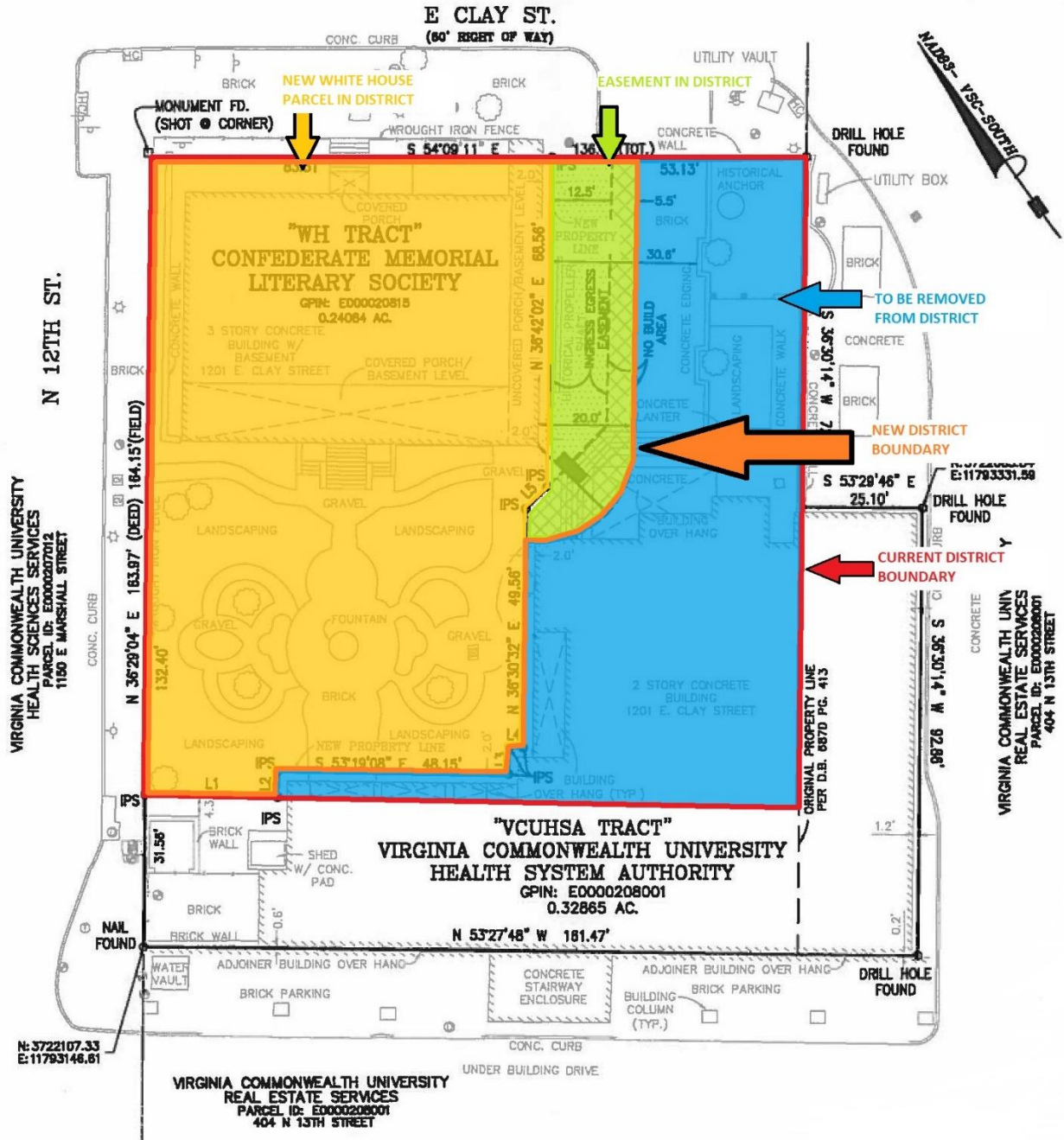


Old and Historic District Amendment Request

REQUEST:

The Confederate Memorial Literary Society and the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority have requested the removal of a parcel (E0000208020 – in blue below) from the White House of the Confederacy City Old and Historic District.



BACKGROUND:

In June 2017, the Confederate Memorial Literary Society subdivided their property and transferred a portion, 1222 E. Marshall Street (E0000208020), to the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority. This parcel contains the Museum of the Confederacy constructed in 1976. The Confederate Memorial Literary Society retained a portion of the property, 1201 E. Clay Street (E000020805), containing the White House of the Confederacy or the Dr. John Brockenbrough House, built in 1818, and the related garden.

Both parcels are currently located in the White House of the Confederacy Old and Historic District created in 1970. Ordinance 70-111 created eleven (11) single structure historic districts all of which were considered to be of "historical or architectural interest." Per City Code section 30-930.2 – "The purpose of creating old and historic districts is to provide a means by which the city council may recognize and protect the historic, architectural, cultural, and artistic heritage of the city."

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY:

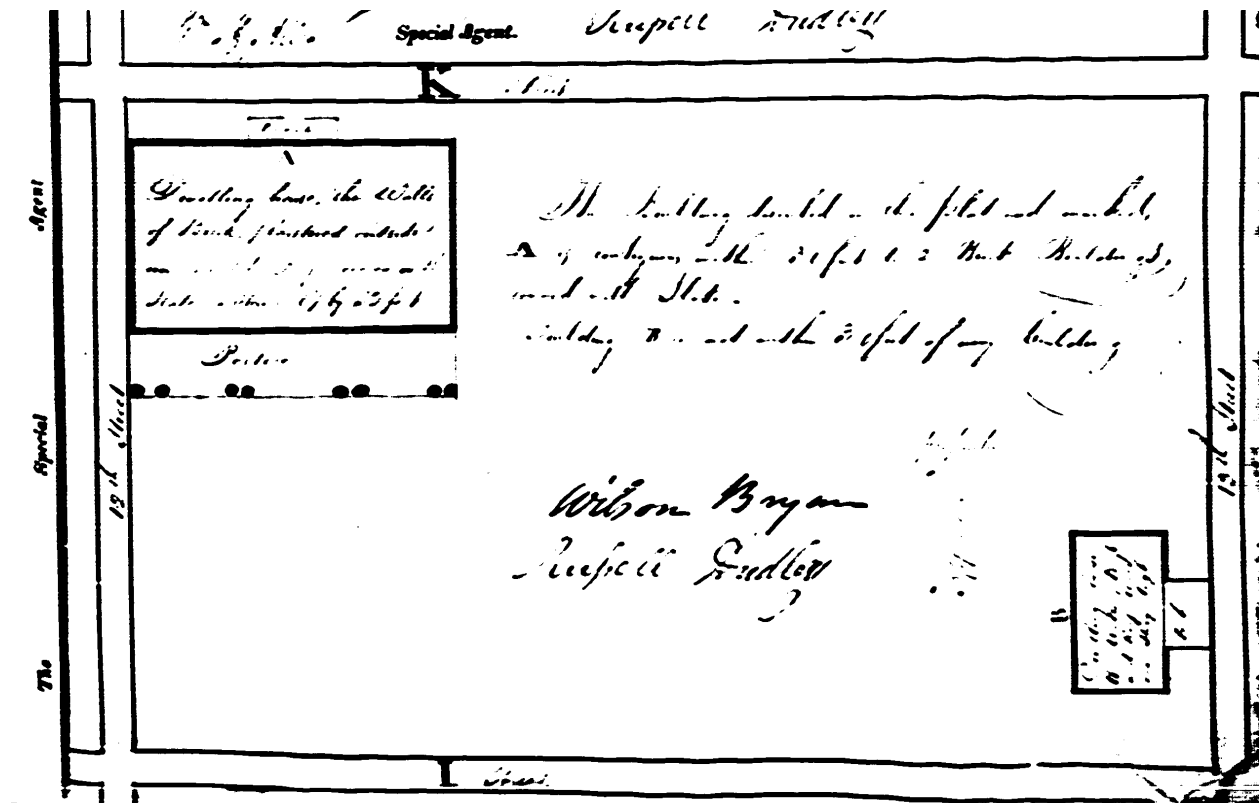


Figure 1: 1818 Mutual Assurance Policy



Figure 2: Unknown date, view of house from southwest

In 1816 and 1817, Dr. John Brockenbrough purchased two lots on the south side of Clay Street, then K Street, to the east of 12th Street on a commanding bluff overlooking the ravine between Church and Shockoe Hills. Robert Mills, considered America's first native architect, had come to Richmond to design Monumental Church and had just completed a nearby home for John Wickham. Mills designed a 2 ½ story stuccoed dwelling with a small front portico and a rear, two-story portico with massive paired Doric columns for Brockenbrough. The house was completed in 1818. Dr. Brockenbrough was the President of the Bank of Virginia and a leading politician and citizen. In 1844, the house was sold to James M. Morson, who owned the home for a year, selling it in 1845 to his sister-in-law, Mrs. James A. Seddon. James Seddon served as Secretary of War of the Confederate States. The Seddon's likely added the third floor and cupola around 1852. Lewis D. Crenshaw purchased the house in 1857 and resided there until 1861 when he sold the house to the City of Richmond and it was offered as a residence for President Jefferson Davis. Davis refused to accept and the house was rented by the Confederate Government for a presidential residence. President Davis and the other government officials fled the city on April 2, 1865 and the house was immediately seized by the Union Army. The United States

government held the mansion until 1870 when it was returned to the City. From 1871 to 1890, the dwelling served as a public school – Central School. In 1889, it was determined that the building was no longer suitable for use as a school and there was a movement to tear it down. The Confederate Literary Society was formed and the property transferred to them for use as a museum on June 3, 1894. On February 22, 1896, the mansion was opened to the public as the Confederate Museum.

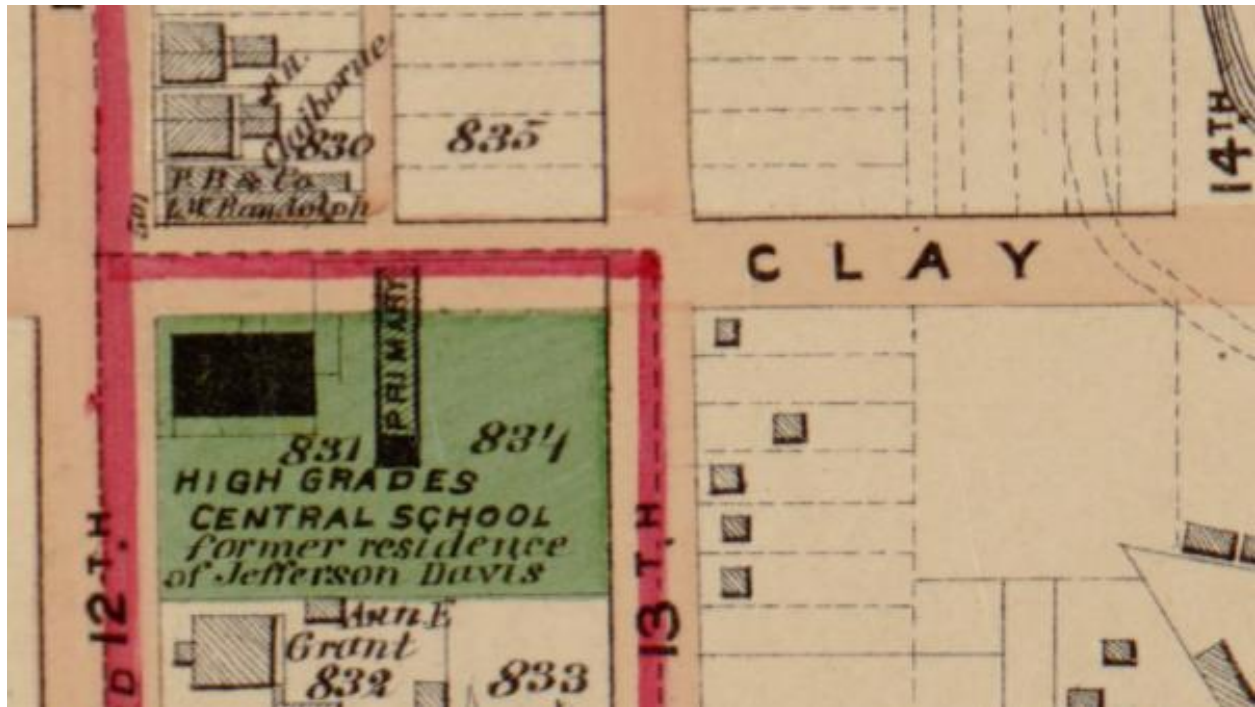


Figure 4: 1876 Beers Atlas



The yard to the south, once enclosed by a high brick wall, contains a terraced garden. There were also once numerous out buildings and dependencies. During the construction of the museum building many of the historic plantings were removed for safe keeping until they could be replanted. During construction of the museum building artifacts from the Central School period of occupancy were uncovered and documented.

Figure 3: Unknown date, Garden behind White House

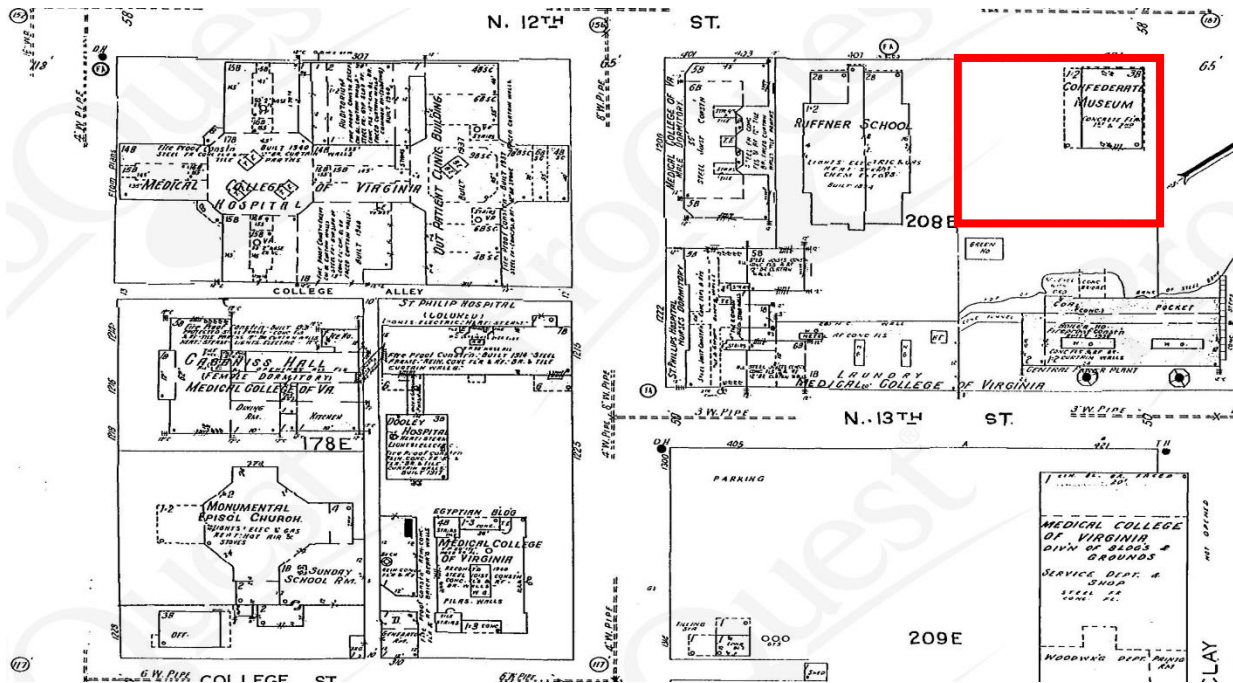


Figure 5: 1952 Sanborn Map

In 1969, the Confederate Literary Society initiated a national campaign to restore the White House of the Confederacy to its appearance during the term of office of President Jefferson Davis and to build a new gallery for the museum’s collection. “We are trying to make the new building attractive but not overwhelming, he (Kurt Brandenburg, museum director) continued. We will keep the garden and try to maintain the serene atmosphere and the dignity of the White House.” (RTD, August 13, 1969) The White House of the Confederacy and a quarter block of property was designated a City Old and Historic District in 1970 along with 10 other individual properties which were recognized for their “historical and architectural interest.” Construction on the new museum, designed by Mills & Peticord Partnership, architects from Washington, DC, began in April 1975. The L-shaped structure, reviewed by the Commission of Architectural Review, forms a courtyard space between the White House of the Confederacy and the high rise buildings on the Medical College campus. The smooth concrete finish, coffers, cantilevers, and symmetrical face reflect the “monumentality and simplicity nearing architectural brutalism” of the historic building. The White House of the Confederacy (Brockenbrough House) was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 with a revised nomination prepared in 1975. The revised nomination made note of the two-story glass wall of the new museum facing the garden and the original building and the use of long vertical inset panels which is a prominent motif on the historic dwelling.

PHOTOGRAPHS:



Figure 6: Facade of the White House of the Confederacy



Figure 7: Entrance to the Museum of the Confederacy – to be removed from district



Figure 8: Looking southwest across the garden towards the wing of the Museum – new property line at face of Museum



Figure 9: Looking southeast across the garden towards the Museum – new property line at face of Museum



Figure 10: Rear Elevation of White House of the Confederacy viewed across the garden

PROPERTY OWNERS AFFECTED:

The applicants, the Confederate Memorial Literary Society, owner of 1201 E. Clay Street (E000020805), and the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority, owner of 1222 E. Marshall Street (E0000208020), will be affected by this decision. It has the potential to affect every property owner in every City Old and Historic District by setting a precedent for redacting and removing properties from locally designated districts.

CURRENT LAND USE AND ZONING:

The property is located within the Virginia Commonwealth University Medical College of Virginia Campus in an area zoned B-4, a Central Business District, which allows for a wide variety of uses. In the Downtown Plan and the Pulse Corridor Plan the area is designated as Institutional. Historic Preservation is a Corridor Principle, as outlined in the Pulse Corridor Plan: Retaining existing historic buildings is a priority. Smaller historic buildings add to a diversity of style and use along the Corridor (p. 26).

The property is also included in the VCU Health System Master Plan. According to VCU Health System -- Support Services and Planning, for the foreseeable future -- the current 10 year planning period -- the museum building will be utilized as a gathering area and gift shop for the

White House and as a temporary construction office and later as a faculty and staff training facility for VCU Health System.

INFORMATION FROM THE APPLICANT:

The following information was provided by the applicants – the Confederate Memorial Literary Society and the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority:

The 1970 historic district boundaries match those of the original parcel acquired by the Society in 1894. On June 30, 2017, the Society recorded a lot split and sold the new tract and two outside tracts acquired in 1962 and 1973 to the VCU Health Systems Authority. The American Civil War Museum is currently constructing a new, state-of-the-art museum facility at Historic Tredegar that will be a showcase for the City and further the American Civil War Museum's mission of being the preeminent center for the exploration of the American Civil War. Most of the exhibits and artifacts housed at the Museum will be moved to American Civil War Museum's new facility.

"The Society hereby requests that the District's boundary be amended to remove the Excess Area from the District. The amended District would encompass the Retained Parcel and the Negative Easement Area and is depicted on Exhibit 1 as the area labeled "Proposed New Boundary of White House of the Confederacy Old and Historic District".

This amendment would conform the District's boundary to its sole original intended purpose: preservation of the White House. Unlike other districts enacted under the O&H Ordinance, which in many cases cover several city blocks, the District has always covered one discrete parcel containing only the White House. The District was named after the White House. Its boundaries even omitted one of the Outside Tracts owned by the Society at the time of the District's enactment, most likely because that parcel was not integral to the White House or its preservation. Quite simply the White House's preservation is the only purpose that can be inferred from the City's enactment of the District in its present configuration.

The amendment would not detract from the District's mission of preserving the White House. The Excess Area already houses a portion of the Museum, which is a two-story, late- 20th century modern concrete-block structure. Given the fact that the Museum and other large non-historic buildings already surround the White House removing the Excess Area from the District would not result in any material change in the White House's situation. The retention of the Negative Easement Area in the proposed new District boundary will preserve the spatial relationship between the White House and neighboring structures.

For the foregoing reasons, we believe City Council should adopt an ordinance and resolution amending the District's boundaries as set forth in City Code § 30-930.5(41) to

conform to the surveyed metes and bounds of the Retained Parcel and Negative Easement Area set forth on the attached Exhibit 3.” (Full request and Exhibits attached)

JUSTIFICATION FOR OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION:

- Sec. 30-930.2. - Purpose.

The purpose of creating old and historic districts is to provide a means by which the City Council may recognize and protect the historic, architectural, cultural, and artistic heritage of the City. This process of historic preservation is a part of the promotion of the general welfare and the protection of community health and public safety of the City through the identification, preservation and enhancement of buildings, structures, landscapes, settings, neighborhoods, sites and features with special historic, cultural, artistic, and architectural significance. To achieve this general purpose, the City seeks to pursue the following specific purposes:

- 1) The identification, designation, and protection of historic resources throughout the City.
- 2) The promotion of harmony of style, form, color, proportion, texture and material between buildings of historic design and those of more modern design.
- 3) The recognition and protection of appropriate settings and environments for historic districts, buildings, structures and sites.
- 4) The enhancement of the quality of life for residents and the providing of attractions to visitors by preserving the historic resources of the City.
- 5) The education of residents and visitors about the City's historic resources.
- 6) The incorporation of historic preservation into the permit review process of the City.

The White House of the Confederacy was designated as a City Old and Historic District in 1970 to recognize and protect the historic, architectural, cultural, and artistic heritage of the City. The 1970 district boundaries included the entire parcel as acquired by the Confederate Memorial Literary Society in 1894, not a reduced portion of the property confined to the house and garden. The entire parcel serves to protect, preserve and enhance the building, settings, and site associated with the architecturally significant Robert Mills designed John Brockenbrough House, aka the White House of the Confederacy. The museum building constructed in 1976 was intentionally designed to further compliment and protect the building and the garden and maintain the serene atmosphere. One could argue that the 1976 museum building has become a designed and integral part of the district. The ordinance provides guidance for creating and amending districts but does not provide specific guidance for reducing the boundaries of a district or removing a building from a district. Perhaps, with good reason.

Staff recommends against this action on the basis that the original boundaries were established to protect and preserve the White House of the Confederacy building and environs. Further staff

is extremely concerned about the precedent that may be established by this action to encourage or support the removal of buildings from City Old and Historic Districts.