

Encyclopædia Britannica, Ninth Edition, Volume XX — Richmond (Virginia)



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RICHMOND, a city of the United States, the capital of Virginia, is situated in Henrico county, on the north side of the James River, at the point where the lower falls (100 feet in 6 miles) mark the limit of the tide ascending from Chesapeake Bay. On the other side of the river, and in the county of Chesterfield, but connected with Richmond by bridges, is Manchester. By rail the city is 116 miles south-south-west of Washington. At mean high tides vessels drawing 14 feet of water can come up to Rocketts, as the lower district is called. The town proper occupies a group of hills—Gamble's Hill, Shockoe Hill, Church Hill, &c.—and looks down over the river, from which it is separated by a strip of flat ground. Main Street is a typical street after the old Southern style, the large portion burned in 1865 having been rebuilt in keeping with the remnant that escaped. By far the most conspicuous edifice in the city is the Capitol, on the summit of Shockoe Hill, designed by Thomas Jefferson, after the Maison Carrée of Nîmes. Beneath the dome of the central hall stands Houdon's marble life-size statue of Washington in the uniform of a pre-Revolutionary American general, and in the esplanade near the west gates of Capitol Square is Crawford's famous bronze equestrian statue of the same hero (1858), surrounded by bronze figures of Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, George Mason, Thomas Nelson, and Andrew Lewis. North of the Capitol stands Foley's bronze statue of General "Stonewall" Jackson, the gift of English admirers of that great Confederate leader. A governor's house, a State

penitentiary, a custom-house and post office, a city-hall and almshouse, and two market-houses are among the principal public buildings. Libby prison, in which thousands of Federal prisoners were confined during the Civil War, was originally a disused tobacco factory, and is now scarcely distinguishable from the other dilapidated brick warehouses in its vicinity. St John's Episcopal church on Church Hill was, in 1775, the meeting-place of the Virginia convention to which Patrick Henry addressed his famous "Give me liberty or give me death," and in 1788 of another convention summoned to discuss the ratification of the Federal Constitution. Monumental Church (Episcopal) commemorates the disastrous burning in 1811 of the theatre which then occupied the site. The State Library, the Virginia Historical Society, Southern Historical Society, Richmond College, and the Medical College (1838) are institutions of note. Holywood Cemetery, occupying a district of great natural beauty to the west of the city, contains the graves of thousands of Confederate soldiers and the monuments of President Monroe and General J. E. B. Stuart, and the Confederate soldiers' monument. Previous to the Civil War Richmond was the commercial capital of the South and a great entrepôt for the produce of the Southern States, Cuba, South America, and Great Britain. Its clipper ships made fast voyages to the Pacific for tea, silk, and other Eastern wares. Its auction sales (monthly or even fortnightly) drew buyers from every part of the Union, even from the northern cities which now supply it with the very commodities they then visited it to purchase. When the war was over

Richmond was without ships, merchants, or capital. The tea trade had gone to London, the South-American to New York and Boston, In recent years, however, a new period of commercial prosperity appears to have set in, and, while several of the old sources of wealth have disappeared, the city still remains the natural centre of some of the principal trades of the South. Before the war more tobacco was sold in Richmond than perhaps in any city of the Union (fifty-six manufacturers were numbered in 1857), and this still remains an important staple. The flour trade is also of great extent. There are a large number of iron works, including those of the Tredegar Company; and granite quarries are worked in the vicinity of the city. In 1857 the real estate of Richmond was assessed at \$18,259,816, and the personal property at \$10,287,278. By 1885 the corresponding figures were \$34,502,903 and \$15,000,000. The city is the owner of both gas and water works. The population, which was only 5737 in the beginning of the century, has increased as follows:—9785 in 1810; 12,067 in 1820; 16,060 in 1830; 20,153 in 1840; 27,570 in 1850; 37,910 in 1860; 51,038 in 1870; 63,600 in 1880 (27,832 coloured).

The first settlement on part of the site of Richmond is said to date from 1609; and Fort Charles was erected as a defence against the Indians in 1644-45. But the real origin of the town, which was incorporated in 1745, was Byrd's warehouse, erected by Colonel William Byrd in the close of the 17th century. It was still a small village when in 1779 it was made the capital of the State of Virginia. From May 1861 till April 1865, when it was occupied by the Federal army, Richmond was the seat of government of the Confederate States. On the capture of Petersburg by General Grant the Confederate leaders thought it

impossible to hold the city, in spite of the strength of its fortifications; and Ewell, who commanded the rear-guard of the retreating army, set the great tobacco factories and flour-mills and the arsenal on fire; the conflagration lasted till the evening of the following day. In September 1870 part of the city was laid under water by the Hoods of the James river.

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