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Accounts

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John W. Braymer

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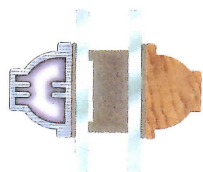
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inform

fall 1992

volume three number four

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Flight of Fancy

A new symbol of civic pride rises from the waterfront in Hampton with the completion of the combined Virginia Air and Space Center and Hampton Roads History Center. *By Aimee Cunningham*

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Opening New Doors

A delightful addition to the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond makes great strides in advancing the museum's aggressive new program of public outreach. *By Vernon Mays*

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Precursors to Greatness

This fall's exhibition of architectural drawings and models at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond is a blockbuster for architects. Inform provides a glimpse into the much-anticipated show, with condensed essays from the comprehensive book that was published to coincide with the exhibition.

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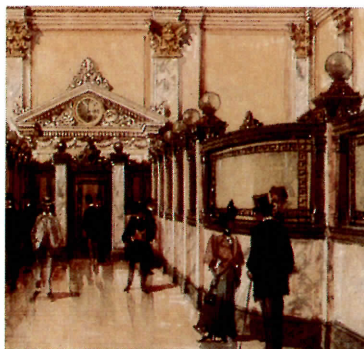
Profile

Denis Wood: gadfly of mapmaking

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Travel

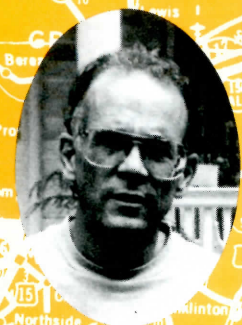
Pocahontas: the consummate company town



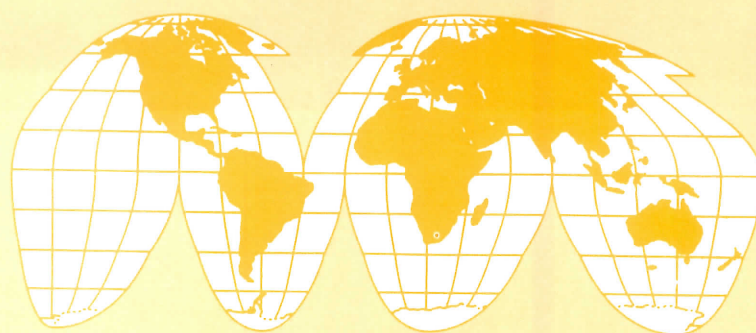
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On the cover: The Virginia Air and Space Center/Hampton Roads History Center
by Rancorn Wildman Krause Brezinski and Mitchell/Giurgola.

Photo by Jeff Goldberg/Esto.



Wood: "Whose agenda is in your glove compartment?"



Denis Wood

Escaping the Tyranny of Maps

By Chuck Twardy

Roll over, Rand McNally, and tell Mercator the news. Denis Wood has the goods on you, and he wants to spread the word. "I've come to realize the map is not a representation of the world in any way," says Wood, a professor of landscape architecture at North Carolina State University who has made the subtexts of maps his personal obsession.

Wood's assertion comes as a shock to the average Triptik flipper who considers a map an aspectless rendering of here-to-there, but it is the theme of an exhibition titled "The Power of Maps," which opened October 6 and continues through March 7 at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. Curated by Wood and Cooper-Hewitt's Lucy Fel-lowes, the exhibition crystallizes Wood's thinking over the past 20 years about maps and their hidden agendas.

"Maps embody the interests of the people who make them," observes Wood, 45, who teaches environmental psychology and landscape history. He does not come fresh to the field of cartographic iconoclasm. Early in his career, Wood delivered a lecture to a group of cartographers titled "Who Cares and Why Nobody Does About the History of Cartography?" The simple answer to that question is that cartography

has stressed issues that are peripheral to the power of maps to shape our land and our lives. Not incidentally, most map exhibitions have skirted the matter, too, preferring to concentrate on pretty artifacts. The first gallery of the Cooper-Hewitt exhibition somewhat reprises this practice. Wood calls it "The Old Map Show." From there, however, it begins to unfold Wood's argument that maps are the means by which a society's elite carves up the land, assays duties and taxes, and paints the most favorable picture of itself. "Maps embody the interests of the people who make them," he says.

Louis XIV wanted a map to tax his realm; Elbridge Gerry wanted a map delineating the most favorable political districts. Even an effort as seemingly neutral as the 37 million-pixel composite map assembled from satellite images by artist Tom Van Sant betrays a flaw. Its individual images were selected for unobstructed views at the height of summer and were tinted later; thus the map depicts a cloudless, fecund Earth untouched by human hands.

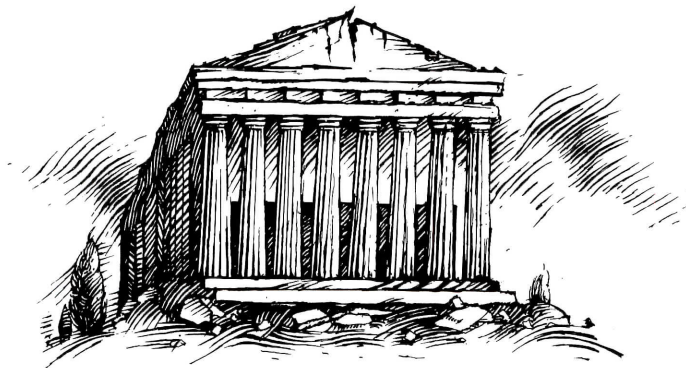
The exhibition may achieve its polemical zenith in the section headlined, "Whose agenda is in your glove compartment?" In it, Wood tackles the North Carolina Highway Map. Not surprisingly

for a road-crazed state whose avowed policy is eventually to stretch a limited-access highway within 10 miles of every resident, its highway map is a work of pride. Not surprisingly for a man who prides himself on not owning a car, Wood finds little to admire in Tar Heel cartography. He says the image derived from the highway map is of a state whose prosperity is inextricably linked with highways, an image that masks a pro-asphalt, pro-gasoline, pro-car sales agenda. He notes that the state spends far less publishing far fewer aeronautic, coastal or public transportation maps. He points out that 63,511 people died on North Carolina highways between 1945 and 1990, and displays news articles alleging poor bridge maintenance and questionable road-building deals.

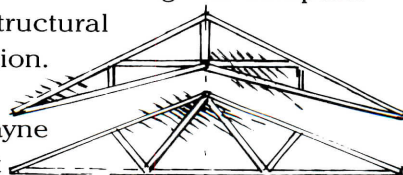
In Raleigh, Wood is known as a combative sort, having contested both the university's mammoth Centennial Campus (a moribund plan to unite research and private enterprise) and the city's plan to build a multilane road past his neighborhood. He lives in a simple, white frame house in the reclaimed trolley suburb of Boy-lan Heights with his wife, Ingrid, two sons and a neighborhood boy they have taken in for a while.

Wiry-looking with longish, gray-ing hair, Wood has an anti-establishment streak he traces to his "would-be anarchist" father, Jasper Wood. A Depression-era Paul Strand photograph, a gift from his father, and his brother's painting of a Zapatista revolutionary overlook a living room that includes a Mies van der Rohe chair and glass table. In 18 years at N.C. State, Wood has forged a reputation as something of an intellectual gadfly, writing on topics ranging from cinema to children's mud play to the living room's role in socialization. Armed with master's and doctoral degrees in geography from Clark University, Wood made the drea-

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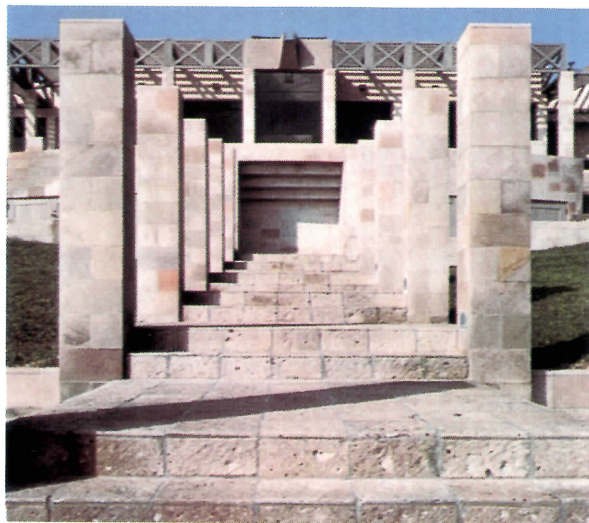
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ry survey of geography departments ("seven or eight doors in a long, linoleum corridor") before accepting an offer from N.C. State's School of Design. The move allowed him to maintain his interest in mental mapping, while expanding into other fields of inquiry. Due close on the heels of the book *Wood* compiled to complement the Cooper-Hewitt show – its chapters parallel the exhibition but it is not, strictly speaking, a catalog – is a tome Wood wrote with psychologist Robert Beck, *Home Rule: Culture, Environment and the American Family*. The book, being published by Johns Hopkins University Press, examines how the living room enforces socialization, using the Wood living room as its laboratory.

Wood says the exhibition and *Home Rule* relate "only insofar as what they are really concerned about is the reproduction of culture." But one can argue that a map doesn't reproduce culture so much as represent it. Don't laws and policies – rather than maps – set tax, voting and school districts? Not quite. "The map doesn't just observe the world, but in a way creates it," says Wood, recalling that the earliest maps set property lines. As Wood sees it, the ability to draw those lines conferred upon the drafters the power to divide property. Once drawn, maps are difficult to contest. Wood relates the case of a Raleigh family prevented by the zoning inspector from selling produce from their yard. "Instead of correcting the map," says Wood, "he corrects the behavior of the people."

Eventually Wood hopes not only to open people's eyes to this power, but to encourage them to seize it. Thus the exhibition includes a room encouraging people to draw their own maps, showing examples such as conservationists' maps and a map tracing children's injuries. The exhibition is complemented by lectures and special events, such as a discussion about mapping the AIDS epidemic. The cumulative effect, Wood hopes, will be to disabuse visitors of cartography's pretense to objectivity. "The power of that pretense is what allows the map to do what it does."

Chuck Twardy is the art and architecture critic of The News and Observer in Raleigh.

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FLIGHT OF FANCY

Since English settlers arrived in 1610, the City of Hampton has been plundered three times: First in the War of 1812, again during the War Between the States, and last in the suburban-focused 1960s, when city planners sought to sanitize downtown by leveling old buildings. But instead of wallowing in its ashes, this city of 135,000 has reclaimed a rich heritage of seafaring and aerospace accomplishments. Its urban waterfront soared to new heights in April with the opening of the Virginia Air & Space Center and Hampton Roads History Center.

Like a gull, the museum's graceful wingspan seems to glide above glass walls. Giant banana-shaped trusses support an aluminum roof that beckons the clouds. The higher wing, nine stories at its apex, greets oncoming motorists as they coast into downtown. The lower wing gestures toward the sea. Hampton's marketing theme, "From the Sea to the Stars," inspired the arched roof and the center's exhibits, says architect Steven M. Goldberg of Mitchell/Giurgola Architects in New York, lead designers of the project. Walter Wildman headed the local architectural team at Rancorn Wildman Krause Brezinski in Newport News, the architects of record for a cultural complex that includes the museum, a 460-car parking garage, public plaza and carousel pavilion that houses the old merry-go-round from Buckroe Beach.

In designing the Air & Space Center, Goldberg was careful to maintain the salty character of "Crab Town," as locals refer to their city. "What's around the building is as important as the building itself," he says. That includes historic St. John's Church, a brick Georgian structure built in 1728 as the fourth site of the Elizabeth City Parish. Hampton also is home to the NASA-Langley Research Center, the country's first air and space

laboratory, which was persuaded by Mayor James L. Eason to move its popular visitors center downtown. A massive fund drive tapped public and private sources for the \$29.7 million needed to build the waterfront complex. Its centerpiece is the awe-inspiring, \$18-million museum that drew more than 140,000 visitors between April and August and boosted Hampton's tourism appeal way beyond the city's projections.

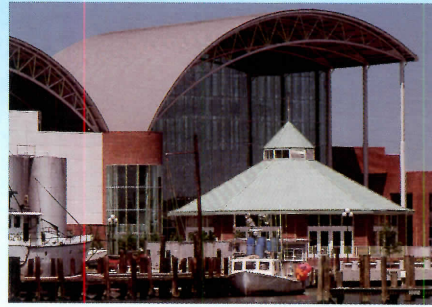
Exhibits focusing on air and space technology, including the Apollo 12 Command Module, occupy the first and second floors of the museum's main "hangar." Great walls of windows on the east and west sides, plus clerestories on the north, allow natural light to bathe the planes. The exposed superstruc-

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Photos: © Jeff Goldberg/Esto

The Virginia Air & Space Center greets approaching visitors with its striking gull-wing profile (above). Its monumental presence is softened by a brick arcade that hugs the street and shelters visitors from the elements. Inside, catwalks pierce the hangarlike space among the suspended aircraft (facing page).



A bit of Hampton Roads nostalgia survives in the carousel pavilion on the brick plaza (above). Along the waterfront, the center's white-paneled façade (below) fits comfortably among the flot-sam of the local fishing industry.

ture inside the building reinforces the themes of the display. Colored lights add drama to dark exhibition areas and, at night, the vaulted trusses are lit from below. Under the smaller wing on the first floor are an IMAX theater, Naval aviation exhibit and the Hampton Roads History Center, highlighting the city's origins and watermen's industry. On the second floor are changing exhibits and an Air Force showcase.

But there are many levels to explore. Reminiscent of Florida's Cape Canaveral launch pad, a glass elevator rises three stories to a sturdy steel gantry. Both give visitors a bird's-eye view of aircraft suspended from the ceiling's trusses. Planes weigh-

ing as much as 27,000 pounds hang close enough to see inside the cockpits. Across the gantry, a steel staircase descends purposefully to a participatory exhibit on rocket launching. Stair landings along the way offer places to pause for new perspectives on the multitude of aircraft.

Although it relies on Space Age appeal, the building is well-grounded in Virginia tradition with its liberal use of "the stone of Tidewater," Wildman's description of brick. Goldberg concedes it was tricky to incorporate brick, counter to his first impulse to make the center look high-tech. But the compromise succeeded; now the center courts the city's quaint character, particularly its delicately-scaled historic sections.

On the north side, facing the city, a brick arcade makes a gentle transition between the pedestrian-scaled sidewalk and towering building. Its covered walkway allows for long queues and protects crowds from the elements while leading them to the entrance. On the center's south side, utilitarian fishing industry buildings suggested a more industrial-looking exterior, which is achieved through the use of painted aluminum panels.

Rather than blocking out the harbor's industrial element, the architects invited people to study it. A final treat on the museum's third level brings visitors down from the clouds and fills their lungs with *fresh salt air*. Through glass doors they can follow a walkway across the roof to a steel stairway and concrete deck overlooking the Hampton River. Directly below lies the waterfront, at work before dawn, beyond which fishing boats bob along with sleek schooners bound for the Chesapeake Bay. "The deck," Goldberg says, "allows people to get out of the museum to see where it all started."

Aimee Cunningham



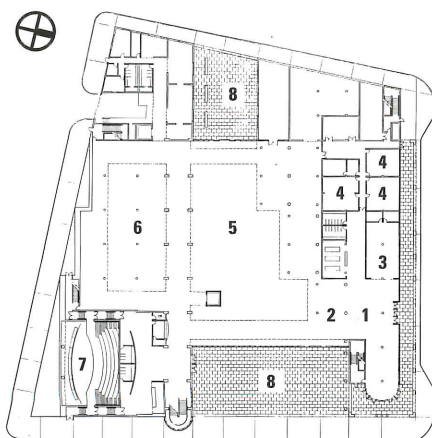


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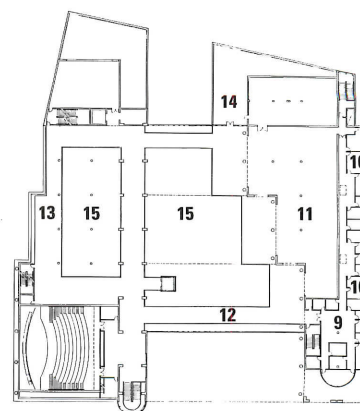
The second-floor mezzanine, which passes alongside vertical trusses supporting the center's expansive wall of glass, allows close-up views of the aircraft and a panorama of the Hampton waterfront.

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- 13 Space Exhibits
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- 15 Open to Below

25 50 100



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



OPENING NEW DOORS



Glave Newman Anderson Architects
designs a delightful addition to the
Virginia Historical Society in Richmond
that advances the museum's aggressive
new program of public outreach.

Phil Jefferson

Few would dispute the claim that the old Virginia Historical Society stood aloof on its perch overlooking Richmond's shady Boulevard. Its windowless neoclassical façade, carved from thick limestone, was fortresslike and forbidding. Even the name of the institution implied none too subtly that entry was granted only to a select circle of initiates.

But, under new leadership in the late 1980s, the society's board of directors decided all that had to change. "They wanted to change the image from that of a private men's club to a public institution," says architect James Glave, of Glave Newman Anderson Architects in Richmond. Design on an addition to the building was still in midstream when the board decided to landscape the grounds and add a parking lot out front so that comings and goings would have a higher profile and convey the message that visitors are welcome.

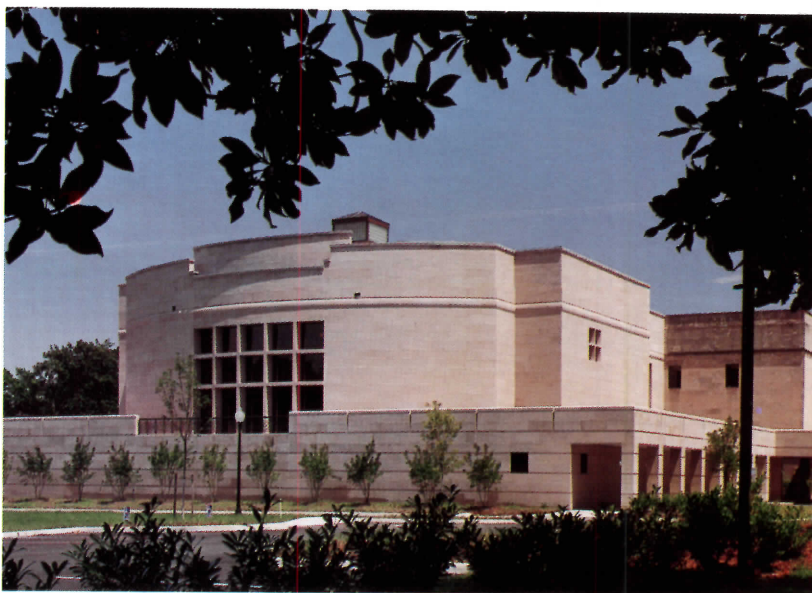
The first design schemes focused on creating a new library, because the society traditionally had emphasized its role as a collection institution. But, with the arrival of director Charles Bryan in 1988, the society's potential as a public museum began to get equal billing, so the need for exhibition space became another key element in the planning. "Until Bryan came, they had never really thought that their collection was anything the public would want to see," Glave says.

Strange that, considering that the society holds the largest collection of portraits in the Southeast and perhaps the most distinguished collection of Confederate firearms in existence. In addition, a small but significant collection of Virginia furniture and a host of other artifacts related to the Commonwealth's history had accumulated over the society's 160-year history, says associate director Robert F. Strohm.

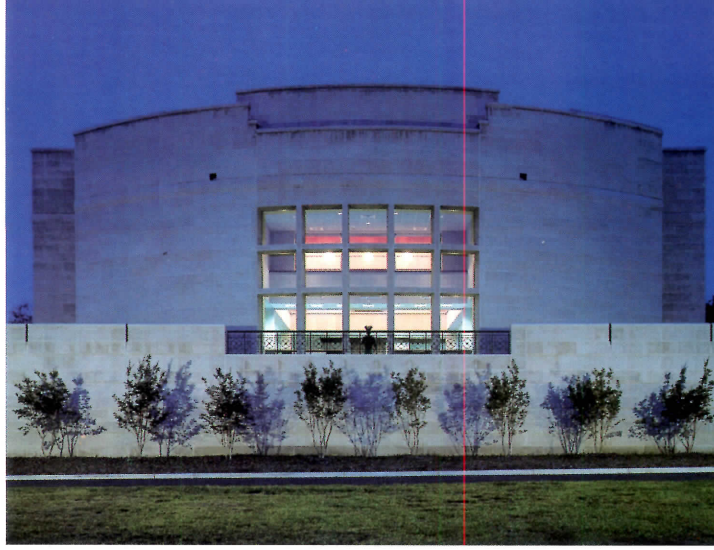
In planning the addition, which doubled the size of the facility to 90,000 square feet, Glave felt that the strong organization of the existing building along a central axis should be continued through to the new section. Now visitors who come for

research purposes enter through double doors at the front of the building and pass through its heart to arrive at the far end in a spacious reading room, richly appointed and monumental in the tradition of old libraries. Here, where the society's 125,000-volume collection is made available to the public, daylight flows from a large glassed opening in the ceiling, while an expanse of lawn and rows of magnolias seen beyond the large rear window serve as a soothing distraction to the amateur and professional scholars who frequent the room. Second-floor galleries in the wings house the rare book stacks and rare book reading room, an elegant setting for study of the most prized volumes.

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The new addition to the Virginia Historical Society (above) is a stately complement to the neoclassical original. Rich mahogany paneling and a soaring skylight make for a memorable reading room (facing page).



The addition's boldest form is the block that houses the main reading room, which sits atop a pedestal containing the library stacks (above). A second-floor gallery affords glimpses of busts exhibited in the new lecture hall lobby (below).

John C.

W. B. Harrison

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Exhibition space in the building was greatly increased both by converting the former reading room into a gallery and by filling the voids in the old H-shaped floor plan with additional galleries. Those changes also improved the flow from room to room, which enhances the viewing of exhibits and their sequencing. An octagonal gallery reserved for portraits of Virginia-born Presidents occupies space that was formerly relegated to map storage. Renovation of the front lobby included painting the walls

a warm gray, which shows off the marble detailing and medallions commemorating the Confederate states, remnants of the 80-year-old building's original purpose as a memorial to Confederate soldiers. The historical society moved there in 1959.

With the dedication of the building in June, the society dubbed its headquarters the Center for Virginia History. To encourage broader use of the facility, a new entry beneath a portecochere on the building's south side was added to allow easy access

to the new 300-seat lecture hall during special events. The lecture hall and secondary entrance form a division between the museum's exhibition space and library, allowing one part of the building to be secured while after hours special events take place in another.

Outside, the architects made the addition fit comfortably with the preexisting building by using a matching limestone and maintaining a similar height and cornice line. Technical advances in blocking ultraviolet rays allowed the liberal use of glass in the addition without threatening the collection, Strohm says. "The center is no longer a forbidding building, an austere and aloof kind of mausoleum for old Confederate veterans," he adds. "The message we convey now is that this is not just a place for serious researchers. Overcoming that fortress mentality of the building was a great feat, and I think it was achieved wonderfully without compromising the integrity of the original building."

Vernon Mays



Lyons

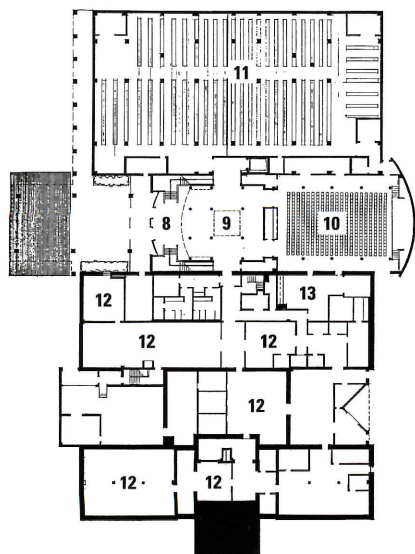


Photos: Maxwell Mackenzie

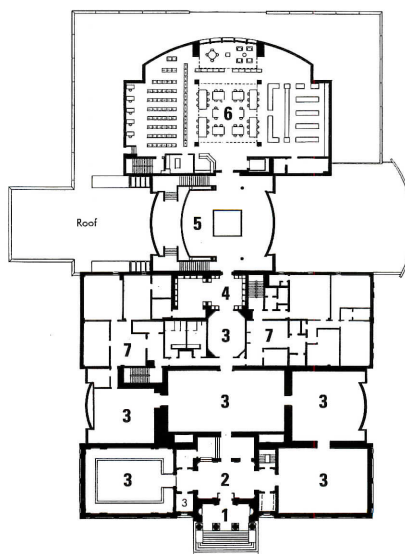
Renovations in the front lobby, part of the original building, included a new reception/information desk and repainting to highlight the memorial medallions from each of the Confederate states.

- 1 Main Entry
- 2 Lobby
- 3 Gallery
- 4 Gift Shop
- 5 Stair/Lobby
- 6 Reading Room
- 7 Offices
- 8 Side Entry
- 9 Lower Lobby
- 10 Lecture Room
- 11 Stacks
- 12 Museum Storage
- 13 Kitchen

25 50 100



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

Precursors TO GREATNESS

The rich legacy
of Virginia architecture
gets its due in a
comprehensive exhibition
of architectural
drawings and models
at the Virginia Museum
of Fine Arts.

20 One can argue with confidence that, while Virginia has made many contributions to the arts, none has been so great as through the medium of architecture. Calder Loth, senior architectural historian at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, says as much in his preface to *The Making of Virginia Architecture*, the 472-page volume published to coincide with the wide-ranging exhibition by the same name scheduled November 10 to January 3 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. "Our stately colonial mansions and the works of Thomas Jefferson are world renowned," writes Loth. "In fact, the making of Virginia's architecture is one of many accounts in the building of an American tradition."

The richness of the Commonwealth's collection of buildings, however, comes not only from the handful of monuments that illustrate history books. Each twist and turn of the state's social and economic fate somehow reveals itself in the buildings we build. Tales of fortune, ambition, arrogance, and pride are represented in brick and stone all across the state. Sometimes the stories never evolve beyond representations on paper: a detailed rendering that fails to lure investors or a primitive sketch that simply records an idea.

In overview, the designs that are being exhibited at the museum comprise a timeline of construction in the state, beginning with a presentation sketch, dated 1719, for Swan Tavern in Yorktown and continuing through the evolution of popular styles and movements until the present day. There is no shortage of architectural celebrities, either, including the work (some built, some

not) of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Robert Mills, Alexander Jackson Davis, Richard Morris Hunt, McKim Mead & White, Ralph Adams Cram, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gordon Bunshaft, Louis I. Kahn, and Robert Venturi.

More than 100 works – from economical houses to civic monuments – are included in the museum's investigation, enough to whet the appetite for the more detailed treatment in the companion book. Amply footnoted and filled with references for further reading, the book serves as a good starting point for the novice or scholar to begin a personal journey into the creation of many

– but certainly not all – of the significant buildings in the state. One drawback of any survey is the necessity of making choices, and difficult deletions most certainly were made by the four historians who curated the museum exhibit and wrote the book's major essays. But the team of Charles E.

Brownell, Calder Loth, William M.S. Rasmussen and Richard Guy Wilson have done an admirable job of cutting a cross-section through the trends and traditions of Virginia building. Their efforts at representing a complex and varied history is a long-overdue examination of the wealth of accomplishment that traverses the state. A taste of their findings is briefly sampled here.

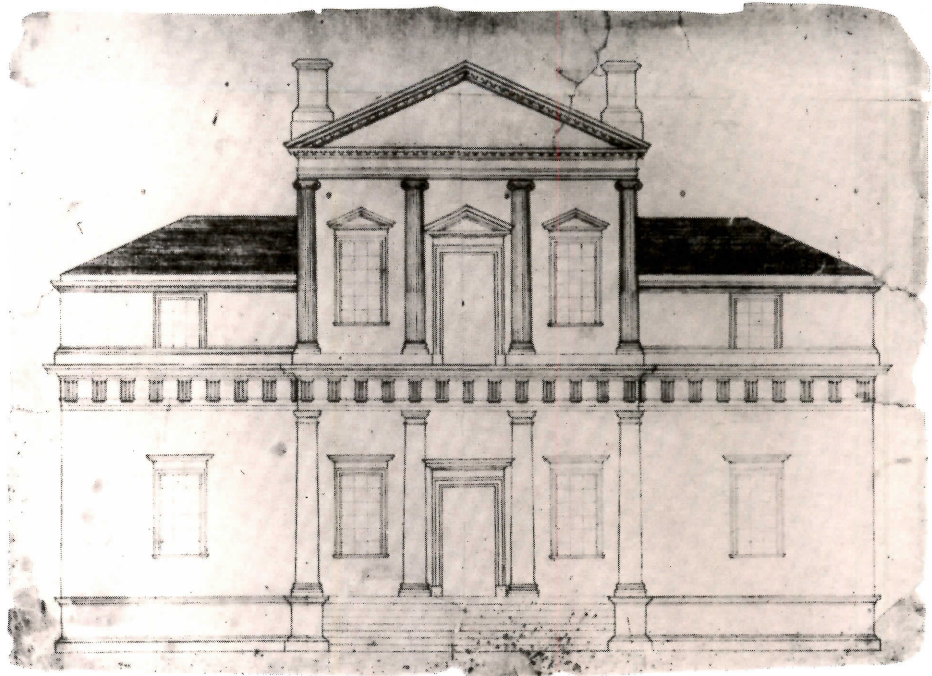
Inform wishes to thank the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for its kind permission to reprint these images and publish condensed passages from *The Making of Virginia Architecture*, available from the museum or through the University Press of Virginia (804-924-3469).



Monticello, First House

Albemarle County

The image of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello that graces the back of the U.S. nickel is recognized worldwide as a work of art. Less known, perhaps, is the fact that Jefferson struggled for years to achieve his masterpiece in the foothills of the Blue Ridge, beginning with this study (right) done in the early 1770s. It closely approximates the form of the first house he built on the hilltop near Charlottesville, an assemblage of boxes with openings cut through the sides. In adopting a two-level porch, writes historian Charles E. Brownell, Jefferson chose to divide the façade into pronounced layers, a compositional technique he used until the end of his life for parts of the academic complex at the University of Virginia. But at the Virginia State Capitol, parts of the University, and the second house at Monticello, he adopted the alternative of unifying two stories with a single architectural order. Much of the development of 19th century Western architecture centered on the rivalry between the façade composed of emphatic tiers and the façade with stories subordinated to a monumental pattern, says Brownell. Robert Mills was Jefferson's draftsman for the elevation of the more familiar Monticello II (facing page), a meta-



Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society (also facing page)

morphosis toward Jefferson's preference for the light and airy. The second house's garden façade employs two elements that were Jefferson trademarks. First, the placing of a bay, especially a polygonal bay, inside a temple portico is a Jefferson signature – a device that he may have invented when he applied it

to Monticello I. The second element, far more widely imitated, was the application of a dome framed on the light and inexpensive Delorme system of laminated plank ribs. After discovering this technique in Paris, he spent 40 years – down to the University of Virginia Rotunda – establishing its use in America.



Collection of Grady P. Gregory, Jr.

Project for First National Bank

Lynchburg

Early in this century, Edward G. Frye and Aubrey Chesterman were the chief architects of the American Renaissance in Lynchburg, producing many of the city's most exuberant buildings. Strongly influenced by McKim Mead & White, Frye & Chesterman quickly established themselves as leaders in Virginia, writes historian Richard Guy Wilson. This interior rendering for the First National Bank of Lynchburg

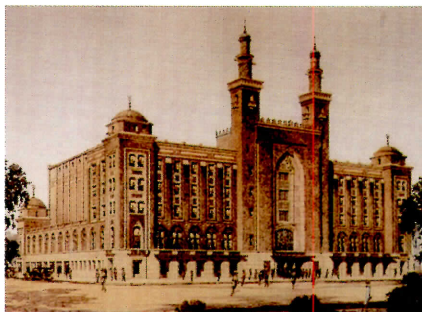
reflects the sophistication Chesterman brought to the city after his apprenticeship in Richmond. His drawing skills captured the bank's richness, including polished Greek, Italian and French marbles, bronze grilles, and an ivory and gold-leaf ceiling. Although another architect won the bank commission, apparently Frye & Chesterman's interior design was so impressive that the bank demanded it be followed.

Project for Hotel Altmonte *Staunton*

Pure fantasy and the Bavarian castles of Mad King Ludwig come to mind when looking at this extravagant project for Staunton. And certainly it was a dream, for although the Staunton Development Company published an aerial map of the town in 1891 showing the Hotel Altmonte as erected, ground was never broken and the hotel was never constructed. This fate was common to a number of grand schemes in the Shenandoah Valley during the late 19th century, more than 100 of which were announced during a land boom that ensued when a north-south railroad line opened up in 1888. But the luster soon wore off the boom and the national depression of the 1890s laid most of the plans in an early grave – including the Hotel Altmonte. The architects, Yarnall & Goforth of Philadelphia, did much of their work for land development companies. They designed many other Virginia projects – few of which apparently were built – stretching from Harrisonburg to Hot Springs. Better known than the firm is the draftsman for these drawings, Edward Eldon Deane, whose work is one of the high points in American architectural delineation, writes historian Richard Guy Wilson. As a design, the Hotel Altmonte assimilates a variety of different and very generalized sources. The primary inspiration seems to be French, with its large towers and tourelles from chateaux used as picturesque exclamation points. The half-timbering and bracing in the gables come from Northern European vernacular buildings. The design has an accumulative character with different forms, roofs, and wall textures creating a panorama. What it lacks in overall coherence it makes up for with tremendous verve.



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Collection of Marcellus Wright, Cox & Smith

Acca Temple Mosque *Richmond*

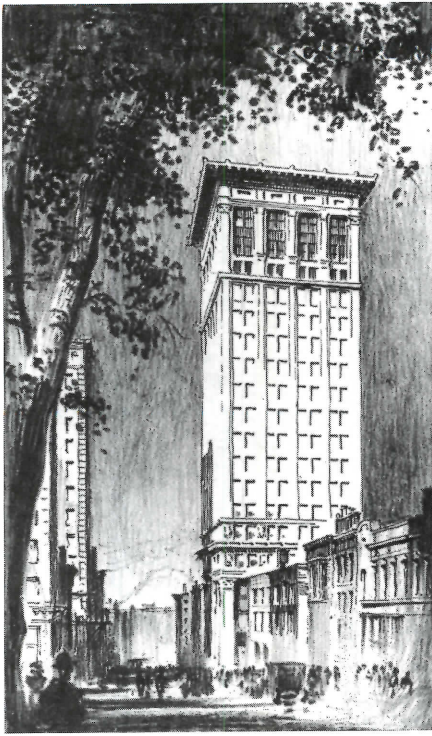
One of the best known 20th century buildings by Richmond architects, the Mosque ranks with other exotic structures of the 1920s. The use of exotic imagery for large entertainment structures was common in the 1920s, and the Shriners erected similar buildings for conventions and as profit-making ventures in other cities as well. The Mosque served an

array of functions: it housed a 4,600-seat auditorium, ballroom, hotel, restaurant, gymnasium, swimming pool, bowling alley, and offices. Besides generating profits, it stood as a public-spirited gesture to provide a first-class auditorium for Richmond. The Shriners forfeited the building during the Depression, and in 1940 the city took it over. This rendering, attributed to Marcellus E. Wright, captures the pictorial application of Islamic and Spanish decorative elements to what is essentially a rational design, notes historian Richard Guy Wilson. Twin minarets flank the entrance arch and low, mosque-like domes cap the corners. The building sparkles with gold and silver leaf and glazed terra-cotta tile from Spain, Italy, and Tunisia while, inside, the original stage draperies allegedly represented a sultan's tent hangings, studded with artificial gems. Wright, founder of one of Virginia's oldest architectural firms, was the lead designer. Advising him on the project was Paul Philippe Cret, Wright's mentor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dulles International Airport *Chantilly*

While Dulles Airport was conceived as a gateway to the capital city, its form owed as much to its location in the Virginia Piedmont. Architect Eero Saarinen envisioned "a strong form between earth and sky that seems both to rise from the plain and hover over it." There's no denying the airport's memorable image is its suspended roof form, but the innovative organizational scheme for the building was just as significant. Key to the solution was Saarinen's wish to decrease distances for passenger travel and allow for easy expansion with a concept that would limit disruption to operations. The result was a centralized, linear shed for passengers and separate facilities for plane servicing – a concept requiring the invention of the Mobile Lounge. Saarinen's idea, however, was not to celebrate technology, but rather to put it in service of a better definition of the issues within the problem, writes professor Peter C. Papademetriou.

Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York



Collection of the Honorable Sir Clive Bossom

First National Bank *Richmond*

The First National Bank Building in downtown Richmond was Alfred Charles Bossom's first venture into skyscraper construction. Bossom, born and educated in England, had come to the United States in 1903 to practice architecture. His marriage to Emily Bayne in 1910 brought him into contact with banking and railroad interests through his father-in-law, Samuel Bayne. The First National Bank Building in Richmond was commissioned by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company, with Bayne offering full restitution if the building by the young and untried architect was a failure. With Bayne's help, and that of Francis Kimball, an established New York architect who served as a consultant, Bossom's first major commission was a success. As he worked, he developed ideas – such as “the building externally should look like a BANK and should call attention to itself by its substantial and conservative appearance” – that would fuel his career. Client service was critical, too. Careful scheduling of construction was necessary so that laborers and material would be available *when needed* and so that the client could move in on time. In 1922 Bossom's temple-type Virginia Trust Company rose next to the First National Bank. Based on Italian Renaissance prototypes, the great triumphal arch is filled with fine metal decoration and shows his progress toward greater simplification and boldness of forms, writes historian Martha B. Caldwell. Bossom's early work was largely in Virginia and North Carolina, but after World War I he received major commissions for banks in New York and Washington, and the Magnolia Building in Dallas. By the mid-1920s, Bossom's attraction to pre-Columbian architecture resulted in early Art Deco-type skyscrapers.

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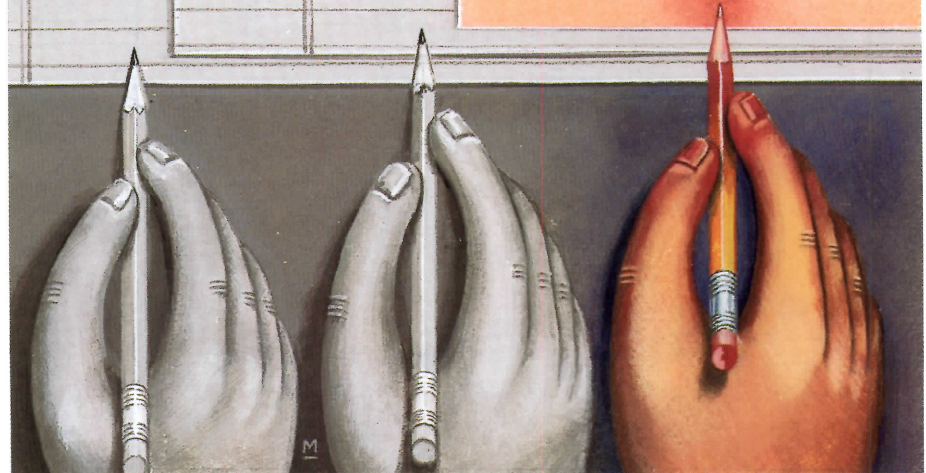
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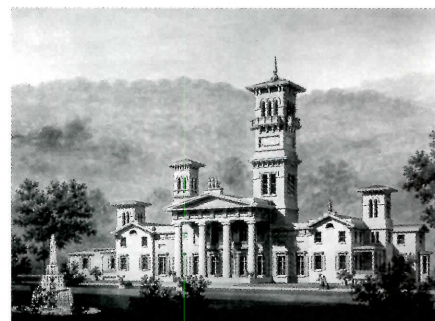
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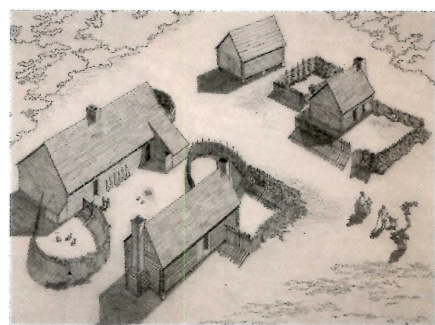
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Morven Park
Leesburg

This remarkable design for a country house in Loudoun County is a proposed remodeling of a complex structure. The scheme, designed in 1858 by Baltimore architect Edmund G. Lind, called for wings connecting the dependencies and four Italianate towers of unequal height. Its towers vaguely recall Osborne, Queen Victoria's country house that popularized the Italian Villa style. In this country, the standard Italian villa house nearly always had a single tower, so a house with four towers may be unique among American expressions of the style, notes historian Calder Loth. Lind's planned enlargements for the body of the house were carried out, but apparently only one of the small towers was built – and later demolished.



Reconstructed Slave Quarter,
Carter's Grove
James City County

During the 1980s, Colonial Williamsburg participated actively in the move away from a single-minded portrait of white middle-class history to one that addressed subjects such as insanity, industrial working conditions, and slavery. The slave quarter at Carter's Grove, for example, offers visitors an opportunity to view 18th century life from the perspective of the slaves. Observers are asked to consider how it reflects the social relationships that once prevailed there – relationships between master and slave, between agricultural laborers and artisans, and between artisans and house servants. Historian Edward A. Chappell maintains that the Carter's Grove effort attempts to suggest living conditions without romanticizing the system of Chesapeake slavery or the slaves' struggle to survive it.

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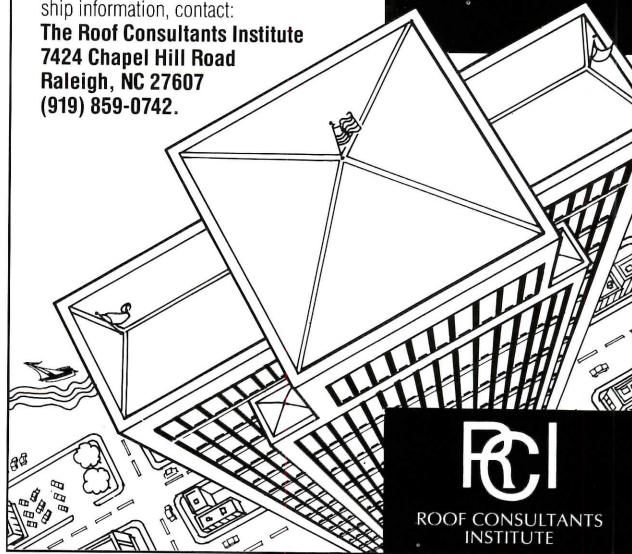
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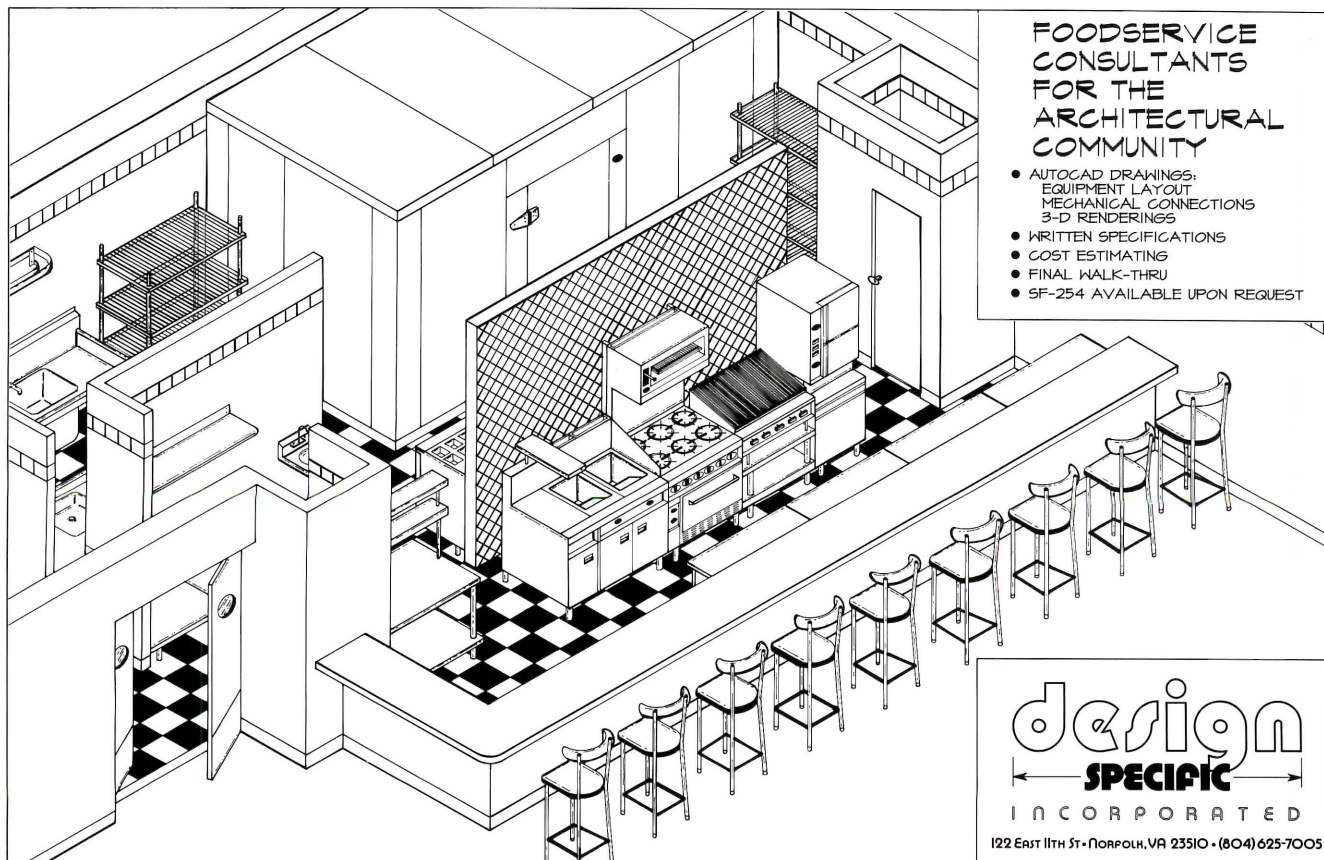
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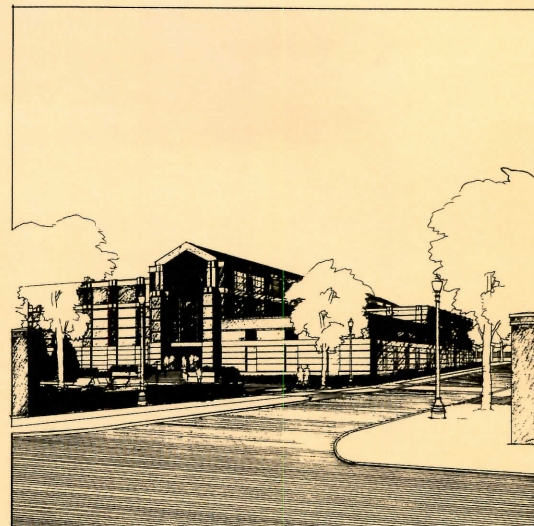
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Architect: Bond, Comet, Westmoreland + Hiner, Richmond
Project: Amelia Elementary School

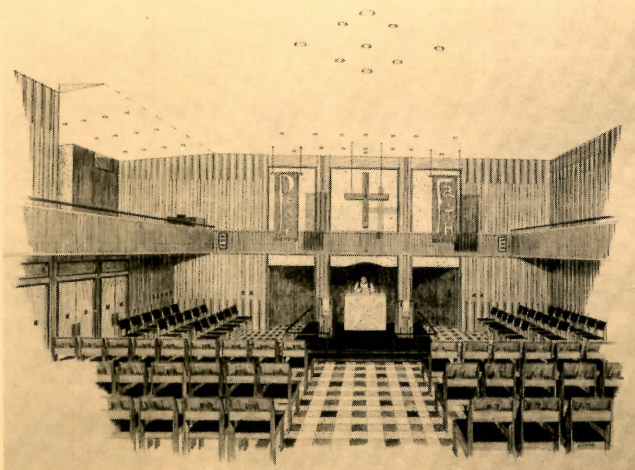
This 1,000-student elementary school in Amelia County is one of the state's largest, and care was taken to make the building feel smaller to students. Large spaces – such as the cafeteria, multipurpose room, and media center – resemble a collection of rural buildings, a “village of education.” 804-788-4774.



Architect: Hughes Group Architects, Sterling
Project: Ft. McNair Fitness Center

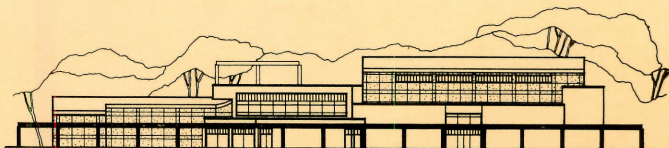
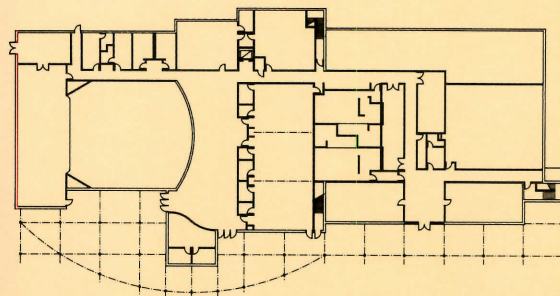
This 40,000-square-foot facility in Washington, D.C., provides for fitness, recreation, and social functions at the National Defense University. The proposed form, materials, and detail maintain a strong connection to the post's neoclassical fabric, while clearly reading as a product of our time. 703-437-6600.

26



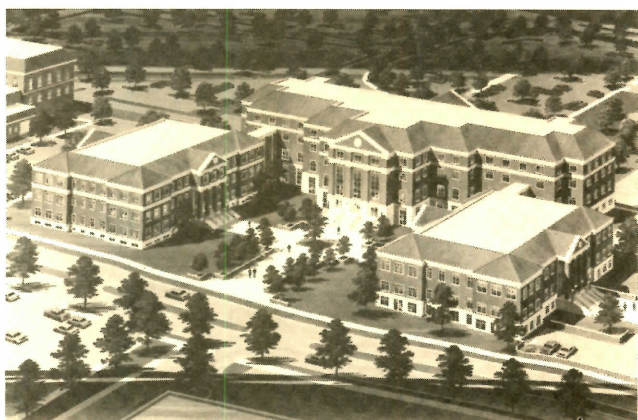
Architect: Virginia Architects Accord, Alexandria
Project: First Trinity Lutheran Church

The major renovation of this Washington, D.C., church was prompted by a change in mission from an emphasis on family worship to community good works. Pictured is the new nave, reduced from 500 pew seats to 225 chairs to make room for a two-story social service and conference space. 703-765-7857.



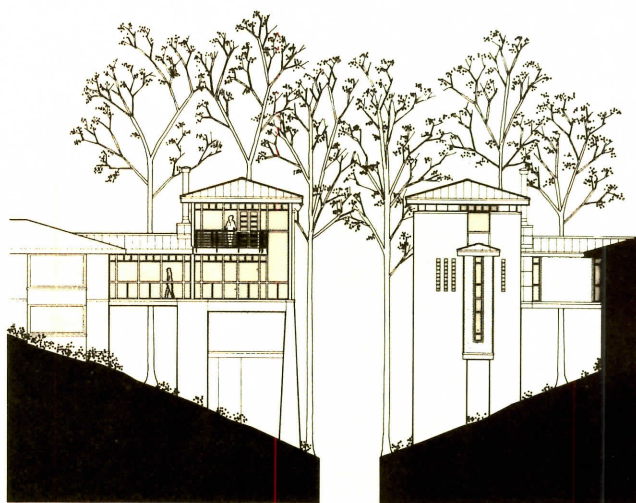
Architect: Harry McKinney, Architect, Abingdon
Project: Southwest Va. Community College Health & Services Building

The 41,000-square-foot building in Richlands will contain a 400-seat auditorium, multifunction meeting rooms, art gallery, two gymnasiums, racquetball courts and support facilities. A colonnade along the length of the building creates a pedestrian link for existing and future development. 703-628-2713.



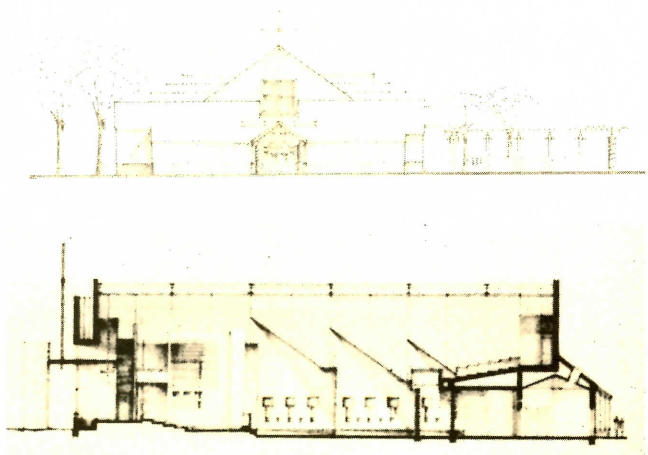
Architect: Williams, Tazewell & Associates, Norfolk
Project: Virginia Beach Judicial Center

The campus-style building, located in Virginia Beach's municipal center, combines functions previously located in 11 other buildings. The firm's responsibilities included programming, planning, architecture, interior design, space planning and civil engineering for the 319,000-square-foot facility. 804-623-6621.



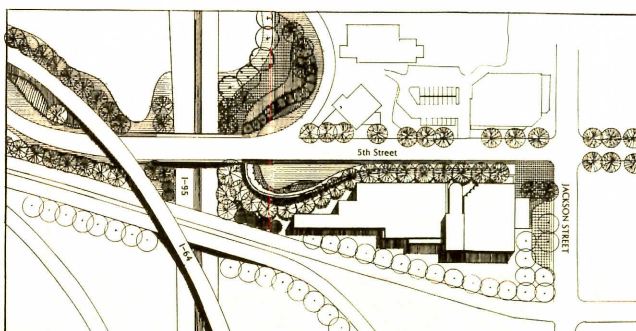
Architect: Bond, Comet, Westmoreland + Hiner, Richmond
Project: "The Treehouse," a residential addition

The existing house, which overlooks the James River in Richmond, straddles a ridge which slopes steeply to each side. To maintain floor alignments, the addition extends into the tree-tops. A master bath, sitting area, and study occupy the wood frame structure, which rests on brick piers. 804-788-4774.



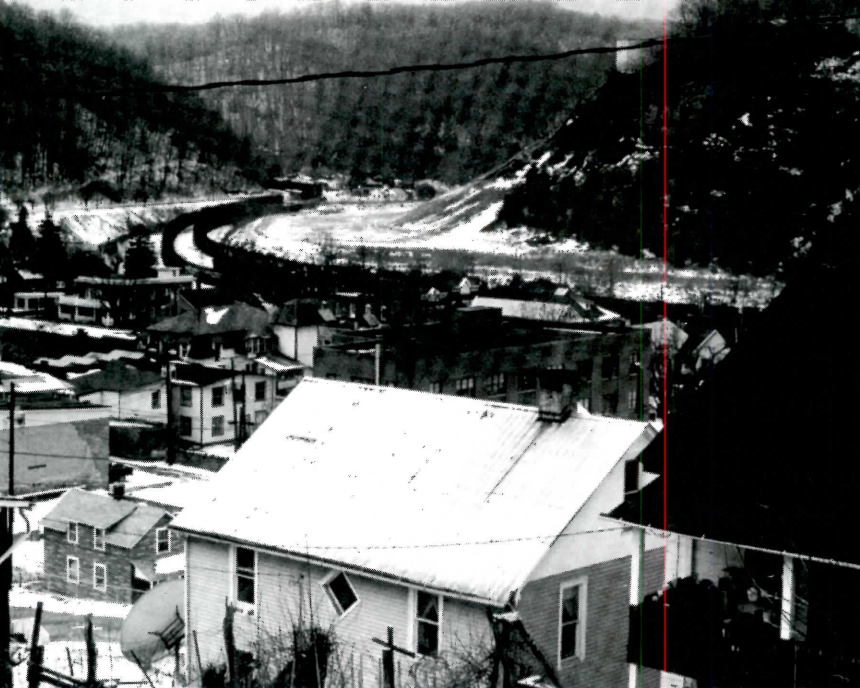
Architect: AP2 Architects, Newport News
Project: Ebenezer Baptist Church Sanctuary Addition

This Hampton church makes clear references to nearby farm buildings in both the materials and form of its new sanctuary, which features board-and-batten siding, a standing-seam metal roof and concrete block base. The fan-shaped plan of the sanctuary is oriented toward a meditation garden. 804-873-6711.



Architect: Carlton Abbott & Partners, Williamsburg
Project: Richmond Gateway Project at Fifth Street

This drawing depicts proposed street and urban design improvements for Fifth Street at a major entrance into downtown Richmond. This block will be the first phase of a master plan developed by the architect for the Central Richmond Association and Downtown Richmond, Inc. 804-220-1095.



Rugged topography and a rich ethnic mix typified the town in its heyday.

Photos: Chuck Bultman

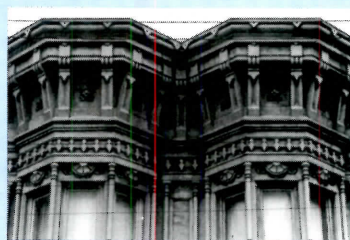
Where Everyone Knew His Place

By Robert Freis

Pocahontas, Virginia, isn't a ghost town, yet its heyday is long past. The once-bustling coal town is best described as spectral. First plotted and occupied as a planned community in the 1880s, this Appalachian village has been on a slow, steady decline since the mines closed down in 1955. There is no industry and most folks have moved away; those who remain are former miners, and elderly ones at that.

Presumably this autumnal community would eventually cease to exist. Yet there's something much too substantial about Pocahontas to allow the past to be forgotten or obliterated – even if it seems rather dilapidated at the present. Listed since 1972 on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, the town is currently the focus of an effort by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to have Pocahontas named a National Historic Landmark – a designation shared by only a tiny minority of historic sites such as Mt. Vernon and Monticello.

During an era that lasted from the 1880s until the 1920s, Pocahontas and other coal towns nearby were busy, culturally diverse aggregations of humanity that left an indelible mark on the history of the Southern Appalachians. However, this place shares tawdry images with its region: poverty, deprivation, isolation, oppression, danger, tragedy. “Popular images of company mining towns are universally negative, as anyone familiar with the literary treatment of them will attest,” writes historian Crandall A. Shifflett in his book *Coal Towns*. This stereotype isn't shared by some folks in Pocahontas, who want to turn their town into an exhibition for visitors seeking to learn what life was like in a coal town. And they are basing their hopes on the success of



Cast-metal cornices dress up the commercial district in town.

the landmark application to bolster the town's reputation. “It's a dream, but I tell you I've been dreaming for 20 years,” says Edna Drosick, a member of Historic Pocahontas and the town's self-appointed goodwill ambassador. The daughter and widow of miners, Mrs. Drosick lives in a converted duplex that once housed two mining families. She was born in Pocahontas and has lived her entire life there.

The community she describes during a stroll about town is one of pride and promise, with a uniquely American story to tell. The nation, having settled its internal identity crisis with the end of the Civil War, was gearing up to join the Industrial Revolution when an enormous seam of high-grade bituminous coal was discovered in what became the Pocahontas Coalfield. Investors who formed the Southwest Virginia Improvement Company in 1881 dispatched an engineer to plan and build a town to serve as a railroad terminus, company headquarters, and residential community for the miners and their families. Soon the town was christened Pocahontas and, after a railroad spur completed the link to the outside world, the town was in business.

Many other towns followed, yet Pocahontas was without parallel as a residential community and commercial center. As the demand for labor grew, the town filled with a cultural stew of nationalities and religions: local hill farmers, former slaves, Jewish financiers, and, via Ellis Island, immigrants from Europe: Hungary, Poland, Italy, Russia and Greece. Mix this unwieldy polyglot and its various native influences with the uniformity and order of a planned mining community and you have Pocahontas in its prime.

Physically, the mining engineers designed Pocahontas with a block plan, a rare form among mining

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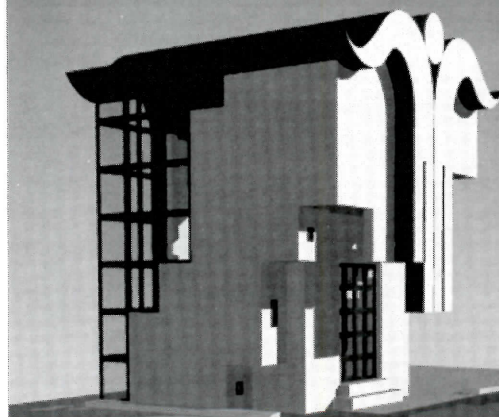
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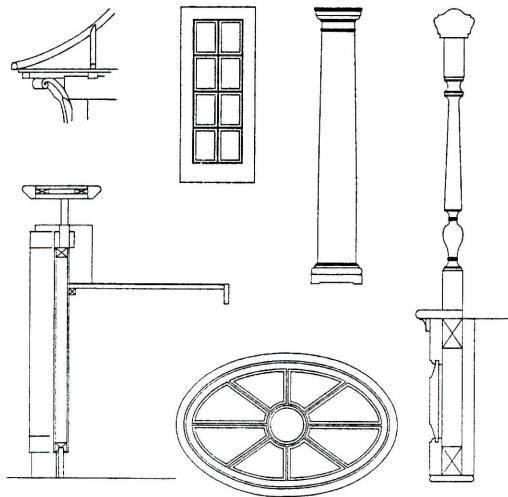
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settlements, which tended to be linear, cross-like or fragmented in shape, owing to the regional topography. The commercial hub was placed near the western edge of town, close to the mines. Most of the dwellings were located to the east, backing up to and lapping over a steep slope. Neighborhoods became divided among ethnic and occupational lines, each anchored by a church of the appropriate denomination, including Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Hungarian Reformed, and a Jewish synagogue. Primary and secondary schools were built atop the hill adjacent to the mine superintendents' house, reflecting the social hierarchy.

On the other side of the moral spectrum, Pocahontas had at its randiest 234 saloons and bars, which promoted a wild-west atmosphere on Saturday nights; fistfights and shootings were a common happenstance. Cultural and civic matters were concentrated in the town's opera house, a multipurpose structure with a jail in the basement, municipal offices and courts on the first floor, a musical auditorium on the second floor and a bell in the cupola that rang the 9 p.m. curfew. Hotels and boarding houses handled businessmen, single miners and transients. At the center of town was the company store, where scrip issued as wages was redeemable for goods. All structures were built and owned by the coal company, which dictated the rhythm and the course of the miners' lives.

Miners generally lived in modest one- or two-story board-and-batten duplexes. Managers' houses were often larger two-story duplexes. The commercial district, still relatively intact, featured late Victorian two-story brick buildings, some with ornate cast-metal storefronts and cornices. In time, many employees and their families came to reside in the town's 11-acre cemetery, which was created in 1884 after an explosion trapped and killed some 114 miners, who were buried in a mass grave. Today, a variety of ornate tombstones is visible among the weeds, many with inscriptions in foreign languages.

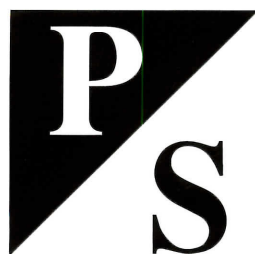
From its peak of 3,775 people in 1920, the population of Pocahontas has declined to its present-day 530. Buildings show neglect and disrepair, and many are being abandoned and demolished as the town draws farther away from its era of viability. Some tourists are attracted to town by an exhibition mine opened for tours during the summer, and Mrs. Drosick says the town's only economic hope is tourism.

Tourism remains a possibility for Pocahontas, says historian John Salmon, co-author of the landmark application, because there is enough left of the architectural fabric – commercial, residential and industrial – to illustrate the town's historically significant qualities. But without substantial funding by private or public sources, Pocahontas will continue its slide toward obscurity, as American society continues to remake itself in a way that takes its industrial achievements for granted.

Getting there

Pocahontas is in southwest Virginia near the West Virginia border. From Blacksburg, take Route 460 west to Bluefield, exit at State Route 102, and follow to Pocahontas.

Robert Freis is a Roanoke freelance writer.



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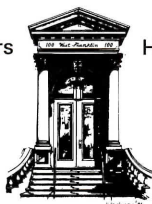
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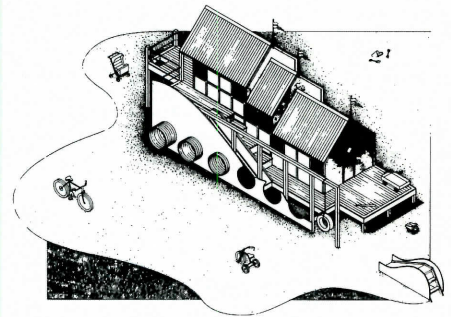
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Coming Up

In our next issue, Inform will examine the status of women in architecture, showcase the work of women designers, and look back on the history of roadside diners in Virginia. Also, we'll visit a striking new aquarium and look closely at the details that give Modern architecture its subtle power.



Playhouse for a Client's Grandchildren,
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