



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Bringing the Family Back Together Again Virginia Historical Society Hosts Largest Thalhimers Department Store Reunion

Richmond, VA—On Saturday, October 16, 2010, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) will host the largest reunion of Thalhimers department store employees and customers to date. Elizabeth Thalhimer Smartt, the author of the new book *Finding Thalhimers*, is hosting her book release event at the VHS from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Former associates and shoppers are invited to celebrate with Smartt and her Thalhimer family members at this free event.

Visitors will be able to purchase *Finding Thalhimers* for the first time, meet Smartt, and get their book signed. Book release event guests will also have the opportunity to see objects, pictures, and artifacts from Thalhimers stores across the Southeast, share memories, register to win door prizes, and meet Snow Bear. Plus, samples of the famous Thalhimers six-layer chocolate cake will be available. This event is free and open to the public.

“The VHS was founded in 1831, and William Thalhimer founded his store in 1842, so we share longevity as Virginia institutions,” said Virginia Historical Society president and CEO Paul Levenson. “The Thalhimer family has been more than generous to the society, by giving funds to establish a permanent gallery, by endowing an archivist position, and by donating Thalhimers’ corporate papers and items. We are honored that, once again, the VHS is involved with Thalhimers to make history by setting a new reunion record on October 16th.”

In *Finding Thalhimers*, Smartt takes readers on her enthusiastic quest to find the true story of her father's family and their department store Thalhimers, which was headquartered in Richmond, Va., for 150 years. At its height, Thalhimers had 26 locations across Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Riveting and poignant, Smartt’s multigenerational narrative weaves together history, biography, and memoir into an unforgettable portrait of an ambitious American retail family.

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“There have been two major Richmond-based employee reunions since 1992 when Thalhimers became Hechts: one at the Carillon in May 1993 that about 150 former employees attended, and almost 200 associates were at the ‘10 Year Reunion Gala’ in August 2002,” said Smartt. “But the book launch event on October 16th at the VHS is gearing up to break the record as the largest Thalhimers reunion ever!”

“People have always been nostalgic about Thalhimers,” said Alexis Kennett, senior vice president of human resources at Thalhimers for 16 years. “For employees, *Finding Thalhimers* is like having a formal memoir of our own professional history. I know people will welcome the book as a vehicle to go back in time and it will bring back a flood of positive memories about their experiences with the company.”

Thalhimers department store items on display at the VHS include the clock from above the entrance to the Broad and 6th Street store in the *Virginians at Work* exhibition. VHS museum admission is free.

Finding Thalhimers will be available for sale in the VHS museum shop beginning October 16th.

“Thalhimers is history, and the VHS preserves history,” Smartt added. “It is a perfect fit for the launch of *Finding Thalhimers*. I am honored to be releasing my book at such a fine institution.”

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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.

