

VLR-6/21/77 NRHP-10/26/77

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED: OCT 26 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC BIRCH HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON  
Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
312 East Broad Street

CITY, TOWN Falls Church \_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE VICINITY OF CODE COUNTY CODE  
Virginia 51 Tenth (Joseph L. Fisher) 610  
(In City)

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Historic Falls Church, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER  
Box 312

CITY, TOWN Falls Church STATE  
Virginia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC  
Fairfax Court House

STREET & NUMBER  
Rts. 123 & 236

CITY, TOWN Fairfax City STATE  
Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Architectural Inventory of the City of Falls Church

DATE 1969 \_ FEDERAL \_ STATE \_ COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Falls Church Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Falls Church STATE  
Virginia

## **Z** DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

312 East Broad Street is the location of the home and remaining property of Joseph Edward Birch dating back to 1849, when he acquired the southeast corner of the John Trammell patent in a court settlement. The house, which Grigg, Wood and Browne date to the 1840s, and which was on the property in 1845 according to the land records at Fairfax Court House, was originally a simple one-and-one-half story Greek Revival structure built parallel to the Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike (now East Broad Street). At some point, probably just after Birch's purchase, the roof was raised to provide a full second story. This provided two rooms down and four small rooms up. The original east-west gable roof is still in place under the higher and newer (1873) roof, the gable end of which faces the street. Plaster marks and lath nails on the under side of the original roof joists attest to the time when the building was one and one-half stories. So do various features in the east and west walls of the second floor rooms.

Recent investigations on the part of the Falls Church Historical Commission and the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia indicate that the kitchen was a small detached structure approximately fifteen feet from the rear of the east end of the house. From the lower floor of this kitchen, a narrow winding stair ascends to a small overhead room -- possible servants quarters.

At some point, probably about 1873, the house was enlarged by an extension across the rear of the original I structure on both floors, with the old and new sections enclosed under a new roof with its gable end toward the street. This extension connected to, but did not enclose, the original kitchen. A porch across the front was added much later than the apparently original east porch. The house sits close to the ground and is supported by a rough fieldstone foundation.

The partial basement, underlying roughly two-thirds of the original I structure, has stone walls on the north (front), west and rear, with earth to the east. Before the present stairs were installed, there was an outside exit adjacent to the east side of the present stairs. The floor joists are rough unpeeled logs hewn on the top side only.

Inside the front door there is a narrow center hall with a straight staircase to the second floor. These stairs date from the 1870s, the earlier stairs having had a bend and landing midway. To the right is a living room which did have a fieldstone fireplace and chimney. This fireplace and chimney has been removed and was replaced with only a brick chimney. A square double-width arch connects this original room and the 1870s room behind it, forming a double parlor.

To the left of the front door is a narrow room with the house's only fireplace. Doors exit east to the porch, to a "sun room," which probably dates from the 1920s, and to the 1870s dining room behind it. There is also an east exit from the 1870s dining room to a brick patio, which incorporates several square paving blocks of the style produced locally about 1770.

Upstairs there are two front (north) rooms, with a modern bath behind the north-west room. There are also two rear rooms in the 1870s extension. Between the two rear rooms, a straight staircase ascends to the attic where there was, at one time, a large water tank which provided gravity flow for water pumped from the well on the west side of the house.

To the south-east of the original kitchen was a two-story storage shed or smoke house -- possibly both. The lower portion, like a bank barn, was entered from the rear. The remaining masonry walls of nondescript bricks and stone may have been

(See Continuation Sheet # 1)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET # 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

Description - continued

cannibalized from the foundation of the original barn immediately west. The upper portion, entered from the front, was frame. A structure on this spot appears on the 1878 Hopkins Map. The frame superstructure fell down from its own weakened condition about 1968. At either end of this structure are stone and brick foundations for the outside privies of earlier times.

There was a chicken house to the south and east of the smoke house.

The original bank barn was a frame structure about 30' x 40' set on a stone foundation. The upper entrance was from the turnpike side, with the lower entrance at the rear. A grandson of Joseph E. Birch recalls that the barn was built with an extension from the southwest corner on the upper level. This served as a shop. There were horse stalls on the lower level as well as a milking area with stanchions. In the 1920s the barn had deteriorated to the point that the frame structure was demolished and a frame one-and-one-half story, 3-bay, 20' x 30' garage was built on portions of the original north and west foundation wall. A now unused portion of the original barn foundation still stands to the east and at the southwest corner of the garage. The lower level continued to be used as a chicken house and barn, with a dog-run behind it, into the 1950s.

Joseph Edward Birch was a blacksmith, among other things, and pursued this activity in a small shop at the north-east corner of the property (now in the front yard of 322 East Broad Street). Preliminary archaeological exploration has confirmed the location of this shop. There was another blacksmith shop immediately east (on the east side of Cherry Street). These, and the tollgate almost directly opposite are shown on the Army Engineer's Map of 1862. A roadway extended from the turnpike between the house and barn and on south to the rest of the farm.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES \_\_\_\_\_ BUILDER/ARCHITECT Uncertain

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Joseph Edward Birch and his descendants played an important part in the life of Falls Church for over a century and a quarter. Joseph E. Birch came to Falls Church in 1841 from Alexandria County where he was born on May 2, 1818. Information on his ancestors and descendants can be found in Steadman's Falls Church: By Fence and Fireside, pp. 251-269. He moved to Falls Church in 1841 and leased a portion of Winter Hill, where he seems to have established his blacksmith trade.

In 1849 Joseph E. Birch came into ownership of two acres and 17 poles of property for \$105.00, including the house at 312 East Broad. Two years later, his father-in-law, Orrin Orton, bought the 150-acre Winter Hill Estate<sup>1/</sup> lying to the east and south around Birch's recent acquisition. Another year later, in 1852, Birch bought the Winter Hill "panhandle" (south of 312 East Broad Street) from Mr. Orton. He subsequently would acquire additional land extending south to the present-day U.S. 50 (Arlington Boulevard), totalling 150 acres, and farmed this while continuing his trade as a blacksmith and serving as a local civic leader.

Delphina Orton Birch died in November 1853, aged 22 years, without issue. In May 1855, Joe Birch married Mary Elizabeth Speer, of a prominent Oakton, Virginia, family. Joe Birch died in 1892 and Mary in 1901. They had eight children -- four boys and four girls. Frank List Birch, born in May 1858, lived his entire life at 312, with the exception of a few years early in the 20th Century when he operated a dairy farm opposite the present National Memorial Cemetery. Frank List Birch died at 312 in June 1939. In December 1882, he had married Flora Belle Crossman, of another prominent Falls Church family. (Her father also had been a founding alderman of the town, and her great-nephew would serve as Chairman of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in the 1970s.) Flora lived at 312 until her death in 1956.

Frank and Flora had four children, all of whom lived most of their lives at 312. Their son, Isaac, died in 1940; Mary in 1957; and Essie, the last of the family to live at 312, died in 1968. Like their parents and grandparents, the children were active leaders in the town and in the work of Dulin Chapel. Before 1968, Frank's last surviving son, Milton and wife, Pauline Waite, had moved to Fairfax City. Milton died on January 19, 1976. His death followed by five days his beeding of the remaining 2.46 acres of his grandfather's 150 acres to Historic Falls Church, Inc.

(See Continuation Sheet # 2)

<sup>1/</sup> Formerly owned by Col. James Wren, sometime sheriff of Fairfax County, ordinary operator, vestryman of Fairfax Parish, and noted architect (Fairfax Court House, The Falls Church, and, by derivation, Pohick Church and Christ Church, Alexandria).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET # 2

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Significance - continued

A responsible, community-minded family through the lives of three generations, the Birches contributed much to the life of the village and town. Joseph E. Birch assisted materially in the incorporation of Falls Church as a town (1875) and was a member of the first town council. He was one of the founders of Jefferson School directly across the turnpike from his property, and his house was home to many of the early Jefferson teachers. This school was the only school in the vicinity of Falls Church in its day. Birch was a trustee of the Methodist Society's pioneer Fairfax Chapel and its successor, Dulin Chapel (now Dulin United Methodist Church). He was one of the first in the community to see the need for a public cemetery, helping to establish Oakwood Cemetery, located on Roosevelt Street at the eastern end of the City.

The children and grandchildren of Joseph E. Birch have all maintained a record of responsible, constructive citizenship. The restoration of the Birch House and the development of the adjacent ground will be a permanent memorial to this family, as well as to the qualities of citizenship their lives have reflected.

The original portion of the house was built before 1845, enlarged upward in the 1850s, and expanded to approximately double its original space in the 1870s. No substantial changes were made after that, so the present appearance of the house has been maintained as part of our visible environment for one hundred years. It is a visible testimony to the growth of this part of Virginia relative to the growth in the Nation's Capitol in the Jacksonian and late Reconstruction eras.

The house also is sited near the center of a block of five 19th Century houses, and serves as the visual centerpiece for this unusually well-preserved 19th Century Virginia village streetscape. The property is protected by covenants, as is the surrounding land. New construction in the block is being controlled for architectural compatibility. Recognition as a Virginia landmark seems additionally appropriate because of the visibility of the property located on Route 7 -- variously known as Broad Street, Leesburg Pike, Harry Flood Byrd Highway, and the Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike. It was a pre-historic Indian trail, and the route of Braddock's fateful march to Fort Necessity, and still is well travelled.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Steadman, Melvin Lee Falls Church: By Fence and Fireside. 1964  
 Wright, Russell "Architectural Inventory of the City of Falls Church." 1969  
 Douglas, Henry H. "Falls Church: Places and People." Unpubl.  
 Artemel, Janice, "The Life and Times of James Wren." Unpubl.  
 Wrenn, Tony P. Historical and Architectural Study. Unpublished

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	311990	4305400	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

312 East Broad Street is on the south side of the street. It is the third parcel west of Cherry Street and the fourth parcel east of East Fairfax Street. It is an approximate square and is identified on the City's Real Property Identification Map as Parcel 1, Subdiv. No. ((25)), Sec. 1; and in the Land Records of Fairfax County as Parcel 1, Wren's Corner Subdivision.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

*HAD*  
 Henry H. Douglas, Secretary, and Paul R. Brockman, President

ORGANIZATION

Historic Falls Church, Inc.

DATE

April 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Box 312

TELEPHONE

532-6680

CITY OR TOWN

Falls Church

STATE

Virginia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE   x  

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Tucker Hill*

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE JUN 21 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

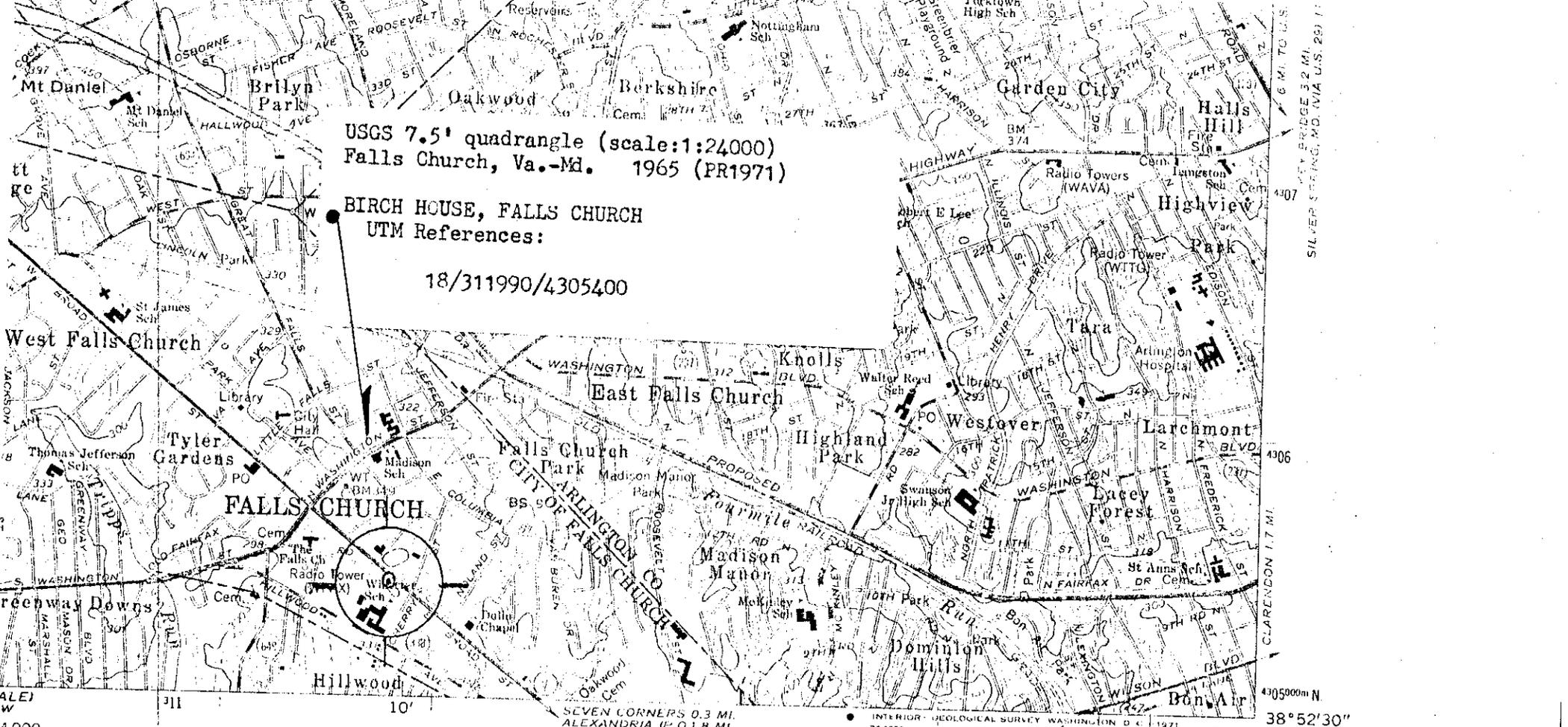
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

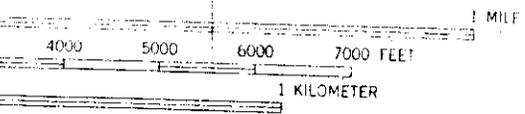
10/26/77



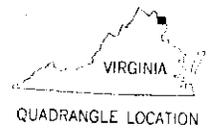
USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
 Falls Church, Va.-Md. 1965 (PR1971)

**BIRCH HOUSE, FALLS CHURCH**  
 UTM References:

18/311990/4305400



- ROAD CLASSIFICATION**
- Heavy-duty
  - Medium-duty
  - Light-duty
  - Unimproved dirt
  - Interstate Route
  - U. S. Route
  - State Route



**FALLS CHURCH, VA.-MD.**  
 N3852.5—W7707.5/7.5

1965  
 PHOTOREVISED 1971  
 AMS 5561 1 NW--SERIES V834

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
 CHARLOTTEVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903  
 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

6 MI. TO U.S.  
 SILVER SPRING, MD. VIA U.S. 291  
 4307  
 4306  
 4305000m N  
 38°52'30"  
 77°07'30"  
 CLARENDON 1.7 MI.  
 (ALEXANDRIA)  
 556115E