



The History of Highland Springs

The following text is adapted from the National Park Service/National Register of Historic Places Registration Form prepared for the County of Henrico in April 2018 by Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc and Maral Kalbian.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Highland Springs Historic District, located in the eastern part of Henrico County, Virginia, derives its name from its elevated site and several abundant springs within its boundaries. Included within the district are the tracts purchased by Massachusetts resident, Edmund S. Read, in 1890, with the expressed goals of both residing on the newly acquired tract that would provide a healthy environment for his ailing wife, and providing a collection of modest and affordable building lots for the area's families who were seeking home ownership with necessary services nearby. Straddling what became Nine Mile Road (Virginia State Route 33), Highland Springs grew to become a thriving residential community supported by commercial, religious, educational, and recreational resources. Identified as Stop 18, Highland Springs boasted among its primary attraction for new home owners its convenient and affordable accessibility to the City of Richmond via an electric streetcar line. Many of the residents worked in factory and other manufacturing facilities in the City and likely viewed a living environment away from the crowded city as a good choice.

The community was laid out in a simple grid plan straddling Nine Mile Road, with several small parks, some of which contained natural springs, scattered throughout the area. The cross streets are arranged alphabetically and named for various species of trees and plants. The Highland Springs Historic District is eligible at a local level of significance under Criterion C for its collection of well-preserved houses in a variety of vernacular and definable styles dating from the late 19th century to the seventh decade of the 20th century. Sitting on uniform lots of the tree-covered neighborhood, most dwellings are modest in nature and exhibit vernacular forms with restrained architectural detailing. A smaller number of dwellings sit on somewhat larger lots close to Edmund Read's residence or on lots adjacent to Nine Mile Road and display a number of more sophisticated architectural styles such as the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. The Minimal Traditional and Ranch styles were widely used in the district after the mid-20th century, with many of the examples almost identical in design.

The Highland Springs Historic District is also eligible under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an excellent example of a remarkably intact late-19th-century "streetcar suburb" of the City of Richmond. It contains a large collection of simple one-, one-and-one-half-, and two-story dwellings dating from the late 19th century to the mid- to late 20th century. Ancillary to the dwellings

are institutional buildings, commercial structures, churches, schools, a theater, a Masonic Hall, and a post office, all from the same period, and all of which continue to serve the Highland Springs community. The mid-20th century was the period of greatest growth in the district and is reflected in large numbers of surviving dwellings from that period. The district is also locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History, as having roots associated with the Temperance Movement and both civic and religious organizations that identified more with Read's New England background than with Richmond and rural Central Virginia. One of the most prominent surviving resources is the 1914 Babcock Masonic Building (043-05413; 043-5334-0024) named for Alexander Gulick Babcock, a leader in the Masonic community and the founder of nearby Masonic Home. Babcock was president of the Richmond City & Seven Pines Railway Company, later the Seven Pines Railway Company that brought the electric streetcar to Highland Springs. Highland Springs also reflects Read's intention to establish a suburban neighborhood with amenities such as small parks for first-time home owners who wished to escape the unhealthy environment of the city and provide a good life for their families. All deeds to new owners included prohibition of sale to those of African descent, a practice that was common to the great majority of residential developments of the late 19th- and early 20th centuries. Although transportation, as represented by the important role that the electric streetcar line played in the first 40 years and genesis of Highland Springs, was important, it no longer played a role in the district's history from after the early 1930s. Transportation is not considered an area of significance because no specific resources associated with transportation survive in the district in any recognizable form. The 1938 Henrico Theatre (043-0287; 043-5334-0490) is the only individually-listed resource in the Highland Springs Historic District.

The Highland Springs Historic District is also notable as being distinctive from other contemporary suburban developments that were platted along streetcar lines in Richmond, most notably Ginter Park. Developed at the same time, Ginter Park was laid out with generous lots that ultimately accommodated many grand mansions and large, sometimes irregular parcels. On the other hand, Highland Springs, although having several fairly large lots and more substantial dwellings near Nine Mile Road, was principally laid out in a strict grid system with very small lots that supported modest and affordable, one and one-and-a-half-story residences. Highland Park, another contemporary "streetcar suburb" north of Richmond that was laid out on a grid pattern and catered to the middle-class, generally contains larger houses than those found in Highland Springs. Highland Park was also one of several "boomtowns" laid out by local development companies (The Southside Land and Improvement Company, the West End Land Company, and the Northside Land and Improvement Company), and not developed by an individual northerner like at Highland Springs.

The period of significance for the Highland Springs Historic District begins in 1890, when Read began his purchases of agricultural land for the community in eastern Henrico County, Virginia, and is the date of the first plat illustrating his vision for Highland Springs; and concludes in 1969, with the construction of the current post office, the most recent historic institutional structure in the historic district. Moreover, by 1969 many of the lots in the Highland Springs neighborhood had been built out, although residential construction continued in the community along the established streets well into the 1990s. The

resources in Highland Springs Historic District continue to reflect the scale of modest and affordable dwellings built for working class families from the earliest period that largely display locally-produced designs and materials used in simple vernacular styles. The commercial and institutional buildings that continue to support the community are located primarily along Nine Mile Road, and demonstrate larger and more elaborate architectural design. The strict grid plan of the original community also survives intact, and the great majority of roadways, named for trees, flowers, and other plants, are distinguished by a rich collection of specimen trees and other native vegetation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The community of Highland Springs, located four and a half miles east of the City of Richmond, occupies one of the most desirable sites in eastern Henrico County, Virginia. Sitting astride a ridge between the Chickahominy and James rivers, the community is the site of several springs that, as early as 1860, was attractive to military units during the Civil War and is the source for its name. The earliest record relating to the spring, known as both the Bonanza and Tucker Spring, was from a Civil War regimental history that states that the springs were used by both Union and Confederate troops during the Battle of Seven Pines in 1862. The parcel with the primary spring is marked as Bonanza Spring on the 1890 plat that shows Read's plan and accompanied the grantee deeds. Although there are no tangible remains from the Civil War era, a concrete outlet, spring box, and flow control vane (043-5334-1207), located at 251 North Quince Street, likely date to the early 20th century. A road trace of uncertain origin lies adjacent to the area of the spring. As it developed, Highland Springs stands historically alone as an established and built-out suburban community in the eastern part of Henrico County. Most of the desirable areas for residential neighborhoods near Richmond were located north, south, and primarily west of the city.

The perception seems always to have been that the western suburbs were most preferred. Fortuitously, a Boston business man, Edmund Sewell Read, whose wife Sophia's health was frail, was searching for a warmer and healthier environment in which to live. The area that became Highland Springs, reportedly located on the highest elevation between the southern city of Richmond and the coast, seemed to offer Read the best place to which to relocate. Read's purchase of about one thousand acres of farmland between 1890 and 1892 was accompanied by preparation of a detailed plat for the forthcoming Highland Springs community (Figures 31-33). The core of his purchase was recorded in 1890; the record notes that it was formerly owned by "Messers Murphy and Babcock." The 1890 plat depicts a strictly gridded plan with primarily small lots and a more limited number of larger lots closer to Nine Mile Road.

The plat shows six small parks, some identified as having natural springs, and an area at the northeastern corner marked as "Bonanza Spring: Water Works," with a note that it is "Not Dedicated to Public Use." The parks carried standard names like "Central," "Oakland," and "Laurel," as well as the names "Boston," and "Winthrop," associated with Read's New England roots. An 1895 plat addition to Highland Springs, which contains lots lining Nine Mile Road to the southwest, also included a "Woodlot Reservation" and a small cemetery, but these blocks are outside of the historic district (Figure 34).

The streets in Highland Springs towards which most buildings faced ran northeast to southwest and

were named for various species of trees and shrubs. Cross streets that ran parallel to Nine Mile Road were named alphabetically from northwest to southeast. Read posted an advertisement in The Richmond Dispatch in 1891 extolling the virtues of his newly-created community, saying: "Secure a home in Highland Springs, one of the highest, healthiest pleasantest places near Richmond. Take Seven Pines railway at corner of P and Twenty Sixth streets. Five-ride tickets, 25 cents."

The other determining factor in the establishment of Highland Springs was the presence of the Seven Pines Railway. The Commonwealth of Virginia awarded a charter to the Richmond City & Seven Pines Railway Company in 1888. Among the incorporators was the president, A. G. Babcock, who had previously owned the land that straddled the rail line. The destination of the new rail line, which ran along the corridor of Nine Mile Road, was the Seven Pines National Cemetery, which had been established in 1866 for the re-interment of Union dead from the Battle of Seven Pines, also known as the Battle of Fair Oaks Station. The first train on the line ran on April 21, 1889, carrying passengers on excursions to the cemetery. By 1892, Edmund Read, now the owner of the Highland Springs property, had opened up cross streets and had begun to sell lots in the new community. Simultaneously, the railroad owners obtained permission to electrify the line and operate streetcar trolleys instead of using steam powered trains. The train cars became known as "trolleys" because they were connected to an overhead wire called a 'troller' that delivered the electricity to power the train. The first electric streetcar ran to Highland Springs on March 16, 1893. As an inducement to purchase lots in the community, Read offered a year's free pass on the streetcar to new property owners. According to a historian writing about rails in Richmond, "[t]he residents of Highland Springs, mindful of the mud and dust on the road, built a high wooden platform about 200 feet next to the track," to make boarding the train easier. The small, relocated, ca. 1890 frame station building survives as the central, almost indistinguishable, portion of a Craftsman-style house at 5 South Holly Street (043-5735; 043-5334-0137), and is generally considered one of the oldest structures in the community. Read moved his family to Highland Springs and built a frame house that later was destroyed by fire. In 1896, he built a substantial Tudor-Revival brick mansion at 5 Nine Mile Road in the center of Highland Springs (043-0731; 043-5334-0003). Two interesting notices appeared in the Southern Planter in 1894: one is a news item and the other an advertisement placed by Read. It can be presumed that there may be some exaggeration in the notices, but a close reading of the text provides a good picture of what Highland Springs was like in the mid-1890s.

Highland Springs.

THE BEAUTIFUL RESIDENCE SUBURB, FOUR MILES FROM RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

It has All Possible Advantages of Climate, Location and Society, while in the Matter of Elevation, Topographical Contour and Good Water, it Offers Attractions that cannot be Withstood.

To the seeker for a home, where it is neither too hot nor too cold, too wet nor too dry; where no violent storms intrude to make life a burden, neither too close to a large city nor too far; where the surroundings and society are all that could be desired, Highland Springs, Henrico, Co., Va., is the place you have been

looking for.

This beautiful suburb is one of nature's own town sites – high and dry, gently rolling and sloping toward the Chickahominy river on the north and James river on the south; where nature has supplied abundant water for a large city, in open springs, while the whole surface of the ground is underlaid with a sheet of the purest water, which has many of the qualities of the most celebrated Lithia and is most delightful and cool to the taste.

This little city has been built up entirely within the last two years, without advertising or booming, and now comprises nearly one hundred houses, three stores, and post office [sic], public library and assembly room, fire department, saw mill, flour and grist mill, a neat school house and church.

The March 1894 notice goes on to convince the reader that the seller is seeking “people of good character who desire to secure a perfect place of residence, where they can actually enjoy life without being subjected to the rigors of the northern winters...” Assurances are offered that the proprietor “does not seek to make it a manufacturing or commercial center, but a little city of pleasant homes, refined society, and pure enjoyment.” Mr. Read also suggested buyers might be interested in securing some extra land to keep gardens. A subsequent Southern Planter notice, dated July 1894, appears more like a standard advertisement. Beyond the standard verbiage that appeared earlier in the year, Read states:

...In three years this thriving place...has become an important village -- containing fine Block of Stores, Post Office, a fine Church... Public Library of 2,000 volumes, Fire Department with Iron Engine House and Engine, . . . large Steam Mill to provide Building Materials, and two Mills for grinding, and about Fifty Dwellings.

Lots are described as 50 X 120 feet for \$50 to \$300 depending on their distance from the center of the village and the streetcar line.

Between 1892 and 1900, three church congregations located in Highland Springs: Highland Springs Baptist (1892); Highland Springs Methodist (1895); and Highland Springs Unitarian (1900). Only Highland Springs Methodist survives today at 22 North Holly Street in a sanctuary that was completed in 1909 (043-0286; 043-5334-0001). The presence of a Unitarian Church in Virginia was unusual as Unitarians were far more prevalent in the north than in the south; a Unitarian Church in Highland Springs can be attributed to Mr. Read's affiliation.

The large number of social organizations early on in Highland Springs confirms the active nature of the community. Some of the earliest include a Tennis Club, Baseball Club, a Ladies' Aid Society, a Men's Quartet, an Odd Fellows Hall, Literary and Musical Association (later became the Women's Club), and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. This trend continued into the early decades of the 20th century when a Boy Scout troop was formed and two of the Commonwealth's earliest Girl Scout troops gathered in Highlands Springs. The U. S. Census for 1900 provides some interesting data about the residents of the new community. Although most of the residents listed in the area were native

Virginians, many hailed from New England, the upper Midwest, other mid-Atlantic states, and a few from abroad. Edmund Read himself is described as a “land lord,” and several other professionals are recorded such as a physician from New York, but the great majority of working residents were skilled laborers or “day laborers.” The number of residents described as “at school” confirms that there was a school within the community.

According to a local history prepared in 1990, the first school in Highland Springs was an 1891 one room frame building that stood on Kalmia and Nine Mile Road. Edmund Read both planned it and paid for its construction. It was succeeded by a larger school building completed in 1907 and expanded in 1908. Sadly, that building burned in 1913, and its 1914 replacement also burned in 1965. The core of the current Highland Springs High School, constructed in 1953, stands outside the district boundaries. The only educational-related resource within the district boundary is the 1916 gymnasium and shop building, which stands vacant at 5 S. Kalmia Avenue (043-5776; 043-5334-0178) and is associated with the 1914 twenty-room brick school that burned in 1965.

The list of occupations of Highland Springs residents in the 1900 U.S. Census shows that a sizable number were involved in the building trades, such as “house builder,” “brick layer,” “plasterer” and “house carpenter.” Other occupations included blacksmiths, stone cutters, wheelwright, printers, and shipping clerks. It can be presumed that many of these residents were employed in Richmond and rode the electric trolley daily during the work week. The 1901 plan prepared by T. C. Redd and Brothers shows Highland Springs completely platted out as far south as Read Street (Figure 35). Section 8, Edmund Read’s property south of Read Street, was not yet platted into separate lots. Section 6 on the plat shows Read’s oversized lot on which stood the large brick residence that replaced the earlier frame dwelling mentioned earlier. Land abutting the eastern boundary of the community was not platted out by this date, but Read continues to be noted as the owner of property east of Spruce Street. The only structure illustrated on Section 8 is a “Steam Mill,” presumably the one Read alluded to in his advertisement. In 1901, Read also still owned large parcels outside of the planned boundaries Highland Springs (Figure 36).

In 1909, the Highland Springs Methodist Church constructed the Gothic Revival-style sanctuary that is still in use today at 22 N. Holly Street (043-0286; 043-5334-0001). This is the earliest institutional building from the first decade of the century that survives in the district. According to a local history, the church, organized in 1895 by a physician named Dr. Granville T. Collins, was originally named the Chickahominy Mission and first met in the Odd Fellows Hall that was located along Nine Mile Road.²⁷ Although it can be assumed that there were originally a number of commercial structures dating from the first years of the 20th century, only two within the district appear to survive today. The two-story, commercial frame building at 16-18 East Nine Mile Road (043-0737; 043-5334-0004) maintains its prominent bracketed parapet and intact storefront. In 1959, it housed a barber shop and Rexall drug store and continues to have a mixed commercial use. The two-story, frame building at 408 West Nine Mile Road (043-5408; 043-5334-0019) was known as Henrick’s Store. In 1959, it housed the Harris

Cleaning Company, and today has a store and market.

The 1910 U. S. Census continues a similar profile of places of birth and employment type of residents with birth places such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Michigan, Illinois, and Maine. This would suggest that Edmund Read's marketing of Highland Springs to a far broader geographic audience bore fruit in the early decades. It also suggests that Read's campaign for multiple affordable dwellings provided employment in fields such as plumbing, plastering, carpenter, and bricklaying to a sizable number of the residents. The population was virtually all white, with African Americans appearing rarely and then only as "servants." This would comport with Read's restrictive covenants stated in the 1890s deed transfers from Read. In addition to prohibiting sale to persons of African descent, there was also a prohibition on the manufacture and sale of "intoxicating liquors," a mandate that presumably was designed to create a healthy living environment. Other occupations listed in the census included a kindergarten teacher, a foreman in a shoe factory, and a machinist in the penitentiary, along with a grocer, and several men working in tobacco factories and paper mills. The census also records Read's son, Frank Read, as a "contracting builder," confirmation that Read's family was active in the Highland Springs community as well. Read himself relocated to Washington ca. 1914, but his sons remained in Highland Springs. During the period of World War I, a munitions factory was built in nearby Sandston, and likely would have resulted in more laborers seeking housing. However, not many of the surviving contributing dwellings in the district appear to have been built during that period.

It was during the decade between 1910 and 1920 that one of the iconic institutional buildings in Highland Springs was constructed – The Babcock Lodge No. 322 (043-5413; 043-5334-0024). This Masonic Hall was named in honor of Alexander Gulick Babcock, who had died in 1894. Babcock was responsible for the founding of the Masonic Home (initially an orphanage) located east of Highland Springs on Nine Mile Road and had been the owner of much of the land conveyed to Edmund Read for the community. He was also president of the Seven Pines Railroad Company that had built the streetcar line linking Highland Springs with the City of Richmond. The presence of a Masonic Lodge in the middle of the community is a testament to Read's philosophy of encouraging "good character," citizenship, and service to the community. Free Masonry, dating to the late 18th century and whose members included many of the nation's founding fathers, "is a social organization that promotes charity, esteem, and love for each Brother and their families." Its goals included service to "our country, promotion of peace, and helping others in need." Read himself was a Past Master of Winthrop Lodge in Massachusetts, and freemasonry's philosophy would have comported with his thinking about the type of community he envisioned for Highland Springs. It is not known who designed the two-story, Classically-inspired, brick Masonic Temple that was constructed in 1914. The contractor for the large, two-story, 1965, rear brick addition was H. E. Ferguson at a total cost of \$5,760.33 The first floor of the Masonic building was used for commercial purposes, including housing the Highland Springs Post Office in the space facing Nine Mile Road from 1952 until its move to its current location in 1969.

The 1920 census is the first time that Highland Springs is mentioned by name as "Highland Springs Village." Occupations of residents remain similar those found in earlier years, with the addition of

electricians, telegraphers for Western Union, pipe fitters, and locomotive shop workers. The wide range of working middle-class employment clearly reflects the level of housing that was affordable, and accounts for the modest size of the great majority of the dwellings. By 1920, Edmund Read himself, by then a widower, had relocated to Washington, D.C. Census data shows that the population remained “all white,” through 1940. The 1940 census suggests that most of the dwellings were valued at between \$4,000 and \$7,000 with monthly rentals averaging \$10 to \$15 per month.

During the period between 1920 and World War II, Highland Springs saw the construction of a number of modest houses, and the expansion of commercial and retail operations along Nine Mile Road. The 1920 census reflects many who worked in businesses like drug stores, groceries, barber shops, and machine shops. The places of birth continue to be a number of localities outside Virginia. For the first time, many of Highland Springs’ street names are noted in the census.

Most of those recorded owned their houses and were all white. Workers associated with the building trades, such as carpenters, cabinet makers, plasterers, plumbers, and electricians, continue to dominate the category of “occupations” for the period from 1920-1940. In 1922, Nine Mile Road was paved, and other roadways followed after the cessation of the Seven Pines Electric Trolley in 1933. Bus service began in 1933, even while electric streetcars continued to operate.

The first Sanborn Maps of the area were drawn in 1921 and updated in 1936. Coupled with later USGS maps of the community, these maps clearly illustrate how the community grew. In 1921, many of the lots remained vacant, with the largest concentration of structures near or fronting Nine Mile Road (Figure 37).

By 1934, the lots in Highland Springs were marginally denser, with houses and other improvements (Figure 38). Nearly 200 resources in the Highland Springs Historic District date to the 1930s, but the growth during those 15 years was not as dramatic as what the middle decades of the 20th century would bring.

It was also during the decade of the 1930s that the landmark Henrico Theatre (043-0287; 043-53340490; VLR and NRHP, 2005) was constructed (1936-1938). Designed by architect Edward F. Sinnott, Sr., it is architecturally the most noteworthy and visible building in the district and reflects the position of the Highland Springs community in the eastern portion of Henrico County. Individually listed on the National Register, the air-conditioned auditorium, with what was then state-of-the-art film projection technology, served as a significant entertainment venue for the region and likely defines most of Henrico County’s eastern population’s perception and knowledge of the Highland Springs community.

Two other religious organizations established congregations in Highland Springs during the period between the World Wars: the Roman Catholics and the Episcopalians. The original sanctuary for present day Trinity Episcopal Church (043-5414; 043-5334-0025), located in the 500 block of West Nine Mile Road, dated to 1922 when the congregation was known as Church of the Messiah. It was replaced by the present building in 1967. The Episcopal Church Sunday school building from 1954 still stands on

South Cedar Street. The Catholic chapel today is located outside the boundaries of the historic district. The presence of a large Catholic community that called for a Catholic church makes Highland Springs more like a New England village than a Virginia one. The tradition of having many denominations that served the Highland Springs community continues today with many recent religious organizations occupying retail storefronts along Nine Mile Road.

Today, there are only a handful of vacant lots, confirming the enormous building campaign after World War Two and continuing into the closing decades of the 20th century. The largest numbers of buildings in Highland Springs (30%) were constructed in the two decades following World War II when demand for housing was tremendous throughout the entire nation (Figure 39). Architectural evidence strongly suggests that there were several developer/builders dominating the building scene in Highland Springs in the 1940s and 1950s, as many of the modest one-story, three-bay gable-roofed Minimal Traditional houses are almost identical in design. There was far more affordable land in this area, east of the city of Richmond, and it was a fertile location for potential home owners of more modest means. One structure that represents the ongoing growth of the residential community is the large county water tower, erected ca. 1950, that still functions at 100 North Daisy Avenue (043-5489; 043-5334-0083). In the early 1940s, local residents came together to organize a Highland Springs fire company. The fire station building, located at 908 East Nine Mile Road (043-5394; 043-5334-0005), was constructed ca. 1956 and later abandoned when a larger more modern one was more recently constructed along the western end of Nine Mile Road.

Because of its location on one of the primary east-west automobile routes between the eastern reaches of Henrico County and the City of Richmond (Nine Mile Road - Virginia State Route 33), Highland Springs was also the site of numerous automobile service repair shops, gas stations, and car dealerships.

Two notably good examples of automobile dealerships are the 1950 former Hechler Motors Chevrolet Dealership at 6 West Nine Mile Road (043-5403; 043-5334-0014), and the 1952 Modernist-inspired building at 601 East Nine Mile Road (043-5396; 043-5334-0007). Gas stations include the 1963 Colonial Revival-style, hip-roofed brick building at 100 West Nine Mile Road (043-5404; 043-5334-0015); the Modernist 1956 former Green's Esso Service Station at 200 West Nine Mile Road (043-5407; 043-5334-0018); and the Contemporary 1957 former Williams Motor Company at 301 East Nine Mile Road (043-5412; 043-5334-0023).

The 1959 Suburban Directory (the first comprehensive directory that captures information on suburban communities in the Richmond area) confirms the important position of the automobile in the mid-20th century development of Highland Springs. Western Auto, Gammon R. A. Gas Service Station, O'Connell's Service Station, Roy Satko Motor Company Auto Repairs, Hechler Motor Car Company (new and used), Crown Service Station, T. C. Williams Motor Company, Highland Auto Parts, Williford Esso Servicenter, and Fair Oaks Motor Sales stood along the commercial Nine Mile Road corridor in the heart of Highland Springs during the 1959-1960 period. Other commercial ventures listed in the City Directory that were located along Nine Mile Road include First Federal Savings and Loan Association;

McCheasney's Hardware Store; Hawthorne Dry Cleaning and Laundry (still in operation at the same location today); Haynes Lumber Company, multiple barbers shops and beauty salons; furniture stores; insurance companies; and several department stores. Since then, auto dealerships have moved to more spacious land parcels outside the community and many of the former commercial buildings are occupied by other commercial enterprises or in some cases, evangelical religious organizations. Current examples include the New Life Baptist Church, located in a one-story, 1949, brick commercial building at 20 Nine Mile Road East (043-5397; 043-5334-0008) and the Impact Church housed in the 1948 Modernist building at 6 East Nine Mile Road (043-5401; 043-5334-0012).

Commercial and residential growth continued in Highland Springs in the 1960s, with nearly 14% of the resources in the community built during that decade. Thirteen commercial buildings along Nine Mile Road date from the 1960s, including the 1969 Highland Springs Post Office (043-5469; 043-5334-0063). Residential construction of the 1960s was generally of the Ranch style, but also reflected the continued use of the Minimal Ranch form due to the narrow size of the lots along most of the streets in Highland Springs.

The Highland Springs Historic District is significant locally under Criterion C in the area of Architecture in its representation of a community that was platted in 1890 and modestly grew during its first few decades. Although Highland Springs was created during the late 19th century, its architecture reflects its appearance during the mid-20th century. The majority of the buildings are single-family dwellings, with fewer than ten examples of duplexes. Commercial buildings are centered on Nine Mile Road. Most of Highland Springs' oldest structures are located along Nine Mile Road and on the side streets on lots closest to it. The most popular architectural style found in the district is the Minimal Traditional, with the majority being constructed in the 1950s. The second most used architectural style in the district is the Ranch, from the 1960s. Dwellings continued to be built in Highland Springs during the 1970s and 1980s.

A primary builder was Cliff Groome, who designed for himself and other builders, simple, one-story, gable-roofed, rectangular dwellings that would fit on the small Highland Springs lots and also be affordable. These were generally three-bedroom, one-bath dwellings on 50-foot wide lots that Groome first marketed in the \$11,000- \$12,000 range.

While the district contains some excellent examples of the Tudor Revival, Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles, the majority of buildings are vernacular in nature (Figure 40). The most architecturally sophisticated building in the district is the individually-listed Henrico Theatre (043-0287; 043-5334-0490), designed by architect Edward F. Sinnott, Sr. and built in 1938.

The community of Highland Springs has evolved over the past 130 years from a carefully planned community that met the ideals of its founder, and that offered services and a convenient transportation system to its residents. The community was and continues to be dominated by a large collection of dwellings, the majority of which sit on small lots and are modest in character. Until the 1960s the population was almost exclusively white with all-white schools and all white religious organizations. And

although linked to Richmond by an electric streetcar line, the identity of Highland Springs has never been directly intertwined or challenged with the late 20th-century urban experience. It was a product of its time, when populations were moving away from the cities and seeking a healthier and rural residential life distant from what in the late 19th century was considered a less than optimal place to raise a family. Over its long history, Highland Springs has offered a community of churches, schools, sports and social organizations accompanied by affordable and modest housing in a tree-covered environment. It took advantage of mechanized transportation that allowed its early residents a way to work in urban factories and live in a rural small-town setting. Today it represents an anomaly in the midst of high priced suburban real estate developments and interstate highways.