



*”It Ain’t Over ‘Til It’s Over”*

*This article was written in the wake of several major downtown businesses announcing their closing within a short period of time of each other. Fueled by gossip and newspaper headlines, something akin to mass hysteria was beginning to rear its ugly head as everyone proclaimed the central city “dead”. While intended for the Richmond, VA, business community, the article is applicable to any city where the inner core is appearing to “die”.]*

Alas! ... Woe is me! ... The heavens are falling! ... Cannons to the right, cannons to the left! ... Somebody grab the colors! ... That last shot damn near took my ear off!

Hold on just one darn minute. Rein in, holster your Colt, put your wristbreaker back in it’s scabbard and take a deep breath. Now, an awful lot has happened lately and a lot of people are running around like Chicken Little.

Well, hell! Stop, look up, and tell me what you see? IS the sky falling? No. It didn’t fall when Henricus failed or when Cornwallis, Tarleton or Benedict Arnold came through. Not even when Little Mac was within five miles of Richmond. It didn’t fall when Dalghren’s men made their foolish ride down Brooke Road or when the warehouses were fired in ‘65 (though it sure looked like all Hell had broken loose).

Having heard of all this talk about abandoning the city I wonder what root stock (that’s pronounced “ruut” stock) has taken over in our fair city. Richmonders are Virginians. And Virginians are a breed apart. Let me give y’all a little remembering:

When Mother England wanted to get rid of excess stock that was more trouble than it was worth, she sent it to Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia. Now we Virginians were among the first to arrive, so it comes as no surprise that we downplay the fact that ours was a penal colony - or at least an “indentured” colony. Probably because of our nascent genetic makeup, Virginians were involved in a handful of wars and rebellions before 1776, more because of our nature rather than “the cause”. In other words, a Virginian never really needed anything more than a good excuse to get his dander up and start raising the devil. We are contrary and stubborn, we are fighters and survivors.

Now is the time to show a little gumption. Plant your feet, roll up your sleeves, and get just a little angry about all this mess and do something constructive about it instead of complaining. Miller & Rhodes and Thalhimer’s downtown stores had sales in the millions each year. They’re gone.



Now who's going to get all the business that they used to have? Who's going to pickup the slack and accommodate all those tens of thousands of people who work downtown for the things they don't have time to shop for after work or in the evenings?

A good retailer wouldn't cry about losing a little competition, especially from some carpetbaggers who came here looking for a fast buck - we've seen it all before and we've always come back stronger. No, a good retailer would look at the opportunity and figure out how to capitalize on it. We'll start on how you can do that the next time.

You see, I'm going to be here... even if you're not.