

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

2015 CONCLAVE THEATRE TOUR

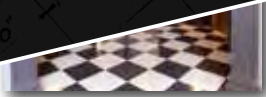
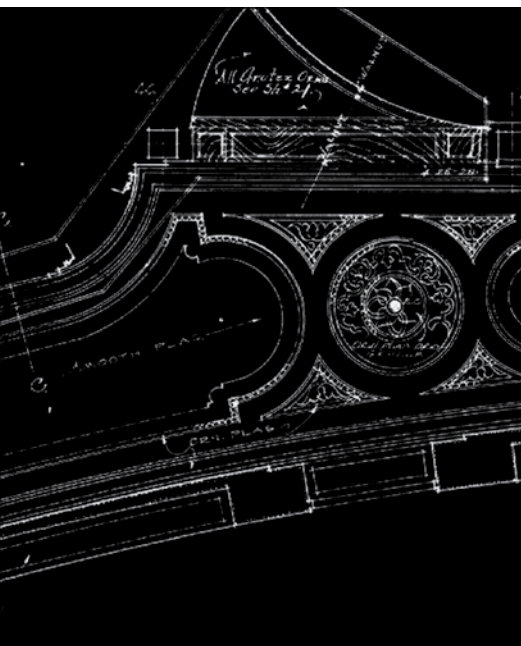


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 McFarlin Auditorium at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

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2015 CONCLAVE THEATRE TOUR

Dear Friends,

The Theatre Historical Society of America would like to welcome you to our 2015 Conclave Theatre Tour, of the Greater Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D.C. area. This event marks our 46th annual celebration of the diverse wealth of America's theatre histories. From grand symphony halls, to small town opera houses, THS recognizes and celebrates the unique qualities that make the theatre experience great.

This year features the Theatre Historical Society's first full scale tour of Virginia and Washington D.C.'s theatres. Virginia has been home to theatres since America's colonial days, and tour stops like Blackfriars Playhouse and the Kimball Theatre take visitors right back into the 17th and 18th centuries. Cities and towns celebrate theatres, whether through the continued maintenance of awe-inducing movie palaces like the Byrd Theatre, or the restoration and reopening of main street theatres like the Beacon.

We welcome our members to this wonderful experience, visiting the theatres of Virginia and Washington, D.C, and we invite you to join us in honoring this state's undeniable place in theatre history.

Richard L. Fosbrink, Executive Director

The 2015 Conclave Theatre Tour will visit over 20 different theatres in 11 cities and towns across Washington, D.C. and Virginia, including:



- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Richmond, VA | 2. Highland Springs, VA |
| 3. Ashland, VA | 4. Washington, D.C. |
| 5. Norfolk, VA | 6. Charlottesville, VA |
| 7. Staunton, VA | 8. Waynesboro, VA |
| 9. Hopewell, VA | 10. Portsmouth, VA |
| 11. Williamsburg, VA | |



DAILY TOUR SCHEDULE



TUESDAY JUNE 23

Registration in the Omni Richmond Lobby from 1:00-6:30 p.m.

- 2:00 p.m. Downtown Walking Tour (À la carte)
Explore Richmond's historic Shockoe Slip district on this docent led tour.
- 6:30 p.m. New Attendees Reception
Meet and Mingle with other first-time attendees Pool Deck, Omni Richmond
- 7:00 p.m. Opening Reception
Kick off Conclave with new and old friends at this opening night reception. Cash bar available. Pool Deck, Omni Richmond

WEDNESDAY JUNE 24

Coaches depart the Omni Richmond at 8:00 a.m.

- 8:15 a.m. Arrive at Altria Theatre
- 9:10 a.m. Depart
- 9:30 a.m. Arrive at Byrd Theatre
- 10:25 a.m. Depart
- 10:35 a.m. Arrive at Bow Tie Cinemas' Movieland
- 11:00 a.m. Annual THS Member's Meeting
- 11:30 a.m. Intermission
Lunch at Bow Tie Cinemas Movieland.
- 1:00 p.m. Depart
- 1:30 p.m. Arrive at November Theatre
- 2:25 p.m. Depart
- 2:35 p.m. Arrive at National Theatre
- 3:00 p.m. Depart
- 3:10 p.m. Arrive at Carpenter Theatre
- 4:05 p.m. Depart
- 4:35 p.m. Arrive at Henrico Theater
- 5:10 p.m. Depart
- 5:40 p.m. Arrive at Ashland Theatre
- 6:15 p.m. Depart
- 6:45 p.m. Arrive at Omni Richmond



THURSDAY JUNE 25

Coaches depart Omni Richmond at 7:00 a.m.

9:30 a.m. Arrive at Lincoln Theater
10:25 a.m. Depart
10:35 a.m. Arrive at Howard Theatre
11:05 a.m. Depart
11:20 a.m. Arrive at Warner Theatre
12:25 p.m. Depart
12:30 p.m. Intermission
Enjoy lunch on your own in Washington, D.C.'s historic theatre district.
2:00 p.m. Arrive National Theatre
2:55 p.m. Depart
5:35 p.m. Arrive at Omni Richmond

FRIDAY JUNE 26

Coaches depart Omni Richmond at 8:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m. Arrive at Attucks Theater
11:30 a.m. Intermission
Lunch at the Attucks Theater.
12:25 p.m. Depart
12:35 p.m. Arrive at Chrysler Hall
1:30 p.m. Depart
1:40 p.m. Arrive at Roper Performing Arts Center
2:35 p.m. Depart
2:45 p.m. Arrive at Wells Theatre
3:40 p.m. Depart
6:30 p.m. Arrive at Omni Richmond

SATURDAY JUNE 27

Coaches depart Omni Richmond at 7:30 a.m.

9:30 a.m. Arrive at Wayne Theatre
10:25 a.m. Depart
10:55 a.m. Arrive at Blackfriar's Playhouse
11:50 a.m. Depart
12:00 p.m. Intermission
Lunch at Trinity Church, Staunton.
1:00 p.m. Depart
1:10 p.m. Arrive at Staunton Performing Arts Center
1:45 p.m. Depart
2:35 p.m. Arrive at Jefferson Theatre
3:30 p.m. Depart
3:40 p.m. Arrive at Paramount Theatre
4:15 p.m. Depart
5:45 p.m. Arrive at Omni Richmond
7:00 p.m. Closing Reception and Banquet
Join us for the last official activity of the week as we present our Annual Awards and recap the week. Cash bar available. Magnolia Wine Bar and Magnolia Room, Omni Richmond.

AFTERGLOW | SUNDAY JUNE 28 (À la carte)

Coaches depart the Omni Richmond at 8:00 a.m.

8:50 a.m. Arrive at Beacon Theatre
9:45 a.m. Depart
11:45 a.m. Arrive at Commodore Theatre
12:20 p.m. Intermission
Lunch and Short Screening at Commodore Theatre
1:20 p.m. Depart
3:00 p.m. Arrive at Kimball Theatre and Colonial Williamsburg
4:30 p.m. Depart
5:50 p.m. Arrive at Omni Richmond

**Schedule subject to change.*

Pictured:

(left column, top to bottom) Lincoln Theatre, Washington, D.C., courtesy of The Lincoln Theatre; The November Theatre, Richmond, courtesy of the November Theatre; The Jefferson Theatre, Charlottesville, courtesy of Kirby Hutto; (right column, top to bottom): Altria Theatre, Richmond, courtesy of Wilson Butler Architects; Carpenter Theatre, courtesy of Richmond Centerstage; Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, courtesy of Michael Pennello.



About Richmond, Virginia

Although Native Americans inhabited the area thousands of years prior to the arrival of the English, the Richmond Region's written history didn't begin until 1607. That was the year that Captains Christopher Newport and John Smith made the first attempt to settle at the Falls of the James, located between downtown's 14th Street Bridge and the Pony Pasture, a recreational area along the James River south of the city. (Four years later the City of Henricus, which later became home to Pocahontas and her husband, John Rolfe, was established.) One of Virginia's most famous and lucrative crops, tobacco, was scientifically cultivated at Bermuda Hundred in 1612 while the first American hospital, Mount Malady, was established at what is now Henricus Historical Park.

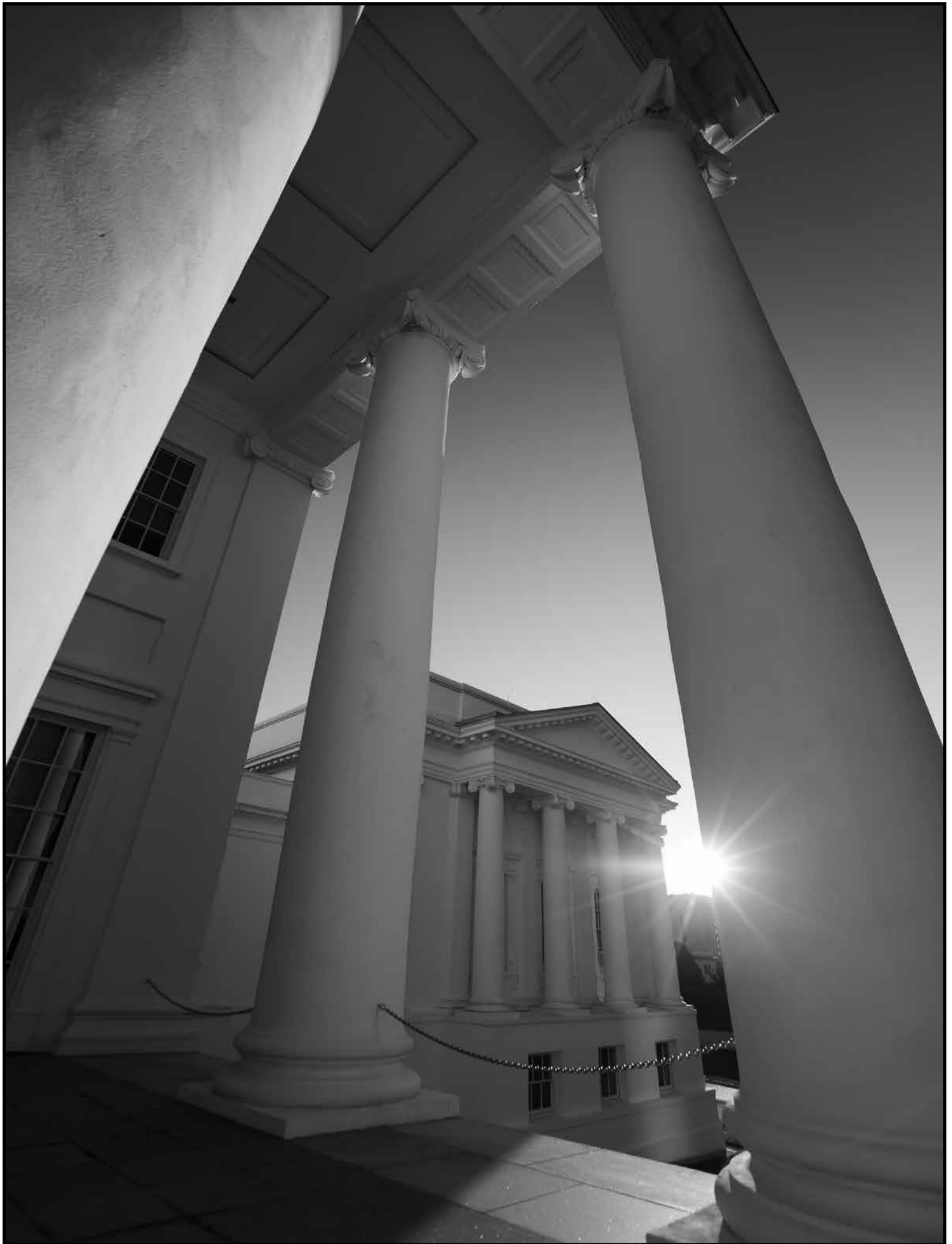
The 18th century was about growth for the Richmond Region. In 1709, the first coal was commercially mined in Midlothian. St. John's Church, the site of Patrick Henry's famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, was built in 1741. In 1780, the state capital was moved from Williamsburg to Richmond, and a year later, the Capitol was burned by British troops, under the command of Benedict Arnold.

Richmond's contributions to the history books were greatly expanded during the 1800s when the Civil War broke out and Richmond became the Capital of the Confederacy. During this time, the population of Richmond swelled from less than 200 at the start of the century to more than 60,000 by 1880. During the early part of the century, the city's first bank, Bank of Virginia, was chartered, and the first public library was established.

Throughout most of the 1900s, Richmond, like the rest of the South, was segregated, offering separate, but not equal, opportunities to blacks and whites. Despite these obstacles, Richmond's African Americans succeeded, creating many firsts for blacks in the Region and the United States. Many of the Richmond Region's most popular attractions, including Maymont and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, opened during this century as well. Big business also came to the Region during this century with the arrival of many large corporations including Philip Morris and Reynolds Metals Co.

The Richmond Region continues to make history in the 21st century. Completion of Richmond's floodwall in 1995 led to new development of the Richmond Riverfront, including trendy loft apartments, restaurants and shops. Richmond-area shoppers delighted in 2003 when Short Pump Town Center and Stony Point Fashion Park, the Region's first upscale, open-air shopping malls, opened, giving Richmond more shopping centers than any other U.S. city based on population.

*Pictured: The Virginia State Capital, designed by Thomas Jefferson
Text and image courtesy of www.visitrichmondva.com*



About Washington, D.C.

Washington, DC is unique among American cities because it was established by the Constitution of the United States to serve as the nation's capital. From the beginning it has been embroiled in political maneuvering, sectional conflicts, issues of race, national identity, compromise and, of course, power.

George Washington, the first president and namesake of the city, chose the site and appointed three commissioners to help prepare for the arrival of the new government in 1800. In 1800 the federal government consisted of 131 employees. Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the city as a bold new capital with sweeping boulevards and ceremonial spaces reminiscent of his native France. Benjamin Banneker, a self-taught African American mathematical genius, provided the astronomical calculations for surveying and layout of the city. The full development of Washington as a monumental city, however, did not come until a hundred years later when the McMillan Commission updated its plan to establish the National Mall and monuments that most visitors to Washington now know.

In its 200 years as the nation's capital Washington has developed as a complex and layered city with multiple personalities. As home to the federal government, it has attracted a diverse mix of government workers, members of Congress from every state, foreign emissaries, lobbyists, petitioners and protestors.

Courtesy of www.washington.org



The Capitol Building, image by Jake McGuire



About Norfolk, Virginia

Located in the center of the mid-Atlantic, and considered the dynamic heart of the storied Coastal Virginia region, Norfolk attracts thousands of travelers each year to enjoy its lively downtown waterfront and 144 miles of shimmering coastline. Offering a vibrant blend of history and heritage with contemporary attractions, outdoor adventure and cultural institutions, Norfolk is an exciting destination. Visitors will find an easily walkable downtown that offers eclectic dining options, a rich arts scene, high-end shopping and year-round special events.

The City of Norfolk is an important 400 year-old port city tracing its roots to soon after the first English settlers landed in the New World just a few miles to the east. It was in 1636 that William Willoughby was granted 200 acres by King Charles I for what is today downtown Norfolk. Since then the story of our city has intertwined with the history of our nation. From being attacked by English ships under the command of Lord Dunmore in 1776 (a cannonball from the bombardment is still in place in St. Paul's church) to becoming home to what is present day the world's largest naval station, Norfolk has been the jumping off point for much of the United States' efforts in two world wars and modern operations across the globe.

And from the clash of the ironclads off its shore, to the first aircraft to take off from a ship, to serving as the final resting place for General Douglas MacArthur, Norfolk has witnessed and continues to make history.

Courtesy of www.visitnorfolktoday.com



Norfolk's historic Ghent neighborhood, image courtesy of VisitNorfolk

Altria Theater

Richmond, Virginia

ALTRIA THEATRE

6 N. Laurel Street
Richmond, Virginia

OPENED: October 28, 1927

ARCHITECT: Marcellus Wright Sr.

Charles M. Robinson

CAPACITY: 3,565

Located at 6 North Laurel Street in the heart of VCU's Monroe Park campus, the newly-renamed Altria Theater, formerly The Mosque and Richmond's Landmark Theater, is one of the best-known and most striking buildings in Richmond.

Opened in 1927 as an entertainment venue owned and operated by the ACCA Temple, the Altria Theater was designed by architects Marcellus Wright, Sr., Charles M. Robinson and Charles Custer Robinson, with original plans including four lounges, six lobbies, 18 dressing rooms, 42 hotel rooms, a gymnasium, locker rooms, a pool, a three-lane bowling alley, offices and a restaurant called "The Mosque Grill" in addition to the theater itself.

In 1940, the building was sold to the City of Richmond and was later renamed Richmond's Landmark Theater in 1995 after a \$5 million renovation.

Altria Theater re-opened to the public in November 2014 after a comprehensive 2 ½ year renovation project. Updated patron-centered amenities include brand new restrooms, upgraded in-house sound and acoustics, two new patron elevators and – perhaps most appreciated by the public – 3,600+ refurbished seats with cushioned backs.

Further, the facility's infrastructure has also been greatly improved, with upgraded electrical systems, plumbing, HVAC, fire alarms and fire suppression system. For historic preservation, the building's façade has been repaired and the historic tile work, floors and fountain in the building's lobby have also been fully restored. The



designs and paint inside were based on historic photographs to bring it back to its original 1920s look.

Performers will also be able to see the benefits from the renovation project, with refurbished dressing rooms, a tour management office, a new crew room with a kitchenette, a new stage floor, a brand new curtain, a wardrobe area with a laundry room and over 50 set lines, which will allow complex scenery and set pieces to be moved much more efficiently.

Some of America's greatest entertainers have appeared on stage beneath its towering minarets and desert murals. With seating capacity at 3,600 and a stage to accommodate the largest productions, this theater is a great complement to the other CenterStage venues downtown.

Text courtesy of www.richmondcenterstage.com. Image courtesy of Wilson Butler Architects.

Byrd Theatre

Richmond, Virginia

BYRD THEATRE

2908 W. Cary St.

Richmond, Virginia

OPENED: December 24, 1928

ARCHITECT: Fred Bishop

CAPACITY: 1,400

The Fred Bishop-designed Byrd Theatre is a true standout in Richmond's Carytown neighborhood. The opulent theatre was built in 1928 by Charles Somma and Walter Coulter to the cost of 900,000 dollars, the equivalent of over 12 million dollars today. Named after William Byrd II, the founder of Richmond, Virginia, the Byrd has become recognized as both a state and national landmark.

The Byrd's premiere showing was on December 24th, 1928. Crowds of adults and children-- charged 50 cents and 10 cents, respectively-- came to see the First National Film production, "Waterfront," starring Dorothy Mackaill and Jack Mulhall. When these first patrons entered the theatre, they were greeted with a grandeur Richmond had never known.

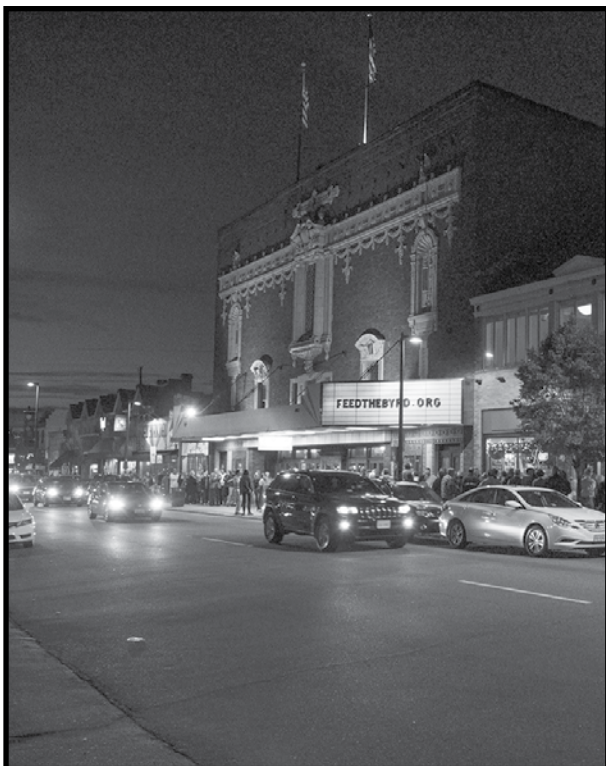
The Italian Renaissance-style theatre featured 916 orchestra seats and 476 balcony seats, luxuriously appointed by New York's Arthur Brunet Studios. The interior was decorated with eleven grand Czechoslovakian crystal chandeliers, imported Italian and Turkish marble, hand-crafted velvet drapes and oil painted canvases of Greek mythology.

The Byrd offered more than lavish design; it was also technologically advanced, with a central vacuum system and a system using a natural spring to support an air conditioning system. The first theatre in Virginia built with a sound system, the Byrd, in fact, featured not one, but two! Outfitted with both a Vitaphone and a Western Electric sound system, the Byrd was built in the transitional period between silent and sound films and also included a Wurlitzer Organ.

With only minor remodels, to accommodate contemporary movie screen preferences and to the lobby to provide concessions, the Byrd exists today almost exactly as it did upon opening. The theatre is open 365 days a year, and has not been

shuttered or remodeled in its 90-year run. The Byrd is currently run by the Byrd Theatre Foundation, an organization that has gone to great efforts to continue fundraising to preserve the Byrd Theatre experience and to make sure the theatre plays a role in the lives of Richmonders for generations to come.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive. Images courtesy of the Byrd Theatre (left) and Ariel Skelley (right).



Bow Tie Cinemas' Movieland

Richmond, Virginia

BOW TIE CINEMAS' MOVIELAND AT BOULEVARD SQUARE

1301 N. Boulevard at W. Leigh Street
Richmond, Virginia

OPENED: February 27, 2009

ARCHITECT: Bob Mills (remodel)

Chris Pereira (remodel)

CAPACITY: 2,908

The 2009 opening of Bow Tie Cinemas' Movieland at Boulevard Square was a historic marker for Richmond theatre patrons- the first new movie theatre build in the city for 40 years. Though Movieland is a new theatre, it is built on a historic foundation, both as a redevelopment of two historic structures and as a part of the Bow Tie Cinema's chain.

Movieland combines the old and the new by offering the latest in movie theatre technology in a setting marked by history. Boulevard Square is comprised of two separate historical buildings, a 53,000 square foot former locomotive assembly plant and a 6,000 square foot former brass foundry.

The entire 53,000 square foot locomotive factory has been reshaped into the luxuriously outfitted Movieland. With creative and adaptive interior design and themeing from Michael Mahaffey of Michael Mahaffey Architects and new base building designed by Bob Mills of Commonwealth Architects of Richmond, the theatre represents the sort of themed adaptive reuse that keeps historical structures alive, even if in different forms than they were originally imagined.

In 2012, the the former brass foundry was reinvented by architect Chris Pereira of New Jersey's CPA Architects into the 264 seat Criterion Cinemas at Movieland, a four-screen art house theatre that invites patrons to watch the best in independent and avant-garde film in a comfortable, industrial seating.

Movieland anchors Boulevard Square and represents the most exciting and up-to-date technologies and comforts of



contemporary movie theatres. Bow Tie Cinemas pride themselves on "Returning Style and Elegance to the Moviegoing Experience," and Movieland is certainly part of that tradition. With 17 different screens, Movieland is able to program a wide variety of films, from Hollywood blockbusters to more independent fare. The theatre also offers special programming, including their "Movies and Mimosas" weekend morning film series and "Insomnia theater" midnight cult classics series.

The theatre has been designed to meet all levels of patron comfort. From Closed Captioning and Descriptive Audio devices to custom designed rocking chair seats, nothing has been ignored when it comes to making sure patrons fall in love with the moviegoing experience at Bow Tie Cinemas' Movieland.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive. Images courtesy of Bow Tie Cinemas.

November Theatre

Richmond, Virginia

SARA BELLE AND NEIL NOVEMBER THEATRE

114 West Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia
OPENED: December 25, 1911
ARCHITECT: C.K. Howell
CAPACITY: 600

Having opened its doors on Christmas Day, 1911, the November Theatre is the state's oldest major stage house and a linchpin in Virginia history. It operates today as the vibrant home of Virginia Repertory Theatre, and as a living museum commemorating and exploring the roles this landmark building has played in the rich cultural life of Central Virginia.

Built by Moses Hoffheimer with an interior design by famed Italian artist Ferruccio Legnaioli, the November was named the Empire Theatre for the first three years of its existence. With a keen focus on fire safety, Hoffheimer modeled his Richmond Empire on the world-renowned Empire Theatre in New York. New York's Empire was famous for being "thoroughly fireproof." Richmond's Empire was the first theatre in Central Virginia to replicate all their advances. The Empire was also Richmond's first "air conditioned" theatre, allowing it to be open during the summers. Small tunnels can still be found inches beneath each aisle. Large blocks of ice were placed under the stage at the mouths of these passageways, and powerful electric fans blew across this ice sending chilled breezes up through floor vents situated near the ends of each row.

When the Empire opened in 1911, it operated as a legitimate theatre, presenting live performances of great plays instead of vaudeville or silent movies. The renowned actress Lucille La Verne, assembled her own stock company at the Empire in 1913. She presented 80 performances in four months, selling 147,000 tickets! Edith Lindeman, Times-Dispatch theatre critic, wrote that the Empire "was a popular theater with audiences, especially on

Wednesday matinees when each woman in attendance received a quarter-pound box of Huyler's chocolates and a dainty linen handkerchief to wipe her eyes during the sad scenes."

During its earliest days as a legitimate theatre (1911-1914), the Empire was home to several national stars who worked in the Empire's own stock company for several months out of every year, dividing their careers between Richmond, New York and the emerging film capital of Hollywood.

In December 1914 the Empire was refitted for the emerging art form of film, and renamed the Strand. The Strand served until 1927 as one of Richmond's most prominent and popular homes for film and vaudeville. In 1927, a fire damaged the space, and it lay dark until it was re-

opened in 1933 as the Booker T Theatre, which featured films and vaudeville performances until 1974.

In 1977 Theatre IV (now known as Virginia Rep) rented the Empire Theatre, launching its first main stage (non-touring) season of major productions designed to serve elementary age children and their families. Theatre IV purchased the theatre and its neighboring Walker Theatre (which later became the Little Theatre and finally, Theatre Gym) in 1986. Restorations were completed in 1990, and Theatre IV presented performances for children and families in the renovated space, which they renamed the Empire Theatre.

Twenty-one years later, with the Empire in need of new renovations, Sara Belle and Neil November made a \$2 million gift for restoration, and in 2012 the Empire Theatre was renamed the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre. Barksdale Theatre and Theatre IV merged in 2012 to become Virginia Rep. In 2013, the stage at the November Theatre was renamed to the Marjorie Arenstein Stage to honor the legacy of prominent Richmond actress, Marjorie Arenstein.

Text and images courtesy of the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre.



National Theatre

Richmond, Virginia

NATIONAL THEATRE

708 E. Broad Street

Richmond, Virginia

OPENED: November 11, 1923

ARCHITECT: C.K. Howell

CAPACITY: 1300 (original)

Owners John Pryor and Frank Ferrandini formed the First National Amusement Company to construct the half-million dollar National Theater. Their company had financial ties to the nationwide group of film exhibitors in the First National circuit. For publicity, the National's backers posted signs at the construction site asking Richmonders to vote for types of entertainment they wanted the new theater to house. Citizens responded by voting for silent movies with a live orchestra. Nevertheless, the National was built for more than just movies. The adaptable stage and orchestra pit could accommodate theatrical, musical comedy, and vaudeville companies, as well as picture shows.

November 11, 1923, was the National's opening night, and Governor Lee Trinkle, Mayor George Anslie, and more than 2,000 eager patrons jammed into the 1,300-seat auditorium to see the Thomas Ince film *Her Reputation*, starring May McAvoy. Admission to the theater was 40 cents, and the building's elegance attracted even the most conservative of patrons. The interior boasted a marble staircase and opulent decoration painted in gold, coral, and turquoise. In addition to the tiered seating of the main floor, the theater had a balcony and four boxes along the sides. The orchestra pit was the largest in Virginia, seating 24 musicians. There was a billiard parlor in the basement, restaurant and retail space on the ground floor, and theatrical booking offices on the second floor. The second floor also provided a nursery and ladies' retiring room. Tea was served here every afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Theater critics have called the National Theater the closest thing Richmond has ever had to a Broadway-style playhouse.

Richmonders' fascination and love of



motion pictures led to the building of more theaters throughout the 1920s. Morton G. Thalhimer, the local department store owner, established Neighborhood Theaters Incorporated (NTI), which grew into a powerful local chain. His first theater was the Capitol Theater at 2525 W. Broad Street. The Capitol had the distinction of showing the first "talkies" in the city...

...By 1966, NTI had acquired all of Theater Row--the National, Colonial, and State Theaters. The company felt that remodeling would improve the National's attendance, and architect William A. Briggs and interior designers Milton Glaser Associates were chosen to modernize the theater.

The National was closed on March 8, 1968, and reopened in June after \$150,000 was spent on the remodeling. The facade was steam cleaned and a new two-sided, stainless steel marquee was installed. The seating of the balcony was re-spaced, reducing the capacity from 1,332 to 1,096. Rather than restoring the plasterwork of the lobby and auditorium, the walls were coated with gray and red paint. The bathrooms were modernized, a new stereophonic sound system was installed, the orchestra pit was covered, and a new wide screen was hung.

Suburban theaters began replacing downtown theaters in the 1970s and 1980s, and by 1983 the National Theater was empty and closed. The National underwent restoration and renovations in the 2000s and reopened in 2008 as a music performance venue.

Text courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places. Image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.

Carpenter Theatre

Richmond, Virginia

CARPENTER THEATRE

600 E. Grace Street
Richmond, Virginia
OPENED: April 9, 1928
ARCHITECT: John Ebersson
CAPACITY: 1800

The Loew's Theater at 6th and Grace streets in Richmond is a handsome example of movie palace architecture of the 1920s. Designed by the renowned theater architect John Ebersson, Loew's was considered the most up-to-date theater in the South when it opened to capacity crowds on April 9, 1928. Richmond's Loew's displays all the theater accoutrement deemed necessary for a successful theater of the twenties. On the exterior these include an exotic, romanticized image of a distant land; an imposing corner tower establishing the building as a major visual and cultural landmark within the urban landscape; and a large marquee woven into the facade by day and a blazing standard by night.

A mixture of Moorish and Spanish Colonial Revivals provided the appropriate fanciful image for Richmond's Loew's Theater. The image on the interior begins in the entrance lobby and foyer with stuccoed walls, turned woodwork, colorful Spanish tile designs and culminates in the auditorium. Facades line the sides of the theater, presenting the illusion of an open Spanish plaza. To the front a large proscenium arch with Spanish Baroque details separates the audience from the stage. A sky-colored ceiling completes the illusion of sitting in an outside Spanish court. One reviewer attested to the success of Ebersson's special atmospheric effects, remarking at the theater's grand opening. "Going into the theatre was like going out of doors, except it was raining out of doors. Stars twinkled in a cerulean ceiling and clouds drifted slowly by."



Over 12,000 people streamed into the theater on opening day...In addition to the speeches and movie, the audience was treated to several patriotic orchestral tunes, a short comedy, and, what one reviewer called "the most impressive part of the bill ...'Wild Oscar', an organist of parts, a deft exponent of syncopation, a nimble musical trickster and a singer of pleasant and agreeable voice." Accompanying "Wild Oscar" and his music was a series of stereopticon slides.

Entering into a period of decline during the late 1970s, Richmond's Loew's Theater closed in June 1979. During its last years as a movie house it played mostly grade "B" movies catering to fans of Bruce Lee and Kung Fu. In June 1979 the theater was purchased by the Richmond Symphony with the intent of using the building as the symphony's home theater. The Richmond

Loew's has now been reopened as the Carpenter Theatre, part of Richmond's multi-venue CenterStage complex.

Text courtesy of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Images courtesy of Richmond CenterStage.

Henrico Theatre

Henrico, Virginia

HENRICO THEATRE

305 E. Nine Mile Road
Highland Springs, Virginia
OPENED: April 25, 1938
ARCHITECT: Edward Francis Sinnott
CAPACITY: 820 (original)
400 (currently)

Located in Highland Springs, the Henrico Theatre was the most prominent and architecturally sophisticated theater, and the best example of Art Deco design in Henrico County when it opened on Monday, April 25, 1938.

The owners Charles A. Somma and B. N. Somma, were not new to theatre architecture. Charles A. Somma (with Walter Coulter) was the builder of the Byrd Theater, built in 1928 to the design of architect Fred Bishop. The Henrico Theatre was constructed with the most up-to-date features possible: air conditioning, high tech lighting and projection equipment, superior acoustical treatment, streamlined and cushioned seats, plush fabrics throughout, neon tube façade lighting at night, and plenty of adjacent parking. The general contractor was Doyle & Russell, who went on to work on Richmond's City Hall. Several of the subcontracting companies are still in business today and were considered topnotch at the time: Decorative plasterwork and painting by E. Caligari & Son (Norfolk and Massachusetts offices), theater chairs and lounge furniture by Heywood-Wakefield (who had launched their "new modern" line a few years prior), stage drapery and equipment by Novelty Scenic Studio from New York City – even the exterior clock was a high tech creation from the International Business Machine Corporation (later IBM.)

No expense was spared in creating what was intended to be the most modern movie facility around in both function and design. The building was constructed of poured in place concrete, which created a monolithic structure that appears much



larger than it actually is. In its grand opening advertisement in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, it was touted as "...a modern 'Big City' temple of entertainment set in beautiful rural surroundings..." It was so well received, that in the 1940 *Architectural Record* poll it was nominated by a distinguished panel of citizen to be one of the most outstanding examples of recent architecture in Richmond.

Buildings designed in the Art Deco mode embraced modernity: as in the case of the Henrico Theatre, the design could be seen as a statement both embracing the newness and modernity of motion pictures, as well as making a clear statement about the possibilities for advancement of this once-rural, and then-emerging suburban portion of Henrico County. The motion picture industry, including the theatres in which films were shown, exemplified the modern transformation of information distribution, and embraced a wide range of developments in technology and transportation available to places formerly

considered too isolated. Art Deco was just the style to convey this promise of modernity, and the Henrico Theatre is, for these reasons, an excellent example of it.

Text courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places. Image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.

Ashland Theatre

Ashland, Virginia

ASHLAND THEATER

205 England Street
Ashland, Virginia
OPENED: 1948
ARCHITECT: Unknown
CAPACITY: 330

As in many towns across the United States, Ashland, Virginia's main street theatre served as a hub of community engagement. Opened as a single screen theatre in 1948, the Ashland Theatre is a simply designed theatre with a mauve and green interior and gold trim—the overall look sleek in keeping with its Art Deco style. For generations, the Ashland was tightly packed with local patrons, gathering at the only place in town to catch the latest films.

As times changed, however, the Ashland began to suffer under competition from the larger megaplexes along the highways that offered more luxurious accommodations and a larger selection of film titles.

When the Ashland Theatre was closed in the late 1990s, the theatre became a symbol for the economic downturn and for the competition local businesses saw from larger, national chains. The bright lights of the theatre remained dark, reminding locals of what a gathering place the theatre had once been.

In 2013, Preservation Virginia included the Ashland Theatre on its list of the 10 Most Endangered Historic Sites in Virginia, and there was concern that, if left as is, the Ashland would turn into a major eyesore. Things began to turn around for the theatre quickly when A.D. and Jean Whittaker donated the Ashland Theatre to the town government in May of 2014. Though the theatre had been closed since the late 1990s, the city was pleased to find that the theatre was not in complete disrepair and was foundationally sound. The city moved forward cautiously with the theatre, seeking appropriate management and devising the most effective ways to use the Ashland Theatre

to benefit all of Ashland.

Through the efforts of the Ashland Main Street Association, the Ashland Theatre has been sporadically open for community entertainment events and film screenings, but recent grant funding could serve to move the theatre's operations forward at an accelerated pace. In late 2014, the Ashland Main Street Association received \$25,000 dollars in state grant money to fund an engineering and architectural study of the Ashland's current conditions. Then, in the spring of 2015, the Ashland Theatre received \$500,000 in Industrial Revitalization Fund monies. The town of Ashland hopes to use these funds to continue to improve on the

theatre, making it a focal point of the main street. Like many other cities and towns working to renovate and reopen their once grand theatres, Ashland seeks to turn the Ashland Theatre into an anchor, bringing patrons not only to the theatre but to other downtown destinations as well.

Text and image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.



Lincoln Theatre

Washington, D.C.

LINCOLN THEATRE

1215 U Street NW

Washington, D.C.

OPENED: January 22, 1922

ARCHITECT: Reginald W. Geare

CAPACITY: 1,225

The Lincoln Theatre was built by theatre operator Harry Crandall, with designer Reginald Geare during the summer of 1921. When the theatre opened in 1922, it presented both silent films and vaudeville performances, with a special focus on Washington D.C.'s African American community. Due to the combinations of a large African American population and segregation laws that kept African Americans out of other D.C. theatres.

In 1927 A.E. Lichtman, a theatre operator who would go on to own many African American theatres throughout the D.C. and Richmond areas, purchased the Lincoln. He transformed the theatre into a luxury destination, with an upgraded auditorium and a new ballroom, known as the Lincoln Colonnade. The Lincoln

Theatre and Colonnade were key to an era when Washington D.C.'s "Black Broadway" thrived. Many famous performers, including Duke Ellington, Pearl Bailey, Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald performed at the Colonnade.

The theatre was just as popular as the ballroom, however, with upgraded technologies like the television projection system that was installed in 1952. Thanks to this technology the Lincoln was able to host screenings of popular boxing matches and other television events.

After desegregation laws were passed in 1953 all movie theatres in Washington D.C. were open to African Americans, and the Lincoln began to suffer financially. The Colonnade was demolished in the late 1950s, and by the late 1960s the theater was in great disrepair. In 1978 the Lincoln was twinned, and experienced some small success with its "All-Night Movie" screenings until the early 1980s. Developer Jeffrey Cohen purchased the Lincoln in 1983 and closed it for renovations. Cohen ran into financial difficulties in his

development plans, however, and declared bankruptcy, leaving the Lincoln closed and unrestored.

1993 was the year of the Lincoln Theatre's turnaround. The theatre was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was restored by the U Street Theatre Foundation, due in large part to \$9 million dollars of support from the D.C. government.

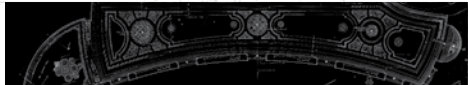
Text and image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.





Howard Theater

Washington, D.C.



HOWARD THEATRE

620 T Street NW

Washington, D.C.

OPENED: August 22, 1910

ARCHITECT: J. Edward Storck

CAPACITY: 1,242

Washington D.C.'s African American community got its first major theatre in 1910, when the National Amusement Company opened the Howard Theater. With an original capacity of 1,200, the J. Edward Storck designed theatre featured orchestra and balcony seats, along with eight proscenium boxes. The exterior was designed in a mixture of styles that combined elements of Beaux-Arts, Italian Renaissance and Neoclassical aesthetics.

In its early days, the Howard catered to the upper crust of D.C.'s African American community, showing slides from the Tuskegee Institute and performances from the most popular African American vaudeville acts. From the teens to the 1920s, the Howard was managed by local African American theater entrepreneurs until 1926, when Abe Lichtman purchased the theatre and it became part of the Lichtman Theatre circuit. By the 1930s, the Great Depression began to affect theatre

attendance and the Howard briefly served as a church. Soon thereafter, however, the theatre returned to its original purpose and, through the rest of the 1930s, the Howard was a major entertainment venue for people seeking out the most up-to-date African American entertainment. In 1941, the theatre's original design was altered to the then-trendy Streamline style.

The Howard remained a successful venue through the 1940s and 1950s, featuring important R&B acts of the day, including Lena Horne, the Supremes and, Marvin Gaye. The 1960s brought desegregation, which had a negative effect on many once Black-only theatres.

The Howard closed in 1970 due to difficulty in attracting patrons. In 1973, the Howard Theatre Foundation was formed and successfully gained historic landmark status for the theatre, but the 1975 grand reopening of the Howard turned out to be a false start. By 1980, the Howard was once again closed.

In 2010, thanks to publicity from the DC Preservation League listing the Howard as one of its Most Endangered Places in 2002, renovations began to restore the Howard to its original 1910 look and purpose. The Howard reopened on April 9, 2012 after 29 million dollars in

renovations led by the firm of Martinez + Johnson Architecture. Since its reopening, the Howard has played host to many of today's most popular jazz, R&B, and hip hop performers and has assisted in bringing more attention and business to the Shaw neighborhood of Washington D.C.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive. First image, of the Howard Theatre in 1976, courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive. Second image, of the Howard Theatre after its 2012 reopening, courtesy of the Howard Theatre.



Warner Theatre

Washington, D.C.



WARNER THEATRE

513 13th Street NW

Washington, D.C.

OPENED: December 27, 1924

ARCHITECT: C. Howard Crane

CAPACITY: 1,847

Originally known as the Earle Theatre, this theatre's development began in 1922. Founded by Aaron and Julian Brylawski, the Warner was designed by C. Howard Crane and Kenneth Franzheim II. The theatre's grand opening as the Earle on December 27, 1924, and provided a full evening experience, with a rooftop garden, a basement ballroom, and a full-service restaurant.

The Earle featured its own precision dance team, the Roxyettes, who performed before and after most films until 1945. Their stage show also featured live comedy performances from performers including Red Skelton and Jerry Lewis. In the 1930s and 40s the theatre hosted a wide variety of music and comedy performers, including Bob Hope, Jack Benny, and Duke Ellington. In 1945 the theatre switched to a film-only policy, two years after hosting the premier of the movie *This Is the Army*.

In 1947, the Earle was renamed the Warner after its then-owner, Harry

Warner. Harry Warner, one of the founders of the Warner Brothers, is said to have told Julian Brylawski, whom was showing him the city, "I own that theatre, put my name up there!"

The 1950s saw the auditorium retrofitted for Cinerama, but the Warner had a hard time due to the economic downturns of the 1970s, and the generally poor state of Washington D.C. at the time. In the late 1970s, however, the Warner saw new life by bringing back live performances, including a famed secret show from the Rolling Stones in 1978.

The Warner continued to host live music acts through the 1980s, but by 1989 was in a state of disrepair. The theatre was closed for extensive renovations from 1989 to 1992. The Kaempfer Company's 10 million dollar renovations brought the Warner back to its glamour days with custom upholstery, drapes imported from Portugal, new gilt for the walls and ceilings, and updated production, sound, and lighting equipment. The Warner reopened in October 1992 with a headlining performance from Frank Sinatra, his last show in Washington, D.C.

Various awards ceremonies have been hosted from the Warner Theatre's stage, including the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song and

the BET Honors ceremony. The Warner Theatre remains one of the city's top venues for popular music acts, with performers from Kenny Rogers to Jay-Z performing to sold-out auditoriums.

Text and images courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archives.

National Theater

Washington, D.C.



NATIONAL THEATER

1321 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C.

OPENED: December 27, 1835
October 15, 1948 (remodel)

ARCHITECT: John and Drew Eberson
(remodel)

CAPACITY: 1,683

Located only three blocks from the White House, the National Theatre is one of the United States' oldest continuously operating theatres, though it has gone through many names and many renovations. The National was opened on December 7, 1835 by prominent local citizens who wanted the nation's capital to have first class entertainment options. The National went through many changes in its first century, including name changes from Grover's National Theatre to Grover's Theatre, and many reconstructions and renovations-- including several after five separate fires. The theatre's current form was constructed in 1923.

The National remained open in the following decades, though its popularity waxed and waned. In 1970, the Nederlander Organization took over management of the theatre, and four years later a not-for-profit called the National

Theatre Corporation was established to revitalize the National, which had suffered a major downturn in attendance due to shifts in the neighborhood's makeup.

The early 1980s brought about major renovations in the National and its surrounding neighborhood, including the opening of new shops, a flagship hotel, and renovations of the National Press Building. This neighborhood redevelopment brought its fair share of controversy, due to the planned razing of nearby historic buildings. Luckily, the National remained intact and renovated, with the current building still resting atop the original 1835 stone foundations, though currently reinforced with erosion-resistant steel caissons.

The National's long reign in the world of Washington D.C. theatre has featured history making performances, such as "Swedish Nightingale" Jenny Lind's riot-causing 1850 concerts, and the long tenure of famed march composer John Philip Sousa as conductor of The President's Own United States Marine Band and the John Philip Sousa Band, both of which performed often at the National from 1882 to 1916.

Throughout its history, the National Theatre has been home to great events in

American musical theatre, including the 1927 premiere of the musical *Show Boat* and the 1957 premiere of *West Side Story*.

With its location so near the White House, it should come as no surprise that the National Theatre has also hosting many political events, from Sir Winston Churchill's lecture on the Boer War in 1900, to the speech given by then-president Ronald Reagan at the Gala Benefit performance of the musical "42nd Street," held to celebrate the 1984 reopening of this great place of American history.

Text and images courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.

Attucks Theater

Norfolk, Virginia

ATTUCKS THEATER

1010 Church Street

Norfolk, Virginia

OPENED: 1919

ARCHITECT: Harvey N. Johnson

CAPACITY: 835 (original)

624 (currently)

The Attucks Theatre was erected by a group of black businessmen who founded the Twin Cities Amusement Corporation, which operated theatres in Norfolk and Portsmouth. It was financed by two black financial institutions in Tidewater, the Brown Savings Bank and Tidewater Trust Company. Situated in the center of a fairly concentrated area of Black commercial activity and

adjacent to a large black residential area, the Attucks Theatre building was designed to accommodate not only the motion picture theatre, but also various retail shops and offices for realtors, doctors, insurance agents, and dentists. Along with the emergence of a growing and more prosperous Black population in Tidewater cities after World War I, there was also a marked tendency to segregate races in all public places. Although segregation in places of public entertainment was not written into the law of Virginia until 1926, society in the Old Dominion was moving in that direction much earlier, and the Attucks Theatre symbolizes the Black community's attempt to deal with the reality.

The architect for the Attucks Theatre was Harvey N. Johnson (1892-1973). Born in Richmond's Jackson Ward, the son of a successful carpenter, Johnson was educated at Virginia Union University in Richmond and the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. In 1919 at the age of 26, he moved to Norfolk to design and supervise the building of the Attucks theatre.

The extant plans of the theatre are signed by Johnson and Charles T. Russell, another Black architect who designed the renovation for the St. Luke Building in Richmond, as well as supervised the additions to the buildings of Virginia Union University.

By 1924, the Norfolk Directory shows that the Attucks Theatre was occupied by several lawyers, a dentist, realtors, and the National Benefit Life Insurance Company. The coming of the Great Depression seems to have halted the prosperity of the Attucks Theatre and the surrounding Church Street area. As early as 1931, there were a number of vacancies in the neighborhood, and the theatre building was ultimately purchased by Stark and Legum. The theatre building itself, along with the surrounding businesses that flourished as a Black commercial center in the 1920s, entered into a period of rapid decline, but was still able to host numerous famous national and local entertainers, including Norfolk's Gary U.S. Bonds and Portsmouth's Ruth Brown.

The Attucks was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 16, 1982, but was not fully restored until 2004, in a partnership between the City of Norfolk's Department of Cultural Facilities and the Crispus Attucks Cultural Center.


Text courtesy of the Virginia Landmarks Register and image courtesy of Norfolk SevenVenues.





Chrysler Hall

Norfolk, Virginia



CHRYSLER HALL

215 Saint Pauls Boulevard

Norfolk, Virginia

OPENED: 1972

ARCHITECT: Williams & Tazewell

Pier Luigi Nervi

CAPACITY: 2500

Built in 1972, Chrysler Hall is part of the Norfolk Scope, an entertainment complex consisting of an 11,000 person arena, a 10,000 square foot exhibition hall, and the 2,500 person Chrysler Hall. Chrysler Hall was always imagined as being part of this amazing Norfolk cultural center. Norfolk architects Brad Tazewell and Jim Williams were inspired by the 1960 Rome Summer Olympics' Palazzo and Palazzetto dello Sport, and made a plea to Senator A. Willis Robertson to build a similar sports complex in Norfolk. When Senator

Robertson was later asked by President Lyndon B. Johnson to support federal funding for a cultural and entertainment complex in Colorado, Robertson took up Tazewell and Williams' idea, and said he would support a cultural complex in Colorado if President Johnson would support one in Norfolk. Williams and Tazewell were commissioned as designers, and they in turn commissioned Pier Luigi Nervi, the Italian architect who designed the Olympic structures they had earlier admired.

Chrysler Hall has been Norfolk's cultural center since its earliest days, currently hosting over 140 events a year and welcoming over 150,000 attendees annually. The Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Norfolk Form, Virginia Arts Festival, and the Virginia Ballet all call Chrysler Hall home. Chrysler

Hall is always a place for more avant-garde entertainment, hosting the Generic Theater's off-Broadway style performances. The Generic Theater brings new and unique theatrical works to Norfolk's public, helping to round out Chrysler Hall's role as the place for the arts in Norfolk.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archives. Image courtesy of Michael Pennello.



Roper Performing Arts Center

Norfolk, Virginia

JEANNE AND GEORGE ROPER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

300 Granby Street
Norfolk, Virginia

OPENED: May 10, 1926

ARCHITECT: Thomas W. Lamb

CAPACITY: 2,100 (original)
861 (currently)

The Tidewater Community College Jeanne and George Roper Performing Arts Center was originally built in the early 1900s, not as a theatre but rather as Gilmer's Department Store. For much of the 1910s and 1920s, the building served as the Philip Levy Furniture Stores, but in 1924 the building was purchased by Loew's. Loew's brought in architect Thomas Lamb and local interior designer Anne Dorrin to shape the department store into a world class theatre, at an estimated cost of just under \$1,000,000.

The Loew's State, as it was called, opened

on May 10th, 1926 with a program that included films, organologues, and vaudeville acts.

The theatre remained open as a movie theatre until 1978, although in the later years the quality of entertainment shifted to X-rated films and b-grade materials. It was briefly reopened as the Premiere theatre in the early 1980s, when new management attempted to make it a live performance venue for jazz and rock acts, but by 1984 they too shut the doors. As the downtown area underwent urban renewal attempts, the theatre's marquee was removed and retail spaces were built along the building's front.

The building was eventually purchased by Tidewater Community College, in partnership with the city of Norfolk, and renovations began in 1999. Though a leaking roof had caused a great deal of damage, much of the auditorium was intact, with restorations done to the ceilings, chandeliers, theatre boxes,

murals, leaded glass windows, and original auditorium seating. The rear section of the building was most affected by the water damage, leading that area to be converted into lecture halls and classrooms. The restoration process led to the rediscovery of many artifacts from the theatre's heyday, including hand-painted film posters from 1929, set pieces from the Loew's vaudeville circuit, and several programs from the early 1930s.

Text and image of the theatre stage during the Loew's State era, courtesy of American Theatre Architecture Archives.



Wells Theatre

Norfolk, Virginia

WELLS THEATRE

110 E. Tazewell Street
Norfolk, Virginia
OPENED: August 26, 1913
ARCHITECT: E.C. Horn
CAPACITY: 641

The Wells theatre is named after Jake Wells, a major figure in late 19th century Virginia theatre. Wells began his career as a professional baseball player, was struck one day by an idea and stated to a friend “I believe there is money waiting for the man who gets hold of that building and puts on the right kind of popular-priced vaudeville.” That building would become the Bijou Family Theatre, Richmond’s first vaudeville house. Wells and his brother would go on to manage and own- over 42 theatres throughout the South, including the namesake Beaux-Arts Wells Theatre, opened in 1912.

Economic sufferings following the Great Depression led to a suffering in attendance and, by the 1960s, the Wells Theatre met the fate of many great American theatres and was only open to screen adult films. A large cinderblock wall was put up in front of the stage to serve as a movie screen, and the backstage area was repurposed as the “Jamaican Room,” a bar and house of ill repute catering to sailors. In 1979, the Virginia Stage Company took control of the theatre and, after using money from its own pockets to pay back the deficit, began the fundraising process to fully restore the theatre to its previous glory.

Under the guidance of architect John Paul Hanbury, the restoration brought beauty back to the Wells. When the Virginia Stage Company moved in, the theatre was marred by a leaking roof which damaged the statues, murals, stained glass, brass rails, and Tiffany lamps which had been painted over, then left to flake.

A 3.85 million dollar renovation in the late 1980s included work on the outer vestibule and house, with work on the plasterwork and ceiling murals. In adjusting the theatre for live performance,



the audience arrangement was changed and the backstage systems were fully repaired. The Virginia Stage Company also purchased the adjacent office building to expand the support spaces. While the restoration updated many aspects of the theatre to 20th century standards, the Wells uniquely retained its traditional rope rigging system. One of the few American theatres still existing as a “hemp house,” the Wells makes use of the traditional complex system of ropes, pins, pulleys and sandbags to lower scenery and props onto the stage.

Upon completion of the restoration, John Witt from the Richmond Times-Dispatch wrote “Cosmetic surgery and skilled makeup artistry have transformed the Wells Theatre from an aging actress into a classic beauty”

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archives. Top image, of the Wells Theatre in its current restored condition, courtesy of Michael Pennello. Middle and bottom images of the Wells Theatre circa 1922 and of the theater interior, courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archives.

Wayne Theatre

Waynesboro, Virginia

WAYNE THEATRE

521 W. Main Street
Waynesboro, Virginia
OPENED: January 18, 1926
ARCHITECT: C.K. Howell
CAPACITY: 625 (original)
384 (current)

The Wayne Theatre opened on January 18, 1926. The Valley Virginian reported that the six-month construction period had resulted in a 625 seat auditorium. The interior was decorated by the Richmond firm of Jones and Davis. The color scheme was ivory, old rose and blue with textured wall and decorative plaster borders. A number of bronze chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling and dimmed by what the paper called “the most up-to-date lighting system possible.” The system was built by Lee Lash Studios of New York City.

A major feature of the Wayne Theatre was the Arthur Jordan Orchestra Pipe Organ. Touted as the “largest and most expensive in the state” it cost 10,000 dollars. The console was located in the small orchestra pit at the front of the stage. The pipes were concealed in the auditorium ceiling and walls. In 1929, the Wayne followed the lead of the Dixie Theatre in Staunton and installed a “talking machine” by RCA which allowed the Wayne to show the first full-length talkie, *The Jazz Singer*.

In 1949, it was decided to enlarge the Wayne. The original stage area was removed and the backstage area was altered, effectively doubling the size of the auditorium. A two-story extension was added to the rear of the building and a lounge was added in an addition on the east. A few years later, a second story was added to the lounge to serve as an apartment for the manager.

The corporation continued to operate the theatres until 1964 when it sold its interests to The B & K Virginia Corporation which leased the Wayne to the Davidson Theatres of Washington, D.C.

A fire on June 2, 1980, created the



opportunity to again alter the interior of the Wayne. The auditorium was divided in half with the first screen placed at approximately same location as the original vaudeville stage. The second screening room was at the end of the 1949 expansion. Audiences accessed the second space via a narrow hallway on the right of the auditorium. The creation of a movie duplex gave the Wayne a few years of profitability, but by 1999 the theatre was no longer a viable business venture. The owner closed the Wayne and deeded the structure to the city of Waynesboro.

In an attempt to turn the defunct movie theatre into a cultural asset, the City of Waynesboro sought the advice of its Cultural Commission. The result was the establishment of the Wayne Theatre Alliance under the leadership of Lillian Morse. She called the first meeting together on April 10, 2000. The stated purpose of the Alliance was “to provide the residents and artists of Waynesboro, Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley, through the use and development of the Wayne Theatre, with an environment in which all the arts may be appreciated, enjoyed, learned, and supported.”

On June 8, 2000, the organization was incorporated as the Wayne Theatre Alliance, Inc. With the city assuming the cost of the application, the Alliance sought a 501 (c) 3 non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service. It was finally granted on March 14, 2001.

After a competition to select an architect for the renovation, Bushman and Dreyfus Architects of Charlottesville was chosen. The architectural historian, Mimi Sadler, was engaged to usher the plans through the approval process for historic tax credits. In October, 2007, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) gave its approval followed by the Federal Park Service.

The new plans call for a 384 seat auditorium with an addition of wing space and fly loft. The addition of the wings and an extension for the bathrooms and meeting room on the east side of the building were the only changes to the 1949 footprint of the Wayne.

In 2014, an amendment to the plans was submitted to DHR. The changes were to adjust the layout, and create a performance space on the second floor behind the auditorium to be known as the Custin Cabaret. No other changes were contemplated. Approval for the amendment is forthcoming.

Text and image courtesy of Wayne Theatre.

Blackfriars Playhouse

Staunton, Virginia

BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE

10 S. Market Street

Staunton, Virginia

OPENED: September 21, 2001

ARCHITECT: Tom McLaughlin

CAPACITY: 309

The American Shakespeare Center hosts an internationally acclaimed theatre company that performs Shakespeare's works under their original staging conditions -- on a simple stage, without elaborate sets, and with the audience sharing the same light as the actors. Home to the ASC's resident troupe and the ASC on Tour, the Blackfriars Playhouse has been established as one of America's premier Shakespeare destinations.

Situated in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley in historic Staunton, Virginia, the 300-seat Blackfriars Playhouse opened its doors in September 2001 and has already delighted tens of thousands of enthusiastic audience members from around the world.

The product of years of research, this unique, historically accurate performance space provides the perfect backdrop for the ASC's Elizabethan staging practices, and has already been called...

"One of the most historically important theatres in the world."

-- Andrew Gurr, Professor of English, University of Reading, England and former Director of Research, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London.

The Blackfriars Playhouse is open year-round for Shakespeare productions, hailed by The Washington Post as "shamelessly entertaining" and by The Boston Globe as "phenomenal...bursting with energy." It's also the perfect venue for meetings and conferences, or for the wedding of your dreams. Additionally, the Playhouse is open for special musical and theatrical events, workshops, educational programs,

and theatre tours.

Southern Living believes that "Staunton's Blackfriars Playhouse will make you fall in love with Shakespeare."

Text and image courtesy of the American Shakespeare Center.



Staunton Performing Arts Center

Staunton, Virginia

STAUNTON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

828 N. Augusta Street

Staunton, Virginia

OPENED: June 16, 1913

ARCHITECT: T.J. Collins and Sons

CAPACITY: 1,200 (original)

Three investors, Witz, Schultz and Olivier formed the New Theatre Corporation, purchased land and hired Staunton's T. J. Collins and Sons as the architects to build the New Theatre. The grand opening was June 16, 1913, and seated 1,200 people on its orchestra and two balcony levels. The interior had gilded plasterwork ornamentation with a bucolic mural above the box seating and continuing over the top third of the proscenium.

Somewhere around 1926 control of the New Theatre Corporation was purchased by Isaac Weinberg, a theatre circuit owner from Clifton Forge. Later, he sold a controlling percentage of his Shenandoah Valley Theatre Corporation to Universal Studios. When Universal, facing financial strains around 1928 or 1929, exited the theatre business, Mr. Weinstein invited Warner Brothers to become his controlling partner.

On January 23, 1936, flames broke out in the rear of the New Theatre, only 20 minutes after the theatre was closed for the night. The destruction was limited to the roof, top level and rear sections of the building, while the elaborate Collins design along the front was preserved almost intact.

The third day after the fire, John Eberson, the premier theatre architect, met with representatives of Warner Brothers and surveyed the destruction. Eberson's stylistic intentions were given, in a quotation published in the *Staunton News Leader* on Tuesday, December 15, 1936, the day of the opening:

Forsaking the path of trodden convention, I therefore am aiming to make available to the motion picture

industry, auditoriums designed and decorated to be seen and felt "in the dark" – eschewing super-palatial architecture and glittering over-ornamentation... Thanks to a management that has granted me freedom of architectural expression, Warner Brother's Dixie embodies my ideas of 'streamline design,' the sturdy stone exterior is in dignified modern style – NOT 'modernistic'...

The moldings were gilded, pulled plaster, each separating soft gradations of green along the sides and continuing over the ceiling in the balcony. Contrasting red upholstery covered the seating and the carpet was a bold geometric design. Blue and green plush upholstered the proscenium arch, accented by decorative "plaques."

For the exterior Eberson retained most of the existing T. J. Collins design for the front, second floor elevation, modifying it only by closing off the five windows with bright tile Art Deco designs. Horizontal bands are used along the first floor exterior, interrupted by the new box office and flanked by display windows holding posters of coming attractions. The neon vertical sign is hung off the wall and just above the new marquee by a curved top bracket attaching it to the roof and by a zigzag bracket at the bottom connecting to the decorative band of the retained design from 1913.

After the Consent Decree of 1948 removed ownership of the theatres from the studios that built them, The Dixie was first transferred to the Stanley Warner Corporation, later merged into Glen Alden, and then the theatre division was purchased by Esmark and then renamed International Playtex, Inc. Once the theatre returned to local ownership, the only design change made was to divide it into four theaters somewhere around the end of the 1970s. Eberson's design is intact, under sheetrock or shirred fabric panels. In contrast to the Dixie's decline, the spirit of historic preservation for the

city began in 1971 with the formation of the Historic Staunton Foundation. The result of these early efforts led to Staunton's revival. Yet the Dixie and the adjacent Arcadia, also owned by Staunton Performing Arts Center, remain the only major buildings along Beverley Street that have not been restored.

The Staunton Performing Arts Center was formed in 2003 to raise the funds to renovate the Dixie and return it to the glory of its opening in 1936. During the intervening years we were able to continue presenting films. In 2014, the theatre went dark for the first time in its history due to the costs of the temporary digital conversion. However we are pleased to add that an exciting new concept, one that will make our historic space vibrant and relevant for the 21st Century, will be announced in June of 2015.

Text courtesy of the Staunton Performing Arts Center. Image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.



Jefferson Theatre

Charlottesville, Virginia

JEFFERSON THEATRE

110 E. Main Street
Charlottesville, Virginia
OPENED: December 25, 1911
ARCHITECT: C.K. Howell
CAPACITY: 600

The Jefferson National Bank constructed its first building in 1901. A two-story Greek Revival building designed by Charlottesville architect W.T. Vandegrift, the multi-columned building with its large Romanesque arches would serve as the town bank for the next ten years. In 1912, when the bank decided to move headquarters, Kendler-Zimmer Co. (who later changed their name to Jefferson-Lafayette Theaters, Inc.) purchased the old bank building and hired local architect W.W. Keenan to lead extensive interior remodels and the construction of an extension of the building, transforming the town bank into its newest theatre.

The new Jefferson Theatre opened to the public on October 21st, 1912 with a live performance from a theatre troupe all

the way from New York. Charlottesville's citizens showed up in droves to pay their \$1.00-2.50 ticket fee for the premiere performance of the comedy, "The Man from Home."

For the next three years, the Jefferson Theatre showed a mixture of vaudeville and films to Charlottesville audiences, but in 1915 a huge fire erupted and completely gutted the theatre. Richmond architect C.K. Howell was brought in to rebuild the theatre, and the new Jefferson opened a year a later. The Jefferson continued under Jefferson-LaFayette Theatres' management until 1966 when it was sold to a team of local businessmen who updated the seating and changed the name to the Cinema Theater. In the early 1980s, the theatre was twinned and renamed The Movie Palace. While the twinning did require the separation of the theatre's mezzanine, it allowed the theatre to continue operating through the 1980s.

The 1990s brought financial difficulties to the Jefferson, thanks in large part to competition from major theatre chains

along Route 29, causing a shut down in 1992. From 2006 to 2009, the Jefferson was reconstructed to open as a live music performance venue. Many historic details were restored in the theatre's designs, while many other updates were made to bring the venue into the 21st century. The Jefferson is now one of the best places in Charlottesville to catch a musical performance, with guests ranging from country music hitmakers to popular hip hop artists.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive, image courtesy of Kirby Hutto.



Paramount Theater

Charlottesville, Virginia

PARAMOUNT THEATRE

215 E. Main Street
Charlottesville, Virginia
OPENED: November 25, 1931
ARCHITECT: Rapp & Rapp
CAPACITY: 1,300 (original)
1,100 (current)

The Paramount Theatre's Rapp & Rapp designed Greek-Revival building fits perfectly with the theme of classic Virginian architecture. Inspired by the architectural leanings of famed Charlottesville native Thomas Jefferson, the theatre's neoclassical design is unique among Rapp & Rapp theatres.

Although it opened in 1931, near the beginning of the Great Depression,

the Paramount was always a popular Charlottesville destination. Drove of movie-goers came to the luxuriously appointed theatre to escape their day-to-day lives and enjoy Hollywood's latest offerings. The Paramount offered more than just movies, however, hosting community events like war bond drives, fashion shows, and popular music acts as well.

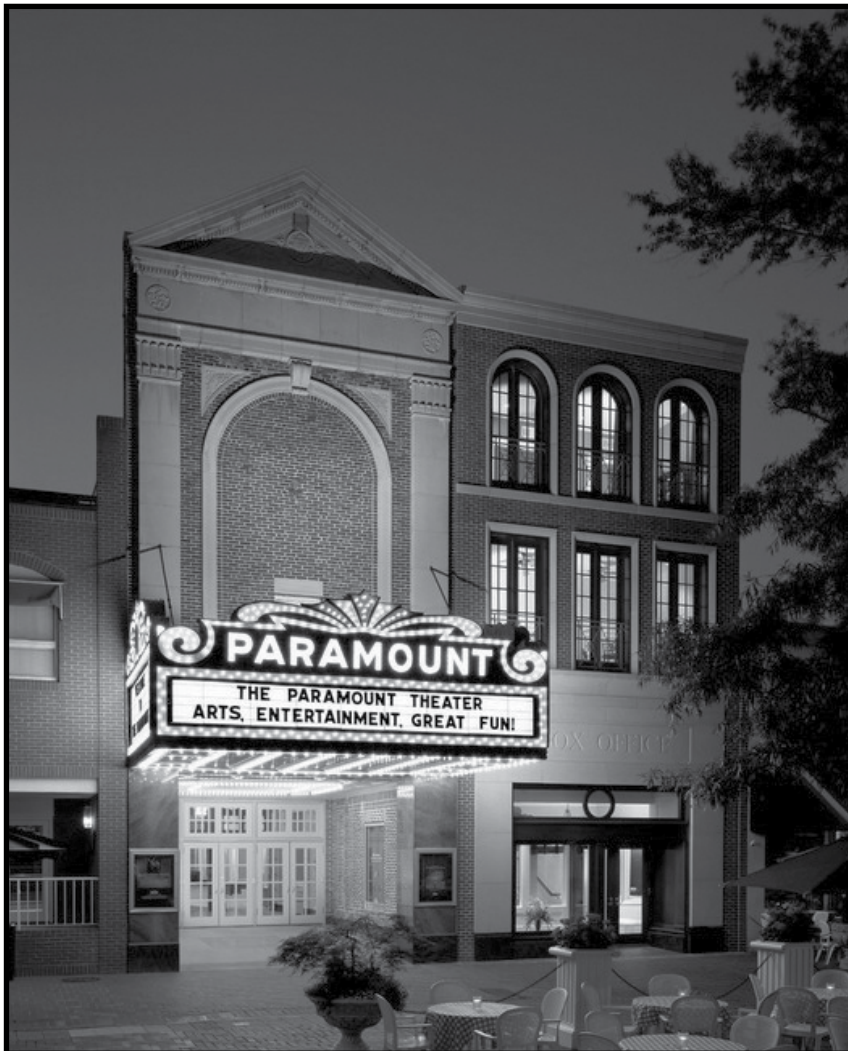
In spite of decades of popularity, the Paramount met the fate of many great theatres and was officially closed in 1974. Though memories of the theatre's heyday never faded, it would be almost twenty years before restoration would begin. The building was purchased in 1992 by a local non-profit calling themselves Paramount

Theater, Inc. Their first project was to restore the theatre's marquee as a calling-card to the community, letting them know changes were coming to the Paramount.

After continued fundraising, Washington D.C.-based architectural firm Martinez + Johnson Architecture, the same firm that worked on the restoration of Washington's Howard Theatre, and local Charlottesville-based Bushman Dreyfus Architects began a 16.2 million dollar renovation project which included both the restoration of the building's original stunning aesthetics and the addition of new facilities to transition the theatre into a regional performing arts hub.

The Paramount reopened on December 15th, 2004 and has once again become a crown jewel of Charlottesville. Fans of theatre, dance and classical music find all of their favorites at this historic theatre, which also programs live screenings of popular sports events and performances from award winning comedians and musicians.

Text courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive. Image courtesy of the Paramount Theatre.



Beacon Theatre

Hopewell, Virginia

BEACON THEATRE

401 N. Main Street
Hopewell, Virginia
OPENED: November 28, 1928
ARCHITECT: Fred Bishop
CAPACITY: 981 (original)
674 (current)

The Beacon Theatre was the brainchild of M.T. Broyhill, C.B. Swain and John Cunningham, all three the original partners of the Hopewell Amusement Corp. They commissioned two architects, local Osbert L. Edwards, and Richmond's Fred Bishop, and general contractor W.W. Thompson to build a new Art Deco-style theatre for Hopewell at a cost of \$150,000, which included a \$10,000 organ. The theatre opened in 1928 as the Broadway Theater

In 1932 the theatre was purchased at auction by George Rollo and George Stath, for \$46,480. They changed the theatre's name to the Beacon. In 1982 the theatre was closed. In 1987, Hopewell Preservation Inc. was formed to restore and reopen the Beacon Theatre as a performing arts center. They obtained ownership of the building in 1989. Though Hopewell Preservation Inc. was able to begin some renovations, the theatre remained in stasis. In 2010, the city of Hopewell took ownership of the Beacon and began the planning and fundraising process, leading to a 4.1 million dollar restoration project that began in 2013.

In 2014, the Beacon once again opened to the public as part of an even larger push to revitalize Hopewell. Since its reopening, the Beacon has brought many famous performing acts to Hopewell, including an opening night premier with Leon Russell. The Beacon has also garnered praise throughout the state, including winning the award for Best Cultural Project from the Greater Richmond Association for Commercial Real Estate.

Text and image courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.



Commodore Theatre

Portsmouth, Virginia

COMMODORE THEATRE

421 High Street

Portsmouth, Virginia

OPENED: November 15, 1945

ARCHITECT: John J. Zink

CAPACITY: 1,015(original)
508 (current)

Located in the historic coastal town of Portsmouth, Virginia, the Commodore Theatre celebrates 70 years of movie-going experiences in 2015. Designed by Baltimore architect John Zink and built by Portsmouth native William S. “Bunkie” Wilder in 1945, the Commodore Theatre continues to be at the center of entertainment and community events in the Hampton Roads, Virginia region. Named for Commodore James Barron, a nineteenth century naval man who is buried in the church cemetery next door to the theatre, the building has nautical motifs throughout.

The Commodore operated as Portsmouth’s premiere movie house from 1945 until 1975, when it closed its doors because

of the national trend of declining traffic in downtown areas of cities. It remained closed for twelve years until it was purchased in 1987 by Norfolk native Fred Schoenfeld, who began the restoration and revitalization process. Schoenfeld’s vision was to restore the beautiful old theatre, yet change the concept to combine first-run movies with full-service dining, the first such theatre in the country.

From over 1000 original seats, the capacity was reduced to 190 seats for dining and 318 balcony seats. Artwork in the auditorium and the lobby areas was painstakingly reworked, created by artists from Wall Illusions in Norfolk, Virginia, with James Nelson Johnson serving as principal artist. The 20 x 40 foot murals on each side of the auditorium, depicting scenes from Portsmouth history until the 1940s, were repainted and enhanced, new chandeliers, each weighing over 300 pounds of Italian leaded crystal, replace old, fluorescent chandeliers, and, in two alcoves in the inner lobby, artists recreated

scenes of the original theatre before restoration.

A kitchen was created from the old manager’s office and men’s smoking lounge; the women’s lounge was restored with its 1940s ambiance. The house curtain was made especially for the Commodore Theatre in 1989 by Greenville Stage Company, while the screen curtain is the Commodore’s original curtain from 1945. The marquee, with an estimated weight of over 20 tons, twinkles with over 900 flashing lights. Excellence in sound and image presentation is a hallmark of the Commodore, based on Schoenfeld’s engineering expertise and his collaboration with the George Lucas THX group in California. With a screen that is 41 feet wide and 21 feet tall, nine large JBL speakers and 22 surround sound speakers, and general excellence in movie exhibition, the Commodore Theatre has had THX certification from its opening, one of the few on the East Coast. The theatre switched to digital presentation in 2012.

When Wilder built the theatre in 1945, he said, “It is our wish that the Commodore Theatre shall be used by the people of this community, and we invite your cooperation to the end that it may become ‘Your Community Center.’” In the heart of Portsmouth’s downtown, the Commodore Theatre remains a hub for community events, as well as movies. It has hosted Public Library Forums, Coast Guard meetings, weddings, film premieres, student art and film showcases, nationally known bluegrass bands and other musical events, an Extreme Makeover broadcast, a televised opinion group during a Presidential debate, and many other community activities.

The Commodore Theatre is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. The Commodore is recognized nationally and internationally as a unique movie-going experience.

Text and image courtesy of the Commodore Theatre.



Kimball Theatre

Williamsburg, Virginia

KIMBALL THEATRE

428 W Duke of Gloucester

Williamsburg, Virginia

OPENED: January 12, 1933

ARCHITECT: Perry, Shaw & Hepburn

CAPACITY: 535 (original)

440 (current)

The Kimball Theatre was originally opened as the Williamsburg Theatre in 1933. Construction began in 1931 under the direction of John D. Rockefeller, who was the major financial force behind the colonial restoration and recreation of Williamsburg. Rockefeller had the Williamsburg built by the same contractor who constructed New York's Radio City Music Hall, and his RKO Pictures operated the theatre until the 1940s when it switched hands and was managed solely by Colonial Williamsburg. The exterior was designed in classic Colonial style, while the original auditorium interior featured Chinese Chippendale style, with scenic Oriental wallpaper in the interior. Other sections of the the-

atre were in more straightforward Colonial style, including an exit door designed to be an exact replica of those in the Supper Room of the Governor's Palace, also located in Colonial Williamsburg.

The Williamsburg Theatre was the main street movie theatre, and served as a community locus, drawing in both tourists to Colonial Williamsburg, but also local residents and college students. Even Rockefeller would show up for screenings, as he had seats in the back specially reserved from him and his wife.

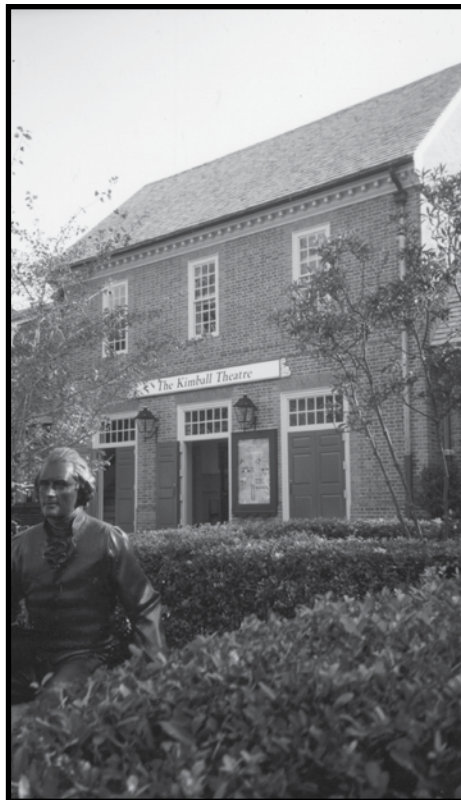
In 1999, Bill and Gretchen Kimball of Belvedere, California made a donation of three million dollars to finance the full renovation of the then Williamsburg Theatre. Renamed in honor of these benefactors, the newly revamped theatre was crafted to increase the working relationship between Colonial Williamsburg and the nearby College of William and Mary.

The renovations were headed by top theatre consultant Lawrence L. Graham of Cape Dixson Associates Incorporated.

They included a lobby enlargement (during original construction R.K.O Pictures encouraged a small lobby, arguing that a line of people outside would encourage onlookers to attend), extending the stage apron, increasing restrooms, installing scenic drops and stage curtains, and configuring an integrated sound system.

Both film and live productions are presented at the Kimball. The Kimball Theatre currently shows a broad program of art, foreign and independent films, along with Hollywood hits and classics. Live performances at the Kimball range from contemporary productions from student groups at the College of William and Mary to productions that fit the Colonial Williamsburg theme--including Grand Medley of Entertainments, described as a sort of "18th-century vaudeville show" and Nation Builders, a series of interviews with actors portraying historical figures like Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry.

Text and images courtesy of the American Theatre Architecture Archive.





THEATRE CONTACT INFORMATION

Attucks Theatre

www.sevenvenues.com/events/venue/attucks-theatre
(757) 622-4763

Altria Theater

www.altriatheater.com
(804) 592-3368

Ashland Theatre

www.ashlandtheatreva.org

Beacon Theatre

www.thebeacontheatreva.com
(804) 446-3457

Blackfriars Playhouse

www.americanshakespearecenter.com
(540) 851-1733

Bow Tie Cinemas' Movieland at Boulevard Square

www.bowtiecinemas.com/locations/movieland-at-boulevard-square
(804) 354-1969

Byrd Theatre

www.byrdtheatre.com
(804) 353-9911

Carpenter Theatre

www.richmondcenterstage.com/venues/carpenter-theatre
(804) 592-3330

Chrysler Hall

(757) 664-6464
www.sevenvenues.com/venues/detail/chrysler-hall

Commodore Theater

www.commodoretheatre.com/
(757) 393-6962

Henrico Theater

henrico.us/rec/places/henrico-theatre/
(804) 328-4491

Howard Theatre

www.thehowardtheatre.com
(202) 803-2899

Jefferson Theater

www.jeffersontheater.com
(434) 245-4980

Kimball Theatre

www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/do/kimball-theatre
(757) 565-8588

Lincoln Theatre

<http://www.thelincolndc.com>
(202) 888-0050

National Theatre, Richmond

www.thenationalva.com
(804) 612-1900

National Theatre, Washington D.C.

www.thenationaldc.org
(202) 628-6161

Paramount Theater

www.theparamount.net
(434) 979-1333

Tidewater Community College Roper Performing Arts Center

www.ttcropercenter.org
(757) 822-1450

Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre

www.va-rep.org
(804) 783-1688

Staunton Performing Arts Center

www.stauntonperformingarts.org
(540) 885-3211

Warner Theater

www.warnertheatredc.com
(202) 783-4000

Wayne Theatre

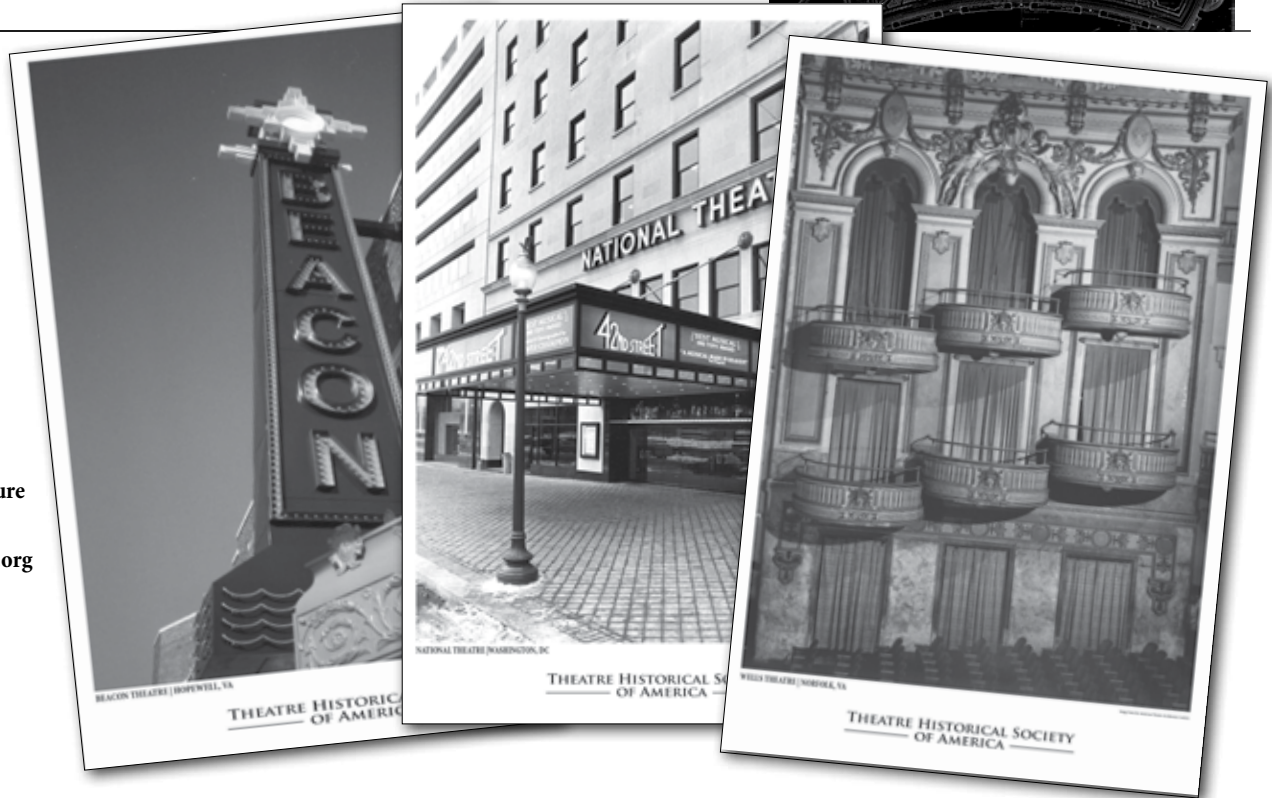
www.waynetheatre.org
(540) 943-9999

Wells Theatre

www.vastage.com
(757) 627-6988

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Altria Theater, Richmond

For the Altria's 2014 opening, EverGreene, under the guide of Wilson Butler Architects, restored decorative finishes throughout the 1926 building and designed & implemented new artwork in the historic spaces.

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and all the venue owners, operators and staff that assisted in making the 2015 Conclave Theatre Tour successful.

Thank you for sharing Virginia and Washington D.C.'s theatre history with us.

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