

VLR-4/16/74 NRHP-7/30/74

106-3

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Virginia
COUNTY:	Colonial Heights (city)
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE:	

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Violet Bank

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Royal Oak Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:  
Colonial Heights

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Fourth (Robert W. Daniel, Jr.)

STATE: Virginia	CODE: 51	COUNTY: {city}	CODE: 570
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PUBLIC ACQUISITION: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered		
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>library</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
City

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Colonial Heights

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Colonial Heights

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1935, 1941

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D. C.

CODE:  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia

COUNTY (CITY): Colonial Heights

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site					

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Violet Bank is an architecturally sophisticated and strikingly handsome Federal-style dwelling set on the ridge above the Appomattox River across from Petersburg. The one-story frame structure retains its original beaded weatherboarding, although the formerly wood-shingled roof is now covered with modern composition shingles. The foundations as well as the two exterior-end chimneys are coated with scored stucco. The most distinguishing features of the house are the three-part bays framing the depressed front entrance. The entrance and the two adjacent windows are sheltered by a tetrastyle portico with somewhat unusual reeded Doric columns. Each column has shaft necking at about one third of its height. Instead of a pediment, the portico is topped by a low parapet.

The graceful frontispiece features sidelights and an elliptical transom with delicate tracery. Its design is repeated for the rear entrance. All six windows on the facade are triple-hung and are framed with louvred shutters. The rear of the south room is lighted by a single triple-hung window with narrow sidelights.

The house originally had a long (82 feet) two-story wing projecting from the northern third of the rear elevation. The south side of the wing was shaded by a two-level colonnade. At its northern end was a one-story service section, making the wing's over-all length over a hundred and eight feet. The wing was removed in the early part of this century when the present street system was installed around the house. The removal of the wing reduced the house to what is essentially a two-room building.

Violet Bank's interior possesses some of the finest Adam-style decorative trim in the state. The south room is the most richly ornamented and features an elaborate plaster-work cornice and frieze. The frieze contains a repeated anthemion motif while the cornice employs an acanthus leaf molding in its crown and base. In the ceiling is a beautifully executed Adamesque oval medallion. Its center has a gilded acanthus leaf patera with sunflower core. A ring of plain molding separates the center from a wide frieze of bell-flower garlands tied with bows. Gilt rosettes in the centers of the curves formed by the garlands further ornament the frieze. Framing the composition is a band of gilt rosettes.

The ceiling medallion in the north room is similar but it lacks the outer band of gilt rosettes. The north room also lacks the anthemion frieze but its plaster cornice has a leaf molding crown and a rinceau in its soffit. Below the soffit are unusual reeded dentils. Both north and south rooms have pedestal-type wainscoting with paneled dados. Both rooms also have Regency-style King of Prussia marble mantels with free-standing Doric colonnettes. The doorways throughout the first floor have symmetrically molded trim with squared rosettes in the corners. Like its flanking rooms, the center hall has a plaster-work cornice and ceiling medallion, but of more simple design.

The house retains most of its original fabric and is in a good state of preservation. The first floor is maintained as a small, tastefully appointed museum of local and Civil War history, while the basement has been modernized to serve as a public library. Although practically all of the original plantation has been developed for housing, enough land is retained around the house to give it a setting of reasonable dignity. The front yard is set off by unusually large "cucumber tree," or Magnolia Acuminata.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                        |                                       |                                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1815

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                                  |                                                 |                                              |                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |                                              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |                                                 |                                              | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Violet Bank is an architecturally sophisticated Federal-style plantation house situated on the heights above the Appomattox River across from Petersburg. The house is noted for its fine Adamesque plaster ornamentation and for its use of octagonal-ended bays in its plan. This latter feature is a distinguishing characteristic of several architecturally important Virginia houses including Point of Honor in Lynchburg, the Hancock-Wirt-Caskie House in Richmond, and several demolished Richmond houses. Octagonal-ended projections were a favorite device of the architect, Benjamin Henry Latrobe who used them in a house design thought to be for the Mayo family of Richmond. This design was the prototype for the other above-mentioned houses, although Latrobe is not known to have been directly involved with any of their designs. Latrobe, however, does mention in his Journal that he visited Thomas Shore of Violet Bank in 1796 while Shore was building the first house on the site. This house burned in 1810 and the present house was erected in 1815. With the new house being so unlike anything in the immediate vicinity, one might conclude that Shore, having made an early acquaintance of the talented architect, consulted him for ideas for his new house. Shore also may have seen the several Richmond houses with octagonal-ended projections that had been constructed by 1815. The form indeed was infectious as a variation of it was employed for Oak Hill, a plantation house a half-mile to the west of Violet Bank.

Thomas Shore acquired the Violet Bank property from John Martin in 1777. The some 140 acres were included in a grant originally made to Edward Tunstall in 1637. Tunstall's land was acquired in 1665 by George Archer, and it was then that the river bank opposite Petersburg came to be called Archer's Hill. The origin of the name Violet Bank for Thomas Shore's portion of Archer's Hill is uncertain. One theory has it that the name was derived from the thick growth of violets on the hillside. Another is that the name is an allusion to a quotation from Shakespeare's Midsummer's Night's Dream. Shore is known to have had a set of Shakespeare's works at Violet Bank.

Violet Bank passed to Shore's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, wife of John Gillam of Petersburg, in 1824. The house served as General Robert E. Lee's headquarters from June 8, 1864 until November 1, 1864. It was there that Lee received news of the explosion at the Crater.

Violet Bank's front yard is noted for its extraordinary "cuoumber tree" or Magnolia Acuminata, believed to be the largest known example of the species in the country.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chesterfield County Deed Books 8, p. 197; 9, p. 9; 25, ;. 342.  
 Heite, Edward F., "Latrobe's Proposals for Richmond," Virginia Cavalcade,  
 Summer 1966.  
 Latrobe, Benjamin Henry, Journal of Latrobe, 1796-1820, pp. 23-24.  
 Mutual Assurance Society Policies, Reel 1, vol. 10, no. 94; Reel 4, vol.42,  
 no. 1338; Reel 10, vol. 75, no. 2868.  
Petersburg Progress Index, "Oak Hill -Violet Bank-Pocohontas the Early Years,"  
 November 24, 1968.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 . "	0 . "		37° 14' 30"	77° 24' 19"	
NE	0 . "	0 . "				
SE	0 . "	0 . "				
SW	0 . "	0 . "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than an acre  
 LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: March, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
221 Governor Street

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

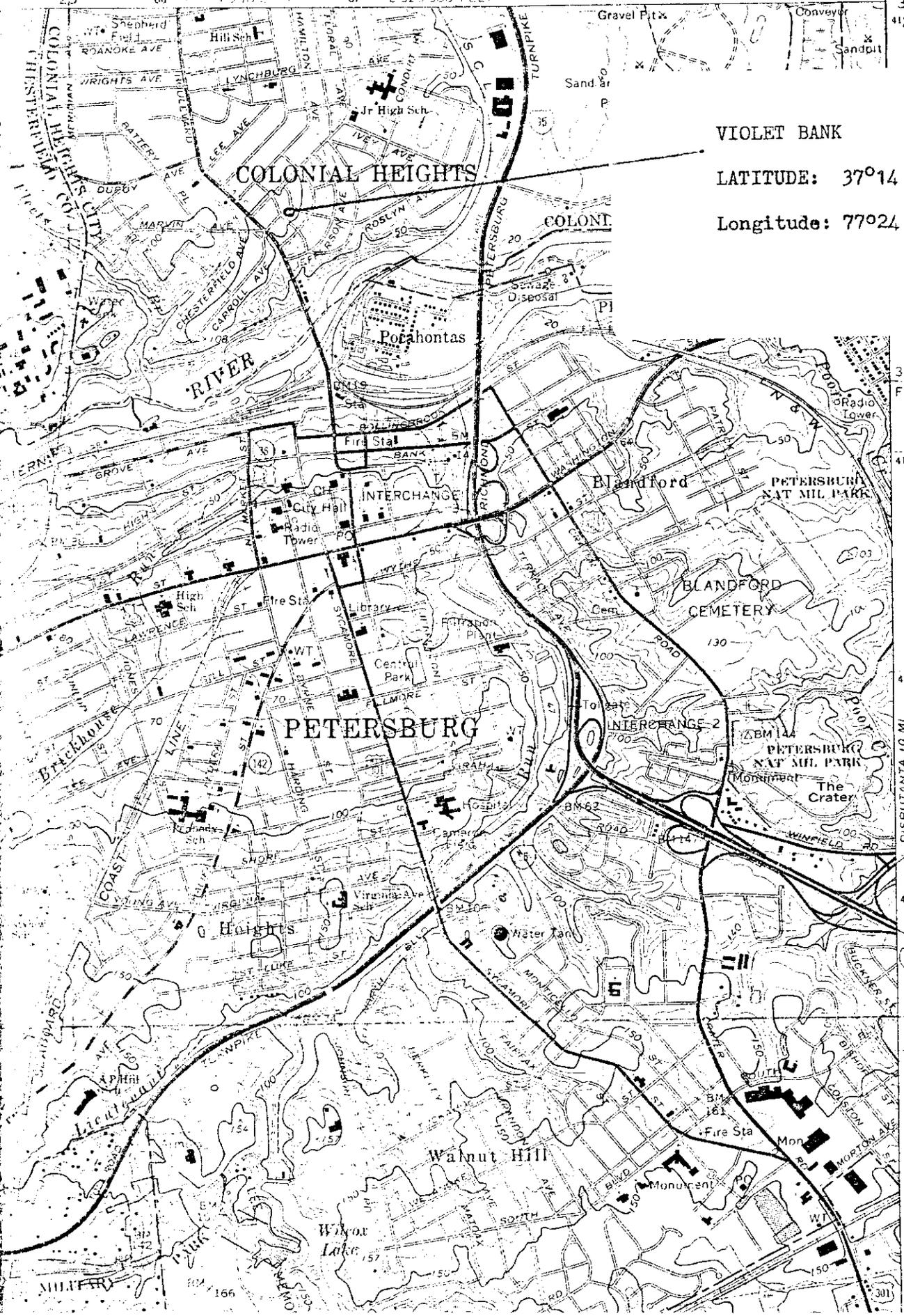
SEE INSTRUCTIONS

PETERSBURG QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 PETERSBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

5858 IV SE  
(HOPEWELL)

286 287 289 77° 22' 30" 37° 15'



VIOLET BANK

LATITUDE: 37°14'30"

Longitude: 77°24'19"

330 000  
FEET

4123

4122

4121

4120

NT. 95  
39 MI.

DISPUTANTA 10 MI.  
SHIFFOLK 57 MI.

95  
MI TO U.S. 301

12-33

4120