

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Rowe House
City of Fredericksburg, Virginia

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> DOMESTIC </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> DOMESTIC </u>	<u> Secondary Structure </u>
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> DOMESTIC </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> DOMESTIC </u>	<u> Secondary Structure </u>
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

 MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof STONE: Slate

walls BRICK

chimneys BRICK

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1828 - circa 1950

Significant Dates 1828
circa 1850
circa 1890
circa 1950

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

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Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately .93 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>18</u>	<u>284341</u>	<u>4241814</u>			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:

Organization: Gibson Worsham date June 1, 2008

street & number: 201 W. 7th Street telephone (804) 232-8900

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23224

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Josiah P. Rowe III

street & number 610 Lewis Street telephone (540) 373-2321

city or town Fredericksburg state VA zip code 22401

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Rowe House, built in 1828, is a significant Federal-style dwelling located on Hanover Street on the edge of the historic core of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia. It is a remarkable, two-story, four-bay, double-pile, side-passage-plan dwelling. The brick house, with its English basement, molded brick cornice, deep gable roof, and two-story front porch, stands on a large lot on the north side of Hanover Street. The principal façade has exterior doors in the first and third openings from the west on the first floor and basement levels and a door in the third opening on the second floor. The west gable end features plain windows lighting each room and the garret. Twin chimneys rise on either side of a semi-circular gable window in the east end. A one-story, brick, two-room addition, also with a raised basement, extends to the east. A one-story, late-nineteenth-century frame wing projects to the north. It was enlarged in the early twentieth century by additions along the east side.

The house has a side-passage-plan on both first and second floors, with elegant molded woodwork and Federal-style mantels in most rooms. A delicate stair extends from the first floor to the garret, which is partly finished. The first floor and the basement contain elements that were added in the mid-twentieth century, including elaborate new Federal-style woodwork in the front room, a modern kitchen in the rear wing, and knotty pine paneling in the basement.

The interior of the first floor of the main house, while it contains most of its original material and finishes, has been subject to several significant periods of alteration. The house is distinguished by a wide variety of molding profiles, with subtly different moldings in most rooms. The trim is notable for its use of astragals to set off the parts of the architrave trim. The first-floor front room was given the most elaborate trim, the passage was treated with the next most important significance, followed by the first-floor rear room, the second-floor passage and the front chambers, and, lastly, by the rear chambers on the second floor, with the simplest, one-part or single architrave surround. All of the moldings are inspired by Greek Revival-style pattern books.

The property includes one extant outbuilding, a garden storage building built in about 1950. It was designed to resemble a nineteenth-century smokehouse. The well-preserved outbuilding's construction date falls within the period of significance for the property and thus contributes to the significance of the property.

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ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Exterior

Main Section

The original portion of the Rowe House is a tall, two-story, Federal-style, brick dwelling of double-pile form. It has two principal stories above a full raised basement that opens to the south at street level. The house is built into the grade along the north side of Hanover Street so that the first floor opens on grade at the rear. A deep gable roof, covered with standing-seam metal, extends from east to west. The brick rear (north) and side walls are built in four-course American bond, while the front has smoother brick laid in a Flemish-bond pattern with a stained or painted surface and penciled mortar joints. The front (south) and rear (north) walls are each headed by a four-course molded brick cornice.

The first-floor windows are fitted with nine-over-nine, double-hung, wood-sash windows, while the second floor windows, which are reduced in height, have nine-over-six, double-hung, wood-sashes. In contrast, the smaller basement and west garret windows have six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows. The windows and doors are topped with rubbed and gauged jack arches at all original openings, except the basement openings on the end walls, which have segmentally arched heads. The jack arches are widely splayed and four brick courses tall, except at the second-floor front and rear openings, where the brick cornice prohibits the arches rising more than two courses.

The doors and windows are the same height on both levels of the facade, through the provision of high transoms over the doors. The first floor doors on the rear and the doors at the basement level are considerably shorter than the windows. The windows retain louvered shutters. The doors and windows have stone sills and two-inch flat exterior surrounds with a three-quarter bead along the inner edge. The doorways on the first and second floors have paneled exterior jamb reveals. The doors are all original, with raised panels on the exterior. The two sets of double doors on the first floor each have three panels, and the central panel of each has been replaced, as if, during an earlier period, they had been filled with glass.

The principal front, facing south, has three levels, each served by a covered porch extending the full length of the façade. The wall on each floor is pierced by four openings, their positions corresponding to the interior functions. The westernmost bay contains an entry door to the narrow passage at the western end of each floor (except on the second floor). The remaining three bays serve the large room that occupies the rest of the south front on each floor, comprised of a central door flanked by a window on each side.

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The western basement door was originally a double-leaf door, but it is now filled by a mid-twentieth-century door with a sidelight on the western side. The doorway in the third bay contains an old six-panel door. The first floor has large, original matching, double-leaf, three-panel doors in both locations. These have elaborate Gothic tracery and single panels with matching details in the jambs and head. The middle panels of both sets of doors have been altered and may have at one time contained added glass lights. The door on the second floor is in the third bay from the west and has the same form as those on the floor below, including the elaborate transom, except that the opening is filled with a single-leaf, six-panel door that matches the jamb and head panels.

The porch that spans the south front may date from the construction of the house in 1828, but the documented reuse of columns from the old St. George's Church for its support suggest that it was built or rebuilt in about 1848.¹ An original porch of at least one story is suggested by the number of doors on the first and second floors. The lowest level is supported by modern, built-up wooden posts standing on old stone base blocks. Twentieth-century tongue-and-groove boards sheath the ceiling. The floor is paved with brick. Evidence of a stone base just west of the center door indicates that a stair once rose along the south front inside the porch, from the central door to the near the western door. The external stair from the sidewalk to the first floor of the porch dates from the early twentieth century. It is aligned with the main entry to the front passage and protrudes into the porch in order to accommodate its necessary length. It is made of poured concrete and features stepped-concrete side walls and modern metal handrails.

The first- and second-floor porches have modern square columns and modern tongue-and-groove flooring. The first floor has a rebuilt railing with nineteenth-century turned balusters, while the second floor has a solid railing made up of wide tongue-and-groove boards, similar to the solid railing that appears on both floors in an important historic photograph from 1864 [Plate 1]. Original engaged pilasters survive, however, against the brick wall. These indicate the form taken by the original supports and may be from the second St. George's Church torn down in about 1848. These paneled square columns with molded capitals were twelve inches wide on the first floor and nine inches wide on the second. Wrought-iron angles bolted through the masonry bind the porch to the house just below the south cornice. The first-floor ceiling is of tongue-and-groove boards installed at around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. The wide beaded boards of the upper ceiling are much earlier in date. The early built-up beam just under the porch roof is made of beaded boards.

The west end contains two asymmetrically placed, stacked pairs of windows. The northern windows are located just north of the center point, to light the lower flights portion of the passage without interrupting the stair landing. The southern windows on the first and second floors are placed in the middle of the front room. The gable contains a central sash window lighting the garret. Two segmentally arched basement windows with metal casement inserts are located just

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above the ground line. A small similar window between appears to have been added. The rake boards that line the edge of the roof are early in date. They incorporate a subtle taper from the bottom to the top and are finished with a molding along the upper edge and an ornamental curve where they intersect the ends of the brick cornices on the front and rear.

The east end is strikingly different from the west end. The two chimneys that originally served the house rise on the east end. Windows are provided on all three floors on the south side of the south chimney. Similar windows were originally inserted in the same position at the north end of the wall, but the lower window is concealed with a later addition. Exterior access to the rear portion of the basement is through a door just below on the lower floor. This door has a segmentally arched head and is located inside the below-grade porch on the north side of the adjacent east addition. A large, elegant, semi-circular window lights the garret on the gable end that faced towards the town.

The first floor of the rear elevation has a door in the same position as the door at the south front. The eastern door is now within the north addition. The original, double-leaf door in the western end has been covered over with plywood boards, but it has the same details without the transom. The north wall has more evidence of structural problems than other areas, with numerous cracks and rebuilt sections between the windows.

East Addition

The east addition, built in about 1850, is centered on the east end of the original section. The six-course American-bond brick wing, which is one room deep and two rooms long, extends from between the two chimneys in order to avoid blocking the windows in the east end. A chimney rises between the two rooms in the center of the standing-seam metal gable roof. The front and rear walls are headed by a three-course corbelled brick cornice. The rake boards in the east end appear to have been replaced in the twentieth century.

The only original first-floor windows are at the east end of the south wall and centered in the east gable end. These two windows have nine-over-six, double-hung, wood-sashes, wooden sills, and no jack arch or lintel above. The original basement window is a six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash opening at the east end of the south front, similar to the window above. The entire south wall of the western room in the addition has been replaced. The upper level was supplanted by a frame, polygonal bay window in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The bay window includes three nine-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows. It is ornamented with novelty siding and a sawn, scalloped lower edge on the top cornice and the bottom support.

The north wing appears to have incorporated a service porch along a portion of the north façade at both the first-floor level (above grade) and at the basement level (below grade). The basement porch, which extended from the main section of the house to a point just west of the window (current door)

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at the eastern end, was defined by a stone retaining wall. It has been used as a garage since early in the twentieth century. The edges of the framing for the early first-floor porch are visible in the basement porch ceiling. The upper level of the porch has a modern square post at the northwest corner, but it retains an old chamfered post where it intersects with the porch on the north addition. The western end of the upper porch was enclosed when the north addition was constructed in the late nineteenth century. The north wall of the east wing appears to have had a single window in the eastern room on both floors and a door and a window giving access to the western room on both floors as well. The western door and window on the basement level are blocked. The western door on the first floor is now the entry to the frame addition to the north and the window, if it exists, is concealed behind modern wall finishes.

North Addition

A narrow, one-story, one-room, frame addition, added in the late nineteenth century, extends to the north. This addition, covered with plain weatherboard, spans the joint originally located between the north front of the original section and the porch of the east addition. It opens off the former exterior door of the large rear room on the first floor of the original section, but it would have communicated directly with the east wing as well by means of the porch along its north wall. It has a shallow, standing-seam metal roof and a stone foundation. It has three openings on the west, two two-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows and, closest to the main house, a door. Another window is located at the east end of the north gable end. The shifting of this window from a central position seems to indicate that the room was heated by a stove flue or other chimney at the north end, likely removed when the house was redecorated in the 1950s. The windows were originally fitted with exterior blinds, as can be seen from the cast-iron, lull-and-porter hinges that remain.

Northeast Addition

The final addition made to the house was an early-twentieth-century extension made along the entire east side of the north wing. This section included an extension of the old north porch on the east addition. The new section had a brick foundation and six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows. The section now features mid-twentieth-century, metal casement windows, including a window that turns the northeastern corner, in a nod to Moderne and International Style design. The new section of porch, which has plain square wood posts, is narrower than the older porch, leaving room for steps to that porch. As part of the division of the east wing into a separate apartment in the mid-twentieth century, the two sections of porch were separated by a lattice partition, recently removed.

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Interior

Basement Overview

The basement has an arrangement of rooms similar to that of the floor above, but with differences based on room uses at the time of construction. The front rooms are fully above grade. They contain a large heated room at the east end and a smaller room below the first-floor passage, both with doors to the exterior. The doors, without transoms, are lower than the windows. The rear range of rooms are almost entirely below grade. The interior of the rear section has probably been considerably altered in its transformation into a twentieth-century furnace room.

A framed opening in the ceiling structure shows that it was reached from above by an early stair near the center of the room and probably ran along a partition dividing the rear section into two rooms. This portion of the basement appears to have served as the principal food preparation and service area, until the east wing was completed in the later antebellum period. A door opens to the exterior at the east end. The chimney at the east end appears to have a bricked up opening large enough to have served for cooking purposes. The two-room basement of the east addition opened off the east room in the front section. Each room also opened onto a below-grade porch along the north side. The large arched fireplace in the inner room of the east wing indicates that this room served as the household's kitchen after the wing was built.

Main Section -West Room

The western room in the basement of the original section is a low ceilinged space that appears to have been fully finished originally. It may have served as a passage giving access to the front and rear rooms of the basement. Today the finishes entirely date from a rehabilitation in the 1950s into use as a kitchen that was part of a basement-level apartment. The walls are plastered and the room is fitted with laminate countertops and painted wood cabinets dating from the mid-twentieth century. A small pantry with open wood shelves opens to the north. A door, now bricked up and concealed in the rear of the pantry, once gave access to the rear section of the basement.

East Room

The eastern room in the main section of the original basement is a low-ceilinged space that appears to have been fully finished originally. It may have served as a living or dining area associated with the upper floors, but the lack of an internal stair in this portion of the basement suggests that it was a separate area, perhaps for business-related purposes. The room features a large fireplace at the eastern end, flanked by a window on the south and a door to the east wing

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on the north. Former openings to the rear section of the basement have been closed and the entire room paneled with vertical tongue-and-groove knotty pine boards. The mantel is formed by a pine shelf attached to the pine paneling. All the trim was renewed in pine at the same time. The floor is made of Masonite tile manufactured to resemble wood planks, an innovative material at the time of the rehabilitation. The radiators are built into the paneling with wide horizontal slots on the north wall to facilitate convection heating.

North Section

The rear range of rooms in the main section of the basement was closed off from the front in the mid-twentieth century and made into the furnace room. A small open stair with exposed stringers was inserted under the main stair in the first-floor passage. The room features whitewashed four-course American-bond brick walls, whitewashed tongue-and-groove ceiling boards, and a concrete floor. Evidence behind the added ceiling finish indicates that the ceiling joists were originally exposed and coated with whitewash. The north wall shows bulging and other damage associated with long-term water penetration.

The room is served by a large chimney at the east end containing what appears to be a walled-up cooking fireplace. It is lit by a metal casement window in the west end wall and is accessed from the exterior by an original door on the north side of the chimney. A large coal bin in the center of the room is enclosed with studs finished on the interior with tongue-and-groove boards. The furnace stands directly in front of the chimney. A small darkroom was enclosed in the mid-twentieth century in the northwest corner of the room and under the steps.

Evidence is visible of an early stairway in the center of the room, running from near the south wall to the north. The former stair opening is trimmed with wide beaded boards. Instability caused by removal of supports of the stair, or by insertion of the new stair, caused the floor above to sag. Two steel columns were added in the mid-twentieth century connected by an east-west steel I-beam, to shore up the floor structure. The two doorways to the southern half of the structure appear to have been bricked up in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, probably when the rear section became a furnace room.

East Addition

The basement below the east addition contains a series of rooms associated with the mid-twentieth-century use of the basement as an apartment for family members or rental use. The east

wing appears upon completion to have replaced the rear section of the main structure as the kitchen for the house. Like the adjoining front rooms in the main section, the finishes in the east wing were completely renewed in the mid-twentieth century, with molded trim and six-panel doors.

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Inner Room

The inner (western) room is fitted as a bedroom today, although it appears to have originally served as the main kitchen. It contains plastered walls and ceiling and Masonite flooring. The mantel and its paneled surround is a very convincing Williamsburg-inspired renovation. The fireplace has a large, segmentally arched opening and a large proportion of original brick in the firebox. An adjacent closet fills the space to the north side of the chimney. A door and window have been bricked up on the north wall. The window is trimmed and treated as a bookshelf, but the door is plastered over. Heat is given by radiators concealed in the west wall.

Outer Room

The outer (eastern) room has been subdivided into several mid-twentieth-century spaces. A bathroom is located on the south, opening out of the bedroom, with a window to the south and tiled walls. The bathroom gives access to a small room to the north containing a door to the north porch. This doorway is in an historic location but the glass-panel door with transom dates from the mid-twentieth century. Both rooms contain small closets and are heated by radiators attached to the ceiling. Both rooms have Masonite tile floors that resemble wood planks.

First Floor

Overview

The first floor, raised high above the street on the front but on grade at the rear, contains the most formal and highly finished rooms in the house. The original section is divided into front (south) and rear (north) ranges of rooms, each made up of an unheated passage adjoining a large room to the east. All four rooms (southwest passage, southeast room, northwest passage, and northeast room) had doors to the exterior, although the door from the northeast room now gives access to the north wing. The northeast room was originally further subdivided and included an interior stair to the basement. Access to the floors above is by stairs in the northwest passage. Basement stairs to the basement in the original closet below this staircase were added in the mid-twentieth century.

The east addition, accessed through a door added beside the chimney in the northeast room, contains two original rooms separated by a central chimney. Both rooms in the addition appear to have opened onto a rear porch. The early-twentieth-century north addition contains a formally treated room, probably a dining room, and the adjacent northeast addition is a kitchen and service wing added in the mid-twentieth century.

The house was generally renovated in the mid-twentieth century, including new building systems, a modern kitchen, and some new woodwork. Floors throughout the first floor were

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covered with new narrow hardwood flooring. Walls and ceilings are of plaster over masonry or wood lath.

Main Section - Passage

The passage is divided into southwest and northwest sections by an ornate original archway. The arch has paneled pilasters with large corner beads and features exaggerated capitals with pointed ovolo moldings. The arch is surrounded by a three-part architrave with a row of Gothic modillions along the outer edge. The front door is fitted with a restoration iron rimlock.

The rear portion contains the finely finished stairway. The stair climbs from the first floor to the garret. It features slender turned newels with a columnar form, two delicate square balusters per step, sawn decorative end brackets, and a ramped and eased rail with a round section. The stair returns at a landing located above the exterior door at the northwest corner of the house. The area under the stair was originally a closet with plastered walls. The enclosed area under the stair was enlarged and the stairs to the basement were inserted. The basement stairs are closed by an early-twentieth-century four-panel door. A door to the adjacent north room was inserted under the landing in the antebellum era, featuring a flattened ovolo architrave trim and a four-panel door.

The passage is lined by flat paneled wainscot, added in the 1950s, that follows the stair to the second floor. The original surbase (chair rail) and wash board are gone. The window and door surrounds in the passage are among the most elaborate in the house, with three-part or triple architrave trim around the openings. The outer molding contains a cyma reversa outer molding. The two receding inner bands are separated by single astragals and the inner edge is formed by a larger astragal. An elaborate cornice with a dentil molding was added in the 1950s.

East (Front) Room

The east room is the principal room in the house. The fact that it was part of the principal circulation path in the original house argues against it serving as a parlor, since parlors were often segregated from the daily life of the house. The room contains much original material, augmented by fine executed woodwork added in the mid-twentieth century as part of an overall rehabilitation of the house. The wide arched doorway to the room was added in place of a conventional opening. This arch was made to very closely resemble the historic arch that subdivides the passage. The room is served by a projecting central fireplace on the east end, flanked on the south by an original window and on the north by an arched shelf unit added in the mid-twentieth century. The south wall has a central door flanked by windows, and a central door in the north wall gives access to the adjacent north room. The room is fitted with an elaborate cornice like that in the passage and features a dentil molding. The cornice steps out over the windows to conceal the curtain rods.

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The fireplace is served by a large Federal-form mantel with a paneled frieze supported by full fluted Doric colonnettes topped by paneled end blocks. The molded, projecting breakfront shelf is carried by a series of four deeply pointed moldings resting on a reeded fillet. The central panel is surrounded by angled gouge marks. The panels in the end blocks are filled with a linenfold-like molding and surrounded by diagonal ornamental gouge-marks. The firebox has been rebuilt, but a stone hearth appears to be original. The alcove to the north side of the chimney was filled with an elaborate shelf over a cabinet in the 1950s renovation. It has an arched opening based on the arch in the passage, flanked by pilasters and filled with open shelves. A paneled cabinet below lines up with the chair rail. There does not appear to have been an opening here originally.

The chair rail is modern (except under the windows) but resembles that in the rest of the house. The wash board is original and has a molded top. The windows have square, flush jambs. The doors and windows are trimmed with the most elaborate moldings in the house. The triple surrounds are characterized by an outer ovolo with astragal, a large inner astragal, and by three bands, separated by beaded edges. The inner edge has a single bead and the outer one is dressed with a double bead. The panels on the double-leaf exterior door are flat. The panels on the door to the north room turn their flat face to the south room. The jambs of the door to the north room are treated with raised panels. The exterior door has a restoration iron rimlock, while the door to the north room was given a brass rimlock at the same time.

North (Rear) Room

The rear room in the northern half of the main structure is identical in size and form to the front room, but its trim is noticeably less highly treated as befitted a room of secondary importance. A projecting chimney breast in the center of the east wall is the twin of the chimney in the south room, but it carries a plainer version of the same mantel. Fluted pilasters support the paneled frieze, which features urns in relief on the end blocks. The fireplace has a modern brick interior and hearth.

The triple architrave surrounds in the north room are similar in most ways to the trim in the front room, but the lower status of the rear location is indicated by the removal of the intervening beads separating the three bands, giving it a very plain appearance. The north room has the same dentil cornice, added in the 1950s, but it retains the original chair rail in addition to the molded wash board. The two-part chair rail has a cyma reversa above two plain bands and a bottom edge bead.

The small four-panel door into the passage was added later in the antebellum period to adapt to changed circulation patterns. It has a flattened ovolo molding, characteristic of that date, on the outer edge and a bead on the inner edge of the single architrave surround. A plumbing chase and several heating pipes are placed in the north corner of the chimney. An original window to the

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north of the mantel has been blocked by successive additions. It remains as an embrasure on the interior. The opening on the south side of the chimney is more difficult to analyze. The deep paneled jamb and the door with its six raised panels matches the details found on the original elements of the house. It appears that there was an exterior door here originally. The trim on the opposite side is mid-nineteenth-century in date and was added with the east wing.

East Addition

The addition to the east was made in the antebellum era. It contains two rooms both of which opened onto a porch along the north side. The addition, which contained service rooms, including a kitchen in the basement, served as an extension of the family living rooms on the first floor. The central chimney serves a fireplace in the western room, but there may have been a fireplace in the eastern room as well, now blocked. The north porch was enclosed in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century to form an additional bedroom opening off the inner room. The entire first floor of the east wing was converted into an apartment in the mid-twentieth century. The east wing has narrow hardwood flooring added at the same time as that in the main house.

Inner Room

The inner (western) room is fitted as a bedroom for the small east wing apartment. It is lit by a large polygonal bay window that fills the whole south wall. The bay has a window seat across the bottom and is flanked by short plaster walls with turned corner guards. The chimney is in the center of the east wall. It has a heavy Greek Revival-style mantel with pilasters. The firebox, altered in the early twentieth century, has a glazed tile surround. The door opening to the main house is treated with a double Greek Revival-era surround with flattened ovolo molding. The door itself and the trim on the opposite side matches the original doors in the main house, suggesting that the door is original and that it opened to the exterior. The rest of the door openings are filled with four-panel doors and trimmed with wide, plain trim that is square in profile with an inner bead, including the doors to the outer room and the original exterior door to the north porch. The north doorway, which now gives access to the porch room, is fitted with a two-light transom.

Outer Room

The outer room was subdivided in the mid-twentieth century into two smaller rooms as part of the creation of a small apartment. The southern part of the room, with the floor raised six inches to accommodate the added plumbing, was used as a bathroom, with modern fixtures, vinyl tile floor, and ceramic tile wainscot. The northern part of the room was used as a kitchen, with a small gas stove and a built-in cabinet containing a sink. There is a window in the south and east

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walls and a door in the center of the north wall. The trim on the original openings is square with an inner bead, and the north doorway has a four-panel antebellum door like the others in the wing. The wash board is square. The wood floor has been covered with vinyl tiles.

Porch Room

The section of porch between the east addition and the northeast addition was infilled with a bedroom, probably when the north addition was made. The room is finished with plaster and was improved in the late twentieth century with a wall of three closets across the west end, each with a louvered door. It has a six-over-six sash window in the east end and the original four-panel exterior door (with transom) of the inner room of the east addition on the south. A door original gave access to the remaining section of porch. It was located to the south side of the east window, but was plastered over on the interior in the mid-twentieth century.

North Addition

The north addition consists of a single large room, probably a dining room, opening off the main section through the original exterior door in the north room. The frame addition is fitted with plaster walls and ceiling, symmetrical molded trim with bull's eye-corner blocks, four-panel doors, molded wash board, and added, mid-twentieth-century crown molding matching that in the main section. The same molded trim is used for the aprons at the three two-over-two sash windows. Doors on the east give access to the kitchen and powder room in the northeast addition.

Northeast Addition

The northeast addition was made to the east side of the north addition in the early twentieth century. The surviving six-over-six sash window in the laundry room is typical of the original windows. It and the adjacent, early, four-panel door in the kitchen, open onto the porch along the east side.

Kitchen

The kitchen interior was entirely redone in the mid-twentieth century, when a stylish Moderne-style kitchen was installed. This included plywood and pine built-in cabinets, green Formica countertops, a projecting peninsula with a semi-circular end, stainless steel appliances, and a built-in breakfast nook in the northeast corner with a curving, salmon-colored vinyl-covered banquette. The grey vinyl tile floor includes ornamental panels of green tile. The windows were replaced with metal casements to complement the interior, with two triple units providing air and light at the breakfast nook corner.

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Laundry Room

The laundry room and powder room were created out of a larger pantry that filled the entire area south of the kitchen. It was accessed by doors from both the dining room and the kitchen. The west end was made into a small powder room in the mid-twentieth century. The laundry room has simple square window moldings, a molded base like that in the rest of the area, and cabinets over the space for the washer and dryer on the west side of the room.

Powder Room

The mid-twentieth-century powder room was designed to be as up-to-date as the kitchen. It has a built-in black sink counter along the south wall with a mirrored wall above. The vinyl tile floor is black and the sink and the toilet are pink vitreous china. Magnolia flowered wallpaper is in a matching shade of pink.

Second Floor

The second floor is similar to the first floor of the main section. The hierarchy of molding treatments continues to this floor, on which there are two distinctive trim variations, both less complex than the simplest surrounds on the first floor. The passage and the two rooms on the south front receive more elaborate moldings than the rooms on the north. The walls and ceilings are plastered. The flooring, like that elsewhere in the house, was covered with narrow tongue-and-groove hardwood boards in the mid-twentieth century.

The floor plan is similar to that of the first floor and responds to the functional demands of providing unimpeded access to each of four, originally unconnected rooms on the second floor. The open stair in the northwest corner runs to the attic. Two bed chambers in the front (south) correspond to the south room and the passage below, and the room corresponding to the north room below is subdivided into several smaller rooms. A medium-sized chamber in the northeast corner is accessed by a short passage extending from the head of the stairs along the central east-west partition. This leaves a small room adjacent to the stairs that was converted to a bathroom in the twentieth century.

All the rooms feature the two-part architrave chair rail with a central double bead, lower astragal and upper cyma reversa with astragal found throughout the house, but the six-inch wash board on the second floor is treated throughout with a simple bead, contrasted with the more elaborate molded wash board on the first floor. The second-floor rooms have the same six-panel doors with narrow stiles and rails. The panels are arranged so that the sides with raised fields face the passage.

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Passage

The short passage contains the stairs running from the first floor to the garret. It includes the area corresponding to the northern section of the passage on the floor below, but includes a short run from the head of the stairs to the northeast chamber. The railings of the first and second flights of the stairs are connected by a curved section of railing rising directly from the flooring. The two newels supporting the rail are made subsidiary to the whole railing by being tenoned into the under side of the rail.

The mid-twentieth-century paneled wainscot installed in the first-floor passage runs up the stairs into the second-floor passage and ends against the central partition. The remaining walls of the passage are treated with the same two-part chair rail as the rest of the house. All of the original doors lead from the passage to each of the four second-floor chambers. The doors are treated with a double or two-part architrave that contrasts with the triple architrave trim on the first floor. The passage molding has an outer cyma reversa molding with an astragal, an inner bead, and no trim to separate the simple transition between the two inner bands.

Southwest Chamber

The small unheated chamber in the southwest corner corresponds to the southern half of the first-floor passage. The window trim in this chamber matches that in the southeast chamber and the passage, while the door treatment is simpler and resembles that in the two chambers on the north. The only difference in the trim of the two south rooms from any other in the house is the provision of small corner blocks at the tops of the windows, apparently to provide a place to affix curtain rods. A closet was added in the mid-twentieth century in the northeast corner of the chamber at the same time that a small wooden crown mold was installed.

Southeast Chamber

The southeast chamber is the largest room on the second floor, corresponding to the most important room on the floor below. It has the same trim as the passage and southwest chamber. The southeast and northeast rooms were linked by a door in the late nineteenth century. The doorway has an Italianate cyma reversa architrave surround and a six-panel door. The room has a central door to the second floor of the front porch flanked by windows. A projecting chimney in the center of the east wall is flanked by an original window to the south side. The shelf-and-architrave mantel with a deep breakfront shelf and fluted end blocks features the same double architrave as the doors and windows. A vertical-board closet was inserted into the north chimney alcove in the late nineteenth century. A small wood crown molding was added in the mid-twentieth century.

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Northeast Chamber

The northeast chamber corresponds to the northern room on the floor below. The trim on both floors is a single architrave element with outer cyma reversa and astragal molding and an inner bead. Linked to the southeast room by a door in the late nineteenth century, the tall opening is fitted with an Italianate cyma reversa architrave surround and a six-panel door. The room has a central door to the second floor of the front porch flanked by windows. A projecting chimney in the center of the east wall is flanked by an original window to the south side. The shelf-and-architrave mantel has a deep breakfront shelf and plain end blocks ornamented with diamond shapes made of vertical gouge marks. The architrave matches the single architrave trim at the doors and windows. A vertical-board closet was inserted into the north chimney alcove in the late nineteenth century. The small wood crown molding was added in the mid-twentieth century.

Northwest Chamber

The unheated northwestern chamber is the smallest room on the second floor. It was converted to a bathroom in the early twentieth century and was redecorated at mid-century in the latest style with a black linoleum tile floor and yellow ceramic tile wainscot with black trim. The single door and window trim matches that in the northeast chamber.

Garret

The stair to the garret cuts across the second-floor window at that location, providing light for the landings above and below. The garret was partially finished, in keeping with its direct access by the main stairway, usually reserved for rooms intended for family use. It consists of hewn and pit-sawn rafters and collars with a row of studs along the sides forming a knee wall. The exposed collar beams, rafters, and brick gable walls are whitewashed. The garret is divided into two rooms by an off-center, pit-sawn vertical plank partition containing a batten door, with the smaller room at the eastern end. A portion of the north part of the west room has been subdivided for storage in the twentieth century by a circular sawn partition. The rafters are concealed by modern particle-board sheathing applied in the mid-twentieth century.

Outbuilding

A small, one-story, frame outbuilding stands to the north of the main house near the property line with a slate covered pyramidal roof. The one-room building was designed for use as a tool house and storeroom for the yard and garden. Intended to resemble a smokehouse from the early nineteenth century, it features a concrete block foundation, plain weatherboarded walls, a six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash window on the west side, a plain box cornice, and a diagonal-board, batten door on the south front.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Rowe House
City of Fredericksburg, Virginia

The Rowe House, a brick, four-bay, double-pile, side-passage-plan, Federal-style dwelling with some Greek Revival-style details, is located in the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia. It survives as an excellent example of a substantial homestead that has remained in the same family since it was built by George Rowe in 1828. The massive two-story dwelling rests on an English basement and has a two-story, three-level, along with an added service wing that further extended the dwelling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nearly one-acre landscaped property is situated on a curving street in a suburban neighborhood. No early outbuildings survive.

The Rowe House is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as a second-quarter nineteenth-century dwelling that contains important architectural information about domestic life in the Fredericksburg and Stafford County area of central Virginia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The house is an unusually well-preserved example of a successful merchant dwelling embodying regionally important vernacular form and popular details. It features decorative forms derived from pattern books representing the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The architectural integrity of the dwelling is high on the exterior and interior and excellent craftsmanship is exhibited throughout the house through original windows, walls, floors, mantels, and window and door trim. Rowe family members added a one-story brick addition to the east in about 1850 and a one-story rear ell and a bay window on the front in about 1890. Mid-twentieth-century restoration efforts resulted in well-executed, Colonial Revival-style interior finishes in the basement and limited areas of the first floor. The landscaped grounds include a contributing mid-twentieth-century frame outbuilding. The period of significance extends from 1828, the year of the original construction of the house, to circa 1950, when compatible modifications were made to the house and the outbuilding was constructed.

HISTORY NARRATIVE

The Rowe Family Arrives in Fredericksburg

The Federal-style Rowe house was built in 1828 for George Rowe (1793-1866). Rowe was the son of John and Sarah Peyton Rowe, who settled in Stafford County. George Rowe married Lucy Leitch (1798-1863) in 1817. According to his obituary of 1866, Rowe arrived in Fredericksburg about 1816, without educational advantages or capital. He allied himself with the businessmen of the town and worked hard to attract and keep their good opinion. His character was highly regarded, and he was said to have been “animated by a stern resolve for self-elevation, and conquest of the adverse circumstances by which he was surrounded. He devoted himself to work, with an assiduity, and integrity which knew no relaxation, and swiftly commanded public

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confidence.”² The scale of the house and other buildings associated with his business indicate

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Rowe House
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that George Rowe had no difficulty raising capital and that he entered commerce with confidence and vigor.

The land on which the Rowe House was built belonged to Daniel Glascock until 1825. It incorporated built improvements valued by the tax assessor at \$800, the approximate cost of a small frame dwelling or shop. Glascock's property, located "on the turnpike" was divided in 1826 into two tracts, both of 39 poles, and each with \$400 in improvements and deeded to his relatives David and William Glascock. The property had once been part of the large Lewis holdings associated with Kenmore plantation. Now the land was located on the outskirts of the town on an important access road from the west.³

George Rowe purchased both parcels from the Glascocks in 1827 and immediately built a large and imposing house on the property. The new tract, "on the turnpike" immediately gained an additional \$3,300 in improvements for a total of \$4,000 that showed up in the tax lists for 1828. A later photograph [Plates 1 and 2] shows some of the numerous outbuildings that surrounded the house. Undoubtedly these were part of the total value and the house was most likely individually worth between \$2,000 to \$3,000, a typical value for such a substantial brick dwelling.

The location near the city [on Hanover Street parallel to the Fairgrounds in the upper right corner of Plate 4] was undoubtedly what Rowe was looking for as a site for his profitable butchering operation. The site would allow the quartering of animals arriving on the hoof by way of the turnpike and their slaughtering without offense to the neighbors. The closeness to the town of Fredericksburg would allow easy access to markets for the produce of the business and to the necessities of life for the Rowe family, who did not have a large farm property at that time. When the town of Fredericksburg banned hog pens and stiles from the town, they exempted slaughterhouses, since the town had since come to include several.

George Rowe

Newspaper accounts and court records give a glimpse of Rowe's activities during his lifetime. He was listed as a tanner in the 19 Dec. 1832 edition of the Virginia Herald.⁴ His meat market was a busy place: cases involving accounts owed him for meat and owed by him for cattle were filed in the courts during the 1830s.⁵ George Rowe was a devout man and an astute and honest businessman. Soon after moving to Fredericksburg he joined a Baptist congregation and became increasingly respected as a religious leader.⁶

In 1840, Rowe acquired a larger piece of rural land--a 554-acre farm including buildings valued at \$2,000. By 1848 he has accumulated eleven properties in Spotsylvania County. In the 1850

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agricultural census, it appears that Rowe has taken his place among the county's most productive farmers. His 400 acres of improved land was one of the county's largest producers of hay (30

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tons), corn (5,000 bushels), dairy products (a herd of 22 cows), wool (126 pounds), beeswax and honey (100 pounds). He slaughtered 300 animals in the previous year (the largest number of animals slaughtered by a property owner was 710).⁷ His son, Absalom P. Rowe, followed in his father's footsteps as a butcher, well before he was listed as such in the census of 1850. His meat market was within the town limits. As they aged or diminished, the buildings on the turnpike property were reassessed in 1857 and reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000. They went down a further \$250 in 1861-1862.

The map of Fredericksburg prepared in 1878 by the O. W. Gray Co. [Plate 5] gives a good idea of the scope of the Rowe property a decade after George Rowe's death.⁸ The group of buildings and businesses probably bear a close resemblance to its appearance during Rowe's lifetime. The lots owned by Rowe along the extension of Hanover Street that corresponds to the turnpike are visible. In addition the barns, pens, and other structures connected with the butchering business, most of which are visible in the 1864 photograph, were still standing. They include two large, long sheds or barns lining two sides of a yard east of the house and two smaller buildings, one to the rear of the sheds and one close to the road near the house. The road being narrower in the nineteenth century, the house sat further back on the site than it does today.

The total Rowe land holdings extended from the foot of Mayre's Heights to the "Colored Cemetery" near Liberty Street and from William to Hanover streets. Several lots had been subdivided off for small householders. The small stream that ran northeast of the house in earlier years had been improved as a mill race soon after George Rowe and others granted John L. Marye the right to construct it in 1860. It served Maryes mill and a paper mill. The Rowe property is located just below the town spring, a kind of site preferred by tanyards and other businesses that required a ready supply of water. A parcel called "John Hurcamp's Sumac Bark Mills and Tanyard" is located on the northern edge of the Rowe tract on William Street. This industry made use of the skins generated by butchering in the town. Hurcamp, currier and the town's sole tanner, was located in the county as early as 1860, when he processed 3,000 hides, 250 cords of bark and 200 tons of sumac to produce leather and oil.⁹ In 1850, when he had been solely a currier, there were two tanners whose total output involved 2,500 skins, so he likely purchased their operations during the next decade.¹⁰

The outflow from the spring also filled a large new pond, labeled "Rowe's Ice Pond", just behind the property.

George and Lucy Rowe had ten children, of whom eight survived at the time of their deaths. The eldest was Absalom Peyton Rowe (1817-1900), who married Almedia Frances Gayle (born

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1845). The next children, Albert and Sarah, died young. Mary Ann Rowe (1824-1902), who married John M. Luck, was followed by John Gallatin Rowe (1827-1891), husband of Margaret A. Purcell. George Henry Clay Rowe (1830-1878) married Virginia G. Sledd, while his younger

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brother, Robert Semple Rowe (b. 1832) married Lavinia Greenwood. James Montague Rowe (born 1837) lived only for a year. Edgar Cephas Rowe (born 1839), who married Emily Zenobia Sledd, and Rebecca Ella Rowe ((b. 1847) were the last two children.¹¹ Soon after locating to the area George Rowe professed conversion into the Baptist faith. He remained an increasingly active member of the denomination throughout his life. He was elected a deacon, and after many years of leadership, was ordained a minister in 1851, serving many of the churches in the rural country around Fredericksburg.¹²

The census of 1830 shows George Rowe living with seven male and three female white persons, six of whom were children. In addition to Rowe and his wife, both between thirty and forty years of age, there were two other adult whites in the household, one male between thirty and forty, and one female between twenty and thirty. In addition there was one slave woman between 36 and 55, a male slave aged from 24-36, and a young slave boy. The household was rounded out by an apparent free black couple, a man and woman aged between 24 and 36. The indication is that there were as many as four households at the Rowe's property at that time, the George Rowe family consisting of George and Lucy Rowe and their six children, a younger white couple probably employed in the butcher business, a young free black family without children also probably employed in the butcher operation, and a middle-aged cook and her family. There were a total of fifteen persons.

The 1840 census showed the Rowe family ten years later, Rowe and his wife were joined by six children at home. There were two males between twenty and twenty-five. Since one new female and one new male child had been added, at least one of these older males was probably not his son, but was rather an employee. An older white woman, between fifty and sixty, was also present in 1840, possibly a relative. The male slave boy from 1830 had grown and was now between fifteen and twenty-four. There was another young male slave aged 15 to 24, although the older male slave present in 1830 was gone. These two probably worked in the butcher business. The now elderly black female (possibly the cook) was joined by a young woman between fifteen and twenty-four, probably a domestic. The total household population consisted of sixteen persons.

In 1850, the more detailed census records that there were seven whites in the household, George Rowe, age 57, a butcher and farmer, his wife Lucy, age 55, daughter Mary, aged 25, son Clay, a young lawyer, 20, daughters Frances and Ella, aged 15 and 3, and son Cephus, aged 11. Two of their seven surviving children had already moved out of the house.

By 1860, the census showed George Rowe, clergyman, age 67, his wife, Lucy, age 62, Edgar

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Rowe, 21, a student of law, and Ella, age 12. In the Spotsylvania slave census of 1860, the Rowes owned seven persons, an elderly woman of eighty who had appeared in earlier censuses, women aged 60, 28, and 17, and males aged 45, 21, and 8. They lived in three slave houses. By this time George Rowe had largely retired from business and his son, Absalom Peyton Rowe,

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appears to have taken over operation of the family business and agricultural interests.

George Rowe's Christian devotion had prompted him to ordination in the Baptist Church in 1851. In that year, having reached a mature age and assured financial security for his family, he retired from business.¹³ His principal call was to Salem Baptist Church in Spotsylvania County, a congregation housed in a substantial brick building several miles west of the town.¹⁴ Many Baptists in the early nineteenth century possessed and preached personal humility and a deliberate social consciousness. Baptist churches were often composed of mixed races and persons of widely divergent economic, educational, and social circumstances. As the nineteenth century progressed, such racial harmony as was possible was gradually replaced by some degree of suspicion and paternalism. In many churches, the races separated, with more or less acrimony, well before the Civil War.

As Shiloh Baptist Meeting House in Fredericksburg prepared to build a new building in the mid-1850s, the congregation split along racial lines. The slave and free black membership included as many as three-fourths of the congregation. The white portion of the congregation occupied the new building and indicated that the black members would inherit the former building, in return for the fulfillment of the construction pledges of those members toward the new building. As the two congregations gradually separated, with considerable controversy, the white congregation continued to exercise authority over the black.

In the pre-Civil War era, a white minister was often appointed to oversee black congregations, and George Rowe was selected for that duty by the church in 1856: "*Whereas we desire the coloured portion of our church to enjoy the privilege of regular public worship in the house we formerly occupied, therefore, resolved, that the esteemed Brother Elder George Rowe, who has for several months been laboring among them with much acceptance, be requested to continue these labors, and to administer the ordinances of the gospel among them, and also, in conjunction with our pastor, to attend to the order and discipline of the church so long as it may be mutually agreeable to the parties concerned, the coloured brethren being expected to make him such compensation for his services as he and they may agree upon*".¹⁵ George Rowe served the Shiloh Baptist Church as pastor for years, and until the time of his death, a large number of his former congregation were present at his funeral.

The Rowe family endured the bombardment of Fredericksburg in 1862 at the house.¹⁶ The assaults on Maryes Heights surrounded the house during the Battle of Fredericksburg. The house

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was one of the most prominent landmarks in the battle area [Plates 1 and 2]. The house was visited by a Union Reconnaissance squad on 12 Dec. 1862. William Kepler, a member recounted the visit: "The squad crossed over the canal. . . [and] moved to the right oblique to the house that was the furthest out of any, [and] went up stairs where they obtained a full view of the

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battlefield of the morrow; looking out the west window, they saw near at hand the pickets taking good aim and firing on our men near Hanover Street; the window was opened and a volley sent into the flank of "graybacks" lying in a ditch . . there was a lively climbing and rushing to the rear by fifty or more Confederates, who did not stop until they were . . . behind the stone wall . . . at the foot of the hill. After this flank movement there was but little firing back of the city Before leaving the house a noise was heard in an outhouse; the squad marched to the door with guns at an aim; the door was tried, but found locked; Lieutenant Byron Evans, with drawn revolver, demanded a surrender; in a moment the door was burst open with a stick of cord wood; when, lo! Scores of chickens fluttered in every direction."¹⁷

A hospital was set up in the house on the day of battle, December 13. Kepler described the evacuation of the hospital in the face of a Confederate bombardment: "When we returned. . . a solid shot fired from Hazzard's Battery plunged through the house; returning comrades heard the imploring voices, were asked to take hold of doors, boards, or window-blinds, place a wounded man upon each, and take him to the rear. . . soon every wounded man was removed. . . . It was none too soon, for shot and shell came with a vengeance before the last man was carried away; one of the shells plowed through the bed from which Chaplain Warner's son, "Tommy," had just been removed. The house apparently continued to be used as an improvised hospital, for another account from the night of December 13, describes a trip with a surgeon to "a brick mansion. . . where the doctor had a rude table fixed up. . . . I was sent out with a canteen with some whisky in it. . . . I started directly towards a wounded soldier that I could hear very plainly. . . after great exertion and after giving him two or three drinks of whisky, I got the man on my back and crept to where our stretcher bearers were. On taking him to the operating table I found on reaching it, to my sorrow, that Dr. Haven had been killed by a shot fired from the rebels as he was engaged in his sad duties of ministering to our wounded comrades."¹⁸

The house was used again after the fighting in May of 1864. William Reed, a Union surgeon, remembered that "every house or place of shelter within a radius of half a mile of the central building was taken and used as a hospital. In mansions of the grandest proportions, in leaky sheds and outhouses crumbling to decay, in rooms, entries, attics, and upon porticos, our wounded men were laid. We were thankful even for floors to place them upon, and this was without a single blanket to soften a couch which at best was to be one of so much pain. Among these houses was the Rowe mansion, occupied by the owner, an old man, whose sympathies were clearly with the rebel cause. His cellar at night was a rendezvous for the guerillas, who held their secret meetings there. Planning for the recapture of the town with all our wounded there. This house was our headquarters, and we felt that we were living over a powder mine, which at any moment might

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explode. . . . We found here a delicate woman and her little child: it was announced to her that her house must be used as a hospital, two rooms being retained by her. She was asked to prepare some dinner for our party, and was promised that we should cause her as little trouble as possible. The poor woman burst into tears, saying, "Indeed, indeed, sir, I have nothing in the

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house but a little corn meal for myself and this little one;” and her story of extreme poverty was only too true. From affluence and a luxurious home, she had been reduced to this, and, as we afterwards knew, was even suffering for want of food.¹⁹

Absalom Peyton Rowe

The Rowe property succeeded to Absalom Peyton Rowe (1817-1900). A. P. Rowe lived in a large brick house on the heights near the family home on Hanover Street. He married Almedia Frances Gayle in the mid-1840s. They produced five children, George Thomson Rowe (1848-1883), Maurice Broaddus Rowe (1850-1925), Ida Gayle (1852-1893), Josiah Porter (1855-1933), Absalom Prescott (1859-1925), and Alvin Tabb (1869-1955).²⁰ He, like his father and two of his sons, Maurice B. Rowe and Josiah Porter Rowe, was a prominent farmer and butcher. The meat business continued into the early twentieth century at a site in the downtown area. The farm was the base for a purebred cattle breeding operation. In 1885, a business directory listed Maurice B. Rowe as one of the city’s two butchers.²¹ By 1889, Absalom Peyton Rowe, mayor of Fredericksburg, and two sons, Josiah P. and Maurice B., were in business together as M. B. Rowe and Co., breeders of improved livestock. Maurice Rowe, called a greengrocer, was living on Maryes Heights, while A. P. and Josiah were at the family property on Hanover near Fair Street (street numbers had not yet been assigned).²² In 1892, A. Peyton Rowe was still mayor. His sons, A. Prescott Rowe, Jr., and Josiah Porter Rowe, lived with him at 801 Hanover Street. Josiah Porter Rowe was listed as the proprietor of M. B. Rowe and Co. Maurice B. Rowe was no longer listed.

Later Rowe Family Members

The next generation of Rowes at the house on Hanover Street is the family of Josiah Porter Rowe (1855-1933). He married Julia Cullen Taliaferro (1859-1951). Their children were William Francis Rowe (1888-1976), George Davis Rowe (1889-1978), Charles Spurgeon Rowe (1891-1915), Hansford Herndon Rowe (1893-1945), Josiah Pollard Rowe (1894-1949), Reginald Thompson Rowe (1897-1951), Taylor Prescott Rowe (1901-1981), and Julia Mason Rowe (1903-1986). As these children grew up and moved away from the house, finally it became the home of Julia T. Rowe. Her son Josiah Pollard Rowe (1894-1949) and his wife, Genevieve Sinclair Bailey, lived there with her. Josiah Pollard died in 1949, and his wife succeeded his mother as principal resident there for the next half century. She redecorated and rehabilitated the old house after the death of her mother-in-law, removing added walls and adding a stylish, modern kitchen, updated bathrooms, and new decorative elements in keeping with the house’s

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detailing. The current owners, Josiah Pollard Rowe and his wife, Anne Martin Wilson, lived in the new basement apartment in the house for several years after their marriage. A photograph from 1932 shows the appearance of the house at that time [Plate 3].

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in the Federal style 1828, with an addition in the same style circa 1850, the Rowe House represents an unusually well-preserved example of the side-passage plan, a regionally widespread domestic house form. The house uses interior and exterior details that are associated with the Federal and Greek Revival styles, fashionable in the United States from around 1800 until 1860. The Federal-style details include the ornamental transom lights, the semi-circular east gable window, and much of the elaborate interior woodwork. The Greek Revival-style details include the plain but elegant architectural elements on the façade, such as the square porch pilasters.

Original Construction of the House

The dwelling that Rowe built was to contain a large and prosperous family. The square bulk of the house loomed above the Swift Run Gap or Orange Turnpike. The two-story house had a raised English basement on the front and a double-pile or two-room-deep floor plan. The basement, built into the steep bank on the north side of the road, had two exterior doors and contained finished rooms on the front and partially finished rooms, including a kitchen on the rear. The first floor consisted of two main rooms served by twin chimneys on the east end and a long passage at the west end containing an elegant stairway that reached to the attic. The front rooms of the basement may have contained rooms associated with the butchering business, since there was no principal stair to the basement from the passage above, but the rear rooms with whitewashed, exposed ceiling joists, appear to have housed the original kitchen.

Often the plan of an historic house contains significant clues to its original function. This is true at the Rowe House, where room hierarchy and use is indicated by the elaboration of the ornament applied to each room and by the circulation patterns allowed or encouraged by the original floor plan.

The rear room on the first floor was altered in the twentieth century. An original or very early stair extended to the basement kitchen near the center of this room. The stair and an adjacent cross partition likely divided the room into two, a larger room at the east end and a smaller, unheated room like the room on the floor above. Evidence of the cross partition is likely visible under the added flooring, but the opening for the stair is fully visible in the basement. There is, however, no evidence that the stair wasn't added when the kitchen was displaced from the main basement to the east wing. This possibility would mean that the original house would have more

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or less resembled its current form and that the nesting of an otherwise inaccessible stair and room within the north first-floor room would not have been an original feature.

The major rooms on the first floor each had direct access to the exterior, and, even more significantly and unusually, the passage did not give direct access to the rear range of rooms,

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Rowe House
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making it necessary to process through the main room to get to the rear room. The simplest explanation of the use of the house is that the first-floor rooms were a parlor in front and a general living/dining room in the rear. Access from a basement kitchen was on the exterior to the door in the north side of the dining room or through a porch outside the early door now giving access to the north wing. The business of the owner was conducted from the two rooms in the front of the basement, also with no direct access to the first floor. The stair would have been added when the new wing was added to the east to replace some lost connection or to add some new function that required direct access to the basement. The second story would have contained the master bedroom. The new east wing likely contained a new dining room, service room, or office, since both rooms opened to the exterior on the north porch. Since the office could have relocated from the front rooms of the basement to the new wing, new uses for that area, such as a bedroom, may have required an interior stair.

The usual form for kitchens in the antebellum era was in the basement or in a detached building. Dining rooms, if provided, were sometimes located in the basement, where it was cooler and sometimes on the main floor, often in a secondary wing or ell near the kitchen. If there was a family chamber or dining room in the basement, it was reached by a well-made interior staircase and the room was fully finished, while if the kitchens and other service areas were in the basement, they were most often reached via exterior doors on each floor. Main-floor dining rooms often had exterior doors for easy access to and from the exterior for slaves. The second-best room on the main floor was often the bedroom of the owner and his wife, and was often used as an all-weather sitting room for the family as well.

A good parallel for the room layout of the Rowe House might be the domestic arrangement recorded in the 1859 inventory of the estate of Samuel Alsop. Alsop had four rooms on the main floor of his large dwelling. These consisted of an elegantly furnished parlor, a sparsely appointed hall (passage), a chamber that contained, in addition to a bedstead, wardrobe, and bureau, a lounge and eight chairs, and a nursery. The upper floor contained four numbered bed chambers, while the "cellar" contained a well-appointed dining room, what appears to have been a small dining room, and possibly a kitchen and dairy.

There are several alternate planning scenarios that might explain the various factors at work here, particularly if the basement stair is shown to be original. As observed above, the number of doors into the second-best first-floor room, including one or possibly two from the exterior, makes it seem more likely that it would have served as a dining room or office rather than as the master

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bedroom. Thus, the interior basement stair could have given direct access from the kitchen to the dining room, without the usual exterior transit typical in antebellum days or the basement. The lack of access from the passage to the rear range of rooms and the existence of the separate basement stair suggests that the functions of the house were complex and related in some way to a division of the interior into precincts related to specific family or work-related factors. The

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interior almost seems to have been divided into two households. Census records, however, do not indicate that there was more than one household resident at the house. The use of the back rooms or of the basement as business-related areas seems the best explanation, even if it does not answer all the questions.

A newspaper story in the Fredericksburg Daily Star for 24 July 1896, indicated that Absalom P. Rowe, in repairing the columns of the family home, had found them to be in fairly good condition. They had been added to the house 48 years before (in about 1844). The columns had come from the old building of St. George's Episcopal Church, which had been demolished and rebuilt by 1848. The porch, first built in 1828, must have been raised to a full two stories or otherwise altered in a substantial manner in the 1840s. The paneled pilasters against the front wall may be the remaining evidence of the added columns.

Service Wing Addition

A new east wing was added in the late antebellum era probably to augment the service functions required by the large Rowe family. The basement contained two rooms, including a kitchen. These opened onto a semi-subterranean service porch. The two upper-floor rooms probably served as a new dining room, bedroom, or office, since both rooms opened to the exterior on the north porch.

Rear Ell Addition

A one-story frame ell was added to the north in the late nineteenth century. The room contained a dining room and opened off the north room in the main house. In the early twentieth century, this addition was expanded to the east with the addition of a new kitchen, pantry, and first-floor bathroom. The north porch of the brick service wing was enclosed to serve as an extra bedroom and a porch extended along the east side of the kitchen. At the same time a polygonal bay was added to the front of the east service wing to provide a bright interior area for cold-weather use.

Mid-twentieth-century Alterations

Modernizations of the house in the mid-twentieth century resulted in a house with several apartments, each provided with porches, kitchens, and bathrooms. The basement was reworked to contain a furnace room in the rear and an apartment in the front part of the main house and in

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the service wing. The apartment was provided with up-to-date knotty pine paneling and Williamsburg-style woodwork, including a new mantel in the old kitchen in the east wing (now a bedroom). The first floor of the service wing also became an apartment, with a new kitchen and bathroom in the east end. The north ell kitchen, pantry, and bathroom were renovated in an up-to-date 1950s Moderne style with a pass-through and a curve-ended built-in breakfast table. The breakfast nook was characteristically set into an added metal-sash corner window. The main

house was upgraded, with a new archway between the passage and south room. The arch and the new arched bookcase to the north of the fireplace were given elaborate modillion trim matching the original archway between the north and south sections of the passage, with pointed ovolo moldings and a row of Gothic modillions along the outer edge of the arch casing. The principal first-floor rooms were also given an elaborate dentil cornice. A modern bathroom was inserted into the northwest chamber on the second floor.

Archaeology Potential

The Rowe House and the surrounding property have the potential to yield valuable archaeological information about the domestic, commercial, and agricultural context of the region and the profession of butcher over a seventy-year period when the land around the house housed slaughter houses, animal pens, and other related secondary structures. While no foundations have been identified, it is likely that subsurface features remain undisturbed on the large urban lot. In addition, the Civil War-era activities around the house have likely left significant subsurface deposits.

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Rowe Family Genealogical Chart, Jeanette Rowe Cadwallender.

Still Picture Records, Composite of photographs of the Fredericksburg Battlefield including the
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundaries for the Rowe House property correspond to the boundaries of lot 134-F-801 on the accompanying tax map of Fredericksburg, Virginia, the tax assessor's office of the City of Fredericksburg.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were selected to include the historic setting of the Rowe House. The .93 acres were conveyed to George Rowe by David and William Glascock in 1827 as cited in the 1826-27 Spotsylvania County Land Books.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are common to:

PROPERTY: Rowe House

LOCATION: City of Fredericksburg, Virginia

VDHR FILE NO.: 111-0107

PHOTOGRAPHER: Gibson Worsham

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: December 2007

ALL IMAGES STORED AT: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond,
Virginia.

VIEW OF: Façade, looking south
PHOTO 1 of 17

VIEW OF: East elevation, looking west
PHOTO 2 of 17

VIEW OF: North elevation, looking south
PHOTO 3 of 17

VIEW OF: Northwest elevation, looking southeast
PHOTO 4 of 17

VIEW OF: First-floor Front Room looking Northeast
PHOTO 5 of 17

VIEW OF: First-floor Rear Room looking Northeast
PHOTO 6 of 17

VIEW OF: First-floor Stair Hall looking Northwest
PHOTO 7 of 17

VIEW OF: Second-floor Front Room looking Northeast
PHOTO 8 of 17

VIEW OF: Garret, looking North
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VIEW OF: Basement Front Room, looking Northeast
PHOTO 10 of 17

VIEW OF: Basement Front Room in Service Wing looking Northeast
PHOTO 11 of 17

VIEW OF: First-Floor Front Room Arch Detail
PHOTO 12 of 17

VIEW OF: First-Floor Front Room Casing Detail
PHOTO 13 of 17

VIEW OF: First-Floor Stair Hall Door Detail
PHOTO 14 of 17

VIEW OF: First-Floor Stair Detail
PHOTO 15 of 17

VIEW OF: South Elevation Column Detail
PHOTO 16 of 17

VIEW OF: Outbuilding
PHOTO 17 of 17

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ENDNOTES

¹ Fredericksburg Daily Star 24 July 1896.

² Fredericksburg Ledger 26 Jan. 1866.

³ Spotsylvania County Land Books, 1826-27, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴ Mary Washington University Fredericksburg Research Resources website.

⁵ Spotsylvania Circuit Court Records, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁶ Fredericksburg Ledger 26 Jan. 1866.

⁷ US Census of Agriculture, 1850. Library of Virginia. Richmond, VA.

⁸ Gray's New Map of Fredericksburg, 1878. Drawn from Special Surveys. O. W. Gray & Son, Publishers, Philadelphia, 28 March 1878. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁹ US Census of Manufacturing, 1860, Schedule 5.

- ¹⁰ US Census of Manufacturing, 1850, Schedule 5.
- ¹¹ Rowe Family Geneological Chart, Jeanette Rowe Cadwallender.
- ¹² Obituary, Fredericksburg Ledger 26 Jan. 1866.
- ¹³ Fredericksburg Ledger, 26 Jan. 1866.
- ¹⁴ Jett, Dora. Minor Sketches of Major Folk. Richmond: Old Dominion Press, 1928.
- ¹⁵ Minutes, Fredericksburg Baptist Church, 3 February 1856, Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) Website.
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- ¹⁹ William Howell Reed, Hospital Life in the Army of the Potomac, Boston, William V. Spencer, 1866.
- ²⁰ Family Geneological Chart, Jeanette Rowe Cadwallender.
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