2011

Mary Wingfield Scott: A Rebel with a Rubble Cause

Kay Peninger
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd

Part of the History Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2612

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
Mary Wingfield Scott: A Rebel with a Rubble Cause

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
Kay C. Peninger
Bachelor of Arts, East Carolina University, 1982

Director: John T. Kneebone, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of History

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
December 2011
Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Dr. John Kneebone for his knowledge, guidance, insight, and patience while I completed this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Ryan Smith and Dr. Charles Brownell for their valuable comments. I greatly appreciate the love and support of my husband, Marty, and my sons, Marty, Jr. and Max, during the years it has taken me to graduate. I wish to thank Sarah Blunkosky and Patricia Noel for their inspiration and support. I would like to thank the talented persons who provided assistance at the Historic Richmond Foundation, Library of Virginia, Preservation Virginia, Richmond Public Library, Valentine Richmond History Center, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Historical Society.
Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................... iv

Introduction .......................................................... 1

Chapter One: The Making of An Architectural Historian ......................... 4

Chapter Two: “Don’t Faint, I’ve Bought a House” ................................ 22

Chapter Three: *Old Richmond News* and *Old Richmond Neighborhoods* ......................... 40

Chapter Four: “All Who Love Richmond’s Beauty should Assume Individual Responsibility for the Future of Our City” .......................................................... 65

Conclusion ............................................................... 85

Bibliography .................................................................. 90

Vita .............................................................................. 97
Mary Wingfield Scott: A Rebel with a Rubble Cause

Kay C. Peninger, B.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

Major Director: John T. Kneebone, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of History

Mary Wingfield Scott (1895-1983) was a leading figure in the historic preservation movement in Richmond, Virginia. Scott demonstrated a preservation philosophy that transitioned from the sentimental, patriotic focus of early preservation efforts to a modern, academic approach that valued the built environment for its relationship to the city and its history. Scott educated persons on the value of preserving houses that were architecturally significant or connected to the city’s heritage. She documented the antebellum housing of Richmond in two books, founded the William Byrd Branch of the APVA, conducted walking tours throughout the city, wrote a newsletter for the William Byrd Branch, and purchased houses to prevent their demolition. Scott was a strong advocate of adaptive reuse, which she applied to the Greek Revival houses known as Linden Row. Scott’s approach to preservation is mirrored in the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) enacted in 1966 and Richmond’s 2009 Downtown Plan.
Introduction

Mary Wingfield Scott (1895-1983), was a leading figure in the historic preservation movement in Richmond, Virginia. Scott developed a passionate interest in architecture and the built environment of Richmond, Virginia. She obtained a Ph.D. in art history, which gave her the training to bring an academic focus to her work in historic preservation. This paper will demonstrate that Scott’s career successfully transitioned and bridged historic preservation in Richmond from its early focus on memorializing individuals who played a significant role in the founding of our nation to a preservation philosophy and body of work that became the future of preservation in 1966 with the adoption of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

During Scott’s formative years and throughout her formal education, women were expanding their public role through activism and public service with benevolent organizations. The female members of Scott’s extended family had a tradition of accomplishment with volunteer organizations that provided role models for her. Scott also had a peer group in Richmond that was composed of single, accomplished women. In 1920, women achieved a significant victory in gaining the right to vote.

At the same time, vast transformations and scientific achievements in the early twentieth century threatened the built environment that she valued and perceived as an asset for the city. The traditional structure of a city was forever altered by the prosperity experienced by the United States following the end of World War II.

Streetcars provided transportation that first generated suburban neighborhoods. Then the automobile became deeply ingrained in the American way of life and its affordability created widespread demand. The volume of automobile traffic and supporting infrastructure such as gas
stations, parking lots, and billboards introduced modern elements into historic areas. Road and highway construction destroyed large amounts of housing stock.

These developments in transportation allowed residents to move out of the city and in Richmond, to maintain racial segregation. The American dream of homeownership increased the demand for new housing. The federal government made homeownership achievable through housing programs that made mortgages affordable. These programs also discriminated against blacks and reinforced the decline of inner city neighborhoods by making these loans unavailable in these areas. Middle class residents left the city in droves to escape crime and poor school districts. The abandonment of inner city neighborhoods to the poorest residents of both races, along with immigrants, led to blight and deterioration of housing. The Federal government then instituted slum clearance and redevelopment programs that further destroyed city neighborhoods.¹

Scott began her career in historic preservation during these tumultuous changes. Scott adopted the actions of other cities that were leaders in preservation, such as Charleston and New Orleans. She made these policies and preservation philosophies her own by adjusting to events in Richmond. Scott worked diligently to educate Richmonders about the threats to the city’s built environment. She earned great public respect for her work in historic preservation over the course of her career, achieving significant victories and suffering defeats.

Several of the organizations involved in Scott’s career have changed names over the years. The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) is now Preservation Virginia. The William Byrd Branch of APVA has merged with its offspring, Historic Richmond Foundation. Together they operate as a subsidiary of Preservation Virginia. The Valentine

Museum is now the Valentine Richmond History Center. I have chosen to refer to the organizations by the name that applied in Scott’s lifetime in order to avoid confusion with her references to the same organizations.
Chapter One: The Making of An Architectural Historian

Mary Wingfield Scott’s family background and formal education provided a solid foundation for her career in historic preservation. The female members of her family had a long tradition of public service and provided role models of women who were accomplished and respected for their contributions outside the home. Her travels in Europe exposed her to buildings that were architecturally significant and valued by the public, as well as historic neighborhoods that remained vibrant in city life. A doctoral degree in art history, a rare achievement for a woman in the early twentieth century, provided an academic foundation for her achievements in historic preservation. Scott’s academic focus allowed her to remain relevant in the field of historic preservation after professionalism of the profession granted leadership and authority to men, and placed women in a supporting role.

Scott was born on 30 July 1895 into a prominent, upper-class family with deep roots in Virginia. Her paternal grandfather, Major Frederic R. Scott (1830-1898) emigrated with his parents and siblings from Ballyshannon, County Donegal, Ireland. He settled as a young man in Petersburg, where he worked at the firm of Thomas Branch & Sons. He married Sarah Frances Branch Scott (1834-1907) a daughter of his employer. Following the Civil War, the firm relocated to Richmond as Thomas Branch & Company and diversified into banking, securities, and railroads. Frederic Scott eventually became a partner in the company. During the course of their marriage they had nine children. The marriage of Frederic R. Scott and Sarah Frances Branch Scott would unite what would become two of Richmond’s wealthiest families. Mary Wingfield Scott’s maternal grandfather, the Right Reverend J. H. D. Wingfield, was the rector of

---

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Petersburg prior to being ordained as the bishop of Northern California.  

Scott’s grandparents built a large, three-story house at 712 West Franklin Street in Richmond, which was completed in 1883. From the time the family moved in until 1937, this house was the center of family gatherings for the extended Scott family. Scott remembered the house as “monstrous” and “huge, with a dark attic, a cupola, a long wing where the servants stayed, a cellar running under the whole house, a stable” and a cow shed. Scott later described the house as “the family home, headquarters, castle” in an unpublished essay titled, 712 . . . Hail and Farewell. Scott described family life at the home as “a paradise” for the grandchildren and the location of family celebrations, holidays, and other social events. She recorded vivid memories of Christmas dinners, of men dressed in pink jackets eating breakfasts before hunts, and of staging horse shows in the backyard. House servants supported the elaborate family lifestyle. Scott recalled the names and personalities of housekeepers, maids, cooks, and butlers. Family life centered on her grandmother, Sarah Frances Branch Scott and later, her aunt, Frances Branch Scott (1861-1937).  

Scott grew into adulthood surrounded by strong, female role models from her family: her grandmother, her aunt, and her mother. Each of these women established herself as a vibrant person with a distinct personality and existence that did not take place in the shadow of a man.  

Grandmother Sarah Frances Branch Scott was the dominant figure in the Scott household, described by one granddaughter as “an eighteenth century marquise.” Following an accident that broke her hip, she ran the household from her upstairs bedroom, where all family members came to pay their respects to her, and followed a custom of curtseying when entering

---

5 Ibid., 6.
the room. Scott was “very fond of Mama Scott” and spent a great deal of time at her grandmother’s home. She became “an intimate friend of the exquisite but relentless matriarch.”

Scott’s grandmother commanded the respect and obedience of her family and house servants. Scott’s aunt, Frances Branch Scott, was commonly known as Aunt Boxie. She never married and made a career of public service as a founder of Sheltering Arms Rehabilitation Hospital where she served for twenty-six years as the presiding officer. Aunt Boxie stepped into the role of family matriarch after the death of her mother in 1907. She continued the entrenched family tradition of Christmas dinner at the ancestral home. Aunt Boxie refused to send formal invitations, reasoning that her relatives did not need an invitation to attend the customary event. This caused great consternation among some of her nieces and nephews who complained that “Aunt Boxie need not think she can go on being a law unto herself and expect fifty odd people to assemble at her home without inviting a soul.”

Scott’s mother, also named Mary Wingfield Scott (1869-1936), was widowed after only seven years of marriage. During her lifetime, Mrs. Scott served on the board of the Woman’s Club of Richmond and the Edgar Allan Poe Foundation, of which she was a founding member. She also held memberships in the Society of Colonial Dames in Virginia and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA).

Mary-Cooke Branch Munford (1865-1938), was a relative who also served as a role model. Munford was a trailblazer and activist who worked to create educational opportunities for women and African Americans and to provide improved housing and city services for black communities.

---


neighborhoods. Munford held leadership positions with several organizations in the city and was the first woman appointed to the Richmond City School Board and the College of William and Mary Board of Visitors.9

With the death of her grandfather in 1898 and then the death of her father in 1901, Scott only knew female-headed households. Scott’s aunt and mother demonstrated that women could achieve fulfilling lives without being married and that public service could provide a sense of accomplishment and success. All of these women demonstrated leadership and organizational skills in a way that was acceptable for women and not threatening to a male-dominated society.

From the Colonial era, Virginia’s white, upper-class society had embraced a patriarchal culture that supported male supremacy and defined the role of women in terms of the household. During the American Revolution, women stepped out of their traditional role and produced homespun for clothing and uniforms and patriotically boycotted the purchase of imported goods. As mothers, women were expected to inculcate in their sons a strong spirit of patriotism. After the war ended, men resumed their role as the family provider and women were relegated to a supporting role. This ideal grew into the cult of true womanhood by the mid-nineteenth century. Men, as head of the family, negotiated the legal system, worked outside the home, and participated in politics. Women remained in the home where they created a private haven for their husbands away from the crass world of business and politics. Women devoted themselves to the domestic sphere, striving to become paragons of gentility and moral superiority.10 This left women without the ability to participate in government by voting or holding elective office.


and while married, without the ability to own property and without legal rights in the case of a divorce. Formal education for women was frowned upon and discouraged because it was thought to have an adverse affect on their ability to reproduce.

The decades of the twentieth century brought about advances in technology and industrialization that created a massive transformation in society. Mass production of consumer goods and automobiles, migration from farms to towns and cities, immigration and the bleak conditions of immigrant poverty, World War I, and women’s suffrage were dramatic innovations that altered everyday life. The advent of mass communication enabled ideas and information to be shared quickly and simultaneously. These changes provided opportunities for women outside the home. Free public education created teaching positions, the mass production of consumer goods led to jobs in department stores, and mills and factories needed women and children to work. The “immense social changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the breaking up of old ways of doing almost everything, created a climate in which the restructuring of woman’s role could more easily take place.”

Wealthy women were able to translate their role as nurturing souls within the family to work outside the home for a religious organization or benevolent society. This public service provided an avenue to expand their presence into the public sphere through activities that sought to alleviate social ills. Women developed their organizational and leadership skills as they worked to relieve the suffering of the poor. Women’s benevolent work with the hungry or homeless grew to include public activism by prominently opposing the use of alcohol. Female activism expanded to include advocating for reform in the area of wages, working hours,

---

working conditions, domestic violence, and sex education. Mary Wingfield Scott’s mother, her Aunt Boxie, and her relative Mary-Cooke Branch Munford utilized their public service work to increase their reach into the public realm through charity work and by volunteering at cultural organizations. The leadership roles undertaken by these women provided them with authority and a voice to advocate for change and expand the role of women. The tradition of public service created by these three females in Scott’s family established a precedent that allowed Scott to pursue a career in historic preservation without opposition from other family members. The increased presence of women in benevolent work also paved the way for Scott to assume a public role in advocating for historic preservation of Richmond’s built environment.

Mary Wingfield Scott undoubtedly was also influenced by and supported by a number of accomplished, talented women whose contributions made a powerful difference in the lives of Richmonders. A number of these women chose to reject the prevailing social definitions of feminine behavior by becoming activists for causes they strongly believed in and by choosing to remain single throughout their lives, allowing them to live according to their own terms. These women often worked together on common causes, providing support and friendship to each other.

Grace Arents (1848-1926) remained single throughout her life, living with companion Mary Garland Smith. After receiving an inheritance from her wealthy uncle Lewis Ginter, Arents became a philanthropist dedicated to helping children from the city’s poor, working-class neighborhoods. Arents executed her vision of helping underprivileged persons by funding public libraries, schools, churches, hospitals and other organizations.

---

12 Kierner, Beyond the Household, 137-138; Scott, Southern Lady, 256-257.
Ellen Glasgow (1873-1945) was a Pulitzer prize-winning author who infused her body of work with realism instead of sentimentality about the South. Her female characters struggled against the prevailing social roles and stereotypes to which women were expected to conform. Glasgow herself defied the social traditions of her class and social standing by retaining her independence and never marrying despite becoming twice engaged. She publicly disclosed that she had a lengthy affair with a married man, scandalous behavior for her era.\(^\text{14}\)

Adele Clark (1882-1983) and Nora Houston (1883-1942) were artists and intimate companions. They met while taking art classes from Lily Logan. They were both members of the Richmond Art Club and later co-founded the Virginia League of Fine Arts and Handicrafts. Clark and Houston were prominent members of the Virginia Equal Suffrage League. When this organization became the Virginia League of Women Voters, they became charter members and active participants. As a project of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, Clark headed the Virginia Arts Project and established art galleries across the state.\(^\text{15}\)

One of Clark’s and Houston’s students was Theresa Pollak, who attended art classes at the Richmond Art Club from the age of thirteen until she was eighteen. Pollak (1899-2002) was a nationally-known artist and educator who founded what would become Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts and the University of Richmond arts program. Pollak created these formal arts education programs from their inception and taught for over


forty years. The program she created at Virginia Commonwealth University would grow into a nationally ranked art school. Pollak remained single throughout her life.\textsuperscript{16}

Scott shared personal characteristics with the women discussed above, who were all part of the same social milieu. They shared a common decision to remain independent and control the direction of their lives by not marrying and in having a purpose in life beyond the household. Their lives connected through a shared desire to make a difference in the city of Richmond. Two of the buildings that Scott worked to preserve had literary associations: the Adam Craig house and the Ellen Glasgow house. The Craig House Art Center, organized to promote the study of art by African Americans, was located in the Adam Craig house and was one of the WPA art centers supported by Adele Clark.\textsuperscript{17} Another group of houses that Scott valued for their architectural distinction was known as Linden Row, which was the location of Miss Virginia Randolph Ellett’s school, which both Scott and Clark attended. By the 1930s, the neighborhood around Linden Row and the Richmond Public Library had evolved into an artist’s colony, and many of the homes had been turned into antique shops, bookstores, and furniture repair shops.\textsuperscript{18} The vibrancy of the people and stores in this downtown neighborhood probably had a strong influence on Scott’s historic preservation philosophy of adaptive reuse.

Mary Wingfield Scott started the preservation movement in Richmond and worked collaboratively with her cousins, sisters Elizabeth Scott Bocock and Mary Ross Scott Reed. This provided a strong female support system for their work. Initially, Scott was the leader of the trio, with her cousins playing a supporting role. Bocock’s daughter, Mary Buford Hitz, recalled in her biography of her mother, Never Ask Permission, that Scott would burst into the family

\textsuperscript{16}“Theresa Pollak,” Virginia Commonwealth University Special Collections, \url{http://library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/exhibit/pollak01.html}.

\textsuperscript{17} Craig House Art Center, Inc. Records, 1938-1941. Virginia Historical Society, Mss3 C8443 a.

home, interrupting a serene breakfast, to discuss with Bocock the latest threat to a building or house in Richmond. Hitz described Scott as “brilliant, acerbic, and funny” with “a startingly deep almost bass voice.” These three family members were life-long partners in the Richmond preservation movement, devoting their time, energy, and personal wealth to saving historic homes.¹⁹

Scott provided additional insight into her intellectual and personal development through her autobiography, *The Making of an Architectural Historian*. Scott penned two additional unpublished essays, *Eighty-Six Years at St. Paul's*, and *My Trips Abroad* that chronicled her family’s involvement at St. Paul’s Church and her travels overseas. In her unpublished autobiography, Scott recounted her life through her college years. Although not a complete autobiography, and without coverage of her career in historic preservation, Scott revealed certain personality traits and influences that contributed to her passion for historic preservation and the development of her preservation philosophy.

In her autobiography, Scott reveals her independent thinking and conviction. She had a complicated relationship with her mother over religion. As the daughter of an Episcopal bishop, religion was central in Scott’s mother’s life. Scott recalled the ritual of daily prayers and then added “I am not sure it wasn’t twice.” She refused to attend confirmation classes or take weekly communion. As a twelve year old, Scott demonstrated the force of character to stand her ground on a topic that was very important to her mother. ²⁰ Scott also described herself as a “hell-cat” and that she could be “not a nice child” when asked to do something that she did not want to do. ²¹ The fact that there was not a male authority figure in the house to insist that she conform to

---

the prevailing social ideas of how a young lady should act may have contributed to Scott being
allowed to exert her willful behavior.

Scott developed an appreciation for art and architecture during the summers when her
family resided in the countryside to escape the heat of the city. Scott writes, the “most valuable
of our summer trips in its results for me was the summer spent in Lexington in 1905.”
That summer, under the direction of her mother, Scott and her brother first created scrapbooks about
painters, sculptors, and buildings. At the age of 10, she had begun a lifelong exploration of art
and architecture. Three years later, Scott and her extended family traveled to Europe for the
summer, “for which the scrap books were a wonderful preparation.” During this trip and
subsequent trips to Europe, Scott’s mother took her and her brother to art galleries, churches, and
other significant buildings. Soon, Scott’s focus was on the building’s architecture and style. In
Richmond, her mother joined a local library in order to provide Scott with greater access to
books. She especially absorbed books on Florentine artists such as Michelangelo. Scott spent
many of her summers traveling in Europe and developed a keen appreciation for art, music, and
architecture.

The Scott family self-published a book titled, Winkie, which was a collection of Scott’s
writings and articles written about her. In the article, “My Trips Abroad,” Scott begins the
narrative with the statement, “The most wonderful things that ever happened to me were the trips
I had to Europe . . . “ Her first trip overseas was in 1908, when her family accompanied
relatives to England for the occasion of a cousin’s presentation at the British court. Scott’s
family stayed for months, traveling between Belgium, England, Scotland, and then Ireland,

22 Scott, Architectural Historian, 7.
23 Ibid., 8.
24 Ibid., 18, 25-29.
25 Alfred Scott ed., Winkie (Richmond, 2010), 167-178.
where they eventually joined another branch of the family traveling abroad. Scott spent much of her time exploring historic sites, art galleries, and the local architecture. After touring Great Britain, the family journeyed to France where they explored Paris and Lucerne. Their next stop was Italy and visits to Milan, Venice, Rome and Naples. Scott finally arrived back in Richmond three months late for the start of the school year.²⁶

Scott’s second trip to Europe centered on Holland, Germany, and Austria. In her writing, she mentioned how fortunate she was to visit this area prior to the destructions caused by World War I and World War II.

Scott was on her third trip to Europe with a school group from St. Timothy’s, the boarding school she attended, when World War I commenced. The group started their trip in England, but found some of the sites they wanted to visit closed due to the English suffrage protests. The group then traveled to the Channel Island of Guernsey and France, and then returned to England.

In 1921 following her graduation from Barnard College in New York, Scott journeyed to Spain. She joined a group from the University of Michigan that spent the summer traveling from Madrid to Segovia, Seville, and Granada. Scott and Virginia Withers lived for two years in Europe after Withers lost her job at Westhampton University, now the University of Richmond.

In total, Scott traveled to Europe fourteen times. When traveling, her trips lasted for months at a time, which provided the opportunity to experience the culture and daily life of a country. She stayed in boardinghouses located in city neighborhoods. Scott explored local art galleries, cathedrals, historic sites, and attended cultural events such as operas and plays. Her travels provided her with an intimate experience of how older buildings were valued and integrated into the daily life of residents.

²⁶ Ibid.
Scott’s formal education was as much an asset to her career as a historic preservationist as her travels. Her formal schooling began at the Virginia Randolph Ellett School or Miss Jennie’s as it was less formally known. Miss Jennie’s was a female academy that later became St. Catherine’s School, a premier Richmond girl’s school. Ellett was a leading figure in education in the South. She was an advocate for providing females with the same quality of education that males received. She also encouraged her students to pursue higher education. Graduates from her school were well prepared for college and many passed the rigorous Bryn Mawr College entrance exam.\(^{27}\) Scott attended school at Miss Jennie’s until she went to St. Timothy’s School, a female boarding school in Maryland, in 1910.

Scott described her four years at St. Timothy’s School as a time in her life that she loved and dreamed about after she left.\(^{28}\) Most of the students stayed for only three years. Scott spent her fourth year applying herself and achieving an academic award. After graduation from St. Timothy’s, Scott attended Bryn Mawr from 1914-1916. Scott dropped out of Bryn Mawr for a variety of reasons, but mainly to join her mother in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to make a home for her brother James, who was enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In Cambridge, Scott spent her time reading art and architecture in the local libraries. In 1919, Scott enrolled at Barnard College where she completed her undergraduate degree.\(^{29}\)

Scott returned to Richmond as an associate professor at Westhampton College, teaching languages from 1921 to 1928. During this time, she met Virginia Reese Withers, her life partner for forty-four years from 1923 to 1967. It was not uncommon for women in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century to form intense, romantic friendships, which may or may not have


\(^{29}\) Ibid., 11; Gary Robertson, ”Mary Wingfield Scott dies here at 88,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 10 August 1983, sec. B, p. 3.
included sexual relations. Often such relationships ended as women choose marriage and motherhood, which also provided economic support. As opportunities grew to obtain an education or pursue a professional career, women were able to support themselves. Many choose to remain in an intimate female relationship, freeing themselves from the demands of a husband and childrearing in order to focus on their careers.\(^\text{30}\) Women who obtained a college degree were less likely to marry than their peers who did not seek higher education. Only 28% of women who went to college married compared to the marriage rate of 80% for women in general.\(^\text{31}\) Lesbian relationships also allowed women to obtain equality in their personal sphere. Scott and Withers adopted two boys in 1927 and raised them together. In her autobiography, Scott described her desire to adopt: “Ever since I was in my early twenties and saw no prospect of getting married, I had thought of adopting a child.” She further related that she and Virginia were following the example of a friend from Bryn Mawr who had adopted a child.\(^\text{32}\)

Withers introduced Scott to the University of Chicago, where Withers had taken classes previously. Scott enrolled there in the Art History graduate school and obtained an M. A. and a Ph.D. degree. This was a significant achievement. During the early 1920s, approximately 15% of all Ph.D.’s awarded were earned by women. By the 1950s, this percentage had slipped to 9%.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^\text{32}\) Scott, *Architectural Historian*, 44.
Scott’s childhood travels in Europe and her studies at the University of Chicago led to her dissertation topic, Art and Artists in Balzac’s Comedie Humaine. Her thesis also provides insight into her preservation philosophy. Virginia Withers deduced from Scott’s thesis:

A corollary of this thesis is that each of these successive styles has its own validity, and that its best examples should be scrupulously intact and never presumptuously altered in an effort to reconcile it with some subsequent style which happens to be in vogue at the moment. The mongrel results of the second policy have defaced many a venerable building in Richmond and elsewhere. Mary was passionately convinced that every such house in Richmond that had been so disfigured deserved a better fate and that those so far untouched by “the blight” should be protected as essential documents in the City’s social and esthetic history. This civic duty gradually became the central urge in her life.

Scott’s career in historic preservation began as an interest in documenting the surviving pre-Civil War houses in Richmond. In 1928, Scott visited New Orleans where she was exposed to the preservation efforts of the city. While there, she saw a book that was a collection of photographs of the French Quarter. The book by Arnold Genthe, Impressions of Old New Orleans, celebrated the historic houses and character of the French Quarter. In his introductory essay, Genthe asserted that the writers and poets, the street people, the servants, the residents, combined with the crooked streets, rickety stairs, and haphazard configuration of houses, porches, and gardens to provide the charm and character of the neighborhood. Genthe criticized the intrusion of modern elements into the historic area and described the jarring effect of seeing a filling station, advertisement, automobile, or a widened street in the quarter. He created the collection of photographs in order to document the buildings before they were lost and to preserve the “vanished beauty and charm of the old days.”

Genthe proposed the creation of a commission composed of leading men to approve new construction and repairs and to have

34 Scott, Ibid., 34; in an essay written by Virginia Withers and attached to Scott’s autobiography, The Making of An Architectural Historian, the thesis topic is related as Art and Artists in the Work of Balzac.
35 Ibid., 59.
architects guide restorations. Genthe’s ultimate goal was to “strengthen the feeling of responsibility towards the preservation of a most precious architectural heritage, which ought to be a matter of pride and concern to every American.”

This same anti-modern sentiment was expressed by Daniel Elliott Huger Smith, in *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston*, published in 1917. Smith lectured his readers that “preservation in that city had been ‘accidental’ and that new construction of an ‘incongruous’ nature would soon become the biggest threat imaginable to the urban scene.” Fear of the destruction of historic fabric and introduction of inharmonious elements into an historic area was common among preservationists across the nation.

At its inception, historic preservation was primarily a grassroots effort that was “bound up with the sentimental, emotional, and associational power of particular places” and “turned on an axis of nationalism and nostalgia” in an effort to venerate the nation’s heroes and patriotic past. As the keeper of the home, females romanticized the connection between sentimental feelings, material culture and the physical environment, linking them together with values such as patriotism, love of family, and respect. Women formed societies such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), and the Ladies Hermitage Association because they were excluded from male-only associations such as the Massachusetts Historical Society or the Virginia Historical Society. This located historic preservation solidly in the realm of women.

---

37 Ibid., 33.
In the South, the historic preservation movement was the purview of women from its beginnings. Historic preservation provided an opportunity for women to extend their influence to the public sphere by organizing volunteers, fundraising, and purchasing historic buildings while articulating a goal that did not diverge from the existing racial or gender order. Women held similar roles in benevolent organizations. Early preservation advocates such as Ann Pamela Cunningham, founder of the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association, or Susan Pringle Frost, an early leader in the Charleston preservation movement, were not academically trained in art history, history or architecture. The effort to save specific buildings from destruction frequently involved emotional appeals for assistance to local chapters of patriotic associations or the community and reinforced women’s focus on traditionalism. Early preservation efforts did not include an emphasis on architectural merit or a focus on craftsmanship.

As the historic preservation movement grew and matured, it mirrored the professionalization of the field of architecture. As preservation became more professional, women were marginalized because they did not have the academic education and training that men benefited from in the male dominated fields of history and architecture. William Sumner Appleton, the founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), was not interested in the romantic, feminine approach to preservation. He focused on “architectural aesthetics, craftsmanship, and scientific, business-minded expertise.” Appleton valued historic buildings that were outstanding examples of an architectural style or craftsmanship, rather than for the associations that women had highlighted.

---


Men assumed a leadership position based on their education and professional experience, while women were sidelined in a supporting role. Two events cemented this trend of male leadership: the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg and the Historic American Buildings Survey.\(^{43}\) A 1931 photograph demonstrated that the professionals overseeing the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg were all male.\(^{44}\) None, however, had any experience in restoring historic buildings.

The federal government entered the field of preservation during the Great Depression as part of the New Deal’s economic recovery efforts. Authorization of the Historic American Buildings Survey under the auspices of the National Park Service (1933) and passage of the Historic Sites Act (1935) provided the impetus for historic preservation to become the work of professionals.

Colleges and universities began to address the need to formalize the study of the history of architecture, which had more often been taught in the art history department.\(^{45}\) The period between 1880 when “the professionalization of architecture began to demand increased attention to architectural history” and the founding of the Society of Architectural Historians in 1940, generated much debate in architecture schools over the value and place of architectural history in the curriculum.\(^{46}\)

Some architecture schools adopted an antihistorical perspective and were hesitant to place too much emphasis on the history of architecture. Henry Van Brunt, an American architect in the nineteenth-century, charged that the influence of history on an architecture student

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 880.
produced “too slavish a devotion to precedent crippled the contemporary designer.”

The opposite approach to studying the history of architecture emphasized the cultural context of architecture by analyzing the “intellectual, social, economic, and technological context in which a building of the past was created and thus better appreciate that building as a design solution in the context of its time.”

Art history departments classified architecture as one of the fine arts and taught survey classes on the history of architecture. Many of the research skills utilized by an art historian studying a painting or other work of art translated into analyzing the built environment. Mary Wingfield Scott entered the profession while it transformed into a field dominated by male architects. She broke ground as a female architectural historian with a solid academic foundation. Scott benefited from the fluidity of the profession by having the opportunity to establish herself as the leading authority on preservation in Richmond without being relegated into a supporting role as a female. She identified herself as an architectural historian in the title of her autobiography and became “an art historian specializing in the analysis of works of architecture” to use the prominent architectural historian and critic Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s self-description.

---

Chapter Two: “Don’t Faint, I’ve bought a house.”

Scott’s career in preservation began after she graduated from the University of Chicago with a Ph.D. in Art History. Although her dissertation was titled, *Art and Artists in Balzac’s Comedie Humaine*, Scott declared that her “real interest was in Richmond houses.” After a visit to New Orleans in 1928, Scott decided to produce a book that chronicled the pre-Civil War housing of Richmond.

The city’s built environment evolved as Richmond transformed from the Capital of the Confederacy to one of the busy manufacturing cities of the New South. Between 1870 and 1920, there was immense investment in industrial and business development, suburbanization and expansion, and population growth. Richmond’s residential development was a complex reaction to the loss of the Civil War and the rise of the Lost Cause mentality, racial segregation, and transportation. The creation of new neighborhoods was unplanned and unregulated, dependent upon where developers chose to invest. Older neighborhoods suffered from a lack of planning and neglect when it came to the installation and allocation of city services and amenities. Racial segregation reflected both social customs and Jim Crow laws and led to separate and unequal residential development for black residents.

After the Civil War, Richmond transitioned from a war-time economy to a peace-time economy focused on growth and development. Manufacturing and transportation fueled the city’s economy. Industries such as flour milling, tobacco manufacturing, iron and foundry work, and the production of fertilizer and other goods kept Richmond’s railroads and port humming, transporting goods up and down the north-south corridor of the East Coast and to international

---

50 Scott, *Architectural Historian*, 34.
By the beginning of the twentieth century, Richmond’s manufacturing and distribution volume had surpassed antebellum levels, survived the economic recession of 1893, and reached $156,724,322 by 1920. The area along the riverfront with its close proximity to shipping and transportation remained the location of business and manufacturing. The devastation of industry and twenty blocks of the business district caused by the evacuation fire set by Confederate forces as they abandoned Richmond was replaced by new brick buildings. Cast-iron was a decorative element added to many of the buildings.

The financial transactions generated by the manufacturing, shipping, and business suppliers needed to support these industries propelled Richmond into a regional financial center. Funds cleared by Richmond banks reached $374,794,873 in 1910. In May 1914 the Federal Reserve Bank selected Richmond as a regional branch location based on two factors: this financial strength and its strategic geographic location. The addition of the Federal Reserve Bank branch sent Richmond’s fund clearings volume soaring to over $3 billion by 1920.

Richmond’s economic success led to a dramatic growth in population. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Richmond ranked as the nation’s forty-sixth largest city, the fourth largest in the South, with a population of 85,050. By 1920, the number of persons living in the city had more than doubled to 171,667.

Up to the 1880s, Richmond’s spatial arrangement integrated the city’s work, residence, and commercial functions into a well-defined physical area that had the characteristics of a

---

52 Ibid., 5-8.
53 Ibid., 5-8.
54 Ibid., 9-10.
Walking was the primary method of transportation most commonly available to the majority of persons. Pre-industrial cities in Europe and North America, thus, developed in predictable patterns: a congested city core where inhabitants lived, worked, and shopped based on their ability to travel by foot. Local business owners managed their daily work in the shop downstairs and resided on the upper floors of the same building. The most prestigious living space was in the center city with the shortest distances to walk. There was also a clear differentiation between a city and the surrounding countryside.

The Richmond neighborhoods that Scott studied reflected the city’s history. The first major transformation that affected Richmond’s housing was in 1779 when the General Assembly voted to relocate the capital of Virginia from Williamsburg. The population of Richmond saw an influx of lawyers, architects, and businessmen, who constructed elegant homes in residential neighborhoods surrounding the capitol. Housing continued to be constructed to the west and by “the 1840s the western section of Franklin Street, which began at Capitol Square, assumed the mantle of most prestigious residential street in Richmond.” Many of Richmond’s affluent residents built large mansions on this street.

Working-class housing developed in close proximity to factories that were located on the north and south banks of the James River. Many employees of Tredegar Iron Works, for instance, resided in the nearby Oregon Hill neighborhood. On the east side of Richmond, Fulton became a residential area within walking distance of nearby factories, too. The neighborhood of Church Hill was home to blacks, whites, and immigrants who held working class and middle class jobs. The location of the neighborhood allowed factory employees to walk to businesses.

along the river and, after 1888, white collar workers to utilize the streetcars as transportation to work in city office buildings.\(^\text{57}\)

The nation’s first electric streetcar system was installed in Richmond in 1888. This transportation system fostered an investment of over $12 million in businesses and suburban neighborhoods in the last decade of the nineteenth century. New neighborhoods located along street car lines included Woodland Heights, Barton Heights, and Ginter Park. Houses in Richmond’s Fan District were built from the 1880s to 1920s. These neighborhoods attracted primarily white middle class residents who wanted to escape the pollution and congestion of inner city neighborhoods and who could afford the streetcar fare. The city invested funds in improvements such as cobblestone streets, terra cotta pipes and sewer systems.\(^\text{58}\)

An impetus for suburban expansion to the west was the installation of the Robert E. Lee monument on what became Monument Avenue. The possibility of creating a grand boulevard in conjunction with the statue led to the selection of a site on the far western environs of the city. The Lee monument was dedicated in 1890. Over the years, other statues to Civil War heroes Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, and Jefferson Davis were also erected. The construction of Monument Avenue and its veneration of the Lost Cause occurred at the same time as the rise of Jim Crow laws and a racial segregation ordinance in Richmond.\(^\text{59}\)

De facto racial segregation had been the custom of relations between whites and blacks for many decades prior to the Civil War. Many of these customs along with new restrictions were written into law between 1890 and 1910. These laws separated the races in public spaces such as transportation, hospitals, schools, employment, and recreational facilities. Residential


segregation ordinances were enacted as African Americans migrated to cities in search of jobs and began to occupy housing in traditionally white neighborhoods in response to the poor living conditions in traditionally black neighborhoods.

Richmond’s city council passed a residential segregation ordinance in the spring of 1911 following a ruling by the Virginia Supreme Court that upheld the legality of racial zoning. African Americans lived predominantly in the neighborhoods of Church Hill, Fulton, and Jackson Ward, where the majority of Richmond’s African Americans resided. Black residential areas also felt pressure on housing stocks as the number of African Americans living in Richmond grew from 32,230 in 1900 to 46,733 in 1910, an increase of forty-five percent.\textsuperscript{60} Jackson Ward was “hemmed in to the north by Shockoe ravine and to the east by the white business district.”\textsuperscript{61} In order to accommodate the number of residents, houses were subdivided into apartments and dwellings were wedged into the alleys and back streets.

With black voters disfranchised, Jackson Ward did not receive the same level of public investment as the other city wards. Most of the improvements and services for black residential areas were inferior to comparable amenities for white neighborhoods. A study of working class and poor sections of the city demonstrated inequality in availability of the city sewer system and water. Filthy and unsanitary living conditions contributed to a black mortality rate that was twice that of whites.\textsuperscript{62}

Richmond’s residential segregation ordinance was a tortured attempt to designate streets and sections of streets as black or white. Persons who were proponents of the ordinance


\textsuperscript{62} Silver, \textit{Twentieth-Century Richmond}, 96-100; Gustavus A. Weber, \textit{Report on Housing and Living Conditions in the Neglected Sections of Richmond, Virginia} (Richmond, 1913), 30-35.
complained that property values fell in reaction to blacks living in the neighborhood and the white families moving out. Peculiar situations arose when blacks owned property on streets designated white and they were not allowed to live in their own property. In 1917 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled racial zoning unconstitutional.

Racial segregation was the only form of city planning adopted by Richmond. Efforts to create a formal city planning function to address the issues of substandard housing, zoning, and city expansion were a victim of government retrenchment. Richmond contracted its government at the time that most cities were expanding public programs in order to compete with rival cities. J. Fulmer Bright won the mayoral race in 1924 and held the elected office until 1940. Bright advocated for a limited role for government and opposed incurring debt or using tax increases to fund city improvements. Bright ignored Richmond’s poor housing conditions and he refused to apply for assistance from the federal government during the Great Depression. He also opposed public housing. It was his “unwavering opposition to the federal housing program” that led to his defeat in the 1940 mayoral election.63

By the 1930s, Richmond’s residential areas were a dichotomy. Inner-city neighborhoods were failing due to blighted and rundown housing, concentrated poverty, and neglect. Urban residents were typically poor, lower-class blacks and whites. In extreme contrast, the city’s formerly suburban neighborhoods, annexed between 1906 and 1914, boasted new construction, amusement parks, and the most up-to-date city services. Wealthy and middle-class whites were the customary residents in the city’s newer neighborhoods.

In 1935, while researching her book on Richmond houses, Scott led a group of preservation-minded persons to establish the William Byrd Branch of the APVA. Scott wrote in

an article for *The Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians* in October 1943 that the founders’ goal was to preserve the old buildings in Richmond. She defined “old” as pre-Civil War. She noted that Richmond’s housing was threatened due to the creation of parking lots and persons “abandoning family homes that were noisy, dusty, expensive both to keep up and to pay taxes on, taxes that classed them as business property.” A result of this was a marked change in the built environment of Richmond between 1925 and 1935 due to the loss of various houses.64

The threat of demolition to the Adam Craig house, one of a small number of Richmond’s eighteenth-century buildings remaining, motivated the group to organize to save the structure. Virginia Withers, Scott’s companion, wrote that Scott’s face “lit up like a constellation” when she announced, “Don’t faint, I’ve bought a house.” The house that Scott was referring to was the Adam Craig house, (ca. 1784-87), located in the Shockoe Bottom section of Richmond. Although it is doubtful that Poe ever visited the Craig house, it became famous as the childhood home of Jane Craig Stanard. Edgar Allan Poe had a teenage crush on Mrs. Stanard, who was the mother of his friend, Rob Stanard. Poe would immortalize Mrs. Stanard and her beauty in his poem, “To Helen.”65

The William Byrd Branch bought the house for $500, using contributions from members and the public to fund the purchase. It was located in a poor, lower-class neighborhood, lacked electricity and plumbing, and was full of broken furniture. A brick building had been built

---

beside the Craig house. Scott declared that “when we first started to clean it, a hoe, not a broom, had to be used.”

Scott was cognizant that “it was not practical to make museums in a city already glutted with them.” She acknowledged that it was as much a challenge to determine an appropriate use for an older building as it was to raise the money necessary to purchase the structure. From the beginning of her career to the end, Scott focused on adaptive reuse as a viable solution for older houses. The restoration of the Adam Craig house was an innovative and resourceful exercise in utilizing a building as a community resource.

After raising the money to purchase the house, the branch installed utilities and painted two rooms of the house in order to rent it to a tenant. After buying the brick building adjacent to the Craig house, the branch rented it out and used the income to fund repairs to the house. The branch took advantage of Works Progress Administration labor to the paint the inside and outside of the house.

After bringing the house to a usable state, the William Byrd Branch appointed a committee to determine a suitable use for the building. From 1938 until 1941, the building was used by the Craig House Art Center. The center provided art classes to African American students who did not have access to organized art instruction after elementary school. Adele Clark, Nora Houston, and Mary Wingfield Scott lectured at the Craig House Art Center. Adele Clark, state director of the Works Progress Administration federal arts program, secured an artist to direct the center.

---

67 Ibid., 28.
68 Craig House Art Center, Virginia Historical Society, Mss3 C8443 a.
Scott recognized that the William Byrd Branch’s goal to raise money and find a suitable use for each of the old and interesting houses in Richmond would need the support of many persons.

In her book, *Houses of Old Richmond* published in 1941, Scott hoped to raise awareness of antebellum structures similar to the Adam Craig house. She demonstrated that “Richmond still claimed nearly a score of distinct and discernible inner-city residential ‘communities’ differentiated by features like architecture, ethnicity, class, economic functions, race, spatial location, and tradition.” As Scott began her research, many of the neighborhoods were no longer vibrant and had evolved from fashionable, sought after locations to a collection of “dilapidated rental units.”69

Scott surveyed the architecture in Richmond from the Old Stone house, built circa 1737 to the Peterkin house, built in 1860. Scott’s goal was to document Richmond’s built environment from the earliest years of the city up to the beginning of the Civil War.70 She was acutely aware that architecturally significant housing was disappearing from the city as neighborhoods and commercial districts grew and shifted as the city was transformed by the immense changes of the twentieth century.

Scott’s work was part of a national trend to document the nation’s architecture by geographic regions. Robert A. Lancaster published *Historic Virginia Homes and Churches* in 1915. Other early publications included Daniel Elliott Huger Smith’s *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston*, published in 1917, Arnold Genthe’s *Impressions of Old New Orleans*, published in 1926, and Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham, Jr.’s *Charleston, South Carolina*, published in 1927. In 1900, only 21 books on early American buildings had been published. By 1920 the

---

number of publications had grown to 126. The Great Depression had an adverse effect on
publication of further books so that by 1939 the number had increased to only 202. Typically
these books provided important pictorial records of the built environment but neglected to
discuss architectural styles, building materials, or plans and elevations. The lack of this
important architectural information, along with a failure to place the buildings into their cultural
context, was a serious limitation of these earlier survey books.\textsuperscript{71}

Scott’s first book focused on the evolution of housing in Richmond from its early days as
a small trading village on the banks of the James River (1737) to just before it became the capital
of the Confederacy (1860). Scott’s book was the first to focus solely on Richmond’s built
environment. She analyzed over 100 residential buildings, by researching information on the
architectural characteristics and placing the building into its historical and social context by
preparing biographical sketches of current and past owners.

Scott organized her research chronologically and grouped the houses into five distinct
periods: the founding period from 1737-1789 that discussed 4 houses, Richmond’s early years
as the capital of Virginia from 1790-1819 that covered 39 homes, the years following the
economic depression of 1819 from 1820-1835 that reviewed 6 dwellings, the period of recovery
from 1836-1852 that discussed 36 houses, and the final period before the Civil War from 1853-
1860 that covered 12 buildings. Scott made a conscious decision to direct her research to houses
that were extant and limited discussion of the number of buildings that had been demolished in
order to avoid slipping into a “nostalgic record of all we have lost.”\textsuperscript{72} Each section of the book
begins with an essay on the economic climate that affected housing construction during the
period.

\textsuperscript{71} Frank J. Roos, Jr., “Research in American Architecture;” \textit{College Art Journal}, Vol. 4, No. 4 (May, 1945): 186-
190; Hosmer, \textit{Preservation Comes of Age}, 1049-1050.
\textsuperscript{72} Scott, \textit{Houses}, 1.
A major strength of *Houses of Old Richmond* is the scrupulous, scholarly research Scott conducted. She used primary source documents that included deed books, tax lists, wills, newspapers, personal papers, land books, and insurance records and drawings. Scott gleaned information to trace the ownership and improvements to each structure. Scott did run into some roadblocks in her research due to errors in documents or incomplete records that were missing or not kept current. She supplemented these primary sources with secondary sources. Photographs of the exterior are included for most houses and a few include interior photographs as well. Scott carefully dispels the myths and legends associated with some of the dwellings and reports what can be confirmed by her research. Each house profile is followed by an individual bibliography denoting which sources were used.

Scott’s monograph contains an extensive bibliography and a map that shows the city boundaries in 1742 and the five annexations that occurred between 1742 and 1867. Another valuable feature of the book is a chart Scott created that graphs the volume of houses built annually between 1827 and 1860.

*Houses of Old Richmond* begins with the fifty-two year period from 1737 to 1789 and examines the housing present at the founding of the city to immediately after the removal of the state capital from Williamsburg to Richmond during the American Revolution. Richmond began as a frontier trading post situated at the falls of the James River. The falls, a rocky outcropping that made the river unnavigable, was the location of trade and shipping related to the tobacco economy. As the volume of trade between the colonists and the local Indians grew, and the number of settlers increased, the small settlement of Richmond became a strategic location for tobacco warehousing. The Virginia General Assembly’s Warehouse Act of 1730 designated this location as an inspection site, putting pressure on William Byrd II, owner of the surrounding
land, to lay out a town. In 1733, Byrd commissioned Major William Mayo to draw town lots for sale from Shockoe Creek east and north from the James River. Byrd named the town Richmond, after noticing a resemblance between the bend in the James River and the topography of Richmond-on-the-Thames in England.\textsuperscript{73}

Richmond remained primarily a trading post and the small village’s built environment was an unharmonious collection of buildings. It was not until the capital relocated to Richmond that the population grew significantly. By 1789, Richmond had approximately 300 houses. The majority of houses were vernacular buildings constructed of wood. These structures were usually “one- or two-room split board buildings with end chimneys and a post-hole frame foundation set on or in the ground.” Persons of all statuses lived in these types of buildings, from planters to enslaved persons.\textsuperscript{74}

The early buildings of Richmond were described as “small tenements.” The Revolutionary War had diverted supplies and energy away from building, but by 1789 the housing was described as “well-built.”\textsuperscript{75} Spring freshets often flooded the town and were known to sweep away houses and commercial buildings, along with all the material goods inside. Fire also destroyed Richmond’s dwellings. A fire on Main Street in 1787 may have led to greater use of brick as a building material. The four dwellings that Scott includes in this section illustrate the range of building materials used then, although typical housing during this period was a vernacular cottage.\textsuperscript{76}

The Old Stone house, the oldest building extant in Richmond then and now, is made of stone with a “primitive appearance.” The house can be documented in the records as early as

\textsuperscript{73} Marie Tyler McGraw, \textit{At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia, & Its People} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Valentine Museum, 1994), 44.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{75} Scott, \textit{Houses}, 6.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 36.
1783, but the actual date of construction is unknown. The Richard Adams house was also built before 1790. It was a wooden frame building and a drawing on an insurance policy shows it had a unique architectural feature of four chimneys. Scott noted that a photograph in the possession of Mrs. F. M. Headen showed the four chimneys. The house was demolished in the early twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{77}

The construction date of the Adam Craig house is also unknown. Scott theorizes that construction was probably between 1784 and 1787. The Craig house is still standing in Richmond, recently restored as a home.

The John Marshall House is the only extant brick house of its period. It was the home of the chief justice when he lived in Richmond. Ownership remained in the Marshall family until 1907 when it was sold to the city of Richmond. The city planned to tear down the house in order to build a new high school. News of the impending demolition of the house rallied concerned citizens whose protests saved the structure. The house is now owned and operated as a house museum by APVA.\textsuperscript{78} Several rooms of the Marshall House were paneled, a typical interior ornamentation for the period. The floor plan of the Marshall house is illogical, and Scott suggests that not until the next decade did the influence of architects eliminate such awkwardness.\textsuperscript{79}

The relocation of the state capital to Richmond in 1779 and the end of the American Revolution led to a period of growth and expansion. The apparatus of government brought statesmen, clerks, lawyers, judges, and others connected with the legislature and court system. Industry flourished between 1790 and 1819, placing Richmond in the top echelon of manufacturers in the South. Flour mills and tobacco factories were the leading industries. A surge in population followed the growth in industry and businesses. Between 1790 and 1817,

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{78} Lindgren, \textit{Preserving the Old Dominion}, 164.
\textsuperscript{79} Scott, \textit{Houses}, 23.
Richmond’s population almost quadrupled, growing from 3,761 to 14,328. By 1810, the city expanded its borders by annexing approximately 6 square miles of land.\(^80\)

Residential dwellings were first built in the valley between Shockoe Hill and Richmond or Church Hill, near Shockoe Creek, close to the businesses along the river. The Adams family owned the majority of the land to the east, which may have slowed the spread of residences in this direction. The state capitol attracted residents to Shockoe Hill, just north of the capitol building, leading to the development of Court End, a fashionable neighborhood with a collection of well-built houses. Further west, houses were built on the outskirts of the city. The first annexation to the city of Richmond incorporated land from Capitol Square south to Gamble’s Hill and west to First Street. Individuals also built houses to the north and east.\(^81\)

Dwellings in this period ranged from simple farmhouses and gambrel-roofed cottages to elegant mansions designed by well-known architect Robert Mills. It was common for business owners to locate their establishment on the street level of a building and create their home on the upper floors. “Plantations-in-town” were houses on large lots in the city. Insurance policies show that owners filled the lots with gardens, orchards, and “a bevy of outbuildings . . . a kitchen-wing, an icehouse, an office, a summer-house, a smokehouse, servants’ quarters, a well, and a stable and carriage-house.”\(^82\) Outbuildings for smaller houses were limited to a kitchen or smokehouse.

Around 1810, innovations in decoration on the exterior and interior of dwellings appeared. The Brockenbrough mansion, built in 1810-1813, introduced porticos and stuccoing, a process that coated the exterior surface with a mixture of sand and lime. Other exterior developments included cornices made of brick, belt-courses between stories, panels between the

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 29-30.
\(^{81}\) Ibid., 27-31.
\(^{82}\) Ibid., 31.
first and second floor windows, windows with plaster-covered brick keystones, and recessed arches over windows. Interior decoration evolved from paneled rooms to the incorporation of chair-rails, carved mantels, and six-paneled doors. Scott traced the evolution of Richmond housing through the “line of architectural succession beginning with the second Brockenbrough home and continuing through the Westmoreland Club, the Barret house, and the Nolting house.” A few of the houses that also delineate the evolution in Richmond architecture did not make her list: the John Marshall house (ca. 1788-90) and the Wickham-Valentine house (ca. 1811-13) are not included.

Richmond’s economy grew dramatically between 1814 and 1818. A combination of investment in land during the War of 1812 and a rise in tobacco prices led to a great volume of real estate buying and selling. A perceived lack of available land also led to dramatic increases in property values. Then the first national economic depression of 1819 contracted property values drastically, leaving many in financial ruin. Building came to a virtual standstill until 1835, with a few exceptions.

The houses erected reflected the economic times. Very little money was invested in ornamentation on the outside or inside. Housing built in this timeframe is hard to categorize architecturally. The influence of the Greek Revival architectural style was beginning to manifest itself in dwellings in the smallest ways, usually as a porch with a pediment. Scott included only a few houses from this period.

In 1836, the construction of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac railroad, along with other lines into Richmond, led to the development of the city as an important center of iron manufacturing. The need for raw materials such as iron and coal revitalized the James River

---

83 Ibid., 32.
84 Ibid., 141.
85 Ibid., 164.
Canal. Under the auspices of the James River and Kanawha Canal Company, the canal was extended west to Lynchburg and through the mountains to Buchanan. Until 1859, the canal transported more “tonnage than all four railroads entering Richmond.”86 Other industries, such as textile factories, paper mills, and tobacco manufacturing grew and prospered. The flour mills were again producing and exporting their product.

The economic expansion created jobs for factory workers, tradesmen, and local business owners. A demand for housing followed Richmond’s population increase of 4,000 between 1830 and 1840. Dwellings were needed for the working population, as well as the wealthy.

Scott classifies the period between 1836 and 1852 as the advent of Greek Revival houses in Richmond. She states that “someone seems to have worked out a formula that utilized the details of Greek decoration to make a house within the means of people of medium as well as of great fortune.”87 Scott describes the architectural features of the Richmond Greek Revival as,

They have gable roofs with a dormer, and a single chimney to serve both halves. In the rear are two-story porches, generally partly enclosed with shutters. In front, instead of being flush with the street like the earlier houses, they are set back in a shallow yard and are approached by several granite steps set between cheeks of the same stone. Over the doors are small porches flanked with columns (generally two). The columns and mouldings of these little porches are entirely neo-Greek in character.88

This style held true for grander houses with the exception of locating the porch in the center of the front façade, a center hall, and a flat or slightly peaked roof. Other variations included adding a full basement and side entrance with a porch.

The Greek Revival style was so prevalent in Richmond during the 1840s and 1850s that Scott referred to it as “monotonous.” She devoted her analysis of the housing included in this period to variations on the Greek Revival pattern. Scott reported in the Barret House history that

86 Ibid., 179.
87 Ibid., 183.
88 Ibid., 185.
she and her cousin, Elizabeth Scott Bocock, had bought the house to prevent its demolition.\textsuperscript{89} She described Linden Row, a collection of ten houses on the 100 block of East Franklin Street as “the most satisfying example of the Greek Revival period in Richmond’s architecture.” The residences were home to many of Richmond’s prominent citizens and associated with “all that was best in the social life of Richmond.”\textsuperscript{90} Scott later bought the buildings of Linden Row to save them from demolition. She deeded them in her will to the Historic Richmond Foundation.

Scott characterized the decade prior to the Civil War as the “Exuberant Fifties.” She described Richmond as a thriving, vibrant city with a strong industrial and business base, populated by just over 30,000 residents in the city and another 15,000 or so outside the city limits. This period of house building employed a great variety of styles and patterns with no dominant theme. Dwellings built in the suburbs of Richmond were often less expensive, small brick homes. The wealthy citizens of Richmond built large mansions in the city with no trace of classical influence. Cast iron came into common use as ornamentation on dwellings from this period.\textsuperscript{91}

The conclusion to the book provides insight into Scott’s approach to historic preservation. She acknowledges that changing circumstances will cause some housing to be lost. The high costs of maintaining and living in one of Richmond’s old mansions or the additional burden of high taxes imposed because the house is located in what had become a business district can lead to a house being unaffordable. Scott applauds the efforts that saved some of the architecturally significant houses in Richmond by converting them to museums: The second Brockenbrough house is now in use as the White House of the Confederacy, the Wickham house is now in use as the Valentine Richmond History Center, and the Old Stone house is the home of

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 222.  
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 255.  
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
the Edgar Allan Poe Museum. She also realized that a proliferation of such house museums was not feasible either. Scott asserted that “some method must be found to absorb houses into the needs of the community and to make people realize that they are not only a great asset to the city as a whole but can be made to pay the individual or group to which they belong, materially as well as in intangible values.”

---

92 Ibid., 313.
Chapter Three: *Old Richmond News and Old Richmond Neighborhoods*

As a result of the successful renovation of the Adam Craig house and determination of a new purpose for the dwelling that was compatible for the neighborhood in which it was located, the branch members had experienced firsthand the difficulty of buying and preserving old buildings in rundown neighborhoods, where future uses of the structures were limited.

This knowledge led branch members to rethink their ambitious mission to save all the antebellum buildings in Richmond. While still fundraising to purchase another old dwelling, the branch “focused our attention on bringing to bear a maximum of publicity on the antiquities of Richmond, both among its citizens and among tourists.” 93 Scott knew the value of tourism dollars in supporting the preservation efforts of the branch from the experience of the statewide headquarters. The income from admission fees and gift shop sales at Jamestown supported the expenses of the APVA’s statewide operations.

Beginning in May 1942, the William Byrd Branch produced postcards made from a series of pictures of historic buildings. The branch sold the postcards at museums, churches, and historic houses. There were several objectives accomplished by this activity: the sales provided a modest income to the organizations that sold them and the postcards raised awareness of the wealth of architecturally interesting buildings and history in order to entice visitors and tourists to Richmond.

Another tactic utilized by the branch to increase the public’s awareness of the rich architectural heritage of the city was exhibitions at the Valentine Museum, now known as the Valentine Richmond History Center. The branch partnered with the museum to produce

exhibitions about ornamental cast iron in the city and about Richmond neighborhoods. Scott had lectured on the use of cast iron as decoration in Richmond at the Craig House Art Center.\footnote{94 “Old Fences Around Plots Found Disintegrating Rapidly, Miss Scott Reports,” \textit{Richmond News Leader}, 19 October 1938, 3.}

The Valentine exhibition titled “Old Richmond Neighborhoods” was produced from a project that Scott was working on to document the extant pre-Civil War housing in Richmond. She created a file that listed the history of the building, an assessment of its present condition and notes on any alterations needed to restore it to its original appearance. The reverse side of the card was a photograph of the structure. The genesis of the project came from Helen McCormack, former director of the Valentine, who had completed a similar project on the housing of Charleston. Scott noted that the city had approximately 700 extant buildings that pre-dated the Civil War.

An outgrowth of this detailed study of the city’s built environment was another venue to educate residents. The Valentine Museum launched a series of walking tours that explored the neighborhoods featured in the “Old Richmond Neighborhoods” exhibition. The William Byrd Branch extended the tours and made plans to continue them on a regular basis. The tours were greeted enthusiastically by large numbers of persons who wanted to explore the city’s housing and neighborhoods. The tours also increased the pride of the persons living in the neighborhoods as they realized the special attributes of their homes.

In 1944, Scott had the idea to begin a newsletter to be sent to members of the branch and other interested persons. The William Byrd Branch of the APVA began publishing \textit{Old Richmond News}, with Mary Wingfield Scott serving as its editor. In this role, she became the voice of preservation in Richmond.
By the 1940s the city of Richmond had developed and expanded into “an amalgam of separate neighborhood units differentiated by age, architecture, social class, and, of course, race.” Neighborhood development was driven by the desire to keep the races separate. This was mainly accomplished by zoning and real estate covenants. Middle and upper-class whites were able to choose from a variety of new neighborhoods that extended to the west. Black residents of all economic statuses suffered from a shortage of housing stock and overcrowded, unsanitary neighborhoods.

Scott was aware of these threats to historic buildings from her research and her knowledge of historic preservation efforts in other cities. What could not be predicted was the scope of unprecedented change in personal lifestyle and city structure brought about by the advent of the automobile, roads to handle the volume of traffic, and homeownership. Federally funded programs were created to help cities cope with the deterioration of inner-city neighborhoods and blight, which led to further destruction of the built environment.

Public transportation was supplanted by private transportation when Henry Ford invented the assembly line and manufactured automobiles at a price affordable for the average person. In 1905, there were 8,000 cars and 1,400 trucks registered in the United States. Fifty years later, there were 52,135,583 cars and 25,755,700 trucks in use. General Motors was instrumental in converting public transportation from a system that utilized electricity and tracks to one that utilized gasoline and roads by purchasing bankrupt streetcar systems and putting buses in their place. The point of view that the “automobile represented the best of modern civilization while the trolley was simply an old-fashioned obstacle to progress” led to the decline and removal of miles of electric-powered public transportation and dependence on the car for transit. As the automobile became entrenched in daily lives, the increased volume of cars overwhelmed the

---

95 Silver and Moeser, Separate City, 125.
public road system. Again, special interest groups related to the automobile industry, such as car dealers, gas station owners, and developers, applied pressure to elected officials to allocate taxes and public financing to build highways to accommodate the increased volume. The congestion of city streets led to expressways which eliminated stoplights and intersections.\textsuperscript{96} The Federal Interstate Highway Act, enacted in 1956, funded approximately 42,500 miles of modern highways that furthered the shift of industry and homes away from the city center.\textsuperscript{97}

Inner-city neighborhoods faced another challenge when federal programs made mortgage loans feasible and accessible to the middle class. The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), enacted in 1933, “introduced, perfected, and proved in practice the feasibility of long-term, self-amortizing mortgage with uniform payments spread over the whole life of the debt.”\textsuperscript{98} This law also created a uniform system of determining the value of a house through appraisals of the physical condition and location of the house that gave confidence to the lender. The appraisal procedures instituted by the HOLC led to discrimination by class and race. By classifying neighborhoods where blacks lived as undesirable, this influenced banks and savings and loan associations not to lend to persons seeking mortgages housing in these areas. The HOLC act was followed by the Federal Housing Act of 1934 which created the Federal Housing Administration. Programs initiated by these acts increased the number of persons who could buy homes and made it more affordable to own rather than rent. Housing starts and sales rose dramatically, from 93,000 in 1933 to a cumulative total of 11,000,000 at the end of 1972, with 63% of families enjoying homeownership.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 249.  
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 196.  
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 207.
FHA loans “hastened the decay of inner-city neighborhoods by stripping them of much of their middle-class constituency.”\(^{100}\) This was the result of a systemic approach to granting loans that provided a greater incentive to purchase a home located in a new development rather than the repair or purchase of older housing in the city. The rating system used to measure the quality of residential areas favored white, suburban neighborhoods and discriminated against black, urban neighborhoods. These procedures strengthened the segregation of persons by race and income. Over a period of time inner city neighborhoods became synonymous with “poor people, crime, minorities, deterioration, older dwellings, and abandoned buildings.”\(^{101}\) Public housing programs, slum clearance initiatives, and blight further decimated these neighborhoods, and led to the destruction of large amounts of the older housing that Scott devoted her career to preserving.

Scott had come to the realization that it was impossible for her or the branch to rescue each of the approximately 700 antebellum structures in Richmond. She took the lead and created a vehicle, the branch newsletter, to educate citizens, owners of these buildings, and others regarding their value to the city’s history. Scott added publication of the *Old Richmond News* newsletter to her previous efforts to educate Richmonders: exhibitions at the Valentine, neighborhood walking tours, postcards, and her first monograph, *Houses of Old Richmond*.

Scott’s editorial goal was to inform readers of buildings that were restored and to discuss areas of Richmond where older buildings stood. The newsletter was mailed to approximately 500 members and friends of the William Byrd Branch. As the editor of the publication, Scott occupied a place of authority and expertise. Over the course of the eighteen years that the branch published the newsletter from 1944 to 1962, she communicated her historic preservation

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 206.
\(^{101}\) Ibid., 275.
philosophy: prevent the demolition of architecturally significant buildings, promote adaptive use of structures, educate homeowners on the appropriate renovation of structures, and respect the relationship of a building to its environment. An editorial in the Richmond News Leader following publication of the inaugural newsletter in 1944 praised her efforts and declared that “Richmond already is permanently indebted for historical researches and for direct effort in saving some of the most interesting of the early structures of the city.”

In 1962, James Parrish, director of the William Byrd Branch, announced Scott’s resignation from the board and the subsequent cessation of publication of the newsletter. He opined that

One of the chief delights of belonging to the Branch was the opportunity to receive copies of her “Old Richmond News.” There could be found her pointed, pungent, but always humorous comments on what she considered to be ill-advised ventures – from the tearing down of houses for parking spaces (one of her pet peeves) or simply poor taste and judgment. (As she so succinctly put it, “Some people’s taste is all in their mouths.”)

Scott’s reputation as the authority in Richmond on architecture and historic preservation was well-established.

Old Richmond News was published when the branch had sufficient news to report and the funds to support it. Generally, it was published three times a year. Some years it was only published once or twice. The newsletter was typically one page, front and back. It contained standard features such as membership and dues information, financial reports, and a list of the board of directors. The remaining space was Scott’s opportunity to advocate her preservation philosophy and educate her readers to “our point of view on Richmond.”

103 Mrs. Charles T. Rose in an undated letter from James McCaw Parrish, Director, William Byrd Branch APVA to membership, in collection Mary Wingfield Scott, Old Richmond News, Virginia Historical Society, F221 A77.1 061.
The first issue contained information on the restoration of several structures: the Masonic Hall, “the oldest Masonic building in continuous use;” Edmond house; Beers house; Broad Street Methodist Church; and a Greek Revival house on Main Street. Scott combined history with architectural analysis to communicate the value of a house to the city’s heritage. While happy that houses were being restored and kept in use, Scott also took the opportunity to communicate her renovation philosophy: “An old house can only be successfully restored to the best it ever was, not to what it was never intended to be.” She asserted that “unwise restorations” utilizing inappropriate modern building materials or new additions on a house from an earlier age were in the same category as demolitions.\(^\text{105}\) Scott also began compiling a list of the oldest extant structures in the city. She took a neighborhood approach, listing buildings in Shed Town, Church Hill, and Shockoe Creek. Scott demonstrated that she saw buildings as part of their context, not single structures without connection to their surroundings.

Scott made an important announcement in the April 1944 issue: the branch purchased the Carrington House, located at 2306 East Grace Street, in Church Hill. The house was originally built between 1810 and 1816. At the time, the Carrington and Adams family owned most of the east end of Richmond. Micajah Bates, the city surveyor, lived in the house from the 1830s until 1856. In 1888 the home was bought by St. John’s Church for use as a rectory. The branch paid $2,500 in cash for the house. Scott related a list of repairs that would be made as funds permitted. The April issue listed the schedule of eight free walking tours to be conducted in April and May. Scott and attendees explored Church Hill, Third Street and Shockoe Cemetery, Court End, East Main Street, Oregon Hill, Marshall Street, French Garden Hill, and Hollywood.

Cemetery. Scott continued her inventory of old buildings in Richmond, listing houses in Court End, Shockoe Hill, Jackson Ward, and others located in different parts of the city.\textsuperscript{106}

In the September 1944 issue, Scott predicted that with peace in Europe “an old war will re-open for the William Byrd Branch.”\textsuperscript{107} She astutely perceived that the return to business as normal would increase the number of buildings demolished to make way for parking lots or new buildings. Scott recognized the need to become advocates for the city’s historic architecture. She directed her readers to become familiar with all areas of the city, to learn how other cities were preserving their historic fabric, and to communicate to elected officials or those in a capacity to make decisions that affected development, that Richmond architecture was “a unique possession, intelligent utilization of which is advantageous” to all residents. Scott urged her colleagues to take a public role in bringing this issue to the attention of elected officials. She also added a new column in this issue of the newsletter, titled “Old House Necrology,” where she mourned houses that were being demolished. She also discussed the removal of several cast iron porches and the loss of gates and fences from Hollywood Cemetery.

Scott announced her fall schedule of walking tours, which varied weekly and ranged from the neighborhood of Gamble’s Hill to Church Hill to Jackson Ward. She also scheduled the fall dates on Saturday, in order to make it possible for persons who worked to participate. Scott utilized this venue to expose members and the public to historic Richmond communities. These walking tours, “complete with stepladder which she mounted at each corner the better to point out historic landmarks” provided Scott with an authentic voice that had the authority of exploring Richmond’s historic neighborhoods regularly and from an eyewitness point of view.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106} Mary Wingfield Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 1 April 1944, vol. 1, no. 2, Virginia Historical Society, F221 A77.1 061.
\textsuperscript{107} Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 20 September 1944, vol. 1, no. 3.
\textsuperscript{108} Rose letter from James McCaw Parrish.
Scott discussed restorations and repairs in the newsletter, voicing her opinion of success or failure. The “asbestos-shingle epidemic” solicited her derision, as did houses with their iron porches removed. Scott valued the ironwork for its beauty and because it was cast in Richmond. The frequency of her walking tours in historic areas made Scott aware of any alterations or additions to the buildings in the neighborhood.

In the September 1944 issue, Scott declared that she had purchased four houses in the Oregon Hill neighborhood and challenged other members to buy an old house. She asserted her leadership by mounting a personal effort to help preserve Oregon Hill from demolition in response to the city targeting this neighborhood for slum clearance. Scott recognized the unique character of the neighborhood and worked to save the housing, valuing it even though it did not have a connection to elite, white residents. Oregon Hill developed as a white, working class neighborhood beginning in 1846. The homes provided affordable housing to employees of Tredegar Iron Works. By the 1930s, many houses required “extensive rehabilitation” and the city proposed demolition of the area. In the April 1945 issue, Scott reported that twelve houses in Oregon Hill had been restored, leaving only a few in need of renovation. Scott asserted that Oregon Hill was a stable neighborhood where residents lived for most of their lives, and the affordable rent provided housing for a certain income bracket. She proposed that the neighborhood was too small for a public housing development and that many of these people would be displaced. Scott recommended that the housing development be placed in an area without historic housing. Lack of federal funding saved the neighborhood this time, but it was later bisected by the Virginia War Memorial and the Downtown Expressway. Scott referred to the memorial as “that airplane hanger with the lady inside breaking her neck,” making clear her

---

109 Ibid.
110 Scott, Old Richmond News, 1 April 1945, vol. 2, no. 2.
preference for the housing displaced by the monument. Astutely realizing that city planning decisions affected the fate of housing in the city’s neighborhoods, Scott informed her readers of an exhibition at the Valentine Museum on this topic and urged them to educate themselves on this subject by taking the opportunity to attend.  

Scott continued her discussion of this topic in the January 1945 issue. She reported the achievement of a victory that altered the Bartholomew Plan, the postwar master plan for the city. The William Byrd Branch, banded together with the Valentine Museum and Sheltering Arms Hospital, to protest the section of the plan which called for the garden of the Valentine Museum to become a parking lot and for the demolition of the hospital. Their combined efforts resulted in these features of the plan being dropped. Scott declared that the interests of cultural institutions would not be heard unless they were represented on the Planning Commission. Scott again took a leadership role by outlining a comprehensive public policy for the branch in the newsletter, an important tool in advocating for historic preservation, as “preservation of historic and architectural landmarks, elimination of billboards, cleaner streets, tree-planting, landscaping of the riverbanks and hillsides, stricter enforcement of building-inspection to prevent the deterioration of old houses and the growth of slums.” Scott perceived these issues as important to making Richmond a desirable place to live and in attracting tourists. Over sixty years later, organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Scenic Virginia continue to advocate for these same values.


Scott, *Old Richmond News*, 1 January 1945, vol. 2, no. 1;” Rite Set Friday for Miss Scott, historian and preservationist *Richmond News Leader*, 10 August 1983, 19;  


This issue of the *News* was also notable in that Scott included an inventory of antebellum housing built by free blacks, along with the name of the owner, a valuable documentation of the city’s African-American heritage. Scott had limited her previous documentation of housing contained in her book, *Houses of Old Richmond*, to white owners. She broadened the scope of her subsequent book, *Old Richmond Neighborhoods*, in an attempt to document more of Richmond housing. Expanding her scope to include all the significant architecture in the city demonstrated further her leadership and modern approach to preservation.

The April 1945 issue marked the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the William Byrd Branch. Scott implored her readers to reach out to others, to secure their membership and/or to be an ambassador for the mission of the branch. Scott declared that “only by education and more education can we persuade Richmond to save the unique heritage of its past.” Scott continued her public education efforts by offering six walking tours in April.

Once again, Scott used her newsletter platform to advocate that the Oregon Hill neighborhood was not appropriate for a slum clearance project or for public housing. She made a sound argument against both of these projects and suggested another location.

Scott also promoted an early version of a modern preservation tool – the revolving fund. Modern revolving funds serve several purposes, but the underlying goal is to provide a non-profit preservation organization the funding to buy a threatened property and resell it to an owner with preservation restrictions attached to it. Preparing the property for resale often involves improvements to the structure and the restrictions placed on the property ensure that the renovations are appropriate to the time and period of construction. Scott appealed to members to make a contribution for the purpose of restoring the Carrington house (ca. 1810-16), purchased

---

113 Scott, *Neighborhoods*, Foreword.
by the branch in April 1944. Funding to perform repairs to the Craig house (ca. 1784-87) was raised in the same manner.\textsuperscript{115}

The end of World War II released pent up demand for construction that had built during the Great Depression. The quickened pace of commercial development in Richmond in turn increased the threat of demolition for structures, proving Scott’s prediction that increased prosperity would result in more destruction of significant buildings. Scott and the William Byrd Branch increased advocacy for preservation by attending the Ordinance Committee of City Council. Commercial development threatened both rundown buildings and sound structures equally if they were in a desirable location. The branch would present an alternative solution, increasing the options considered by the council. Scott took a very public role with other branch members in attending the committee meeting to voice their protest over a zoning change that would allow a taxi company to demolish a row of classic Revival houses.\textsuperscript{116}

Scott used the same issue of the \textit{News} to demonstrate that demolition of interesting, old buildings was not the only option. She described the successful rehabilitation of a building and its reuse as an antique store. Scott interpreted this as a direct result of the restoration of the nearby Crozet house, creating a link in readers’ minds that one act of preservation would inspire another.\textsuperscript{117}

Scott urged her readers to protest the removal of Trinity Methodist Church building to a new location in the west end of the city. The church steeple was a landmark of the skyline and the oldest standing steeple in the city.

Scott expressed frustration with city government the following year. The February 1946 issue begins with an observation that “City Council seems at hopeless odds with its Planning

\textsuperscript{116} Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 1 October 1945, vol. 2, no. 3.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Commission.” Scott then proposed her vision for Richmond: “intelligent understanding instead of heedless exploitation” that would develop older neighborhoods with consideration of location and character, a building inspection department with the authority to prevent blight and slums, and cooperation between the races to provide adequate housing for the poor of all races. Another forward-thinking idea Scott advanced was utilizing empty spaces in existing neighborhoods to build similar housing and revitalize the area.\textsuperscript{118} Infill housing is an important tool in current redevelopment plans for older, urban blighted neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{119}

The first issue of 1947 praised the restoration of the Clarke house, (ca. 1840), the Brockenbrough-Caskie house, (ca. 1810), and the Ellyson-Coke house, (ca. 1865). Overall though, the year was not a good one for preservation. Scott reported the loss of ten pre-Civil War buildings and included an additional page with pictures of the five most interesting. Scott also reported that several buildings had been the subject of inappropriate restorations, leading to depreciation in their aesthetic appeal. She related the dismay of Lady Astor, who had visited Richmond in the previous spring, over the loss of houses. Scott related that she would be conducting four lectures supported by slides at the Valentine Museum that month.

An editorial in the \textit{Richmond News-Leader} called for citizens to unite in saving Richmond’s old buildings. The William Byrd Branch responded by identifying the Ellen Glasgow residence as first on their list of buildings that needed to be saved and “put to appropriate use.”\textsuperscript{120}

In the April 1947 issue, Scott announced that the William Byrd Branch seized the opportunity to buy the Glasgow house (ca. 1841). In order to save this property they borrowed

$10,000, demonstrating the branch’s commitment to preservation. The branch’s operations had become more complex. They now owned three properties: the Craig house, the Carrington house, and now the Glasgow house. The board began contacting women’s organizations that were looking for headquarters that might find the house suitable for their needs and enjoy a connection with one of Virginia’s greatest female writers. The board ultimately rented the house for three years to the Richmond Area University Centre. During this same time, the Richmond News Leader reported that Scott had resigned her position as branch director in order to concentrate her efforts on the publication and research committee. This allowed her to retain her public voice and to focus on her goal of educating Richmond citizens regarding the value of historic preservation through her monographs and newsletter. Scott demonstrated that her priority and most important work were advocacy and education.121

The 1 October 1947 issue boasted of the successful presentation of the Ellen Glasgow house during Garden Week. Scott wrote that 1764 persons visited the newly opened house, bringing the branch much needed income of almost $600. In addition to the $10,000 borrowed from the statewide branch of APVA, the branch invested $6500 in the renovation of the house by installing a furnace, painting the interior and exterior, and clearing the garden. An appeal to members to help fund these expenses resulted in $6,302.

Scott also urged readers to attend one of her walking tours. She focused the October tours on sections of Richmond likely to be demolished: Franklin Street, Court End, and areas affected by the proposed Express Highway.

The growing expense of maintaining and restoring three properties increased the need for fundraising for the William Byrd Branch. Scott wrote a column titled, “Not By Bread Alone,”

for the January 1948 issue promoting a sophisticated fundraising tool – planned giving. She asked members to consider a bequest in order to provide for the future of the branch. Not leaving anything to chance or risking confusion, Scott printed a sample codicil that could be included in any member’s will to provide funding for the operations of the branch. Planned giving is a fundraising strategy utilized by the majority of non-profits today to build their endowment, ensuring the future of the organization.\footnote{Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 20 January 1948, vol. 5, no. 1.} Scott demonstrated her understanding of financial planning and creating a sustainable organization.

Another topic appearing regularly in the newsletter was zoning. Scott discussed two separate zoning issues that affected the viability of older housing. She opposed spot zoning that allowed inappropriate stores or filling stations to operate in areas zoned residential. Scott perceived that these businesses had a negative effect on a neighborhood. She did support rezoning that would allow businesses to operate out of an older home without modifying the exterior of the building. Scott strove to keep neighborhoods vibrant and attractive to residents by including a mix of residential and light commercial use. Scott saw this zoning mix as a way to keep neighborhoods from deteriorating.

Scott urged branch members to form a “Vigilance Committee” that would advocate before City Council, the Board of Zoning Appeals, or the City Planning Commission to adopt logical zoning that would enhance Richmond’s existing built environment. Members had presented their point of view before City Council twice in the past three weeks. Scott wanted to build a pool of members who were informed and willing to appear at these meetings in order to push their policies.

The April 1948 issue was written to appeal to tourists visiting Richmond to attend Garden Week. Scott highlighted the distinctiveness of the commercial buildings in Richmond’s business
district that were decorated with cast iron. These iron-front buildings were a “beautiful and harmonious ensemble.” Scott also reviewed the mission, accomplishments, activities, and needs of the William Byrd Branch. Scott also revealed that the branch advocated on behalf of not cutting down trees on West Cary Street.

Scott began in earnest to battle what she called the “bulldozing brotherhood.” Economic prosperity and commercial development led to alterations of the Richmond cityscape. Richmond’s commercial district expanded west along the south side of Broad Street. This expansion replaced housing for middle class residents and caused real estate values to double. Suburban neighborhoods offered relief from the city’s problems and led to decentralization. Existing housing in neighborhoods abandoned by whites was converted to low-income rental units, creating a high density of poor, often black residents in the city’s older neighborhoods. Neglect and poor enforcement of building codes contributed to the decline of older homes and led to blight. Richmond’s Mayor J. Fulmer Bright had previously eschewed federal assistance but in the 1940s and 1950s city planning efforts addressed the housing situation through federal urban renewal programs which offered a combination of bulldozing and clearance, along with public housing.123

Highways proved to be another destructive force that negatively affected housing in Richmond: the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike, now part of Interstates 95 and 64 and the Downtown Expressway. These projects threatened entire neighborhoods. The Richmond City Council explored various routes for a controversial expressway, several of which were more objectionable than others. In the October 1948 issue, under the headline “The Expressway,” Scott reported that a proposed highway through Monroe Park met strong opposition and had

---

been defeated. She educated readers on how highways affected other cities such as New York, Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.  

In February 1949 Scott reported that businesses were beginning to take note of Richmond’s history. She discerned evidence of this from business support of an exhibition at the Valentine Museum, two renovations of historic mansions on Fifth Street by business firms, the use of Christmas cards that featured pictures of historic scenes, and a booklet published by a local firm that celebrated its centennial and featured many images of the city. Scott continued with her wish list of projects that she hoped would be accomplished in the city: finding appropriate adaptive reuse of homes near the intersection of First and Main, renovation of Linden Row, and utilizing the Nolting House (ca. 1847) in an appropriate manner.  

The William Byrd Branch continued its advocacy on zoning issues in the city. On 4 April 1949 the Planning Commission met to consider rezoning Linden Row for business use, and Scott and other members of the branch appeared in person to speak against the proposal. Linden Row was a complex of ten Greek Revival houses designed by Otis Mansion and built between 1847 and 1853. Two of the houses were previously demolished in 1922 in order to build the Medical Arts Building. Scott valued the houses because they were “an outstanding landmark in the architectural development of the whole United States.” Scott realized that the complex issue of property rights affected the ability to preserve the city’s cultural heritage. Owners of the Linden Row houses could potentially see their property increase in value if the zoning was changed to business. She argued that any zoning ordinance had the potential to affect an owner’s property rights in a positive or negative way. She also asserted that it was wrong to “sacrifice to

---

the potential profits of a few people the City’s beauty and history.” The conflict between personal property rights and historic preservation has grown increasingly complex. It is an important public policy issue that has come before the U. S. Supreme Court. The debate centers around two opposing points of view: individuals who seek to use or disuse their property as they see fit and the common public good of preserving historic and cultural resources by taking property by eminent domain.

The October 1949 issue noted that Scott, along with two other members of the William Byrd Branch, had been appointed to a special committee to compile a list of buildings in Richmond that were the most important to preserve. This report was modeled after a similar study conducted in Charleston by Helen McCormack, one of the founders of the branch. McCormack, formerly the director of the Valentine Museum, had relocated to Charleston and was active in that city’s preservation efforts. Scott astutely perceived that the report would do little good if the findings were not taken into consideration by the planning officials who would determine an expressway route.

Scott also addressed Capitol Square, another topic that she was passionate about. She lamented the appearance of a third billboard in the square, emphasizing how distasteful this was to her by including a quote from a local bus driver who stated, “If that don’t look like a hick town.”

Walking tours were suspended in the spring of 1948 while Scott devoted her time to research for her second book, Old Richmond Neighborhoods. The book was an outgrowth of her project with the Valentine Museum to research and document Richmond’s historic housing. Old

127 Ibid.
129 Scott, Old Richmond News, 1 October 1949, vol. 6, no. 3.
Richmond Neighborhoods was published in 1950. Scott also drew from a series of newspaper articles on Richmond neighborhoods that she authored in 1942 and from the neighborhood walking tours she personally conducted annually in the spring and fall. Because the focus of her book was to document those neighborhoods in Richmond with the greatest number of old buildings extant, Scott organized this book geographically. Her goal was to produce a permanent record of older neighborhoods, including all surviving dwellings, churches, businesses, and factories. Scott excluded any type of building that had been demolished.130 Scott included a large number of photographs of the buildings in each neighborhood, which are a rich complement to her written history. They show each building in its context, providing valuable reference points for topography, landscape, fencing, and the closeness or absence of other buildings. Occasionally, the photographs capture the presence of people, giving the pictures greater resonance. Scott surveys three broad geographic areas: the East End, Center of Town, and Jackson Ward. Within each geographic area she narrows her focus to the neighborhoods that developed spontaneously as the city grew. Scott’s book takes the reader on a virtual walking tour of each neighborhood, for she wrote descriptively of the physical layout, private and public buildings, ornamentation and history of each district. She produced a documentary history of pre-Civil War Richmond that was still “in demand some thirty-four years after its publication.”131

In “East End,” Part I of Old Richmond Neighborhoods, Scott chronicles the early neighborhoods east of Shockoe Creek. Some are less well known than others. Shed Town is located in present day northeast Richmond. Scott speculated that the sheds of bricklayers who lived in the area, or possibly the flimsy housing erected by squatters on the Adams property gave

130 Scott, Neighborhoods, Foreword.
131 Ibid.
the name to the area. Very few of the early houses here remain. It is hard to date what is still extant because the area was not incorporated into the city until 1867 and the land books of surrounding Henrico County did not note improvements until 1820. Most of the residents of Shed Town were homeowners who practiced a trade.

In contrast, Union Hill was a neighborhood of rental houses, which were built as investments. Many residents reported their occupations as a mechanic. Some of the street names changed when the area was annexed into the city to avoid duplication of street names already in use. The area also experienced a great deal of street grading which greatly altered the topography.

Scott then traced the development of the city’s social, religious, and civic life to its inevitable westward march from the “cradle” of Richmond in the section titled “The Valley Where Richmond Began” to what she called the “heart” of Richmond in “Centre of Town.” Scott characterized the neighborhoods around the state capital as the location of the core of state business, stores, hotels, and public buildings. The homes built in this area were the most handsome. As the core of the city, it was the neighborhood most affected by the changes brought about by the city’s growth. The changes were so vast that Scott states that “to those born since 1900 the following pages will picture a city as unknown to them as Troy.”

The last section of Old Richmond Neighborhoods addressed Jackson Ward. As the name suggests, Jackson Ward was originally a political ward in the city but in the twentieth century it referred to the largest black neighborhood in Richmond. Scott asserts that this area contained over half of the antebellum houses still standing in Richmond. In spite of deterioration, Scott

---

132 Ibid., 91.
133 Ibid., 89.
considered the area a “treasure-trove” of dwellings.\textsuperscript{134} Scott feared the proposed construction of the interstate highways would destroy many of the older homes in the neighborhood. She asserted that this destruction would “have a more far-reaching effect than any event in the history of Richmond except the Evacuation Fire.”\textsuperscript{135}

In the conclusion to \textit{Old Richmond Neighborhoods}, Scott again acknowledged the inevitable changes brought about by the growth of Richmond. Business and industry expanded and encroached on residential neighborhoods. She also described the effect of neglect and abuse on old homes and buildings. Scott offered two solutions to address these issues. The first was an Intermediate Business Zone. This zoning ordinance would allow houses to be used as offices, stores, or other types of businesses that would not require alteration of the exterior of the house. The second solution Scott advocated was a method to combat the deterioration of abandoned buildings. She urged city leaders to adopt the Baltimore Plan, where an estimated 95,000 buildings were in violation of a city ordinance. The Baltimore Plan, adopted there in 1945, enforced “housing, building, fire, and zoning codes in order to force slum owners to either repair or vacate their properties.”\textsuperscript{136} The plan was implemented on a block by block basis.

In the Foreword to the 1975 reprint of \textit{Old Richmond Neighborhoods}, the Valentine Museum Library Committee surveyed the monumental changes to Richmond’s built environment since the first edition of Scott’s book was published in 1950. The Federal Urban Redevelopment Program contained in the Federal Housing Act of 1949 led to the destruction of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 225.
\end{footnotesize}
the inner-city housing fabric of many cities. Urban renewal and federal highway programs often “destroyed neighborhoods by slicing them apart.”  

Construction of interstate highways 95 and 64 paved over sections of Jackson Ward, Shockoe Valley, and lower Main Street. The extension of Belvidere Street removed the houses in the 600 block of Marshall, Clay, and Leigh Streets. The downtown expressway, built in the 1970s by the Richmond Metropolitan Authority, has destroyed housing in the Sydney neighborhood and on Third, Fourth, and Byrd Streets. The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority destroyed more of Jackson Ward when building the Gilpin Court, Mosby Court, and Whitcomb Court public housing projects. In 1975, additional demolition in the Randolph and Fulton sections of Richmond occurred.

City and state office buildings, the Medical College of Virginia, and a new Civic Center and Coliseum wiped out much of the housing in the Court End and other neighborhoods around the Capitol, eliminating residential housing in this area.  

During the years from 1950 to 1975, the growth of suburbs, business, road systems, government and city infrastructure, the federal programs of public housing and urban renewal and the growth of Virginia Commonwealth University’s academic and medical campuses all had a negative impact on the neighborhoods of Richmond. These developments dramatically changed the physical layout and appearance of Richmond.

The only neighborhood that has not been affected by development is the Church Hill Neighborhood. The Historic Richmond Foundation (HRF), an outgrowth of the William Byrd Branch, formed in 1956. The original five board members of HRF were also members of the

---

138 Scott, Neighborhoods, “Foreword to 1975 Reprint.”
board of the William Byrd Branch, founded by Scott. HRF had the legal authority to buy and sell property, which the William Byrd Branch lacked. Historic Richmond Foundation acted quickly to buy threatened properties. HRF recognized the historical significance of St. John’s Church as the location of Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech in March 1775 and the surrounding neighborhood. HRF “hoped to re-create the former quiet residential neighborhood by buying houses and encouraging others to buy, restore and live in them.” In 1957 the Richmond City Council adopted a historic district ordinance and at the same time designated the Church Hill neighborhood the city’s first historic district. Scott called the goal of restoring the whole neighborhood, “absolutely sound.”

Scott’s two books, *Houses of Old Richmond* and *Old Richmond Neighborhoods*, are an invaluable documentary record of Richmond’s built environment prior to 1860. They are thoroughly researched using a variety of primary source documents. Scott was a skilled writer whose vibrant prose brings to life the history and stories that she associated with the dwellings and neighborhoods that are her subject matter.

Scott’s books had several weaknesses. She did not include plans or elevations of the buildings when available. She also does not devote adequate space to Richmond’s public buildings. Scott also had an opportunity to craft a story with more focus on the professional architects working in Richmond—nationally recognized architects such as Robert Mills and Thomas U. Walter, or local professionals such as Otis Manson, Albert L. West, or Thomas and Samuel Freeman. An analysis of their careers and architectural work in Richmond would have been a valuable addition.

---

139 Crumley, *Church Hill*, 122.
140 Ibid., 123.
Nonetheless, Scott’s books have stood the test of time. Although *Houses of Old Richmond* was published sixty-nine years ago and *Old Richmond Neighborhoods* was published sixty years ago, the books are still considered an authoritative record of antebellum buildings in Richmond. Paul S. Dulaney, author of *The Architecture of Historic Richmond*, published in 1968, acknowledged the work of Scott by asserting that the “previous work of Miss Mary Wingfield Scott through her books and earlier inventory of historic buildings provided invaluable source material.”

Marguerite Crumley and John G. Zehmer, authors of *Church Hill: The St. John’s Church Historic District*, published in 1991, wrote:

Much of our information is based on the meticulous work of the late Mary Wingfield Scott (1895-1983). For antebellum Richmond her books, *Houses of Old Richmond* (1941) and *Old Richmond Neighborhoods* (1950), remain invaluable resources. Moreover, her notes and file cards in Richmond’s Valentine Museum are a constant source of still new, unpublished information on people and places.

Scott’s body of research remains at the Valentine Richmond History Center as a valuable resource for persons researching Richmond’s built environment and social history.

Scott’s hopes for the historic buildings of Richmond became reality with the advent of federal tax credit legislation that made it lucrative to rehabilitate historic properties and a cultural change that shifted from suburban to urban, from new to historic. Prior to the passage of tax credit legislation in 1976, historic properties were considered very risky to rehabilitate. Federal tax incentives that provided a capital tax loss on buildings that were torn down along with incentives on new construction made it unattractive to renovate existing buildings.

---

143 Crumley, *Church Hill*, 6-7.
The inception of federal tax incentives to rehabilitate historic properties has spawned a “multibillion-dollar business in which nearly every real estate entity participates.”\textsuperscript{145} The federal agencies that oversee this program, the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service estimate that the federal tax incentive program has resulted in over $21 billion invested in the rehabilitation of historic buildings. This also reflects a cultural shift from a preference for new construction to a “growing realization that all old buildings have a certain value—economically, scenographically, sentimentally—and not merely those whose historicity or artistic value is already established.”\textsuperscript{146}


\textsuperscript{146} Fitch, \textit{Historic Preservation}, 169.
Chapter Four: “All Who Love Richmond’s Beauty should Assume Individual Responsibility for the Future of Our City”

After publishing her second book on Richmond’s antebellum neighborhoods, Scott reported in the February 1950 issue that the rezoning of Linden Row was again on the agenda of City Council and that she feared for the imminent demise of the architectural gems. The Planning Commission submitted a recommendation that the row houses be zoned for business and at the same time elected not to recommend a historic zoning ordinance for the list of approximately 70 buildings designated as the highest priority for preservation compiled in the study conducted by Scott and two others.

Scott voiced her frustration with City Council and their unwillingness to “blaze a trail.” She was equally exasperated that the council would not take even a moderate step towards providing a degree of zoning flexibility by adopting the “Intermediate Zone” option that the branch proposed two years prior or pass an ordinance that prohibited additional gas stations on Franklin Street. Scott wanted property owners to have the option of finding a new use for their dwelling if it was located in an area that was no longer residential.

Scott appealed to her readers to have a grander vision: that it was “imperative that all who love Richmond’s beauty should assume individual responsibility for the future of our city” and that preserving Richmond’s built environment as a valuable asset to the city and its residents transcended individual property rights in some cases.\textsuperscript{147}

In this same issue of News, Scott announced that the cost of planned renovations to the Carrington house exceeded the branch’s available funds by $5,000. She asked branch members to make a contribution to fund these expenses. Scott communicated the importance of preserving the property due to its architecture and association with Richmond’s history, but also

because it would be an asset in preserving the neighborhood around historic St. John’s Church. This comment hints at the genesis of the Historic Richmond Foundation, formed by members of the William Byrd Branch to restore the “neighborhood around St. John’s Church, the city’s most historic building.”\footnote{Crumley, \textit{Church Hill}, 122.}

The January 1951 issue of \textit{Old Richmond News} triumphantly announced the Carrington house restoration. The branch spent $17,340 to return the house to an inhabitable condition. Scott urged members to come by and see the beautiful woodwork, rescued from two early nineteenth-century houses, along with doors and mantels that were formerly in Samuel Parsons’ Spring Street home (ca. 1817-19).\footnote{Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 1 October 1947, vol. 4, no. 3, 1 February 1949, vol. 6, no. 1, 20 January 1951, vol. 8, no. 1.}

In the same issue, Scott declared that “1950s effect on Richmond” should erase any doubt about the need for a historic zoning ordinance. Architects and others who appreciated the expression of what Scott called the “complete development of the Greek Revival mansion” protested from across the nation the loss of the Nolting house (ca. 1847).\footnote{Scott, \textit{Houses}, 253; Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 20 January 1951, vol. 8, no. 1.} Other structures lost were the Dr. Wood cottage, 1905 W. Cary Street (ca. 1862), 410 N. Eighth (ca. 1860), 13 N. 24th (ca. 1854), and row houses at Tenth and Clay and on Franklin Street. This loss of building stock was capped by the removal of the majority of the trees on West Clay Street in order to pave it.

Scott also announced that she had bought three of the Linden Row houses and repaired them. The fate of Linden Row had worried Scott for months and the recent demolition of the Nolting house, despite national protests, may have been the impetus to buy them. She disclosed that she paid $1,000 a front foot, approximately 30\% greater than what was paid for the Nolting
house. Scott related that an appropriate use for the houses would be offices and retail shops. Scott mentioned that the other three houses in the row were in good condition.\textsuperscript{151}

Scott also criticized the APVA statewide office for not accepting the bequest of “Reveille,” a plantation home built (ca. 1720). Scott worried that the organization would be perceived harshly by the public for not preserving the home.

In the last bit of news for the branch, Scott reported that sales of \textit{Old Richmond Neighborhoods} were going very well, with 1152 copies of her book sold since it was published.

The May 1951 issue of \textit{Old Richmond News} related that the branch had co-sponsored a meeting with the Valentine to discuss preservation and slum-clearance. Slum clearance was a concern due to the great percentage of older housing stock located in slums. Scott feared that the Jackson Ward area, home to over 400 antebellum structures would be leveled without attempting to save the brick buildings that remained in good condition.

In this issue of \textit{News}, Scott began to advocate for “preservation enforced by law,” a concept that was implemented in New Orleans, Charleston, and Alexandria. Recently, Old Georgetown became protected by law and no building could be demolished or altered on the outside without permission from the National Committee on Fine Arts. Scott urged Richmond’s Planning Commission to stop being timid and to enact a similar law to “preserve what is valuable for the whole city.”\textsuperscript{152}

The last issue of \textit{News} for the year, printed in November 1951, was full of good news. The parent APVA office forgave the $2,000 loaned to the William Byrd Branch to make repairs on the Carrington house. The branch was now flush with cash and promptly reinvested the money in additional improvements.

\textsuperscript{152} Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 17 May 1951, vol. 8, no. 2.
Scott was also excited about the Medical College of Virginia’s restoration of the esteemed Thomas U. Walter designed First Baptist Church (ca. 1841). Major General Tompkins, a William Byrd Branch member, spearheaded the restoration. During the project, Tompkins consulted with other members for advice. Scott was proud that the branch members were seen as having expertise in preservation projects.\(^{153}\)

The *Old Richmond News* edition of February 1952 contained news of the proposed midtown expressway. Scott revealed that she had deliberately remained silent on the topic and that she had previously offered her opinion of the devastation that would be wrought in Jackson Ward if the expressway was routed through this area. Scott was equally pessimistic over a proposed route that would affect both the Craig house and the old Masonic Hall (ca. 1787). The branch reported to the Planning Commission that this route would be “disastrous.”

The branch also began pressing the Planning Commission to adopt a historic zoning ordinance. Scott optimistically reported that the culmination of the furor over the demolition of the Nolting house, the recent adoption of legislation to protect Old Georgetown, and the expertise of the three lawyers working with the branch might result in progress.

Scott discussed the proposed demolition of the Bransford house (ca. 1840), now called the Cecil Memorial Church House. Scott did not classify the architectural style of the house in her book, *Houses of Old Richmond*, but did note that it had some exceptional interior woodwork. After passing out of the Bransford family, the house was bought by Second Presbyterian Church. Scott reminisced that during World War II, female Navy League workers reported that the house would charm young soldiers who had not experienced such an imposing structure. The

---

Bransford house continues to delight visitors today as part of the Valentine Museum complex, where it was relocated in 1954.¹⁵⁴

The William Byrd Branch recounted seventeen years as Richmond’s preservation organization in the May 1952 issue of *Old Richmond News*. Accomplishments were the successful restoration of the Craig, Carrington, and Glasgow houses, along with securing appropriate tenants or organizations to rent each house. The goal of educating the public on adaptive reuses for historic homes resulted in new uses for the Barrett, Clarke, Crozet, Spring Street Home, and three of the Linden Row houses.

The branch established collaborations with the Valentine Museum to produce exhibits, walking tours, and house studies. Scott did not mention the strategic partnerships established with various branches of the Garden Club of Virginia. Various local garden clubs provided landscaping and gardening expertise at all three houses under branch ownership.

Successful publication of *Houses of Old Richmond, Old Richmond News, and Old Richmond Neighborhoods* was modestly placed near the bottom of the list. Scott stated that the branch had also produced forty-two different postcards with images of historic buildings in Richmond. These postcards created world-wide awareness of Richmond’s impressive history and architectural riches. Scott also failed to mention the inventory of historic structures that she produced on file cards for the Valentine Museum.

After reviewing the achievements of the branch, Scott elaborated on what she saw as its failures. Too many significant buildings had been demolished. The most significant to Scott were the Nolting house (ca. 1847), the Bott house (ca. 1802), and the Westmoreland Club, formerly the Stanard house (ca. 1839). Scott felt that all the hard work to communicate the value and importance of preserving the city’s best architectural gems had only been understood by a

few. Scott referred to the apathetic response from Second Presbyterian Church members when its leadership wanted to tear down the Bransford house. Scott characterized the lack of an outcry as evidence that the “cult of the utilitarian as more real than the beautiful is a mark of a crude society” and that there was no “concept of acting for the good of one’s fellow-citizens.”

The 1 February 1953 issue of News discussed the destruction of historic housing brought about by slum lords who wantonly wielded their private property rights to allow investment properties to become dilapidated housing where only the poorest persons would reside. Scott predicted that this would lead to the demise of housing stock in Gamble’s Hill, just as the majority of historic homes had been lost in Richmond.

There was good news in this same issue. Scott reported that an ordinance had been introduced to provide owners of historic homes with an official marker that would indicate the date the house was built. These makers imparted a sense of pride to residents. In return for the marker, the homeowner agreed to not to perform any alterations to the façade or to demolish the house without sufficient notice. Scott hoped that passage of this ordinance would be putting “our City government on record as considering our historic houses as among the City’s assets.”

Another piece of good fortune came from Arthur Glasgow, brother of Ellen Glasgow. Glasgow gifted $20,000 to replace the funds the branch and parent office expended to buy the Glasgow house. The parent office relinquished their share to the William Byrd Branch, which used the windfall to create an endowment for the house.

The statewide APVA office also placed the Pulliam house under the care of the William Byrd Branch. The branch began looking for suitable tenants with whom to strike a rental

agreement. Scott also reported that the Medical College was restoring the Putney house (ca. 1859) and that a branch member was renovating a house on Franklin Street for offices.

Scott used the 20 May 1953 edition of *Old Richmond News* to put forth her recommendations to the city on what she would do to ensure that Richmond was a beautiful city. Scott would plant trees, eliminate bill boards, not allow small buildings to be “hitched” to larger ones, enforce a sanitary code, and institute a campaign to stop littering. Her final action item would be to declare historic zoning ordinances around the Capitol, St. John’s Church, and Franklin Street.

Scott also had news of the sanitary code that she had promoted. It was being piloted on test blocks. In the areas where the sanitary code was being enforced, inspectors found only twenty-five houses that were up to code. The majority of the houses contained too many people and not enough plumbing.

The 12 February 1954 issue of *Old Richmond News* began with Scott announcing that Virginia was a “Sahara of the Bozart.” Scott was referring to the famous article written by H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) in 1917 of the same title that criticized the South as an intellectual, artistic, and cultural desert. Scott asserted that the commonwealth’s lack of vision concerning preservation matters and “state-sponsored vandalism” were evidence that Mencken’s accusation was true. The “state-sponsored vandalism” that Scott referred to was the impending demolition by the state of the remaining “Iron Front” building that survived the 1865 Evacuation Fire, along with two houses built in 1835 and 1841 by William Ritter, in order to build a state office building. Scott was also fired up over a State Art Commission with so little authority that it could not remove a billboard that occupied Capitol Square. She suggested that the commission

---

have the power to approve new construction and to disapprove projects that destroyed historic, architectural, or scenic treasures.

Scott discussed the “Iron Front” buildings on Main Street further. Two in this location had been demolished previously. Scott acknowledged the difficulty in retrofitting the buildings’ upper floors. Elevators were expensive to install and it was not practical to only use the first or second floors. She implored architects to solve this structural issue.¹⁵⁸

The 25 May 1954 of *Old Richmond News* contained an update on the progress of the historic markers. A letter was sent to 116 property owners informing them of the makers and the program guidelines. The response to the invitation to participate varied. Four homeowners decided that they wished to sell and forty homeowners wanted to participate in the program.

Capitol Square was the main topic of the 1 February 1955 issue of *News*. Scott considered inappropriate renovations just as harmful to a building as demolition. She was unhappy with recent alterations to Capitol Square and several that were under discussion. A recent change that replaced an iron fence around the Governor’s Mansion with a brick wall frustrated Scott. Her opinion of the alteration was that the money would have been better spent replacing the balustrades along the Mansion roofline.

Several landscaping changes proposed for the Capitol grounds were characterized by Scott as an attempt to remake the open green space into gardens that were more reminiscent of the ones at the Colonial Palace in Williamsburg. Scott reminded her readers that the grounds were originally full of ravines until John Notman created the current park setting. She was against any attempt to plant flower gardens that were not native to the site or anything else that detracted from the open green space.

The most disturbing proposal for Scott was the idea of enlarging the Capitol itself. Scott was alarmed at the thought of a second addition to the Jefferson-designed building. She favored removing the two wings added (ca. 1904-06) to allow the classic temple design to be seen. She sarcastically suggested that if the only considerations were providing convenient meeting space, then perhaps the entire building should be demolished and the planned state office building erected in its place!

Scott interpreted the Capitol as an irreplaceable treasure that symbolized courage, freedom, and beauty, and that the building and its surroundings were a bond between the people of Virginia and their cultural heritage. This was the same connection that Scott perceived between Richmond’s buildings, residents, and its history. Scott urged her readers to speak out in order to protect the Capitol from “the bright little ideas of those whose political power is out of proportion to their taste or knowledge.”

Scott printed a poem in the 1 October 1955 issue of Old Richmond News that described what was happening to Richmond’s neighborhoods. She titled it, “Fable of An American City.” She wrote,

Once there was a block of fine old houses.  
The owners didn’t care what kind of tenants lived there.  
Whether they broke windows or used the balusters for kindling.  
The houses got so bad nobody would rent them.  
So a colored family paid twelve thousand for one  
and the other tenants and owners  
Took to their heels and sold for two thousand.  
All the offices and fine big stores  
Were ringed around with slums.  
Nobody was left to buy anything or come to City Hall  
Except to apply for relief.  
So the merchants persuaded the City Fathers  
To cut highways through the bad old slums.  
They built low-rent houses and parking garages,  
But nobody was left to pay for them.

159 Scott, Old Richmond News, 1 February 1955, vol. 12, no. 1.
Because the people who paid the taxes
Had all moved out to the County.
Tourists stopped using the Superhighway
When they found everything worth seeing had been torn down
To build garages and low-rent housing.
So the historic city became a ghost-town.
Where no one used the handsome stores
Save truck-drivers swirling around a clover-leaf
To pick up a cup of coffee. 160

Scott’s fable contained all the factors that had adversely affected Richmond’s built environment. She wove a tale of housing that declined due to renters who physically destroyed the interiors, landlords who neglected houses and left them in disrepair or unsanitary conditions, white flight to the suburbs, the decline of property values following the appearance of black families in neighborhoods, and the growth of slums throughout the city. Scott painted a bleak picture of a future Richmond devoid of its historic architecture, no longer visited by tourists eager to see its cultural or historic sites, a formerly vibrant city that had become a shell.

In the January 1956 issue of *News* Scott informed her readers that the interstate highway that would soon be cutting through Jackson Ward would demolish eighty-three pre-Civil War houses among the hundreds slated for demolition. Scott proposed a novel idea of creating a nineteenth-century village composed of antebellum houses relocated from the neighborhood instead of demolition.

Scott also broached the topic of unsightly parking lots. She deplored the condition of a parking lot in Gamble’s Hill that was overgrown with weeds and littered with beer cans. She declared that a recent ordinance that permitted parking lots in residential areas was short-sighted

---

in not prohibiting billboards and other signs along with not requiring the lots to be complimented with a low brick wall or shrubbery to add beauty.\textsuperscript{161}

In the 1 November 1956 \textit{Old Richmond News}, Scott explained to branch members the relationship between the William Byrd Branch and the Historic Richmond Foundation (HRF). She stated that it had been necessary to form another organization, with the same mission and board of trustees in order to hold title to property and to raise the large sums of money needed to carry out their preservation agenda. Scott also stressed that when a structure was in danger, the ability to act quickly to purchase the house was critical and that as a branch of APVA, this was not possible due to their organizational bylaws.\textsuperscript{162}

The following issue in February 1957 announced that HRF had purchased three houses and held options on twelve others. All these houses were located in the area around St. John’s Church. The branch and its offspring, HRF, were determined to prevent the neighborhood immediately surrounding the nationally significant historic site from becoming a slum.

The remaining news was not so positive. Scott continued to communicate the importance of trees to the city and that attractive environs were meaningful to residents, whether it was a parking lot, street, or shopping center. She reported that the Brockenbrough house (ca. 1810) on Clay Street had been demolished. The Court End neighborhood had changed from a residential area to one primarily of institutions.

In the 25 May 1957 issue of \textit{Old Richmond News} Scott offered an informal analysis of the inventory of extant antebellum structures that she compiled from 1942-1943 for the Valentine Museum. An update of the file found that 250 buildings were demolished. Jackson Ward had lost eighty-six houses and twenty houses were lost in Oregon Hill to the Virginia War

Memorial. She surmised that most of the destruction was for parking lots and business buildings. The neighborhoods most affected were Court End, East Main, and Grace and Marshall Streets.

She also found that several areas had been virtually untouched. Areas that were not an attractive location for a business and neighborhoods where poor blacks resided had lost only a few houses. Shed Town had two less homes, Church Hill had lost only three out of 125, and Union Hill still had 117 antebellum houses.

Scott also proudly announced that “on May 13 many of our members had the heartwarming experience of watching City Council unanimously pass a Historic Zoning Ordinance” for the neighborhood surrounding St. John’s Church. This was a significant victory for the William Byrd Branch. After passing the historic zoning ordinance the city created the St. John’s Church Old and Historic District and a Committee of Architectural Review. The historic district boundaries were 22nd Street to 29th Street and from Franklin Street to Marshall Street. It contained over seventy antebellum houses. Richmond was now part of a forward-thinking group of municipalities that enjoyed “legalized protection of a historic heritage.”

In order to accomplish its goal of preserving the Church Hill neighborhood, HRF acted quickly to purchase ten houses in Church Hill. Scott also made the suggestion that the new Federal building be placed at the end of the Marshall Street Viaduct, located between Church and Union Hills. This would revitalize the housing in the area and relieve the congestion around City Hall and the Medical College.

This issue of News had more good news. Scott revealed that she now owned seven of the eight Linden Row houses and was in the middle of restoring one of them. Another building that had been rescued was the Abraham Skipwith cottage (ca. 1790s) that was located in Jackson

---

Ward. Skipwith was a former enslaved black who built the cottage and whose descendants lived there until 1904. Scott’s cousin, Mary Ross Scott Reed bought the cottage and relocated it to her house in Goochland.

Scott also urged readers to purchase her booklet on Capitol Square titled, *Virginia’s Capitol Square: Its Buildings & Its Monuments*. Scott’s text is accompanied by fifteen pictures that illustrate the Capitol, the Governor’s Mansion, and the statues on the square. Scott declared that the square had always been a battleground between “Progress” and preservation of the square as a green, open space with the Capitol “standing on its bluff like the Winged Victory, fair symbol of rational man’s triumph over tyranny.”\(^{164}\) Scott decided to write a history of the square in hopes of persuading the many “history-minded” individuals to put an end to the buildings and alterations that mar the beauty of Capitol Square.

Many of the alterations have come with the growth of state government and the need for parking. Tall buildings block the view of the Capitol so that it is no longer the prominent feature of the city skyline. The latest proposal to link Capitol Square with the new Civic Center via a mall, would “take a large bite out of the north side” of the square.\(^{165}\) This proposal was never considered.

Scott’s brief history of the square is an important overview of the buildings and other features that make up Capitol Square. The period pictures that she included are a valuable illustration of the square before “Progress” intruded.

In the *Old Richmond News* issue dated 1 February 1958 Scott chided Richmond’s elected officials for their failure to take action in Gamble’s Hill. A group of businessmen had proposed in 1952 that the area be condemned as a slum and that private interests be allowed to redevelop


\(^{165}\) Ibid., ix.
the property. This proposal was turned down. Now in 1957 most of the residences were gone, along with Pratt’s Castle, described by Scott as a unique example of Gothic Revival architecture. Scott proposed that Gamble’s Hill was the most suitable location for a residential area near the central business district.

Scott also had an alternative idea for the east side of Capitol Square. She wanted to scrap plans to condemn Morson Row (ca. 1853), a very harmonious neighbor to the square, in order to install three tall office buildings. Scott declared that the office buildings were out of character for the square and would have an adverse effect by blocking sunlight and lack compatibility with the square.\footnote{Scott, \textit{Old Richmond News}, 1 February 1958, vol. 15, no. 1.}

Scott took a moment to reflect on the William Byrd Branch’s twenty-fifth anniversary in the 1 June 1960 issue of \textit{Old Richmond News}. The branch had accomplished a significant victory by securing a historic zoning ordinance in Richmond. Branch members successfully restored and had found appropriate adaptive reuses for five houses. Scott commented that while the branch had not accomplished everything that it set out to do, it had made a difference in preventing Richmond’s historic buildings from being torn down at will. Scott’s biggest regret was that the branch failed to prevent the demolition of the Nolting house (ca. 1847) and the Westmoreland Club (ca. 1839).

In the 15 October 1960 issue, Scott pointed out an editorial that ran in the \textit{Richmond News-Leader} on August 29 that adopted Scott’s stance against unattractive parking lots. The editorial, titled “Must We Be Ugly?” included two pictures of attractive lots. The standard that Scott had advocated for years was now being publicized in the mainstream press.

Capitol Square was again on Scott’s mind in the 10 February 1961 issue of \textit{News}. She proposed a list of recommendations for Capitol Square that included no parking within the
square, return of the benches that had been removed, uprooting plantings that were not appropriate for the climate, replacing the balustrade on the roof line of the Governor’s Mansion and returning the iron fence that was replaced by a brick wall, saving the fence around the square, and removing the additions from the Capitol. Scott suggested that state office buildings be placed down the hill from the square. She also asked the Virginia legislature to consider moving out of Jefferson’s masterpiece and return it to its original footprint, exactly what Connecticut had done with its eighteenth-century statehouse. \(^{167}\)

In the 15 October 1961 issue of *News* Scott communicated that she was so strongly opposed to enlarging the connective space between the original Capitol and the wing additions for two reasons. The first reason was that more of the original building would be hidden. The second reason was that Scott did not think the convenience of elected officials and government merited covering up Jefferson’s temple on the hill.

Scott also announced that HRF had been in existence for five years and was now poised to enter a second phase. The first wave of restorations in Church Hill was undertaken with the goal of finding tenants to rent. Now, persons were buying and restoring homes as their residence.

The 5 February 1962 issue of *Old Richmond News* contained a story of the useless demolition of an antebellum home. The house was built (ca. 1848). A parking lot operator bought the property and promptly demolished the house. The business then applied for a zoning exception in order to create a parking lot. The parking lot never came into being and the house was destroyed needlessly. Scott used this example to demonstrate the value and purpose of an ordinance that would inform the public of the intended sale of an older house, giving an interested party the opportunity to buy it.

This was the last issue of Old Richmond News that Scott produced. Throughout its publication, Scott communicated and educated branch members and other readers on the value of preserving architecturally significant housing, along with benefits of keeping Richmond’s neighborhoods intact. She warned of the threats of allowing rental properties to decline through neglect, of building expressways, monuments, or placing slum clearance projects in neighborhoods that required destroying large amounts of housing stock. Scott also understood the value of an attractive city and tirelessly promoted planting trees and creating urban parks throughout the city. She proposed zoning and tax solutions that would allow residential and light commercial businesses to coexist in harmony.

There was no hint that she intended to stop writing the newsletter. Virginia Withers, Scott’s life partner, wrote that Scott’s editorial goal was to create awareness of all the forces that led to the destruction of Richmond’s antebellum housing. Withers attributed Scott’s abandonment of the publication to the fact that “she considered the failure of the membership at large to take a militant part in combating such a menace that decided her to drop the publication of Old Richmond News.”

Scott resigned from the William Byrd Branch board in 1963. She then turned her attention to Linden Row. Scott loved the houses and had attended Miss Jennie Ellett’s school when it was located in one of the houses. Linden Row became her personal experiment in applying her preservation philosophy of adapting old houses for use by an appropriate business. She purchased seven of the Greek Revival houses remaining in order to save them from being torn down and the property redeveloped. For thirty years she rented the houses as apartments, offices, and businesses, charging rents well below market value. The row of houses became home to a photographer’s studio, an advertising agency, and a bookstore. An eclectic mix of

---

168 Scott, Architectural Historian, 65.
persons lived in the rental apartments and formed a creative enclave of writers, artists, and musicians. In 1980 Scott deeded the houses to the Historic Richmond Foundation. Eight years later the houses were adapted for use as a hotel and became Linden Row Inn.169

Scott’s worst fears for Richmond’s built environment came true. The Virginia War Memorial removed a large section of Oregon Hill in the 1950s. Interstate Highways 95 and 64 destroyed sections of Jackson Ward and Shockoe Bottom in the 1950s and 1960s. The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority created the public housing project of Gilpin Court in Jackson Ward, removing more homes. The Housing Authority also removed large sections of houses in the East End along Seventeenth Street and further east into the Union Hill section. By 1963, the area was the location of the Mosby Court and Whitcomb Court public housing projects. Additional demolitions were slated for the Randolph and Fulton areas in the late 1970s. The Commonwealth of Virginia and the Medical College of Virginia have dramatically transformed Court End, the area around Capitol Square, and the area west of Twelfth Street to the highway. Virginia Commonwealth University demolished houses in the area of Franklin, Park, and Floyd, while adapting a large number for use as offices and classrooms.170

Scott’s vision for the city was echoed almost fifty years later in the Downtown Plan. The plan was based on a series of public planning sessions held in July 2007, with input from the Richmond Community Development Department. City Council adopted the plan in October 2008 and later amended it in 2009. The plan concentrated on the city’s downtown district only and was anchored by seven foundations. These foundations promoted “historic preservation,

infill development, redevelopment, and conservation of open space and natural resources.”

These foundations embodied the bedrock of Scott’s preservation philosophy that she advocated in *Old Richmond News*.¹⁷¹

Foundation One, Variety and Choice, asserted that Richmond’s unique neighborhoods were a competitive advantage for the city because they provided for a variety of residents, housing, and land use. The plan further stated that “these neighborhoods are considered key contributors to the character of Downtown” and that they attract economic investment to the city. Preserving Richmond’s historic neighborhoods is a key tenet of Scott’s preservation philosophy.¹⁷²

The Downtown Plan stated that mixed-use blocks contributed to the vibrancy of city neighborhoods which meet the needs of residents through a “variety of shops, offices, and housing.” Scott also promoted the adaptive reuse of old houses for shops and light commercial businesses, proposed creating tax structures that would not penalize capital reinvestment in the building, and zoning modifications that would allow transitional uses to coexist with residential.¹⁷³

The Traditional City Foundation promoted integrating a variety of transportation options for residents. Walking in the city was enhanced by the historic urban architecture and a variety of shops and offices. The beauty of architectural details such as doorways, cornices, eaves, and other decorative elements, provided an engaging and satisfying walking experience. This

¹⁷² Ibid., 3.4.
¹⁷³ Ibid., 3.5.
principle also reinforced Scott’s perception that preserving historic buildings contributed to residents’ quality of life.\textsuperscript{174}

Green, which is Foundation Three, stated that the Downtown district should incorporate “an integrated system of urban parks” and that the city should “initiate an ambitious street tree campaign.” Scott promoted these two features numerous times in \textit{Old Richmond News}, as ways to improve the beauty of the city and the quality of life for residents by providing recreational space and relief from the urban environment.\textsuperscript{175}

Another component of Scott’s preservation philosophy, that buildings should relate to and respect their environment, was reflected in Foundation Five, Urban Architecture. This principle required “all new construction within the Downtown to respect and reinforce its urban location, relating to the scale and character of the adjacent buildings.”\textsuperscript{176}

The History Foundation called for “an aggressive historic preservation program and a coordinated system of history trails, museums, and interpretive sites.” The plan asserted that “preserving historic buildings is one of the most important ways that a city can maintain a unique identity, share its history with the public, and uphold a coherent urban fabric.” Adaptive reuse was presented as the best way to incorporate modern uses into the district. One of the benefits of preserving the city’s history and historic structures was that it could be promoted through heritage tourism to residents and visitors alike, where historic buildings provided a tangible connection to the past. Scott stressed that a building’s historical association and its architectural characteristics enriched its value to the city.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 3.7.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 3.10.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 3.16.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 3.32-3.33.
The final plan foundation was Mixed Income. In order to achieve the density and diversity of population that creates a dynamic urban environment, cities must be able to provide housing options for a variety of income levels. Scott advocated preserving Richmond’s neighborhoods that had been built for the working class in the nineteenth century for this reason. When the Oregon Hill neighborhood was threatened by the Virginia War Memorial, she argued that the persons who would be displaced could not afford higher rents in other sections of the city.\footnote{Ibid., 3.35.}
Conclusion

Mary Wingfield Scott left an enduring legacy of the value and importance of historic preservation in Richmond. As a “rebel with a cause,” she shifted the focus of historic preservation from elite, white individuals who promoted traditional Southern culture and heritage to a professional academic-focused effort to preserve Richmond’s built environment as a visible record of the city’s social fabric and history. Under the auspices of the William Byrd Branch of the APVA, she provided leadership to men and women in the effort to preserve Richmond’s built environment. Scott’s career as an architectural historian placed her in a position of authority and gave her a public voice to educate and recruit William Byrd Branch members and the public to her preservation philosophy. She was a leader and an active participant in the struggle against “progress and smokestacks” and city government officials and others that she referred to as “the bulldozing brotherhood.”

Scott’s accomplishments included producing the first documentary record of the development of antebellum housing in Richmond through her books, from a chronological and then from a neighborhood focus. Scott also created an inventory of antebellum housing for the Valentine Museum that continues as a valuable resource for persons researching Richmond history and architecture. Her newsletter, Old Richmond News, reached an influential audience that was in a position to assist Scott in her work. The walking tours that she led each spring and fall allowed her to reach a diverse, public audience. Scott utilized each of these vehicles to promote the benefits of historic preservation. While communicating the value of historic preservation, Scott also promoted other characteristics that, along with preserving historic buildings, contributed to the quality of life for city residents, such as urban green space and

creating an attractive city. Scott offered solutions to make preservation of historic structures viable such as a creating a tax structure that rewarded investing in an older building and amending zoning laws to allow a mixed-use approach to keep neighborhoods vibrant.

Scott’s preservation philosophy of preventing the demolition of architecturally significant buildings, promoting the adaptive reuse of buildings, promoting appropriate renovations of structures, and respect for the relationship of a building to its environment, and preserving the character of an entire neighborhood through historic district zoning was forward-thinking. Her preservation vision and the quality of life characteristics that she advocated for the city of Richmond were the future of preservation.

Jane Jacobs’ book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities published in 1961, attempted to answer the question of why some sections of a city grew and flourished while other areas declined into blight and slums. Jacobs’ book challenged the prevailing city planning and federal policies of slum clearance and urban renewal as the cure for inner-city blight and decay. Jacobs asserted that the pathway to a dynamic urban environment was the opposite of mainstream thinking. Her insights into city life led her to advocate for “diversity, density, and dynamism—in effect, to crowd people and activities together in a jumping, joyous urban jumble.” Jacobs book “shook the foundations” of city planning.180

Jacobs defined four characteristics of vibrant, healthy cities that should underpin city planning. When all four conditions are present in a city district, the area has the greatest potential to become a thriving, vibrant district where people live, shop, and attend cultural and recreational events.181

Two of Jacobs’ four conditions reinforced Scott’s preservation philosophy. Jacobs’ reinforced Scott’s principles of adaptive reuse, combining residential and light commercial businesses, and urban parks. Jacobs’ theorized that city districts needed “mixed primary uses” in order to meet the needs of persons who lived and worked in the area by providing amenities such as restaurants, shops, neighborhood parks, and residential areas to serve the needs of persons throughout the day and night. Jacobs identified another condition as the need for aged buildings. Jacobs stated that older buildings are valuable because they foster and support small businesses by providing lower overhead expenses and they can be adapted for new uses.  

In 1966, Scott’s work was further validated when Congress enacted the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This legislation established a federal framework for historic preservation that incorporated much of Scott’s approach to historic preservation. The NHPA established an inventory of nationally significant properties, a method to protect these properties from harm, and provided tax incentives to encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The NHPA fostered the development of a professional movement focused on preserving the character of an entire historic district. This holistic approach, which came to be known as the tout ensemble, encompassed the buildings, landscape, and history of all residents, while promoting the adaptive use of buildings and historic district designations to preserve and protect a community’s irreplaceable heritage.

In 2008 the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) produced a brochure titled, *Prosperity Through Preservation*, that reviewed the amount of capital that had been

---

182 Ibid., 152-177 and 187-199.
invested in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings across the commonwealth following the inception of Virginia’s Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program in 1977. In Richmond, 587 projects were completed representing approximately $799,700,000 in rehabilitation expenditures. The brochure stated that the investment in historic structures enhanced the quality of life in communities by “preserving and restoring community fabric; inspiring people toward reviving historic districts and reclaiming their community’s legacy; promoting heritage tourism and educational resources; increasing a broader range of housing stock; and supporting smart-growth and sustainable development through the efficient reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure.”185

All of these developments reinforced the importance and relevancy of Scott’s career to save Richmond’s historic buildings as a valuable asset to the city and as a way to connect the city’s past to its present. Her efforts garnered an array of awards, publicly acknowledging the significance of her contribution to historic preservation in Richmond. In 1951, the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects recognized Scott’s contribution to historic preservation by awarding her an honorary membership. The American Association for State and Local History bestowed an award of merit on Scott in 1963. The Valentine Museum, a partner to Scott in much of her work, honored her with its first ever Valentine Award in 1967. The following year, the National Trust for Historic Preservation followed suit. In 1978, Scott received an award from the Virginia Foundation for Architectural Education. At the 1979 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Council Award Dinner, she was presented with the prestigious Distinguished Service to the Arts Award.186

Following Scott’s death in 1983, an editorial in the *Richmond News Leader* asserted that her “driving force created a citywide awareness of the value of historical preservation and the need to save important ties to the past” and attributed to her legacy “the preservation of so much of Richmond’s rich history as embodied in the city’s architecture.”\textsuperscript{187}

Scott passionately lived, worked, and led the preservation movement in Richmond, utilizing her education and career in historic preservation to affect change in Richmond. She described her calling as “I just did what I had to do . . . because nobody else seemed to care.”\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Merritt, “Mary Wingfield Scott In Her Day,” Sec. K, p1, 4.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

City of Richmond. *Richmond Downtown Plan.*
http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/planninganddevelopmentreview/PlansOther.aspx.
July 2009.


*Richmond News Leader.* “Rites at 4 P.M. for Mrs. Scott.” 9 March 1936.

______ . “Rites Tuesday For Miss Scott.” 22 March 1937.


______. “Old Fences Around Plots Found Disintegrating Rapidly, Miss Scott Reports.” 19 October 1938.

______. “Old Richmond News.” 11 January 1944.


______. “Mary W. Scott Quits as Head W Byrd APVA.” 15 April 1947.

______. “Rite Set Friday for Miss Scott, historian and preservationist.” 10 August 1983.

______. “Mary Wingfield Scott.” 15 August 1983.


______. Mark Holmberg. “’Miss Scott’s Alley’ called a fitting tribute,” 9 May 1992.


**Secondary Sources**


Kay C. Peninger is a citizen of the United States of America. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from East Carolina University. She currently resides in Richmond, Virginia and is employed as the executive director of St. John’s Church Foundation where she executes the organization’s mission of education and preservation. St. John’s Church is located in Richmond’s first Old and Historic District and is surrounded by the beauty and history of the houses saved by the foresight and career of Mary Wingfield Scott.