

PROPERTY INFORMATION

PROPERTY NAME	Rick's Tattoo Studio (Current) Judge Thomas R. Monroe Law Office (Historic)
PROPERTY ADDRESS	4818 Lee Highway Arlington, VA 22207
TAX PARCEL	07006006
USGS QUAD (S)	FALLS CHURCH
COUNTY/INDEPENDENT CITY	Arlington (County)

ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION

ARCHITECTURE SETTING	Suburban
OWNERSHIP CATEGORY	Private

SITE DESCRIPTION

November 2019: This 0.2-acre lot is a slender rectangular parcel that contains the L-shaped building which fronts Lee Highway. An adjacent east driveway provides access to the lot and the rear paved parking lot. There is no green space or vegetation on the flat parcel and its immediate surroundings, save to the south, are commercial. A recreational parcel with some mature vegetation exists south of the lot.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

November 2019: For the first two decades of the 20th century, streetcars were the principal mode of transportation through northern Arlington County. The location of the streetcar stops determined the size and distribution of the area's commercial buildings. Shoppers rode the streetcar into Washington, D.C., to make their large purchases at the city's many department stores with their more extensive inventory, reserving their trips to local stores for groceries and hardware items. Small one- and two-story frame or concrete-block buildings, often repurposed dwellings, clustered around the streetcar stops. Built as part of the national US highway system in the 1920s, the portion of Lee Highway in Arlington County quickly became the area's main transportation and commercial corridor. During the 1930s and 1940s, retail stores, service stations, and other businesses were built at Lee Highway's major intersections, giving Lee Highway the fragmented, linear, and car-centric appearance it retains today. The provision of adequate parking either in front of the commercial buildings or at the rear became a paramount design feature along Lee Highway. The mostly one-lot-deep commercial zoning along Lee Highway, bordered on the north and south by residential development, mostly prevented the building of large shopping centers and enclosed malls that were popular during the 1960s and 1970s. Widening of Lee Highway and the reconfiguring of several of its major intersections further reduced on-site parking.

Commercial development during the 1970s continued to be unplanned and consisted mostly of small office buildings with businesses and professional services as tenants. Older commercial buildings were demolished, and their sites redeveloped with few unifying design principles. Nonetheless, Lee Highway continued to be home to a wide variety of both local businesses and national franchises. The 1985 *Lee Highway Commercial Corridor Study* noted that approximately one-third of Lee Highway businesses provided professional services such as banking, medical services, real estate, and insurance; another one-third provided convenience services such as dry cleaning, groceries, beauty shops and barbers; with

auto-related businesses such as dealerships, auto supply stores, and service stations, along with restaurants making up most of the remaining one-third. The 1985 study also noted that there were 4,000 parking spaces associated with the 292 businesses in the Lee Highway corridor (Arlington County 1985).

The scale, nature, and siting of commercial buildings along Lee Highway has remained remarkably consistent since the 1930s, even where their outward appearance has changed due to frequent remodeling and renovation of individual building facades. One- and two-story buildings, either free-standing or grouped in small strip malls predominate, although a few post-war shopping centers such as Lyon Village and Lee-Harrison are also present. Many of Lee Highway's commercial buildings built before 1970 are concrete-block and are faced with a variety of building materials (brick veneer, marble, metal, stucco, or wood-shingle siding), are oriented to the roadway, and where possible have off-street parking on-site or nearby. Many commercial buildings from the 1970s onwards such as banks and fast-food restaurants have drive-in windows. Lighting, signage, prominent surface parking lots, and large expanses of window displays and advertising easily visible from passing automobiles are integral to many buildings' design. Sidewalks, landscaping, street furniture and other features that promote walkability are more recent improvements to small sections of Lee Highway's commercial areas. Façade and streetscape improvements have occurred over the years at some of Lee Highway's shopping centers and strip malls to reflect current design trends and thus commercial buildings reflect a wide variety of period commercial styles and aesthetics.

PROPERTY HISTORY

November 2019: This was an African American-owned building built and managed by area resident Vance Green who also operated multiple businesses from the property, including a barber and beauty shop. Green leased other office space to a dentist and the law office of attorney Thomas Monroe (Green 2019). Thomas R. Monroe (1924-2005) opened his law office on Lee Highway in 1955, the same year he became president of the Arlington County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; he was president through 1956. Arlington County Directories from 1955 to 1964 confirm Monroe's law practice located at 4818 Lee Highway (Hill's various dates). From 1955 to 1959, his law firm was named Hankins, Myer & Monroe; it was listed as Myers & Monroe in 1961 and 1964.

In 1968, Monroe joined the law firm Bean, Kinney & Korman as the first African American partner in a non-minority law firm in Virginia (BKK n.d.). In four short years, he was appointed to the bench where he served as the first African-American Circuit Judge in Arlington County and the first to serve on all three Arlington courts. Judge Monroe retired from Arlington County judiciary in 1993 leaving a legacy of "compassion as well as competence" according to then-fellow Chief Circuit Judge William L. Winston (Winston in Sullivan 2005). He was a substitute judge in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in 1972, a General District Court judge in 1976 and the state's second black Circuit Court judge in 1982 (Sullivan 2005).

Judge Monroe was a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, VA and served as an Army sergeant during World War II before studying law at Howard University. As a community member, Monroe was active during desegregation, presided over the Nauck Citizens Association, was board member of the Arlington County Action program active on the Human Relations Commission of the county's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee.

SURVEYOR ASSESSMENT/RECOMMENDATION

November 2019: Although a commercial building, 4818 Lee Highway was not identified in the Arlington County Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) in 2011 (Arlington County 2011).

The commercial building at 4818 Lee Highway is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A on the local level for its historical association with social and civil rights activism in Arlington County as well as the African American heritage in the Hall's Hill/High View Park (HHHVP) neighborhood. Under Criterion B, the commercial building is eligible for its association with Judge Thomas R. Monroe, who was known for his social and civil rights activism in the predominately African American HHHVP community. Judge Monroe was significant for his legal

achievements as a president of the Arlington chapter of the NAACP, as the first African American Circuit Judge in Arlington County and the first to serve on all three Arlington courts. It is eligible under Criterion C as embodying the characteristics of commercial architecture along Lee Highway including its two-story height, brick veneer, large display windows, and parapet roof. The building retains its integrity of location, design, setting and feeling. However, the alterations to the facade impact its integrity of materials and workmanship. Also, the law office of Judge Monroe no longer operates in the building which impacts its integrity of association.

[SURVEYOR RECOMMENDATION: NRHP ELIGIBLE](#)

PRIMARY RESOURCE INFORMATION

RESOURCE CATEGORY	Commerce/Trade
RESOURCE TYPE	Commercial Building
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION	1935 (Local Records)
HISTORIC TIME PERIOD	World War I to World War II (1917-1945)
HISTORIC CONTEXT(S)	Architecture/Community Planning, Commerce/Trade, Ethnic Heritage (Black)
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	No discernable style
FORM	Rectangular
NUMBER OF STORIES	2.0
CONDITION	Good
THREATS TO RESOURCE	None Known

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

November 2019: (Portions of the rear (south) elevation of the building were obscured from right-of-way view).

The original 1935, two-story, wood-framed commercial building is no longer evident due to massive historic masonry additions (ACBP). The historic additions include: a brick and cinder block addition in 1951; two-story, two-room addition in 1952; an unspecified 1953 addition to the 1952 addition; an unspecified two-story addition in 1954; an unspecified 1955 remodel; a boiler room addition in 1957; a 1960 addition to the office building; and a brick chimney addition in 1962.

The extant building reads as a two-story, Masonry Vernacular commercial building that has a concrete slab foundation which supports masonry walls clad in stucco; brick and stone veneer exist on the primary (north) elevation. The 1950s additions created an L-shaped building that has a flat, built-up roof. A double-flue brick chimney exists on the east side of the rear (south) elevation. Fenestration includes original single and paired three-pane casements and tripartite windows with four-pane casements; and replacement one-pane fixed, and one-over-one, single-hung metal sash windows; several windows are partially boarded and/or fitted to accommodate window air-conditioning units. Exterior door and window placement suggest the building's internal program. There are three metal doors with a large glass pane on the primary elevation; the outer access units on the ground floor while the central door provides access to the second story. There is a single hollow-core metal door on the first floor of the east elevation near the southeast corner. Three doors exist on the ground floor of the west elevation (from north to south): one hollow-core metal door with square glass pane that appears to be original; a replacement modern wood-paneled door; and a boarded door. Two rear doors exist on the ground floor of the rear elevation, a hollow-metal door on the historic addition and a replacement wood-paneled door on the east side.

Exterior ornamentation includes brick and stucco-covered brick sills. Graphic lettering on the front windows identifies the commercial tenants. There is a large rectangular sign affixed to the center of the second story which reads “Rick’s Tattoo, Since 1970, Traditional and Custom Tattooing.”

EXTERIOR COMPONENTS

COMPONENT	COMPONENT TYPE	MATERIAL	MATERIAL TREATMENT
CHIMNEYS	--	--	--
ROOF	Flat	Unknown	--
WINDOWS	Fixed; Casement	Metal	--
STRUCTURAL SYSTEM/EXTERIOR TREATMENT	Wood Frame	Stucco Veneer	Cement Fiber/Cementitious Stone, Brick
FOUNDATION	Solid/Continuous	Concrete	--
PORCH	--	-	--

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