



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Building Boom on the Boulevard: Museums Flourish on One-Time Farmland

Virginia Historical Society Shows Changes to Block Dominated by Art and History

Richmond, VA—As the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) wraps up construction on its new wing and prepares to reopen to the public on May 1, 2010, its neighbor on the Boulevard, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS), presents a special exhibition that explores the changes that have occurred on the block occupied by these two world-class museums.

The Boulevard and How It Grew: From Soldiers' Home to the Home of World Class Museums opens at the VHS on May 1. Through twelve photographs, postcards, illustrations, and a map, the exhibition will give visitors a brief look at the 115-year-history of the block currently occupied by the VHS, the VMFA, the Robinson House, the Confederate Chapel, the United Daughters of the Confederacy building, and the Robert E. Lee Camp Memorial Park.

“This exhibition documents the steady evolution of the museum block, showing that like Rome, it was not built in a day,” said Jeffrey Ruggles, VHS curator of prints and photographs and curator of *The Boulevard and How It Grew* exhibition. “Because there are buildings still standing that date back over a century, there is often confusion among visitors and residents about who owns and runs which structure. I hope that this exhibition helps clear up some of that confusion by showing how each part of the puzzle developed. I also hope that visitors realize that the institutions that occupy this block are significant in ways that reach far beyond the city of Richmond, and even the state of Virginia.”

The exhibition tells how the thirty-four acres of farmland that was purchased from the Robinson family in 1884 developed into buildings that house extensive collections and impressive exhibitions related to world art and Virginia history. *The Boulevard and How It Grew* closes at the VHS on July 18, 2010.

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“This block has been in transition for most of its existence,” said Paul Levengood, VHS president and CEO. “We are glad that the construction is almost finished and visitors will be able to experience two world-class museums free of charge. Art and history — the defining filters for studying civilization within feet of each other.”

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For more than 182 years, the **Virginia Historical Society** (VHS) has been connecting people to America’s past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. The VHS—a history museum and research library—features award-winning exhibitions that are entertaining and educational for visitors of all ages. The Society is the only museum with all of Virginia’s history under one roof—all centuries, all regions, and all topics are covered. Although designated the Official State Historical Society, the VHS is a privately funded non-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations to sustain its operations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Museum hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. Library hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit www.vahistorical.org, or find the VHS on Facebook and Twitter.

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