Below are some of the firm's notable projects:

- Arista Hoge House
- Augusta County Courthouse
- Augusta Military Academy (several buildings)
- Augusta Stone Church (additions)
- Augusta Street Methodist Church
- Beverley Garage
- C&O Depot
- C.W. Miler House
- Cobble Hill (residence)
- Dunsmore Business College
- Eakleton Hotel (now R.R. Smith Center)
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church
- Fishburne Military School (Waynesboro)
- Form R.E.Lee High School
- Gibson Warehouse
- Marquis Building
- National Valley Bank
- New (Dixie)Theatre
- Rockingham County Courthouse
- St. Francis Catholic Church & School
- Staunton Military Academy (several buildings)
- Stratton Building
- Stuart Hall School (several buildings)
- Switzer Building
- Temple House of Israel
- Thornrose Cemetery (Walls, Gatehouse, etc.)
- Trinity Episcopal Church and Parish House (additions)
- White Star Mills

Historic Staunton Foundation is a non-profit organization promoting the preservation and revitalization of the rich architectural and historic resources in Staunton, Virginia.

Staunton is a unique community of cohesive neighborhoods and a central business district with an impressive inventory of historic buildings and landscapes most dating from the city's late 19th century boom-town growth.

Since 1971, Historic Staunton foundation has promoted historic preservation through the

- creation of six historic districts
- revitalization of downtown business districts
- advisory services to property owners and the Historic Preservation Commission
- technical rehabilitation support for property owners
- development of R.R. Smith Center for History & Art

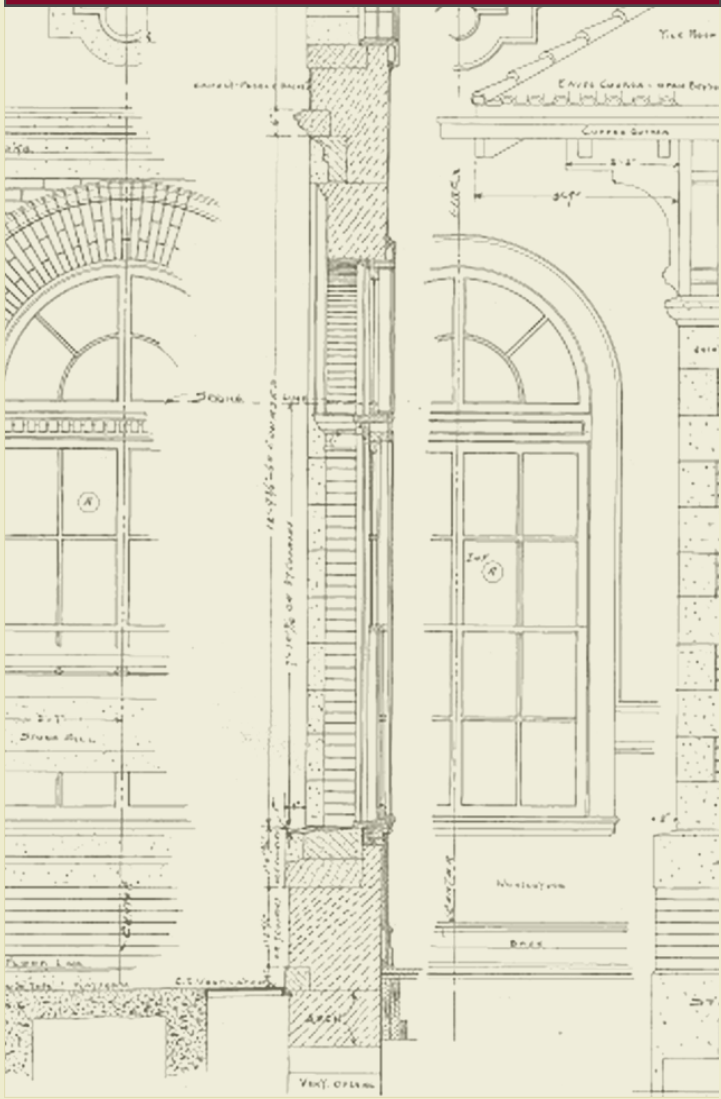
The T.J. Collins Archive Collection continues to be the centerpiece of the Foundation's unique role in preserving the architectural history of Staunton

Historic Staunton Foundation
20 South New Street
Staunton, VA 24401
540.885.7676
adminhsf@historicstaunton.org
www.historicstaunton.org

T. J. Collins & Son

THE LEGACY OF A FAMILY FIRM

STAUNTON, VIRGINIA



For over a century, the three generations of architects of T. J. Collins & Son made immeasurable contributions to the rich architectural heritage of Staunton's built environment. Their designs for residences, houses of worship, commercial, education, public and industrial buildings—as well as remodelings of all kinds—left an indelible mark on the area. Below is a timeline of the family or architects whose prolific work made such a lasting impact on Staunton's physical landscape.

1844: Thomas Jasper Collins born in Washington, DC to a family with a decades-long tradition of building design and construction.

1862: At 17, Collins enlists in the US Army as a private; by 1864, he is working as a messenger for the War Department.

1865-6: Works for the family contracting business in Washington.

1867: Is employed by the US Post Office Department. That same year, he marries his first wife, Genevieve Meem*, also of DC; one of their sons, Will, born in 1874, joins his father's firm about 20 years later.

1876: Although he has the title of Engineer at the Postal Service, he is listed as "Architect" in that year's DC City Directory.

1878: Wife Genevieve dies.

1881: He marries second wife Sophie C. Barrett of Philadelphia, who is 17 years his junior. Their son Samuel, born in 1881, later joins the family firm; daughter Florence, born in 1887, also works in the office.

** Records from the 19th c. spell her name several ways, including Mum, Memm, Mune—even Queem! Meem is correct: it shows up in the 1870 census and also as her son Will's middle name in his 1917-18 Selective Service Papers.*

1883: Leaves the Postal Service to form his own building company with his nephew. The firm struggles financially and hardships continue for the rest of the decade.

1890: Applies for a draftsman position with the Staunton Development Company (SDC) in the Shenandoah Valley, when the area experiences an unprecedented building boom due to new transportation connections. He moves to Staunton and by 1891 has teamed up with another SDC draftsman name Hackett to form the firm of Collins & Hackett.

1893: By this time, SDC has developed financial difficulties and gone out of business, and Mr. Hackett has left for Roanoke to open his own practice. Shortly thereafter, T. J.'s son Will joins his father in Staunton to establish the family firm of T. J. Collins & Son.

1906: Son Samuel leaves his practice in Raleigh, NC to join his father and half-brother Will in the family business.

1911: T. J. suffers a stroke and retires. Will & Sam continue to run the firm. In his 20 years as principal architect, T. J. Collins designed nearly 200 structures in Staunton, nearby cities and West Virginia.

1925: T. J. dies. His funeral is held in St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, which he designed.

1926: Rose Collins Johnson, T. J.'s daughter, gives birth to his grandson, J. Joseph Johnson, Jr., in Staunton; Joe guides the family firm in its later years until it closes in the early 2000s.

1933: Due to a drop in commissions during the Depression, Will and his family move back to DC to work for Department of Interior; later moves to Chicago with Bureau of Indian Affairs. Sam stays on as principal architect.

1946: After his wife Margaret's death, Will moves back to Staunton to re-join the firm, along with his son Richard E. Collins, also an architect.

1944-50: Joe joins the Army, serving 1944-47, attends University of Maryland and graduates with a degree in Architecture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VA Tech); he joins the family firm in 1950, working with his uncle and mentor, Sam, and cousin Richard.

1953: Both Sam and Will die within months of one another. Richard and Joe continue to run the family firm together for nearly a decade.

1961-62: Richard moves back to DC to teach architecture at his alma mater, Catholic University. He eventually opens his own firm, Collins & Kronstadt, which still exists in Silver Spring, MD. Joe continues as principal architect until his retirement.

1997: Recognizing the enormous value of his family's contribution to Staunton and the surrounding area, Joe donates the entire T. J. Collins & Son architectural collection—comprising some 1,1000 project files—to Historic Staunton Foundation. A few years later, after more than a century, the firm officially closes its doors at 4 North Madison Street.

The story of T. J. Collins & Son is one of excellence and creativity spanning over a century of architectural styles. But it is also the story of three generations who lived and worked together in their adopted town. Fittingly, T. J. and his wife Sophie, son Will and his wife Margaret, sons Samuel and T. J., Junior, and daughter Florence, are all buried together in the family's plot in Thornrose Cemetery. His other children, daughter Rose Collins Johnson and son Harry Joseph Collins are buried elsewhere in Thornrose—the beautiful resting place to which the family firm of T. J. Collins & Son contributed so much.