facts," aimed at recruiting labor from throughout the U.S. for the shipyards and other local defense industries, was distributed nationally through the 1,500 offices of the U.S. Employment Service, whose local office was situated at 601 Nevin Avenue.¹⁴⁴ A Rental Bureau opened by the Chamber in 1942 helped incoming workers find rooms in private homes when defense housing projects could not meet the demand. According to the Chamber, approximately 6,000 placements were made that calendar year.¹⁴⁵

The group was also actively involved in post-war planning to address lingering problems brought on by the influx of new residents, and to maintain the economic growth that the war years had created. The Chamber appointed a special committee in late 1944 to help sustain existing businesses and to attract new post-war industrial development. A national advertising and promotion campaign to

¹⁴³ *Richmond News*, December 1942. Handbook of Richmond California, 1944 (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 28.

¹⁴⁴ "Job Facts Recruits Labor," *Richmond News*, August 1942

¹⁴⁵ *Richmond News*, December 1942.

recruit new industries to the City was supported by \$25,000 allocated by Richmond's City Council, and \$35,000 raised from private interests.¹⁴⁶

Local chapters of the American Red Cross were one of the most important conduits for funneling home front Americans' energy toward the war effort, and for communicating health and safety information to local residents. Richmond's Red Cross chapter operated out of the Lincoln Elementary School on Tenth Street just south of Macdonald Avenue at the start of the war, moving in 1944 to a new facility within Nicholl Park. The city's female residents were the foundation of Red Cross activities, which included visiting nurse programs, blood drives, making surgical bandages to send to the front, serving as members of the Motor Corps (which provided defense-mobilization transportation), teaching first aid courses, and support for wounded servicemen in local hospitals. Many local organizations, including the Richmond Women's City Club, formed Red Cross sections to raise funds and perform on-going home front activities such as refurbishing old clothes and knitting and rolling bandages.¹⁴⁷ Employees at the Richmond Shipyards participated in Red Cross blood drives, and work crews competed with one another to see who could raise the most dollars for the organization's activities.¹⁴⁸

Richmond citizens shared the national concern that unsupervised youth whose mothers had joined the war effort would engage in anti-social activities. Short school days and lack of adequate recreation facilities were blamed for "hordes of youngsters" roaming the streets of Richmond "with nothing better to do but to get into trouble."¹⁴⁹ A "Teen Club" located across the street from the Post Office was initiated to provide "a suitable meeting place in the central business area."¹⁵⁰ The Richmond Boys' Club was seen as another way to "make better citizens and reduce juvenile delinquency." With leadership and fundraising support by the Elks Club, the Richmond Community Chest remodeled an armory building at 263 South 20th Street in 1944 to give local boys a place to pursue healthy activities. Serving boys six years of age and older, the new facility was designed to accommodate a membership of 600 children from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. with activities in woodworking, sports, pool, games, reading, etc.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ *Handbook of Richmond California 1945* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Richmond Independent*, 2 July 1940, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ *Fore N Aft*, 7 May 1943.

¹⁴⁹ McVittie, p. 90.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁵¹ "Boys' Club Organized," *Richmond News*, June 1944. Building permits for this structure through the 1970s remained in the name of the Boys Club; in 1996 a permit to remodel the building was issued to the West Contra Costa County YMCA, which occupies the building today.

Local organizations accepted the challenge of accommodating newcomers as part of their contribution to the war effort. Churches not only ministered to newcomers spiritual needs, they connected migrants to resources that helped them access services and settle in to their new community. The 1944 report, *An Avalanche Hits Richmond*, stated that “church leaders are already aware of an area in the Latin-American community which is in special need of attention.”¹⁵² Traditional adherence to the church’s central role in individual and family life, as well as language barriers, made churches extremely important resources for Mexican American people who came to Richmond during the war. The First Mexican Baptist Church and St. Marks Catholic Church fostered connections between migrants and long-time residents, and supported transition into a city that was unfamiliar and often chaotic.¹⁵³

The United Services Organization (USO) Traveler’s Aid established a program at 248 14th Street to assist newcomers find housing and other essential services. According to an oral history with Traveler’s Aid employee, Tarea Hall Pittman, who went on to become a regional civil rights leader, the organization’s services were not segregated and were open to all newcomers.¹⁵⁴ Richmond’s main USO building at Tenth and Virginia (now the site of the MLK Recreation center) offered a range of recreational and leisure activities to build morale among servicemen and women, as well as workers at defense industries. Richmond’s USO offered writing tables, a snack bar, lounge, library, games and records, boxing shows and a weekly dance. A demonstration Victory Garden was planted on the facility’s grounds and courses on gardening, nutrition, and cooking were offered throughout the war years. One example is the “Health for Victory Club” offered by the USO and Pacific Gas & Electric Company. Monthly meetings were announced in November 1942 with the purpose of teaching “wives, mothers, sisters – in fact anyone who needs a Richmond shipyard worker,” how to maintain that workers’ optimum health through good nutrition and wise meal planning on a tight budget.¹⁵⁵

Negotiating demands on the USO facility was an ongoing issue. In spring of 1943, the *Richmond Independent* announced that a USO Club for African American servicemen was to open in an unused building in Point Richmond that June. Mirroring the segregationist policies of the US armed forces, USO facilities in most metropolitan areas were formally segregated, or more informally targeted at specific ethnic groups such as the Chinese USOs in San Francisco and Los Angeles. USO regional and local leadership held a special meeting with protesters from Point Richmond who brought

¹⁵² McVittie, p. 97.

¹⁵³ David Washburn, p. 22.

¹⁵⁴ Tarea Hall Pittman. *Tarea Hall Pittman*. (Berkeley: Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1971-72), pp. 37-38.

¹⁵⁵ “Shipyards to Have Health Victory Club,” *Berkeley Gazette* 16 November 1942.

petitions arguing that a “colored club” was not appropriate in their neighborhood, but more suitable for a “negro section” of town. Within two weeks, the USO announced that it would “be governed by the people of the community” and would no longer pursue the proposed new facility in Point Richmond.¹⁵⁶ It is unclear whether this event had any impact on subsequent patterns of USO use by African American shipyard workers or servicemen, but a separate USO was never built.

By 1944, the main USO at Tenth and Virginia was described as “chiefly industrial and has such heavy demands in this field that it cannot provide for all the requirements of service men.” In response, the YMCA and the Richmond Recreation Department opened a Hospitality House at 1030 Nevin Avenue that provided recreation and sleeping quarters for servicemen, and also housed the YMCA Youth Center. With a snack bar, recreation room, lockers and showers, the new fifty-bed-facility accommodated visiting servicemen and provided them with activities alongside local youth organized by the City’s Recreation Department. Funded by the Community Chest and the State of California, the building was dedicated in a joint ceremony with the new Boys’ Club facility on May 20th 1944.¹⁵⁷

Nearby at 318 Ninth Street, the United Church Ministry of the Church Defense Council oversaw the provision of religious services at the defense housing centers including the Richmond Trailer Camp, the Canal Administration Building, the USO at Tenth and Virginia, and Auditoriums at Harbor Gate, Terrace, Cutting Avenue War Apartments and Atchison Village. Special “Colored Church Services” were offered at Harbor Gate, Canal and Cutting Auditoriums.¹⁵⁸

Commercial Richmond

Although Richmond City Manager, J. A. McVittie, wrote in 1944 that “practically no new construction has occurred in the downtown business district during the war period,” World War II was certainly a “second gold rush” for Richmond businesses that profited from the enormous influx of new workers.¹⁵⁹ Aileen Blaisdell recalled her employer reminiscing about the war years.

“Mr. Stribley...said that merchandise to sell was hard to get, and the demand was very great. People were working and making good money. Sometimes they were

¹⁵⁶ Robert Wenkert, *An Historical Digest of Negro-White Relations in Richmond* (Berkeley: University of California Survey Research Center, 1967), pp. 24-26.

¹⁵⁷ “Service for Service Men,” *Richmond News*, June 1944.

¹⁵⁸ *Handbook of Richmond California, 1944* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 34.

¹⁵⁹ McVittie, *An Avalanche Hits Richmond*, p. 131.

three to four deep at the counter. No salesmanship was needed. You just made change. He said it came in so fast he hardly had time to count it.”¹⁶⁰



**Woman shopping for shoes, photographed by Dorothea Lange in 1943
(Courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California)**

Newcomers and old-timers looking for food, drinks, clothing or a good time found what they needed on Macdonald Avenue. Storefronts from 2nd Street to 18th Street held restaurants, clothes shops, banks, bars, theaters and dance halls. From two movie houses in pre-war Richmond, the City’s stock grew to twelve by 1945, and nearly all featured the exuberant architecture common to the period.

Unfortunately, none of the movie theaters in the PRISM project area survive, but commercial structures with ties to the home front era can still be found on Macdonald Avenue and elsewhere. The store at 201 Macdonald, which formerly housed the Spanish-American Grocery Store, was home to the Victory Liquor Store by the close of the war years according to building permit records. Access to alcohol for Richmond’s home front revelers was plentiful; nightclubs and liquor stores mushroomed in those years, and even the numerous Italian households that clung to the tradition of home winemaking listed their services in city directories. According to City records, the Victory Liquor Store operated at least until the 1960s at this location.

¹⁶⁰ Wartime quotes from vertical file in collection of Richmond Museum of History.



**Victory Liquor Store, photographed by Dorothea Lange ca. 1942
(Courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California)**

A modest building still standing at 230 - 232 Macdonald held a number of wartime businesses that illustrate important aspects of daily life on the home front. A 1943 electrical permit was issued to Wing Fong for use of a hot plate in the “New China Café,” one of many new restaurants opened to serve the needs of busy defense workers with more disposable income than time and ration coupons for shopping and cooking. The same year a heating permit was issued to the Melrose Dress Shop at 234 Macdonald, again illustrating new, small businesses that reaped the benefits of Richmond’s booming commercial sector. The owner of the building is listed in a 1935 permit as the Pacific Ice Company of San Francisco. Pacific Ice may have been the parent company of Union Ice, which operated out of this shared structure (presumably from the rear). Ice was a crucial household commodity for preserving food in the days before refrigerators were widely available. The 1942 Richmond City Directory lists the building at the corner of Macdonald Avenue and 4th Street (now the 4th Street Market) as housing the Bellevue Hotel, Nick Glenos’ restaurant, the Salvation Army, and the Richmond Pool Hall.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ “Map of Macdonald Avenue Storefronts from 1942 City Directory,” Richmond Museum of History.

Other extant buildings along Macdonald Avenue associated with the home front era listed in the 1942 City Directory are:

- 510 - 512 Macdonald: Richmond Meat Market, Base Hit Liquors and the Gordon Hotel
- 530 - 532 Macdonald: First National Bank
- 830 Macdonald: Mechanics' Bank
- 916 Macdonald: J.C. Penney's store
- 932 - 938 Macdonald: Skaggs Drugstore and Kirby Shoe store 1
- 1001 Macdonald: American Trust Building
- 1017 Macdonald: Galvin Building, Richmond Independent
- 1019 Macdonald: Peter Pan Confection
- 1021 Macdonald: Carl Shoe Shiner and Hugh Smith barber
- 1031 Macdonald: Winters Building Dance Hall, Florist, Furniture Store
- 1408 Macdonald: Bowman and Woods Batteries, Pacific Natl. Fire Insurance, Richmond Brake Shop
- 1412 -1414 Macdonald: De Ben Barber and Beauty Shop
- 1420 Macdonald: Aguilar Motor Co.
- 1424 Macdonald: Brown Locksmith¹⁶²

Along with gas stations and shoe shops, stores like the Richmond Meat Market were locations where the impacts of wartime rationing on commercial establishments and on home life were probably felt most dramatically. Richmond resident Norman Stevenson recalled:

“Gas rationing—everything was rationed. Women’s stockings rationed, sugar was rationed, wasn’t much all that wasn’t rationed. So much stuff. Every time you go downtown, so much stuff was rationed that you see a long line, you got out of the car and got in it because you know it was something rationed that you know you could possibly get, you see?”¹⁶³

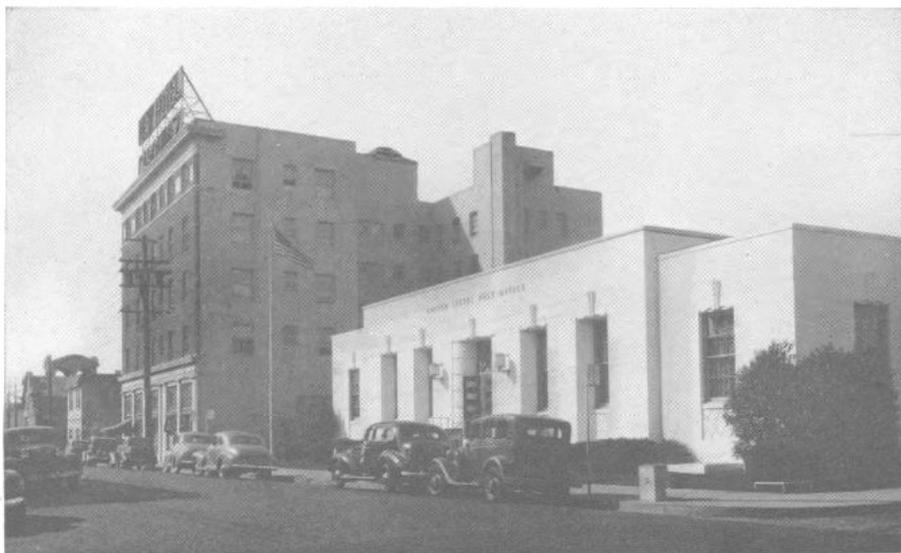
Lincoln School at 205 Tenth Street was the headquarters for the Richmond Ration Board.¹⁶⁴ This site for local operations might have been selected because tasks such as distributing ration books and general information were performed by schoolteachers in many communities. When local quantities of rationed items were perceived as seriously inadequate in light of Richmond’s booming population,

¹⁶² Richmond City Directory, San Francisco: R.L. Polk & Co., 1942.

¹⁶³ “Interview with Frank Stevenson: Rosie the Riveter World War II American Home Front Oral History Project,” Bancroft Library, 2003, p. 38.

¹⁶⁴ *Richmond News* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) August 1942 stated that the Board operated out of Lincoln School’s Room 3.

a special 1942 count of residents was initiated because foodstuffs were allotted to stores based on the outdated 1940 census. According to the Chamber of Commerce, protests from “shipyard interests, local merchants, and the public” about resulting food shortages inspired the Chamber to ask Richmond’s Postmaster to make an assessment of current residents based on mail deliveries. The Postmaster’s survey established the rise in the city’s population from 23,000 in 1940 to 114,899 just two years later.¹⁶⁵ The Richmond Post Office’s handsome Art Deco building at 1025 Nevin Avenue was completed in August 1939, just in time to accommodate the explosion of services it would be required to perform as the City’s population quadrupled.



**The US Post Office at Nevin Avenue and 11th Street in 1944
(Courtesy of the Richmond Public Library)**

Transit and Urban Infrastructure

Because of the severe housing shortages, many Richmond workers commuted from throughout the East Bay and San Francisco. Despite gas rationing, traffic on many of Richmond’s streets had increased up to ten times the rate of 1940, causing the police department to deploy thirty-five officers solely on traffic patrol.¹⁶⁶ These problems were especially acute in south Richmond where access to the Shipyards and increasing density meant additional traffic congestion. Lorene Lemonds recalled frequent accidents at the intersection near her US Maritime Commission apartment at 23rd Street

¹⁶⁵ *Richmond News* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) December 1942. “Post Office Gains,” *Richmond News*, December 1943.

¹⁶⁶ McVittie, p. 47 and 135.

and Cutting Boulevard. “One time a car rolled right up under our window and rolled over. It barely missed the building.”¹⁶⁷

Traffic congestion was of great concern to residents and public officials who helped businesses organize “share the ride” programs, and worked to secure federal funding for public transportation that could ease the situation. The Shipyard Railway, operated by the East Bay Key System, carried more than 11,000 passengers on a daily basis. Running sixteen miles and connecting workers to the Richmond Shipyards and Moore Dry Dock in Oakland, the US Maritime Commission used portions of existing lines to complete the railway in 1942, importing converted cars from New York’s elevated line.¹⁶⁸ Additional transportation improvements aimed solely at shipyard workers were completed the same year; a new ferry service traveled between San Francisco and slips within the shipyards.¹⁶⁹

Street improvements were also made to ease traffic. The *Handbook of Richmond California 1942* published by the Chamber of Commerce reported that greatly increased wartime traffic had thrown an “unprecedented load” on the Street Department. Seven thousand five hundred dollars were spent on “Surveys and Plans for Defense Access Streets.” The Chamber described the Street Department’s largest project of 1941 as the removal of the center strip in Cutting Boulevard, transforming this artery into “a first-class boulevard to handle the enormously increased traffic which came as a result of the two new shipyards.” Additional improvements were made to Tenth and Fourteenth Streets and Hall Avenues, all thoroughfares that also served Shipyards 1 and 2.¹⁷⁰ 1942 saw the completion of a new access road just west of the Southern Pacific tracks connecting to the shipyards, which relieved the increasing congestion along Cutting Boulevard and East Shore Highway.

The same *Handbook* described over \$730,000 allocated in federal funds for a new sewer main on Tenth Street in 1942, and for new sewer connections to nearby defense housing projects. “The necessity of Federal financing becomes obvious when it is realized that Federal projects in Richmond will probably result in property assessed at more than \$1,500,000.00 being removed from the tax rolls, a problem that is having the urgent attention of Richmond’s efficient City officials.”¹⁷¹ A new 36-inch sewer main was installed in 1944, and in 1944-45 new pipes and fire hydrants were installed throughout the areas surrounding defense housing projects to provide better fire protection.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Donna Graves with Eddrick Osborne, “Richmond’s World War II Defense Housing Program: A Report Prepared for the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency,” 2008, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁹ *Handbook of Richmond California 1943* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce), p. 14.

¹⁷⁰ *Handbook of Richmond California 1942* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce), p. 8.

¹⁷¹ *Handbook of Richmond California 1943* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce), p. 3.

¹⁷² *Handbook of Richmond California 1945* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce), p. 14.

Expanding services to accommodate the explosion of new households and businesses was a Herculean task for the utility companies. The Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Co. was located at 343 Tenth Street; Pacific Gas & Electric was next door at 345 Tenth Street. East Bay Municipal Utility District offices were located at 717 Macdonald Avenue. As early as 1940, all of them began to enlarge facilities and provide new connections to areas with increased usage, such as the area around the shipyard, North Richmond, East Richmond and the Mira Vista neighborhood in the Richmond hills. By the end of the war the number of water meters had climbed by 125 percent, electric meters by 86 percent, and gas meters by 95 percent from their 1939 numbers.¹⁷³ Information about additional telephone service and other aspects of the Telephone and Telegraph Company's operations was restricted during the war, but published expenditures for 1941 indicate that approximately \$350,000 was spent on expanding facilities and increasing service areas.¹⁷⁴

Governor Earl Warren's 1944 testimony to a congressional committee summarizes the dramatic impact of World War II on cities like Richmond.

“Certain communities in California and elsewhere which must serve a suddenly increased permanent population, diverted to such areas as part of a war program, cannot provide adequate public facilities and services during the years immediately following the war from their own resources alone. It, therefore, seems as logical to consider a part of the cost of such facilities as a national responsibility, as is the acknowledged responsibility for rehabilitation of injured Veterans.”¹⁷⁵

By the date of that statement, city officials were planning for a post-war population of approximately 50,000—half of Richmond's wartime peak. Yet they expressed grave concerns that if the needs of even a reduced post-war population were not met, Richmond would remain a “war-casualty city.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ *Handbook of Richmond California 1946* (Richmond: Chamber of Commerce) p. 52.

¹⁷⁴ “A Report of Progress: Two Shipyards Add 15,000 Workers,” *Richmond News*, December 1942.

¹⁷⁵ J. A. McVittie, *An Avalanche Hits Richmond*, 1944.

¹⁷⁶ McVittie, p. 15.

Property Types & Registration Requirements

Residential Buildings

The overwhelming majority of World War II era properties in the PRISM survey area are residential, primarily consisting of small single-family “Defense Home” cottages. Nearly all properties are 1-story in height, and typically massed according to a few basic arrangements. Most common are irregularly-shaped homes with a projecting rectangular mass at the front, offset with a larger rectangular massing in the rear. The main entry is typically located in this rear mass within a small entry porch featuring wood posts supporting a shed roof extending from the main roof. These homes may have either hip or gable roofs, and typically have a driveway along one side rather than an integral garage. This driveway is usually located adjacent to a brick interior chimney located at the rear corner of the building.

Also common are rectangular-shaped houses with a horizontal emphasis along the primary facade, nearly always featuring an integral garage at one end, with a small entry porch near the center. These buildings tend to have combination roofs, with a side-gable roof above the garage and a hip roof over the main part of the house. Metal chimney pipes enclosed in wood ductwork near the roof ridge are a common feature of these homes.

Another popular design was an L-shaped home featuring a long projecting integral garage on one side. These homes typically have hip roofs with metal chimney pipes, and in many instances the garage has since been converted to residential space or the garage door otherwise infilled.

Wood shiplap siding is by far the most common cladding, although a few examples of homes clad with what appears to be large, masonite shingles are also known. Masonite was a material typically used for interiors during that era, but wartime scarcity may have influenced the decision to use it as exterior cladding. Indeed, the few homes that appear to have this siding were constructed in the later years of the war. It is also worth noting that numerous buildings from this period also included a stucco dado at the base of the facade—typically running beneath the level of the windows and separated from the wood siding by a horizontal band of trim.

Originally, all of these buildings would have featured wood-sash windows, although replacement with aluminum or vinyl-sash windows is near universal. Indeed, within the PRISM survey area, well-preserved examples of World War II era houses are quite rare. Most have been re-clad with stucco siding, and few retain their original wood windows, shutters, or other decorative elements.

Multi-family residential buildings constructed during the World War II era are rare, and it does not appear that any of the wartime apartments constructed by the U.S. Maritime Commission survive. However, there are some multi-family buildings that share stylistic similarities with wartime apartments, including two apartment buildings on the southeast corner of Third Street and Barrett Avenue. According to City records, these apartments were built in 1943, but survey data shows that they were moved onto the lot sometime after 1951. Another building that appears to have been privately developed, but is similar in character to apartment buildings built as temporary defense housing is 149 Marina Way.

Much different stylistically are the townhouses constructed by Charles M. MacGregor in 1942 near the intersection of Ohio Avenue and 23rd Street. Unlike the basic, utilitarian forms that characterize other World War II period residences, MacGregor's buildings are more attuned to the pre-war single-family Tudor-Revival style homes he constructed nearby along 17th and 18th streets.

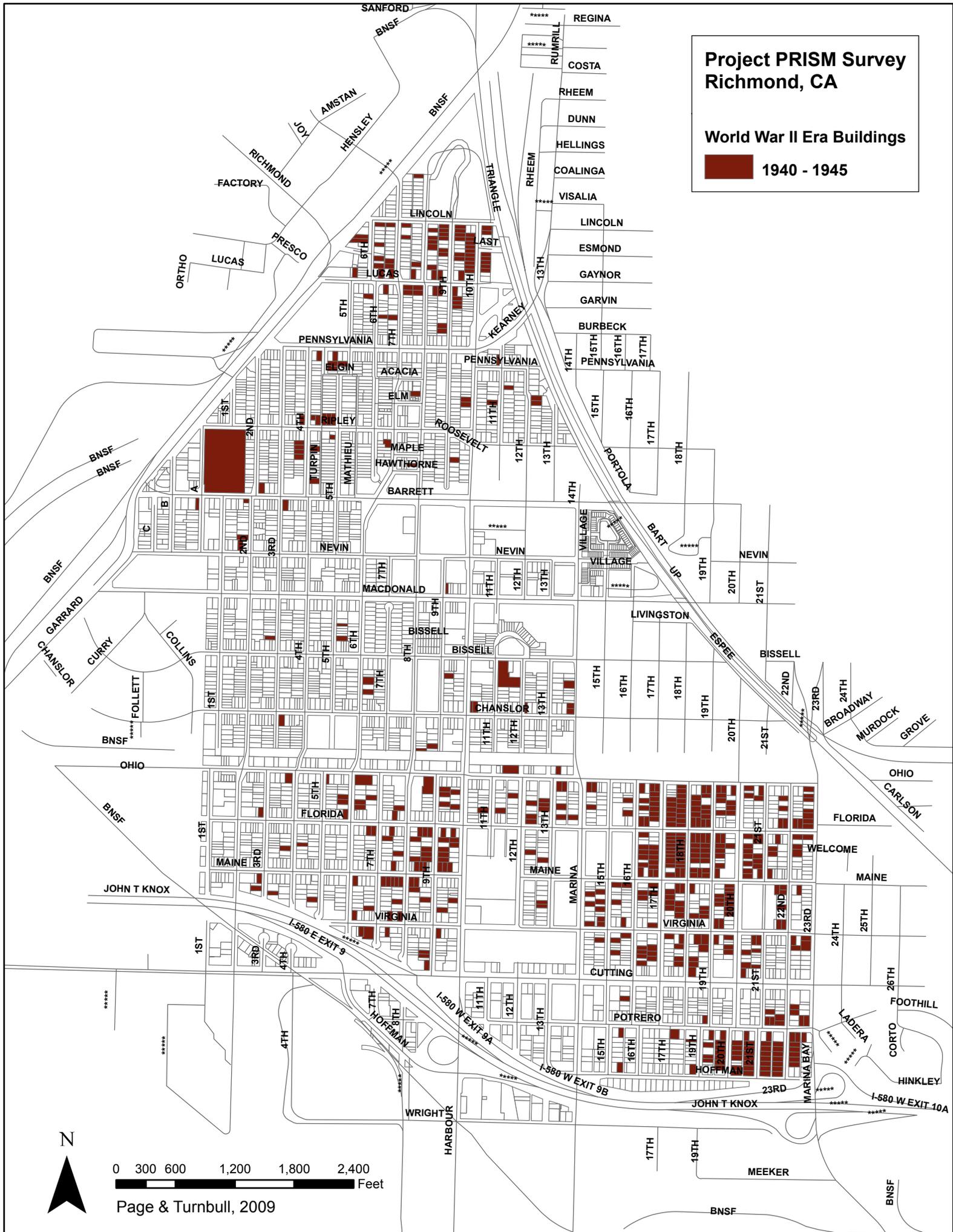
If there is a single stylistic element that appears to unite many of the World War II period houses (at least the best-preserved examples), it is the use of decorative wood window shutters. Some shutters are scored with lines set at a 45-degree angle, but more common are shutters featuring decorative pierced cutouts, such as stars, exclamation points, or other geometric designs. It is also not uncommon for some World War II era homes to have scalloped wood trim above the porch, or a hipped metal hood with scalloped trim above the entry in homes constructed without porches.

In total, the PRISM survey identified over 530 buildings constructed during the Wartime Boomtown years of 1940 – 1945 (**see map on following page**). Nearly all of these buildings are single-family residences. These buildings are overwhelmingly located south of Ohio Avenue in the Santa Fe and Coronado neighborhoods, with the single greatest cluster located in an area bound by Ohio, Maine, 16th and 20th streets. A few blocks to the south, another dense cluster is found between Potrero and Hoffman avenues along South 20th, 21st and 22nd streets. The northern tip of the Iron Triangle neighborhood also includes a cluster of Defense Homes, with the densest concentration located along Ninth and Tenth streets between Lucas and Lincoln avenues.

**Project PRISM Survey
Richmond, CA**

World War II Era Buildings

 1940 - 1945



0 300 600 1,200 1,800 2,400 Feet

Significance

Residential properties dating to the World War II era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of World War II Boomtown development.

A residential property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a military or civic leader, prominent merchant or professional, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the residence should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A residential property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods, particularly those characteristic associated with the "Defense Home" type. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological artifact dating to the war era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity:

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the World War II Boomtown theme. For residential properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A residential property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

It should be noted that thousands of "Defense Homes" were constructed in Richmond, and it appears that most were built outside the PRISM survey area. Because examples of these types of buildings are quite numerous, caution should be exercised when assessing their integrity. At an individual level, properties should retain all or nearly all original materials to qualify. For any potential

historic district, the majority of all contributors should, at a minimum, retain their original cladding (in addition to the aspects of integrity outlined above).

For residential properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For residential properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of a World War II Boomtown residence, it is crucial that it retain the original form and massing; the original roofline; the original pattern of windows and doors; and key historic materials. As mentioned above, examples of these types of buildings are quite numerous, and caution should be exercised when assessing their integrity. At an individual level, properties should retain all or nearly all original materials to qualify. For any potential historic district, the majority of all contributors should, at a minimum, retain their original cladding.



924 Florida Avenue, constructed in 1940



643 South 21st Street, constructed in 1941



137 South 6th Street, constructed in 1941



430 South 15th Street, constructed in 1942



131 South 13th Street, constructed in 1942



233 South 17th Street, constructed in 1942



852 8th Street, constructed in 1943



861 10th Street, constructed in 1943



151 South 11th Street, constructed in 1944



249 South 13th Street, constructed in 1945



303 South 18th Street, constructed in 1941



1528 Virginia Avenue, constructed in 1942



2218 - 2230 Ohio Avenue, constructed in 1942
by Charles M. MacGregor



149 Harbour Way, constructed ca. 1942



466 - 468 3rd Street, constructed in 1943 and moved onto
its lot sometime after 1951



44 - 46 3rd Street, constructed in 1943

Commercial Buildings

Commercial buildings dating to the World War II Boomtown period are exceedingly rare within the PRISM survey area, and only one building, 125 Nevin Avenue, appears definitively dated to this era. This is a small, one-story utilitarian commercial building with a gable roof and Western False Front style parapet. Originally constructed in 1945 as a store, this building is now used as a church. It may be that wartime rationing of materials accounts for the paucity of commercial construction during this era, although it should be noted that many commercial buildings are listed without construction dates in the records of the Contra Costa Assessor. Likewise, in-depth construction history research related to commercial buildings located along Macdonald Avenue revealed that no original building permit is available for many of the buildings. Thus, the possibility exists that other commercial buildings scattered throughout the survey area may have been built during the World War II Boomtown period, but their construction cannot be definitely dated without further research.

Significance

Commercial properties of this period may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of World War II Boomtown development, particularly if they were designed to meet the needs of Richmond's burgeoning wartime population.

A commercial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, for instance a prominent merchant or professional, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the commercial building should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A commercial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological resources dating to the Industrial Era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the World War II Boomtown theme. For commercial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A residential property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For commercial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For commercial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of a World War II Boomtown commercial building, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property. Some latitude should be given for the likelihood of storefront alterations, with a recognition that some alterations could also be considered significant if they are representative of important historic trends in commercial design.

(As only one commercial building is known from this era, its photo has been combined with examples of industrial buildings on the following page.)



**125 Nevin Avenue, constructed in 1945
as a store and now used as a church**



250 5th Street, an industrial building constructed in 1945



**Former U.S. Housing Authority Warehouse
at 600 Ohio Avenue, constructed ca. 1945**



**Quonset hut at 25 Harbour Way, likely moved from
elsewhere and erected on the lot in 1946**

Industrial Buildings

Although Richmond's industrial plants operated at a frantic pace during the war, it appears that few industrial buildings constructed during the World War II Boomtown period are still extant with the PRISM survey area. A total of 10 industrial buildings were assigned construction dates between 1940 and 1945, but it should be noted that many industrial buildings are listed without construction dates in the records of the Contra Costa Assessor, and thus almost all of these dates were estimated using Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps. Such is the case with the large, block-long, Marwais Steel Company (formerly the California Steel Products Company) building constructed circa 1945 at 1 Barrett Avenue. This building appears on the 1951 Sanborn map, but no original building permit is available. Thus, the possibility exists that other industrial buildings scattered throughout the survey area may have been built during the World War II Boomtown period, but their construction cannot be definitely dated without further research.

Most industrial buildings believed to have been constructed during the World War II Boomtown period are small to medium in scale, typically only one- to two-stories in height, and may be constructed from a variety of materials, including brick masonry, concrete, steel or heavy-timber framing. At least two buildings are clad with metal panels, and one example definitely dated to 1945 is concrete block construction. Facades are usually arranged symmetrically, and often feature an overhead rolling door in the central or end bays. Ornamentation is usually quite restrained, and most buildings have industrial steel-sash windows. It should be noted that a Quonset hut located at 25 Harbour Way was likely constructed during this period, but appears to have been moved onto its lot in 1946.

Most industrial buildings of this era are located adjacent to former or current railroad lines, but do not appear to be concentrated in any particular area.

Significance

Industrial properties dating of this period may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the themes of World War II Boomtown industrial development in Richmond, particularly if they are connected with the growth of wartime industries.

An industrial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a civic leader, prominent business owner, or other important figure, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the industrial

property should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

An industrial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. Industrial buildings, being utilitarian in nature, are most likely to exhibit characteristic forms that would make them significant. A property might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer, though this is not likely for industrial buildings that were not typically architect designed.

Any archeological resources dating to the Industrial Era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the World War II Boomtown theme. For industrial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For industrial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For industrial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of a World War II Boomtown industrial building, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the

original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property.

Civic, Social & Religious Buildings

The World War II Boomtown put a tremendous strain on Richmond's civic infrastructure, particularly the ability to meet the classroom demands for the children of war industry workers. Thus, it is not surprising that three of the civic structures constructed in the PRISM survey area during this era are tied to education, including the Richmond Unified School District Building at 1108 Bissell Avenue, the Nystrom School at 159 Harbour Way, and a large addition to Roosevelt Junior High School (now Gompers High School). Several other important public facility buildings constructed during this era, such as the Kaiser Field Hospital and the Maritime Child Care Facility, have been previously documented and were not examined in detail by the PRISM survey.

There do not appear to be any extant social clubs or religious buildings constructed during this period within the survey area, likely as a result of wartime scarcity of materials.

The school buildings constructed during the World War II Boomtown period are all medium to large in scale, and typically two- to three-stories in height. Construction is usually of reinforced concrete, and two of the buildings show a strong Art Moderne stylistic influence. However, the former office of the United States Maritime Commission at 1801 Cutting Boulevard is a vernacular, one-story wood frame, structure.

Significance

All known civic and government buildings dating from this period are significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of World War II Boomtown development, as all were constructed to meet the demands of Richmond's exploding wartime population. Although no extant social clubs or religious buildings are believed to have been constructed during this period, such buildings that already existed before the start of the war often played vital support roles during this period, and thus may gain significance for their association with World War II home front activities.

A civic, social or religious property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, such as a prominent civic, community or religious leader, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the civic, social or religious building should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A civic, social or religious property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological artifact dating to this period may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the World War II Boomtown theme. For civic, social & religious properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For civic, social & religious properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For civic, social & religious properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of a World War II Boomtown civic, social & religious building, it is crucial that the majority of character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. Minor alterations, or the replacement of some historic materials, can be acceptable as long as these changes are subordinate to the overall historic character of the property.



**Richmond Unified School District
at 1108 Bissell Avenue, constructed in 1942**



**Nystrom School at 230 Harbour Way South,
constructed in 1942**



**Former U.S. Maritime Commission Housing Office at
1801 Cutting Boulevard, constructed ca. 1943**



**Roosevelt Junior High School (now Gompers High
School) classroom wing constructed in 1944**

RESHAPING THE CITY (1945 TO 1969)

Far less historical documentation and analysis has been devoted to post-World War II Richmond than previous eras. Yet an overarching popular mythology has grown out of the notion that the demise of the Kaiser shipyards caused the wartime boomtown to undergo a precipitous “bust.” Underlying this version of Richmond’s community history is a belief that the thousands of WWII-era migrants who found work in the Richmond shipyards were unable to find full employment afterwards and contributed to the city’s post-war “decline.” However, a review of historical materials and press accounts show that Richmond faced the considerable challenges of the post-war years with some measure of confidence and real growth. An especially potent emblem of that era and its optimism is the Richmond Memorial Civic Center, which lies outside of the PRISM project area between Barrett and Macdonald Avenues and 25th and 27th Streets. Financed by a \$4 million bond passed by the City in 1945, the Memorial Civic Center was completed in 1949 and dedicated the following year as a monument to WWII sacrifices.

The widespread acclaim the Richmond Civic Center, as it is now known, received for its striking design by noted architects Timothy L. and Milton T. Pflueger, as well as Richmond’s innovative assemblage of public services, attests to a community that saw its fortunes growing. Multiple records confirm that post-war Richmond was a thriving community. Indications of civic growth included housing starts; arrival of new industries and the continuation of old industries; increased enrollment in schools; and upgrading of infrastructure. Richmond proudly claimed the title as an “All American City” in 1952. The same decade, however, saw the city’s population contract by more than twenty-five percent as jobs and residents moved away from Richmond.¹⁷⁷ While the aftermath of the shipyard closing was obviously a significant factor in Richmond’s postwar story, many of the tougher aspects of the decades after the war were due to a combination of variables that afflicted many urban centers across America, including public and private disinvestments in urban cores, and promotion of suburban development of housing and retail.

¹⁷⁷ Shirley Moore, p. 101.

Commercial and Civic Development

Macdonald Avenue



Macdonald Avenue in the 1950s
(Courtesy of the Collection of Lynn Maack)

Macdonald Avenue remained Richmond's thriving commercial center for a number of years after the war. By the early 1950s, the majority of the blocks between 2nd Street and the Southern Pacific Train Station at 16th Street were fully built out with a range of commercial and civic uses. A comparison of Sanborn maps from 1930 and 1951 indicate that most of these buildings pre-dated WWII, with some continued and some new uses.¹⁷⁸ Scattered stores, offices, banks, churches, meeting and dance halls and hotels appear in the blocks between Macdonald, Nevin and Bissell Avenues. New structures joined the old: Jack Newell, owner of Newell's Market at 23rd Street and Cutting Boulevard, opened a shop and liquor store erected in two phases at 10-12 Macdonald Avenue during 1948-49. Ten years later, a similarly modest concrete block building was erected next door to house a laundry.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ The PRISM survey data also shows remarkably little construction on Macdonald Avenue after 1940.

¹⁷⁹ DPR form for 10-12 and 20 Macdonald. Building permit records dated 1948-49 and 1956 from City of Richmond Planning Department.

Further up the street toward the crossroads of Macdonald Avenue and Tenth Street (now Harbour Way), remodeled storefronts and neon signs announced that commercial Richmond was keeping up with the times. In 1955, Milen's Jewelers added a cantilevered marquee and blade sign to the new façade of 916 Macdonald Avenue, which was constructed in 1916 and formerly housed the J.C. Penney's store.¹⁸⁰ Penney's had erected a new building at the corner of Seventh Street and Macdonald Avenue in 1950. Two years later, another national chain store, Macy's, moved into the old Albert's department store building and gave its Tenth Street façade a modernist facelift.¹⁸¹ While both the Mechanics Bank and American Trust maintained their imposing traditional buildings, Bank of America built a handsome international-style structure on Tenth Street just south of Macdonald at what is now 261 Harbour Way.¹⁸²



Macdonald Avenue at night, 1950s
(Courtesy of the Richmond Museum of History)

Many long-time Richmond residents recall their community's downtown as a vibrant hub during the 1940s and '50s, a period one historian of urban America has called "a moment of grace."¹⁸³ Sandi Genser-Maack remembered: "Every storefront had a business in it. People came downtown. Whatever you needed – it was here."¹⁸⁴ Students from Nystrom Elementary School would walk to Eagle Creamery for a soda. Stores stayed open and people strolled the sidewalks on Friday and

¹⁸⁰ DPR form for 916 Macdonald and building permit dated 1955 from City of Richmond Planning department.

¹⁸¹ Richmond *Independent*, 16 April 1950.

¹⁸² DPR form for 261 Harbour Way.

¹⁸³ Michael Johns, *Moment of Grace: The American City in the 1950s*, University of California Press, 2003.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Sandi Genser-Maack for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

Saturday nights. Kay Verrinder remembered, “People would walk down one side of Macdonald Avenue and then up the other. I remember women wore gloves with their hats.”¹⁸⁵ Four movie theaters played the latest films. The Rio Theater at 414 Macdonald Avenue screened Spanish-language films each week. The Fox Theater was at 710 Macdonald Avenue, and the UA Theater stood one block east at 823 Macdonald Avenue.¹⁸⁶

By the early 1950s, the Richmond *Independent* newspaper, now in its 50th decade, had built a new facility at 162 Tenth Street (which still stands on Harbour Way) spanning the width of the block to 11th Street.¹⁸⁷ Also standing across the street is a modest one-story building erected to house offices for the State Board of Equalization and the Sheriff’s Department.¹⁸⁸ Further down at Tenth Street and Florida Avenue, a drive-in restaurant now known as Frosty King was built in 1949. In fact, a growing number of auto-related enterprises (repair shops, gas stations, tire shops etc.) filled lots on Richmond’s primary streets, attesting to the increasing availability of cars to Americans and their impact on building and city design.¹⁸⁹

Over time, Macdonald Avenue emerged as a crucible for the new Richmond, whose demographics had shifted dramatically during and after WWII. Jack Hughes remembered “a point just at the close of the war where I saw a café on Macdonald Avenue with a sign that said ‘Whites Only’.”¹⁹⁰ If new, overt signs of discrimination appeared on Macdonald Avenue, it was also the place where inter-racial/inter-ethnic transactions and relationships occurred. Robert Ellison, whose parents had been among pre-WWII pioneer African Americans, recalled the “joy of going into those shops and buying stuff and being treated with this great respect” after the war. However, Ellison also remembered that Macy’s would only hire him as a stock clerk because African Americans “were not allowed on the [sales] floor, ever.”¹⁹¹

By the late 1950s, cracks in some of the most solid racial barriers were beginning to appear. The once strictly segregated New Hotel Carquinez was home to a daily rhythm and blues show on KTIM radio hosted by Ollie Freeman. Greg Cook recalled that as a white junior high student, he was “enamored with the music and with his personality and so I would go up there and answer the

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Kay Verrinder for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

¹⁸⁶ “Richmond’s Grand Old Movie Hall Has Long History, Many Memories,” *West County Times*, 26 May 1985. *Richmond City Directory*, San Francisco, R.L. Polk, 1956, p. 833-834.

¹⁸⁷ Sanborn map, 1951.

¹⁸⁸ Richmond Chamber of Commerce, “Pictures Tell A Story – What’s Happening in Richmond,” 1946.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Jack Hughes for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Robert Ellison for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

phones when people would call in for dedications with Ollie Freeman.”¹⁹² By then Freeman, who had run a shoeshine stand on Macdonald Avenue in the late 1930s, owned North Richmond’s popular Jazzland Records store. Jack Ball said that he and his white friends from Richmond High School couldn’t find the “race music” that intrigued them at Macy’s, but Arts Record Shop at Sixth Street and Macdonald Avenue offered special listening booths where they could hear recordings by African American musicians and comedians.

While African American music drew the interest of white youth, teen activities were primarily segregated. Many Richmond teenagers spent weekends “dragging the Main” during the 1950s and early ‘60s. Ron Nielsen recalled:

“Macdonald Ave. was a sea of kids in their cars. And at this time it wasn’t just a Toyota or something, it was a Ford that was lowered with the flame job and they were all chopped. And kids drove up and down the main, bumper to bumper, from 23rd St. to First St. They made a U-turn, came back to 23rd St., turned left and went down to a restaurant that was called Gordon’s Drive-In.”¹⁹³

According to sisters Janice Mason and Betty Ubiles, dragging the main wasn’t something African American youth participated in. “Wasn’t a lot of African Americans cruising Macdonald at the time, mainly Hispanic and white” they recalled.¹⁹⁴ In addition to cruising downtown, Mexican American boys joined sports activities offered by “Los Chicanos,” a program developed by Bob Garcia at the Boys Club at 263 South Twentieth Street. Over 200 members of the Chicano Boys Club attended a 1950 awards ceremony luncheon at the Recreation Center at Tenth Street and Virginia Avenue.¹⁹⁵

Schools

The school system serving Richmond’s diverse youth continued to suffer from the same overcrowding that plagued it during wartime. Enrollment numbers from kindergarten through high school continued to climb in the post-war years.¹⁹⁶ Elementary schools serving south and central Richmond were among those suffering from the most serious overcrowding.¹⁹⁷ Greg Cook, raised in

¹⁹² Audiotaped interview with Greg Cook by Richard Gonzales shared with the author, 2008.

¹⁹³ Interview with Ron Nielson for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Janice Mason and Betty Ubiles for Memories of Macdonald project, August 2006.

¹⁹⁵ “Chicano All-Stars, Boys Luncheon” from the collection of the Richmond Museum of History.

¹⁹⁶ “Your Schools... A Business Enterprise,” Richmond Unified School District, 1949.

¹⁹⁷ William Odell, James Macconnell, and Keith Goldhammer, “A Survey of School Facilities Evaluated for a Planned Community Re-Development, 1955,” Stanford University.

south Richmond defense housing remembered the strengths of his educational experience, despite the over capacity classrooms:

“When I was at Nystrom, the classes were horribly overcrowded—forty or fifty kids. But I had a private [music] lesson one day a week and band lessons 3 days a week and the school district loaned me an instrument for years. It was a golden day even though we didn’t have any money. That’s the community I grew up with.”¹⁹⁸

Richmond Unified School District undertook a major building and remodeling campaign in the 1940s and ‘50s to address the needs of its growing student body. By 1955, the district issued a report stating that they were just then seeing “the possibility of catching up” with the school housing needs created by the wartime population explosion. The original 1908 Nystrom School had been completely replaced during WWII. Twelve bungalows and a kindergarten building were added in 1949. A multi-purpose structure was erected in 1953.¹⁹⁹ Despite its expanded capacity, the district acknowledged “as of March 31, 1955, approximately 435 youngsters were on half-day sessions in this school.” In some cases, brand new schools were added to address this need for classroom space. In the PRISM project area, the district acquired a full block between Virginia and Maine Avenues, South 20th and South 21st Streets, in 1951-52. By 1954, Coronado School opened there with twelve classrooms, two kindergartens, a multi-purpose room and offices. Photos from 1955 show that the new playground was surrounded by soon-to-be-demolished U.S. Maritime Commission defense apartments. Additional land was purchased in 1958 and, over the next ten years, nine permanent and ten portable classrooms were added to the Coronado school facility.

Several of Richmond’s older school structures gradually made way for new facilities. The old Lincoln School on Tenth Street was demolished for noncompliance with state safety regulations and relocated to a new facility at Sixth Street and Chanslor Avenue in 1948. Demand for classroom space led the district to maintain the historic Peres School until 1956, despite its noncompliance with state earthquake regulations. Over time, portions of Harbor Gate School, built to serve children of defense workers around Harbor Gate Homes, were moved to supplement the older building and help accommodate continued overcrowding.²⁰⁰ According to records of the West Contra Costa Unified School District, “with the ending of the war and the closing of the war time emergency housing in the old Harbor Gate housing development, the district decided to relocate this school to

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Greg Cook.

¹⁹⁹ DPR Form for Nystrom Elementary School in “Architectural Evaluations for the Charter Schools Construction and Modernization and the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Community center and Park Renovation Project,” June 2008.

²⁰⁰ Helen Pence, “Whatever Became Of...Harbor Gate and Seaport Schools?” *The Mirror* (Richmond: Richmond Museum of History) Fall 1996, p. 8.

the Peres site.”²⁰¹ Even with classrooms added in 1948 and a new library and multi-purpose room built in 1955, the demolition of the old Peres School meant that the school remained overcrowded. Not until ten modular buildings were installed in 1966 did Peres resume a standard school day for the first time since the war years. Although recent site maps from the West Contra Costa Unified School District describe the southern end of Peres’ campus as newly constructed between 1953 and 1955, Donald Hardison, whose architecture firm undertook this renovation and expansion project, confirmed that the L-shaped structure at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fifth Street was moved from the school at Harbor Gate homes.²⁰²

None of Richmond’s high schools and only one of its five post-war junior high schools was located in the PRISM project area. Roosevelt Junior High (now Gompers High School) still stands at Ninth Street and Bissell Avenue. Although the district described the site as inadequate and classrooms overcrowded in 1955, it assessed the buildings, which dated from 1924 and 1944, as “fairly functional and in good repair.” Two portable classrooms, a shower and locker room were added in 1951-54.²⁰³

Redevelopment

In 1959, newcomers to Richmond found a “busy, bustling downtown” as former Mayor Irma Anderson recalled of her arrival to the city. Yet the Richmond Redevelopment Agency was developing plans for major changes to the downtown and south Richmond.²⁰⁴ That same year, a report on Downtown Richmond Development listed “modernization” of the area as its overarching goal.²⁰⁵ A land utilization and marketing study commissioned by the Agency a few years later characterized Macdonald Avenue and the central business district in very different terms than residents like Irma Anderson, calling it “physically unattractive” and “the picture of obsolescence.” The study points to the surrounding Iron Triangle neighborhood as one of the oldest and poorest in the city, with African Americans representing over one-third of its population. Because federal policies under the National Housing Act of 1949 assigned penalty points to older neighborhoods with non-white population, these statements supported arguments that the area suffered from “urban blight” and needed redevelopment. Although the same study described, “relatively slow turnover” of

²⁰¹ Standing files in the office of Vince Kilmartin, Facilities Director for the West Contra Costa Unified School District. Helen Pence, “Whatever Became Of...Harbor Gate and Seaport Schools?” *The Mirror* (Richmond: Richmond Museum of History) Fall 1996, p. 8. Pence dates this transfer of buildings to 1957.

²⁰² Site tour with Donald Hardison, December 2003.

²⁰³ “A Survey of School Facilities...”

²⁰⁴ Telephone interview with Irma Anderson, 25 June 2008.

²⁰⁵ Harold F. Wise et al, Downtown Richmond Development, 1959.

downtown merchants and overall satisfaction with their location, it recommended a new vision for Richmond's Main Street.

“Downtown Richmond lacks the bright cheerful air of the new, modern shopping centers with which it competes. The lack of good accessibility and adequately located off-street parking facilities have combined to create an undesirable situation. Through redevelopment, these physical deficiencies can be remedied.”²⁰⁶

From 1954 to 1962, the Redevelopment Agency operated out of the upper level of the historic Carnegie Library at Fourth Street and Nevin Avenue.²⁰⁷ The Agency's greatest effect on downtown Richmond did not reach fruition until after the PRISM study period, but major infrastructure projects developed in tandem with Agency goals, such as the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (1956) and Eastshore Freeway (1958), changed Richmond dramatically.²⁰⁸ The other major physical change to Richmond in these years was the demolition of wartime defense housing and the development of replacement residential stock.

Defense Housing and Post-war Struggles for Shelter

The majority of WWII migrants chose to stay in California, despite expectations of Richmond officials and old-timers that most new residents would return to their home states once peace was established. Although officials projected that only half of Richmond's wartime population would remain in the city, the 1950 U.S. census indicated that Richmond's post-war population decline was comparatively small, and the town still counted over 99,000 residents.²⁰⁹ Richmond's defense housing projects continued to provide critical shelter for former shipyard workers—as well as newly returned war veterans who had priority for public housing. Henry J. Kaiser himself chose to pursue post-war homebuilding in the suburbs of Los Angeles, with mass-produced units marketed to white veterans and their families, rather than Richmond multi-ethnic population.²¹⁰ During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Richmond's wartime housing became its own battlefield as residents fought with the Richmond Housing Authority and City officials to keep their housing in place.

²⁰⁶ Roy Wenzlick & Co., “Land Utilization and Marketability Study CBD Redevelopment Project – Calif. R-56 Richmond, California: Prepared for the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Richmond, California,” ca. 1963.

²⁰⁷ A photograph owned by the Richmond Museum of History shows “Redevelopment Agency emblazoned over the main entry to the library and cites these dates for its tenure in the building.

²⁰⁸ This study has highlighted the need for further research into the history of the Redevelopment Agency, including its efforts to revive downtown in the 1970s and '80s.

²⁰⁹ Moore, p. 101.

²¹⁰ Henry J. Kaiser Collection, Carton 160, file “Kaiser Community Homes,” Bancroft Library.



**Richmond Housing Authority flyer regarding the perceived social threat of retaining defense housing in the post-war period.
(Courtesy of the Richmond Museum of History)**

How the Richmond Housing Authority (RHA) would allocate scarce housing while proceeding with their stated intention to demolish thousands of dwelling units was a predictably contentious process. Local papers reported controversy as early as July 1945 when word spread that the War Relocation Authority planned to send Japanese Americans returning from forced relocation and imprisonment to live in 1,000 Richmond housing units. Richmond Mayor, Clarence Erickson, supported protests by the local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. RHA director, Charles Strothhoff, went on record that no room was available for returning Japanese Americans because thousands of Richmond units had been recently made available to former workers from defense plants at Mare Island and Hunters Point.²¹¹

Apparently in response to this resistance, the initial handful of Japanese Americans to move to Richmond was limited to families that included military veterans.²¹² Although early notices claimed that 1,000 housing units were to be reserved for returning Japanese Americans, a 1957 study stated that in June of 1946, only 205 family units were occupied by residents described as “other,” a

²¹¹ “Vets Protest Moving Japs Here: VFW Asks City Council to Balk Plans of WRA.” *Richmond Independent*, 23 July 1945.

“Plan to Send Japanese to this Area Revealed by WRA.” *El Cerrito Journal*, 26 July 1945.

²¹² “10 Jap Families Move into Richmond.” *Oakland Tribune*, 9 September 1945.

category primarily made up of Japanese Americans.²¹³ Earlier in 1946, the Richmond *Independent* described plans by the RHA and San Francisco office of the Federal Public Housing Agency to reserve 2,000 units of “vacant” housing for returning vets.²¹⁴ By summer of that same year, the *Independent* reported that occupancy rates for RHA dwellings were at an all-time high of 97.2 percent, exceeding the 95 percent wartime peak.²¹⁵

The crushing need for housing to meet Richmond’s demand continued. Over half of the city’s population was still housed in “temporary” wartime structures five years after WWII ended. An even higher percentage of African Americans relied on these projects because most other housing options were still closed to them because of racial discrimination. Their economic status also declined after the close of the war. According to one historian, “In the immediate postwar period not a single Negro or other minority was found working in City hall doing clerical work and not a single Negro had received a job placement with the leading industrial employers in town.”²¹⁶

By 1950, over three-quarters of Richmond’s African American population of 13,374 relied on wartime housing.²¹⁷ The City had abandoned an earlier request to the Federal Housing Authority for funds to create over 4,000 permanent public housing units.²¹⁸ As City officials and the Redevelopment Agency sketched their vision for a post-war city, African Americans saw that the demolition of defense housing posed a direct threat to their survival. Realtor and civil rights activist, Neitha Williams, described the atmosphere: “There was nothing, absolutely nothing in private rentals or sales available to the minority groups. They had to take what the Housing Authority offered.”²¹⁹ And what the RHA offered to residents of projects slated for demolition were temporary dwellings in units designated as “reservoir” housing. Jaundell Moore’s experience of moving her family to several units in succession—for only a few months at a time—was typical.

“They’d tear out a section here and then they would move them over to another place until they get that cleaned up and then they’d tear down some more . . . I was there when they started tearing them down. They moved me to another place and then they started tearing down the Canal projects. They moved all the Canal people somewhere else when they went to tear them down. And then, that’s when I went to 28th Street and tore all them down on 28th Street, they moved them somewhere else,

²¹³ Roy Hamachi, *Postwar Housing in Richmond, California; A Case Study of Local Housing Developments in the Postwar Period*. M.A. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1957, unpaginated. Carton 6, File 3 of the Catherine Bauer Wurster papers, Bancroft Library.

²¹⁴ “Housing Units Opened to Vets.” *Richmond Independent*, 5 January 1946.

²¹⁵ “Housing Occupancy at Highest Level,” *Richmond Independent*, 22 July 1946.

²¹⁶ Hamachi.

²¹⁷ Moore, p. 97

²¹⁸ Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 223.

²¹⁹ Moore, p. 99.

and that was when I went to South 14th Street. And when they began to tear those down it was looking like a ghost town around about then. You couldn't tell what projects were up there, they tore them all down and then I went to South 43rd on Potrero, and that was the last one I went to.”²²⁰

Long-time Richmond resident, Edgar Monk, described projects such as Harbor Gate, Seaport and Canal, which were predominantly white during the war years, as transitioning to “all-black neighborhoods” by the late 1940s. Monk and his family lived in one of the barrack-type apartments erected by the USMC on South 16th Street near Ohio Avenue. He recalled that these housing projects remained primarily white neighborhoods in the post-war period, a perception confirmed by Hamachi's statement that, as of December 1952, only two African American families resided in the USMC Division 1 development of over 1,500 apartment units.²²¹ Although the need for adequate numbers of housing units was abundantly clear, city leaders nevertheless moved forward with plans to demolish the defense housing projects.

Title 1 of the 1949 Federal Housing Act allocated resources to cities to purchase, demolish and resell “slum” properties at a discount to private developers. The Richmond Redevelopment Agency, which had been formed in 1949 to oversee reuse of the shipyards and “blighted” neighborhoods, worked with developers to remove all of the temporary public housing built during the war. Canal War Apartments were the first to be forcibly vacated in 1952. In 1954, the RHA froze access to all vacant units in temporary defense housing, no longer permitting any new tenants. By 1955 RHA had only 7,520 tenants in the area, which represented a huge drop from five years earlier when the largest proportion of south Richmond's 24,000 residents lived in defense housing.²²²

By 1956, all of Richmond's temporary defense housing projects were razed to make way for Highway 580 and future development. Residents (and even representatives of some federal agencies) sought to pressure the City of Richmond and its Redevelopment Agency to construct replacement units. Yet the only organized projects actually realized created a mere 91 units of privately developed housing in the Plaza Homes Pilot Project, and 300 units of public, low-income housing at Easter Hill Village. Neither of these efforts occurred in the PRISM project area, where thousands of units of temporary defense housing were replaced by privately developed single-family homes and small apartment buildings. However, two of the three permanent housing projects erected during the war years remained in the PRISM project area: Nystrom Village and Triangle Court continued to provide 200

²²⁰ Interview with Jaundell Moore, 2005.

²²¹ Interview with Edgar Monk, 2005, p. 23. Hamachi.

²²² Hamachi.

dwelling units of affordable housing, none of which were rented to African Americans in the early 1950s.²²³

Replacement Housing, Redlining & Neighborhood Transformations

The residential landscape of large portions of the PRISM project area changed dramatically in the post-WWII period. In 1945 Richmond's Chamber of Commerce had spelled out the plan to replace "all hastily constructed war time homes" with "modest suburban type, one-family homes."²²⁴ Residential construction that replaced defense housing south of Ohio Avenue is primarily of this type, with small ranch houses, duplexes and stripped down four-unit apartment buildings filling the lots that had held apartment blocks of temporary wartime housing. Most were of wood frame construction with stucco cladding. This low-density housing did not replace the number of defense units demolished and contributed to ongoing strains for Richmond residents, particularly African Americans who faced barriers to renting and buying homes for several years.

White former shipyard workers who had secured stable jobs could take advantage of new private housing developments with mortgages insured by the federal government. African American veterans faced a different situation. Although the G.I Bill promised low interest and even zero down payment loans to all WWII veterans, African American servicemen across the United States generally met with the same barriers to home purchase as those who had not served. In Richmond, developments such as Fairmede, College Highlands, Greenridge and Valley View, located in the northeastern area of the city, were aimed at middle and upper-income residents and were understood to be off-limits to African Americans and other people of color. One of the few residential developments near Richmond that welcomed African American homebuyers was Parchester Village, a subdivision built in northwest Richmond in 1949 through an alliance of long-time developer Fred Parr and African American leaders. Advertised as an integrated neighborhood "for all Americans," the 409 houses offered for sale in 1950 did not ultimately attract white residents, but did help satisfy the pent-up demand of black workers for new homes.²²⁵

While many accounts have focused on "white flight" as a reflection of racism, there were also concrete economic forces deepening neighborhood segregation across the United States in the 1940s

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ "A Report to the Nation: Richmond Wins the Peace," Richmond Chamber of Commerce, ca. 1945 in files of Richmond History Room/Richmond Public Library.

²²⁵ Moore, p. 113-114.

and 1950s. Federal mortgage insurance policies and racially-based practices of the bank and credit industry quickened the pace of neighborhood transitions. Federal Housing Authority (FHA) mortgage insurance specifically ruled out areas of “blight,” characterized by overcrowded or aging properties, such as the Iron Triangle. FHA mortgage insurance assessed property values using race as a significant factor. Thus, homogenous areas of white (and non-Jewish) residents received the highest rating of “A” and the color green, while properties in neighborhoods where even a few African Americans resided were marked in red with a “D.” Loans to buy or improve property were not insured in “redlined” areas, and thus made it nearly impossible to obtain at the same rates and conditions as those backed by the FHA. As historian Beryl Satter remarked in her detailed account of urban housing and race in post-WWII Chicago, the “presence of a single black family was reason enough to refuse to insure mortgage or home improvement loans to an entire block.” Therefore redlining reinforced white motives with what Satter identifies as a “powerful economic incentive” to keep minorities out of their neighborhoods.²²⁶

Richmond’s post-war narrative of residential segregation and integration follows national patterns—with some notable differences. Examples of overt housing discrimination abound. In 1946, a group of 70 Richmond residents demanded the city council reject the sale of a property at 749 Sixth Street to “those other than the white race.”²²⁷ The Richmond *Independent* refused to run an ad in the early 1950s for a home sale in the College Highlands subdivision that included the phrase “ALL WELCOME.” The seller, a white teacher named Joanne Fox, worked with an East Bay organization called HOME (Housing Opportunities Made Equal) to find an Oakland realtor who would help her challenge the segregated character of her neighborhood.²²⁸ This story, recounted in Roy Hamachi’s study of post-war housing in Richmond, does not state whether Ms. Fox succeeded in her goal.

The most notorious incidence of post-WWII housing discrimination in Richmond occurred in 1952 when Wilbur Gary, a black former shipyard worker and war veteran, moved with his wife, Borece, and seven children from an apartment in Harbor Gate to a house he purchased in Rollingwood, a wartime subdivision developed for shipyard workers. The Gary’s move touched off violent racial confrontations. On March 3rd, 1952, the Gary family was greeted with a burning cross on their lawn and a rock-throwing mob. This must have been especially frightening in the context of escalating assaults on African Americans across the nation. The previous year, in a widely reported incident in a

²²⁶ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*: p. 45.

²²⁷ Moore, p. 98.

²²⁸ Hamachi.

Chicago suburb, an enraged white mob of 4,000 attacked the home of an African American veteran in Cicero, Illinois.

The Garys and their African American realtor, Neitha Williams, proceeded with their challenge to racial discrimination despite hostile assaults. A rock thrown from a passing car shattered the picture window in Williams' downtown office at 347 Sixth Street the day after the cross burning at the Garys' home. Rather than accept a buyout offer by white neighbors, the Garys relied on round-the-clock protection offered by members of the Richmond NAACP and sympathetic whites drawn from local unions, churches and the East Bay Civil Rights Congress. Weeks of protests and demands for justice buttressed Wilbur Gary's resolve to stay in his new home. "I am not afraid and I will not be forced out ... We've got to whip this thing sometime and it might as well be now," he stated. A special meeting of the Richmond City Council was held on March 20th 1952 to examine "housing segregation, unemployment and other special problems facing Richmond's Negro residents." Although the attacks on the Gary home subsided, the assaults apparently discouraged any other black families from moving into the area.²²⁹



**Broken window at Neitha Williams' Real Estate Office, 1952
(*San Francisco Call* newspaper)**

²²⁹ The Gary story is recounted on Moore, pp. 116-118 and Johnson, pp. 226-27. Jovanka Beckles recently added to their accounts in, "The Gary Family of Richmond: Fighting for Equality and Standing for Their Rights," accessed at www.jovankabeckles.org/GARYSTORY.pdf. According to Beckles, nine more black families moved into Rollingwood neighborhood without problems in the twenty years that followed the Gary incident.

While the Gary story demonstrates how difficult it was for African Americans to follow long-time white residents who moved out of the city, African-Americans and other people of color found they could purchase homes in what historian Shirley Anne Wilson Moore termed Richmond's "Black Crescent" bounded by the Eastshore highway and the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroad tracks. This was not by happenstance, but a pattern common to many urban areas in the decades after WWII. "Blockbusting" and "redlining" were the new verbs shaping neighborhoods across urban America. Some realtors fanned racial fears among white homeowners by "busting blocks" or "panic peddling," convincing whites that their neighborhood was "turning" and it was in their best interest to sell their home quickly at, or even below, market price.

A few years after Lawrence Gonzales moved into his new home at 441 South 17th Street in 1956, two large men he suspected of working for a local realtor advised him that it was in his best interest to move from his new neighborhood, where blocks of wartime apartments were being replaced by single family homes and small apartment structures. According to Gonzales' son, the men told his father "blacks are moving in, you gotta sell."²³⁰ The Gonzales' recalled that by the late 1950s the Coronado neighborhood held a handful of Mexican American families, who were presumably viewed by whites as not being as substantial a threat to property values as the African Americans who were buying homes in the area.

Edgar Monk, who moved to a single-family home on Florida Avenue in 1959, described the neighborhood as racially integrated. Monk recalled that south Richmond was selected by local realtors to "become a black neighborhood."

"They had a policy, the realtors had a policy, and they set a line at Pennsylvania Avenue. They had decided that they were going to make an all-black neighborhood. . . . A realtor told me this, so I'm not just guessing. And he said that they went in and told the white people that the black people are going to move next-door, your property values are going down, so you'd better sell now before your property values go down. Well, people sold and the neighborhood councils were organized with the purpose of trying to stabilize the community. Let the black people move in but the white people don't have to move. But it didn't work. People moved out anyway."²³¹

In cities across the nation, banks and realtors benefited a second time when they sold these "threatened" properties, which had often been purchased at reduced prices, to African Americans

²³⁰ Personal communication with Richard Gonzales, 6/11/09.

²³¹ Interview with Edgar Monk," p. 45-46.

and others who could not access prime loans and thus were forced to pay higher fees and interest rates. In 1962, 85 percent of black wealth was in white financial institutions, and blacks controlled only a tiny fraction of the nation's lending institutions. According to one source, the Bay Area had only two African American savings and loans in the post-war period.²³² The cost of these unfair real estate practices was borne by the individual homeowners and their community. Faced with onerous monthly payments, new homeowners deferred needed maintenance and sometimes took in family members and friends to help with the finances. Consequently housing became overcrowded and blocks decayed, reinforcing stereotypes about race and property values.

While these discriminatory economic practices presumably had some role in the increasing concentration of African Americans in south Richmond and the Iron Triangle, other local forces were also at work. Neitha Williams, the realtor who helped Wilbur Gary and his family purchase their home in an all-white neighborhood, led a small cadre of African Americans who worked in Richmond real estate in the 1940s and 1950s. These individuals saw their role in buying and renting or selling property to other African Americans as part of the struggle for civil rights—as well as a good source of income. Ermastine Martin began her decades-long real estate career by purchasing a home with her husband at 22nd Street and Potrero Avenue in 1948. Like the Garys, the couple found a cross on their front yard, but claimed their right to stay in what had been an all-white area.²³³ Within a few years, Martin (then named Ermastine Petgrave) had opened a real estate office in a two-story building at 112 South Seventh Street. She lived with her husband and young daughter in the second floor, while running a grocery store on the first floor and her new real estate practice.²³⁴

African Americans who wanted to enter Richmond's real estate field faced closed doors from many sellers and lenders, as well as other realtors. Vie Taylor Wims recalled that her application to join the local realtors association was rejected; instead, she and other African Americans joined the "Realtists." Wims credits Neitha Williams with teaching her "... everything about real estate. How to get listings, how to talk to people, and how to write contracts" Using their skills and tenacity, these realtors successfully placed many African Americans in Richmond houses in the 1940s and '50s. Subterfuges such as sending an African American who could pass as white to look at a home, or having the black buyer and a black appraiser visit a house for sale costumed as workmen, allowed buyer and realtor to avoid barriers to purchase that might have otherwise been erected by white

²³² Satter, p. 140. "Interview with Wims," p. 42.

²³³ "Interview with Ermastine Martin" Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, 2005, Interview No. 2, pp 36-37, Interview No. 3, p. 1.

²³⁴ "Interview with Ermastine Martin, No. 2," p. 43. The building, named the S & S Market, is apparently still standing.

homeowners.²³⁵ Vie Taylor Wims described her real estate practice as fundamentally linked to a commitment to broader housing issues, which included her long-time involvement with the East Bay Democratic Club and the political career of Byron Rumford—the first African American elected to the state assembly from Northern California and author of groundbreaking fair employment and fair housing legislation.²³⁶ The 1948 Supreme Court ruling, *Shelley v. Kraemer*, had made racial covenants unenforceable, yet FHA and private industry resisted changes.²³⁷ Rumford’s Fair Housing Act of 1963 presented a major challenge to residential segregation in California.

The same challenge was happening on a smaller scale in Richmond. Wims, Martin and a third realtor named Ruby Bims often worked together to purchase, renovate and sell properties in South Richmond and the Iron Triangle, almost exclusively to African American buyers.²³⁸ Martin recalled purchasing homes auctioned to make way for schools and new highways and then working with local house movers to relocate the properties to south Richmond. This is born out by PRISM survey findings, which indentified many buildings that appear to have been moved onto their current lot.²³⁹ The women developed connections with owners of empty lots and with lenders, including Bank of America, Golden West and Richmond’s own Mechanics Bank, who helped to facilitate their purchases and sales.²⁴⁰ According to Martin, the trio even entered into a joint venture with Los Angeles developer, Jim Woods, to create a development of pre-fabricated houses at the corner of 17th Street and Potrero Avenue. “We got [three of] those houses built, but they weren’t that lucrative, so we didn’t build the rest of the land, we split ... off the remaining parts of those lots.”²⁴¹

Wims recalled that nearly all of her sales were from white owners “moving out of the neighborhoods that were getting black.”²⁴² One 1967 map illustrating racial segregation in Richmond shows that the Iron Triangle and most of south Richmond were 55 – 60 percent “Negro.”²⁴³ Based on this map, by the 1960s Richmond’s segregation index (the relationship between the overall racial proportions of a community and the racial percentages in a given neighborhood) was strikingly high. In 1960, African Americans made up 20 percent of Richmond’s population according to the U.S. Census, a marked

²³⁵ Wims, p. 45.

²³⁶ Wims, p. 47. Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 260.

²³⁷ Satter, p. 43.

²³⁸ Interviews with Wims and Martin use alternate spellings “Bims” and “Bimms” for the third realtor, but public records for a Ruby A. Bims found on Ancestry.com appear consistent with this individual.

²³⁹ Among the most notable of these relocated buildings is the Quonset hut, a prefabricated building of common use during WWII, at 25 Harbour Way.

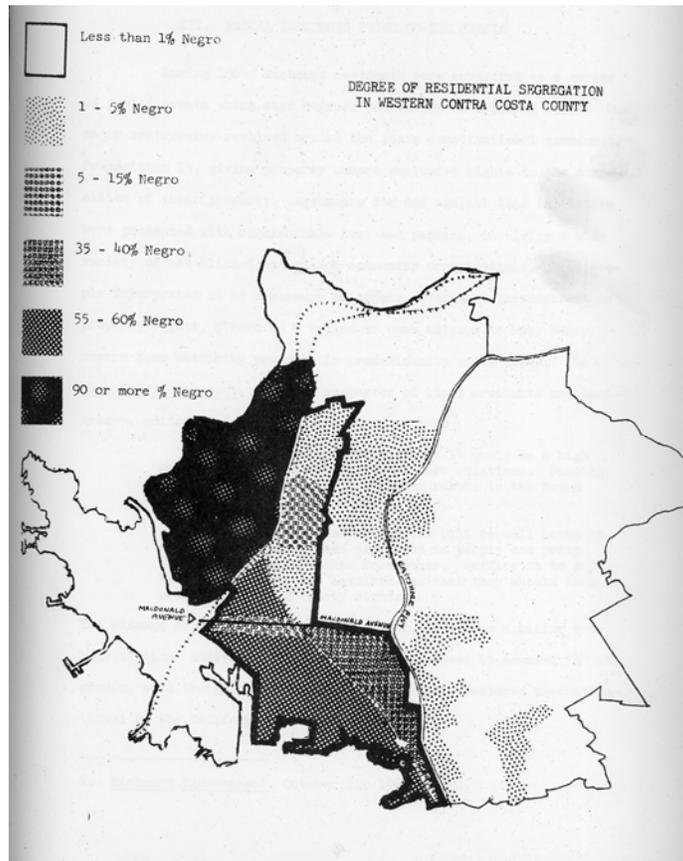
²⁴⁰ Martin interview 3, p. 29. Wims, p. 44.

²⁴¹ Martin Interview 3, p. 26.

²⁴² “Interview with Wims,” p. 20.

²⁴³ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. “Racial Isolation in the Public Schools; A Report.” 1967.

increase from the 10 percent they represented at the end of WWII.²⁴⁴ Yet the proportion of African Americans in the Iron Triangle and south Richmond were approximately three times the ratio that would have appeared in a community reflecting the racial makeup of its total residential population. This does not make Richmond unique, of course, but does reinforce the dramatic transition from primarily white to majority black neighborhoods in much of the PRISM project area.



1967 map of residential segregation in Western Contra Costa County
(U.S. Commission on Civil Rights)

Community Activism & Campaigns for Civil Rights

As African Americans became concentrated in larger numbers in south Richmond housing projects (below Ohio Avenue), they developed organizations and strategies for resisting efforts to push them out of the city. The NAACP and a growing number of interracial coalitions aggressively challenged Jim Crow practices in housing and employment using WWII and Cold War slogans to support their causes. Richmond residents organized the Richmond Council for Civic Unity in 1946 with

²⁴⁴ Moore, 101.

headquarters in the YWCA building at 1201 Nevin Avenue. Later reorganized as the Richmond Council on Intergroup Relations, the organization stated its founding premise “We prefer civic unity to disunity and setting up of race against race, religion against religion—in short, dividing the country so that the ‘strong man’ and his cohorts can step in almost unnoticed.”²⁴⁵ Ollie Freeman, who left his Macdonald Avenue shoeshine stand to fight in the segregated 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion, echoed the political overtones of this message when he recalled that “Everybody agitating for better homes and jobs knew it wouldn’t look too good for Uncle Sam if he didn’t allow people to live right. People would say ‘might as well be in Russia, no difference.’”²⁴⁶

By the late 1940s Richmond residents organized campaigns and picket lines at businesses that discriminated in hiring and service. The Lucky Store at 1528 Cutting Boulevard was targeted because it would not hire African Americans, who made up a substantial portion of its clientele. Picket lines and a boycott received strong community support and resulted in the store hiring five black clerks.²⁴⁷



Man protesting outside of Lucky's, 1949
(Courtesy of the Myers Collection, Richmond Museum of History)

²⁴⁵ Moore, p. 107

²⁴⁶ Moore, p. 104.

²⁴⁷ Polk's Richmond City Directory, 1950, p. 404. Moore, p. 105

The NAACP organized successful campaigns against the “Negro Patrons Not Wanted” signs that appeared during the post-war years on Macdonald Avenue and Cutting Boulevard. Edgar Monk recalled organizing integrated picket lines at the Bank of America and Safeway near Tenth Street and Macdonald Avenue protesting discrimination in hiring practices. Monk and his wife Clydeth, became friends with Bea and Bill Hayes, an African American couple who lived in the Canal Apartments, through the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, to which Edgar and Bea belonged. The two couples mounted a series of demonstrations at eating establishments that refused to serve black patrons, including restaurants along Macdonald Avenue.

“...They had passed the Fair Employment Practices Commission, and a part of that law was that the restaurants couldn’t discriminate because of color. But they continued to do so. So there was, I think there were other couples did the same thing but anyway, we used to go, the four of us would go in. The Hayes’ would go in first, and we’d come in about five minutes later and sit down. Well, they would sit over here and we’d sit there, and the waitress would wait on everybody—but wouldn’t wait on them. And then they would complain and we’d back them up and threaten to sue them. [Restaurant staff would say] “No, no, no, no.” And every Sunday we did that until the next thing we knew they were integrating the restaurants. Sort of bluffing them into complying with the law.”²⁴⁸

By 1961, strong black leadership and connections to local progressive organizations and the Democratic Party led to the election of George Carroll, Richmond’s first black city council member (and the second to be elected to a Bay Area city council). Carroll, an attorney who arrived in 1951, was one of a number of black professionals who established practices in post-war Richmond and participated in, or led, civil rights campaigns. Richmond’s first African American doctors, Paul T. Robinson and James Weeks, had already established practices downtown. Weeks arrived in Richmond in 1946 and was thwarted in his initial attempts to find office space: “I had an awful time getting an office. Nobody was willing to touch me. You’d think I had the plague. Finally this black chap who had a tavern on Sixth Street gave me a room or two above him. It wasn’t the most wonderful place but it was a start.”²⁴⁹

By 1959, pharmacist James McMillan had opened the Sixth Street Pharmacy at 338 Sixth Street near the offices of realtor Neitha Williams and George Carroll. A black-owned funeral home, Rose Manor, stood at 434 Nevin Avenue.²⁵⁰ One block away, Cotright Grocery Store opened at 432

²⁴⁸ Monk, p. 29.

²⁴⁹ Scott Winokur, “Richmond – From Ranch to Mostly Black Urban Community,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 April 1980.

²⁵⁰ “Interview with Savannah Bello, Charlesetta Braggs-Ford and James McMillan” 10 February 2009. *Richmond City Directory, 1962-63*. Monterey Park: R.L. Polk & Co. A probable successor business called “Stewarts Rose Manor” is now located at 3331 Macdonald Avenue.

Barrett Avenue in 1954. Macmillan described proprietor Odis Cotright as the organizer of the “unofficial black chamber of commerce.”²⁵¹ The Cotrights, McMillan, Robinson and the others all worked to elect African Americans to local positions, relying heavily on the votes of south Richmond to accomplish this goal. In addition to work with the NAACP, many of these individuals organized the Political Education Committee, which worked on relations between the African American community and the Richmond City Council and Police Department.²⁵²

According to historian Shirley Moore, one of George Carroll’s accomplishments was leading the creation of Richmond’s Commission on Human Relations, among the first municipal organizations of its kind in the United States.²⁵³ The commission fought hard against a 1964 statewide initiative, Proposition 14, designed to overturn the Rumford Fair Housing Act. The proposition, organized by the California Real Estate Association, turned California into “a battleground for a national showdown on housing legislation” in the words of Byron Rumford. In spite of well-organized opposition to Prop 14 by the Human Relations Commission, elected officials and numerous political and civic groups, Richmond voters passed the measure by 56 percent.²⁵⁴ Statewide, 65 percent of the voters endorsed the repeal of the fair housing legislation.

African American ministers also played an important role in political and civil rights campaigns in Richmond. Through his role as the secretary of the Northern California Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Booker T. Anderson was instrumental in organizing a March 1961 visit by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Anderson, who migrated to Richmond and served as pastor of Easter Hill Methodist Church, had met Dr. King while both were students of theology at Boston University. Although many black ministers were politically cautious, Anderson’s wife recalled that her husband was able to gather ministers from all the Richmond and East Bay black churches to hear King’s thoughts about the growing civil rights movement and the importance of fighting for social change. Irma Anderson recalls her husband and other ministers from Richmond churches, such as North Richmond Missionary Baptist and St. Johns Baptist Church, mobilizing their congregations to participate in local and national civil rights campaigns.²⁵⁵

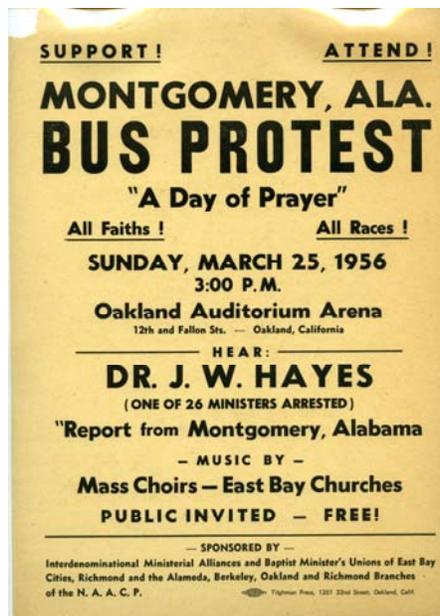
²⁵¹ The original address for Cotright Grocery is from “Willie Mae Cotright: Rosie the Riveter World War II American Home Front Oral History Project,” Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 2002, p. 31. At some point, the Cotrights moved their store to the current location at Fifth and Barrett.

²⁵² Telephone interview with James McMillan, December 2008.

²⁵³ Moore, p. 125.

²⁵⁴ Moore, p. 125.

²⁵⁵ Telephone interview with Irma Anderson, June 2008. Anderson recalls that Novalean Harris’ home and beauty shop at 401 S. Harbour Way was the frequent meeting place for NAACP gatherings.



Flyer for a rally in support of the Montgomery Bus Boycott sponsored by the Richmond branch of the NAACP (Courtesy of the African American Museum & Library, Oakland, CA)

Richmond became the scene for civil disobedience tactics borrowed from the national civil rights movement. A local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) formed in 1962 with meetings held at private homes, Mt. Carmel Baptist Church at 539 South 15th Street, and Providence Baptist Church at 312 South 12th Street. One of the local CORE leaders, Savanna Bello, recalled viewing Southern civil rights actions on television news reports and being inspired by Reverend King's example as a church leader who followed Jesus' example as a "radical." Bello and her friend, Charlesetta Braggs-Ford, established the charter and by-laws for Richmond CORE and became active in picket lines protesting employment discrimination in Richmond and other East Bay communities. "Saturday night we got dressed up to go to a picket line like other people dressed up to go out for dinner," Bello remembered. Their tactics went beyond picket lines: CORE members reinforced their displeasure with Bank of America's hiring practices by intentionally slowing down bank business. Bello and Braggs-Ford described taking a check to be cashed then asking for the money to be converted to dollar bills, then coins, infuriating bank staff and holding up the line.²⁵⁶

The most dramatic action by Richmond CORE was a sit-in at the offices of the Richmond Housing Authority at 28th Street and Maine Avenue to protest discrimination in the allocation of public housing. In July 1964, a white CORE member was given an apartment when Katie Himes, a black

²⁵⁶ Telephone interview with Savanna Bello, December 2008. "Interview with Savannah Bello, Charlesetta Braggs-Ford, and James McMillan for PRISM Project," 10 February 2009.

CORE member who had been on the RHA waitlist for three years, was denied yet again. After threatening to take the issue to the Richmond Human Relations Commission, Mrs. Himes was assigned a poorly maintained unit in far worse condition than another vacancy in an all white area. Her report of “discrimination in maintenance” to the San Francisco office of the Fair Employment Practices Commission led RHA to withdraw their offer of housing. At that point, staff from the CORE regional office and members of the U.C. Berkeley CORE chapter joined forces with the Richmond chapter to challenge the RHA. Youth from Richmond SCORE (Student CORE) conducted a door-to-door survey of RHA housing and created a map showing that the units were not only segregated, but also disproportionately white. African Americans made up one quarter of RHA residents, far less than the proportion eligible for subsidized housing.²⁵⁷



The CORE sit-in at the Richmond Housing Authority, August 21, 1964
(*San Francisco Call* newspaper archives)

On August 20th, Savannah Bello, now chairman of CORE’s Education Committee, presented the statistical information and CORE’s grievances to the RHA Board, which made a token gesture to allow additional time for their concerns on the next monthly agenda. An impromptu sit-in ensued with singing demonstrators blocking the doors to the building, which in turn led Board members to climb over the protestors while staff crawled out windows. An account of the all-night

²⁵⁷ “Interview with Bello, Braggs-Ford and McMillan.” David Friedman, with Bryson Collins
“Reconstruction at the Richmond Housing Authority,” *Campus CORE-lator*, January 1965 accessed at
<http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=kt2f59n5d7&doc.view=content&chunk.id=d0e215&toc.depth=1&brand=calisp here&anchor.id=0>

demonstration inside and outside the Authority's building by two members of campus CORE describes the reaction of local residents.

What made the sleep-in especially memorable was the unusual amount of community participation. The RHA building is located in a Negro neighborhood, and all night long hot food, blankets, and moral encouragement was brought by the neighbors, as well as a television set, on which we heard the news that our arrest was imminent. In the morning, hordes of young children arrived, joining the demonstration spontaneously and enthusiastically.²⁵⁸

A series of heated negotiations at well-attended public meetings ultimately resulted in RHA Board adopting CORE's requirements that the Authority cease its discriminatory policies and be held accountable by furnishing reports on the racial breakdown of applicants and tenancy in the following months.

Inspired in part by examples of African American organizing, Richmond's Mexican American community also became more visible with demands for social justice. During the 1940s and 1950s, Father John Garcia of the St. Mark's Catholic Church shared new perspectives on working for social change with adults and youth in his congregation. Some of these individuals helped form a Richmond chapter of the League for United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the oldest Hispanic political advocacy organization in the United States. The organization's float took an honorable mention in the citywide parade held to celebrate the newly constructed Memorial Civic Center.²⁵⁹ Later, LULAC often joined forces with the local chapter of the American GI Forum, established in 1964, which focused on securing veteran benefits, education and civil rights issues.

In 1965, the United Council of Spanish-Speaking Organizations was co-founded by Coronado residents Lawrence Gonzales and William "Bill" Espinosa to provide social services to Latino residents in Richmond and West Contra Costa County. "El Concilio," as it was known, operated out of a former apartment building on Nevin Avenue owned by the Redevelopment Agency.²⁶⁰ Richmond activists like Gonzales supported the efforts of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, collecting resources for striking farm workers and picketing local grocery and liquor stores in support of the grape and Gallo wine boycott. Many Richmond residents traveled to Sacramento to join thousands of farm workers and their supporters for an Easter Sunday rally in 1966.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Materials from exhibit "Siempre Aqui," organized by the Richmond Museum of History in 2006.

²⁶⁰ Personal communication with Richard Gonzales, June 2009. The Gonzales' remember the Concilio operating out of 1201 Nevin Avenue; this address has yet to be confirmed.

²⁶¹ Materials from "Siempre Aqui."

Tensions between civil rights advocates and upholders of the status quo—as well as increasing fury about police relations with Richmond’s residents of color—erupted in what many long-time residents viewed as the city’s death knell. On June 25th 1968, police responding to a report of a stolen car at Ninth Street and Macdonald Avenue chased the vehicle into North Richmond where they shot a fifteen-year-old African-American youth, Charles Mims, as he tried to escape pursuit.²⁶² Mims’ shooting prompted immediate confrontations with police in North Richmond and scattered vandalism in the downtown area. The *Independent* reported that “roving bands of looters” broke doors and windows and threw firebombs at multiple downtown buildings.

Macdonald Avenue businesses between Second and Fifteenth Streets bore the brunt of the rioters’ fury. Some merchants defended their property brandishing weapons; others, like Joanne King, found protection through their long-time customers. King, who had arrived in Richmond from the Netherlands after WWII, opened a women’s boutique on Macdonald Avenue in 1950. “Most stores closed up, but I stayed open,” she recalled. “The husbands of my clients kept watch over my store and we just conducted our business. They kept us going.”²⁶³ The most notable incident occurred at Travalini’s furniture store at 1501 Macdonald Avenue. The business, which had been established fifty years earlier by Riccardo Travalini, was completely destroyed by fire. The arsonist, however, was later identified as a white sailor who was attempting to destroy the company’s financial records because he owed a large sum of money to the store.²⁶⁴

City Council authorized the police chief to take all necessary actions to restore order, which included a nighttime curfew and calling in hundreds of officers from as far away as Sacramento to reinforce local police.²⁶⁵ Richmond’s disturbance of 1968 has been popularly understood as an example of the wave of African American riots that erupted across the U.S. in the late 1960s. Yet a broader lens also applies to this period. The local paper reported that police described arrests made as “about evenly divided between white and Negro juveniles and adults.”²⁶⁶ And less than one week later, the

²⁶² “Riot Rocks Richmond: Fast Police Action Curbs the Looting,” *Richmond Independent*, 26 June 1968. The previous year, the shooting death of another black youth, Denzel Dowell, by a Martinez Sheriff’s deputy had been the cover story for the first issue of the Black Panther newspaper.

²⁶³ Interview with Joanne King for Memories of Macdonald, August 2006.

²⁶⁴ Email communication (10/6/2009) with Donald Bastin of the Richmond History Museum, in reference to an interview conducted with Felton Fraser, a former reported for the *Richmond Independent*.

²⁶⁵ “Richmond Ravaged by Rioting: National Guard Placed on Alert,” *Richmond Independent*, 27 June 1968. “Armed Merchants Held Off Looters During Riot,” *West County Times*, 10 January 1988.

²⁶⁶ “The Chief Says Order is Returning,” *Richmond Independent*, 29 June 1968.

neighboring City of Berkeley was also under curfew and National Guard patrol as protestors surged through the University of California and downtown area.²⁶⁷

As a result of long-standing grievances and tensions, the dramatic events of the summer of 1968 emerged as a watershed period in Richmond's history. This period of community history deserves far more attention than it has received, or that the PRISM project can provide. Yet it is clearly one that had an immense effect on the city, in some ways an echo of the impact of WWII. And, like the oversimplified version of a post-war "bust" that followed the shipyards' closing, many residents recall the summer of 1968 as the death of downtown Richmond. However, larger political and economic forces were the major factors reshaping the heart of Richmond. One week after the Richmond riots, Contra Costa County officials received an application to rezone 112 acres for the construction of a new regional shopping center north of Richmond on land adjacent to Interstate 80. Developers were rumored to be wooing J.C. Penney's and Macy's to place branches in the new mall, which would severely affect Macdonald Avenue as a regional shopping center.²⁶⁸ Hilltop Mall opened in 1976, and became the regional destination its developers had dreamed of. Richmond native (and former City Manager), Isiah Turner, pointed to the "perception of it being dangerous to go on Macdonald and shop. Whereas, the perception of going to Hilltop was just the opposite."

Richmond's post-WWII patterns of physical, economic and social development mirrored many national trends. Yet it also shares the amplified qualities that make the WWII chapter of Richmond's history so notable. In Richmond, developments common to other cities appear in dramatically stark outline. By the late 1990s, City leaders were struggling to overcome the perceived negative legacies from these decades though efforts to recall the City's role as the premier "purple heart" city of the U.S. home front. The City of Richmond's Rosie the Riveter Memorial and Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, which it inspired, have begun to redefine the community's heritage. As part of this ongoing effort, the PRISM project is important step in reclaiming Richmond's complex history.

²⁶⁷ "New Rioting Breaks Out In Berkeley," *Richmond Independent*, 1 July 1968.

²⁶⁸ "Richmond Mall Up To County," *Richmond Independent*, 4 July 1968.

Property Types & Registration Requirements

Residential Buildings

Post-war residential development in the PRISM survey area primarily consists of small, one-story single-family homes designed in the Ranch, Minimal Traditional, or Modern “Contemporary” style. Buildings are typically rectangular, one-story in height, clad with stucco and/or vertical groove plywood, and often have low-pitched hip roofs—although gable roofs are also common. Facades are often arranged asymmetrically, and several examples include a dado of decorative brickwork at the base. Nearly all appear to have integral garages, and on the better-preserved examples, geometric wood trim is often seen on the original garage door. Some high-styled examples often feature a projecting garage bay with a slanted roof, while others include a bladed wing wall at the corner of the primary facade which is attached to a wooden trellis projecting from the roof of the garage.

Multi-family residences are less common, and typically consist of small duplexes or 4-unit apartment buildings. As with single-family homes, these buildings are most often clad with stucco and/or vertical groove plywood, although flat roofs are more common. Most feature integral garages, often located on the first story with the living space above.

The PRISM survey identified over 400 residential buildings constructed during the post-war period, with more than 75 percent constructed between 1951 and 1958 (**see map on following page**). Generally speaking, only properties that are at least 50 years old may be considered historic resources. Thus, Project PRISM did not formally examine any properties constructed after 1958. Residential buildings of this era are scattered throughout the PRISM survey area, but are overwhelmingly concentrated south of Ohio Avenue in the Coronado and Santa Fe neighborhoods, where thousands of units of wartime housing were torn down to make way for private development.

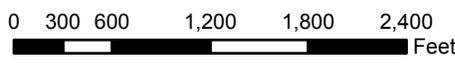
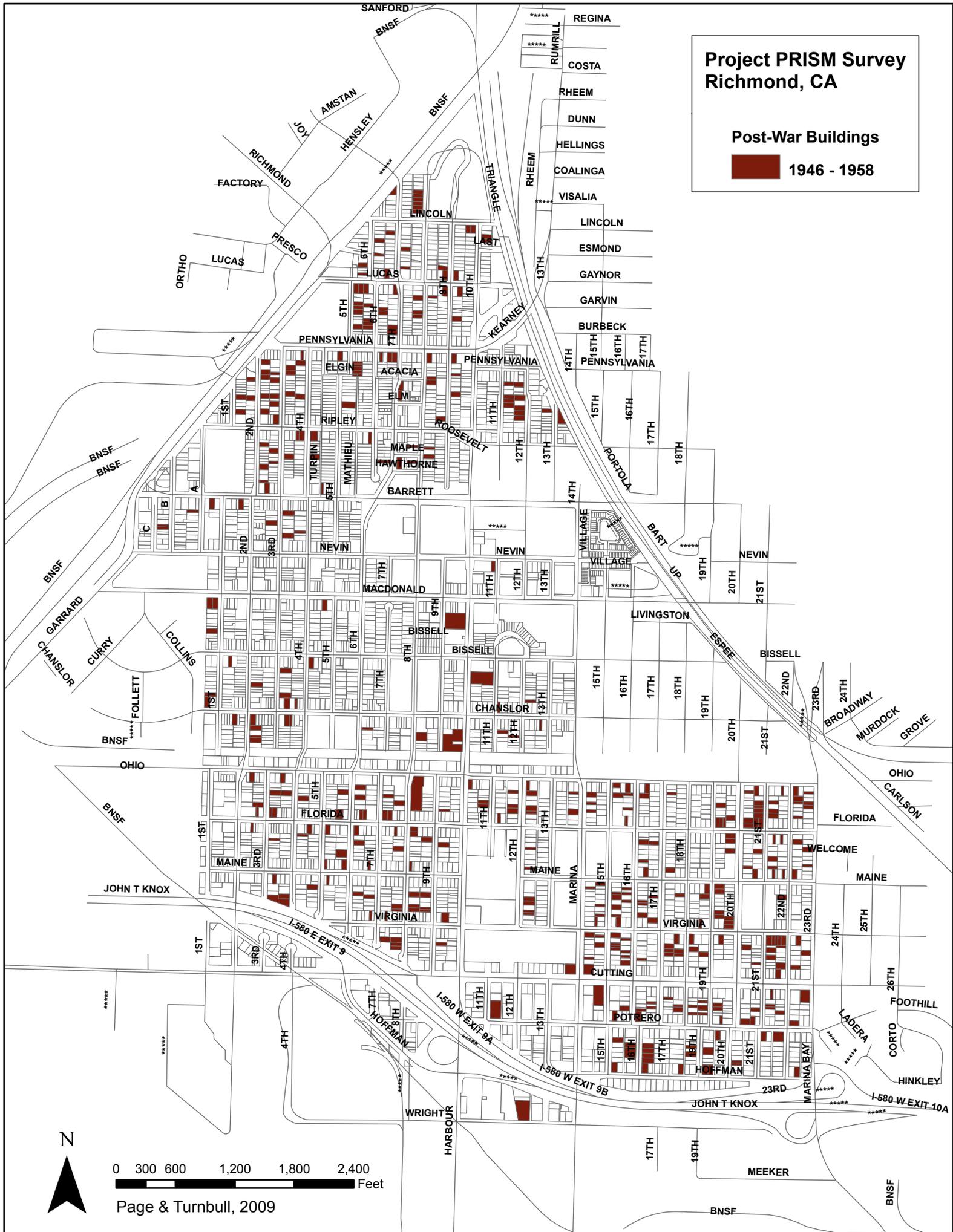
Significance

Residential properties dating to the post-war era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of residential development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate development patterns related to post-war events and population trends.

A residential property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, for instance a civic leader, prominent merchant or professional, or other important figure, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however,

**Project PRISM Survey
Richmond, CA**

Post-War Buildings
 1946 - 1958



the residence should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A residential property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Additionally, any archeological artifact dating to the post-war era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the post-war Reshaping the City theme. For residential properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For residential properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For residential properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of post-war residential architecture, it is crucial that nearly all character-defining elements are retained. As many of these buildings have only recently become more than 50 years old, a stricter evaluation of integrity is warranted.



352 South 19th Street, constructed in 1951



1817 Virginia Avenue, constructed in 1954



433 South 18th Street, constructed in 1958



740 - 744 9th Street, a duplex constructed in 1950



1901 - 1907 Hoffman Boulevard, a Pueblo Revival style duplex constructed in 1953



2112 Virginia Avenue, a duplex constructed in 1955

Commercial Buildings

Most post-war commercial properties in the PRISM survey area are found along major thoroughfares such as Cutting Boulevard, or as infill in the downtown core along MacDonald Avenue.

Architecturally, several exhibit design features that were common during the mid-20th century, such as Art Moderne or International style influences, although other examples may be more utilitarian in form. Most commercial buildings are constructed of concrete, one- to three-stories in height, clad in stucco, and nearly all have flat roofs. The ground floor commercial space usually consists of an aluminum storefront assembly, with fully-glazed double doors and plate glass windows. Reflecting the increasing post-war influence of the automobile, most of these buildings are associated with adjacent parking lots or parking structures. In total, the PRISM survey identified only eight commercial buildings constructed between 1946 and 1958 that were not previously documented.

Significance

Commercial properties from the post-war era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of commercial development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate strong patterns in the growth of commercial corridors or clusters, or a relation to patterns in residential development, like proximity to tracts or accessibility by automobile.

A commercial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, for instance a prominent merchant or professional, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the commercial should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A commercial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological artifact dating to the post-war era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the post-war Reshaping the City theme. For commercial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For commercial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For commercial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of post-war commercial architecture, it is crucial that nearly all character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. As many of these buildings have only recently become more than 50 years old, a stricter evaluation of integrity is warranted.



2220 - 2230 Cutting Boulevard, a commercial building constructed in 1947



1030 Nevin Avenue, a commercial building constructed in 1947



1430 Cutting Boulevard, commercial building constructed in 1950



Former Bank of America buildings at 261 Harbour Way, constructed in 1955

Industrial Buildings

Industrial buildings dating to the post-war era are relatively rare, but like previous eras are most often located in proximity to current and former railroad corridors, such as Ohio Avenue, or along major thoroughfares with access to Highway 580. These buildings are often small to medium in scale, typically only one- to two-stories in height, and are usually constructed of reinforced concrete, concrete blocks, or steel framing. Facades are usually arranged symmetrically, and often feature an overhead rolling door in the central or end bays. Ornamentation is usually quite restrained, and most buildings have industrial steel-sash windows and metal doors. In total, the PRISM survey identified only eight industrial buildings constructed between 1946 and 1958 (and not previously documented), but it should be noted that many industrial buildings are listed without construction dates in the records of the Contra Costa Assessor, and thus many of these dates were estimated using Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps.

Significance

Industrial properties dating to the post-war era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the themes of industrial development in Richmond, particularly if they illustrate strong patterns in the growth of industrial areas.

An industrial property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, for instance a prominent business owner or other important figure, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the industrial property should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

An industrial property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. Industrial buildings, being utilitarian in nature, are most likely to exhibit characteristic forms that would make them significant. A property might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer, though this is not likely for industrial buildings which were not typically architect designed.

Any archeological artifact dating to the post-war era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a

property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the post-war Reshaping the City theme. For industrial properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For industrial properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For industrial properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of post-war industrial architecture, it is crucial that nearly all character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. As many of these buildings have only recently become more than 50 years old, a stricter evaluation of integrity is warranted.



**Richmond Unified School District warehouse
at 810 Ohio Avenue, constructed in 1946**



**26 8th Street, an industrial building
constructed in 1953**

Civic, Social & Religious Buildings

Very few civic, social or religious buildings constructed during the post-war era (and not previously documented) appear to be extant within the PRISM survey. In fact, only one building was identified by the survey: a church at 424 Third Street. This building was assigned an estimated construction date of 1955 based on Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps and architectural features. However, without further research, this date could not be confirmed.

Significance

Civic, social and religious properties from the post-war era may be significant under Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3 for associations with the theme of community development in Richmond, particularly if they reflect strong demographic patterns or other trends based on the population groups they serve.

A civic, social or religious property known to be connected with a prominent citizen of Richmond, for instance a prominent civic, community or religious leader, might be significant under Criterion B/2/2 for association with a person important to history. If this is the case, however, the civic, social or religious building should be the best or only remaining property capable of representing that person's achievements or reasons for being significant.

A civic, social or religious property might be significant under Criterion C/3/4 if it demonstrates architectural merit in the form of noteworthy and intact stylistic features, forms or construction methods. It might also be significant under this criterion and/or City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 5 if it was designed or constructed by a prominent architect or developer.

Any archeological artifact dating to the post-war era found in Richmond may have the potential to yield information important to history and may be significant under Criterion D/4/1. Additionally, a property may be locally significant under City of Richmond Historic Structure Code 6 if it meets any of the above criteria and its loss would be a major detriment to the City.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historic register, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the post-war Reshaping the City theme. For civic, social or religious properties significant for association with a historic event, (Criterion A/1 or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 1 and/or 3), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still

important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. A property must retain essential physical features that made up its character during the period when the important event occurred.

For civic, social or religious properties significant for association with a historical figure (Criterion B/2/2), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. Less crucial but still important are the aspects of materials and workmanship. The property must retain a majority of the essential physical features that made up its character during the period it was associated with a historical figure.

For civic, social or religious properties significant for architecture (Criterion C/3, or City of Richmond Historic Structures Codes 4 or 5), the aspects of integrity deemed most important are integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. If a property is significant under this criterion as an example of post-war architecture, it is crucial that nearly all character-defining elements are retained. This includes retention of the original form and massing; retention of the original roofline; retention of the original pattern of windows and doors; and retention of key historic materials—particularly the original cladding. As many of these buildings have only recently become more than 50 years old, a stricter evaluation of integrity is warranted.

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