NPS Form 10-900
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OMB No. 1024-0018

VLR 6/8/6
NRHP 11/9/6

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Aviator

other names/site number VDHR 002-5073

2. Location

street & number 575 Alderman Road — not for publication N/A

city or town Charlottesville — vicinity X

state Virginia code VA county Albemarle code 003 zip code 22903

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Pan 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of certifying official — October 12, 2006 Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of commenting official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply):

___ private
___ public-local
_X_ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box):

___ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
_X_ object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
1	0	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: RECREATION & CULTURE Sub: Works of Art (Statue)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

Cat: RECREATION & CULTURE Sub: Works of Art (Statue)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions):

LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS

Materials (Enter categories from instructions):

foundation: Pedestal: Marble
roof:
walls:
other: Sculpture: (Bronze)

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

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.

X 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.

X B removed from its original location.

__ C a birthplace or a grave.

__ D a cemetery.

__ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

X 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) ART

Period of Significance 1919

Significant Dates 1919: Unveiling of statue

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Borglum,Gutzon, Sculptor

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 #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

X State Historic Preservation Office

__ Other State agency

__ Federal agency

__ Local government

X University

__ Other

Name of repository: University of Virginia Special Collections; University of Virginia, Fiske Kimball Library; Virginia Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1)	17	718899	4212792

___ See continuation sheet.

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 Susan Smead, Architectural Historian and Taryn Harrison, Historic Preservationist
organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date 4/17/06
street & number 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone 804.367.2323
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

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 University of Virginia, Office of the Architect (Contact: Mary V. Hughes, University Landscape Architect)
street & number The Rotunda, S.E. Wing P.O. Box 400304 telephone 434.924.6015
city or town Charlottesville state VA zip code 22904-0304

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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

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 Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 “C” Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

Summary Description

American Renaissance sculptor, John Gutzon Borglum (1867-1941), primarily known for his monumental sculptural program at Mount Rushmore, designed "The Aviator" memorial sculpture located on the Central Grounds of the University of Virginia, in Albemarle County, Virginia, and surrounded by the City of Charlottesville. The bronze statue was commissioned in honor of University alumnus, James Rogers McConnell's heroism and courage in World War I. The memorial statue consists of a male nude standing with arms outstretched with wings attached and rests on an inscribed marble granite pedestal base. The Aviator is the only memorial of its kind at the University of Virginia, thus reinforcing McConnell's noble war efforts and the recognition by his peers and the University during a pivotal time in American history. "The Aviator" is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period, for representing the work of a master, and because it possesses high artistic values. It is also eligible under Criterion Consideration B since it was repositioned with the design and completion of the brick walkways and more defined landscape area.

Detailed Description

The Aviator statue is sited at the terminus of a long brick-paved walkway adjacent to Alderman Library and Clemons Library on the Central Grounds at the University of Virginia in Albemarle County, Virginia. The statue rises above the adjacent open plaza and nearby playing fields serving as a focal point of the area. Academic buildings surround the statue and picturesque views frame its backdrop including Lewis Mountain and Lewis Mountain House. The statue was originally installed near its present location on a grassy knoll on axis with a pathway from the Rotunda where it was surrounded by trees and shrubs. As the University campus evolved, the original lush setting gave way to a more defined hardscape consisting of walkways with benches, and lampposts. The statue was more than likely repositioned to accommodate the addition of new buildings. Although the statue has been relocated, the siting is very similar to the original location and still frames the majestic view of mountains beyond.

The Aviator statue was commissioned in 1917 by Edwin A. Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, and was delivered to the University's Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds on April 10, 1919[1] prior to the public unveiling ceremony held on June 11, 1919.[2] John Gutzon Borglum, a well-known American sculptor was commissioned to design the statue as a "memorial of heroic conduct, and a work of art, embodying the new form of valor…"[3] in honor of University student James Rogers McConnell who was killed in allied aerial combat on March 19, 1917 while fighting for France.

Gutzon Borglum was born in St. Charles, Idaho, but his formative years were spent in the western United States. His academic training included classes at St. Mary's College in Kansas, Mark Hopkins Art Institute in San Francisco, and international training at Academie Julian in France. Academie Julian educated many leading modern artists and utilized drawing and painting of the male nude as foundation for training. Borglum settled in New York upon returning from his travels abroad and worked on a variety of sculptural commissions. A significant exhibit in 1904 for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, gained Borglum public attention. His subsequent works exuded similar expressive forms that some critics compared to George Grey Barnard and Rodin.[4] A majority of Borglum's work possessed a curious monumental expression even those modest in size. His most acclaimed work came after the Aviator including the presidential carvings at Mount Rushmore and his work at Stone Mountain, Georgia. Borglum was known for his "…quick temper and outspoken manner, and his sharp criticism of most contemporary American sculpture alienated him from the leading sculptors who clustered around the National Sculpture Society."[5]

The Aviator sculpture is twelve feet high and eight feet six inches wide and rests on a Tennessee marble granite pedestal base that is approximately four feet deep. The statue consists of an athletic male nude with his feet placed shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent and arms outstretched supporting a pair of wings. The statue's head is covered with an aviator's helmet and the

waist

is adorned with a belt holding a knife signifying combat. The figure stands on a semi-round rough textured surface representing the earth, bearing the signature of Gutzon Borglum. The statue parallels Icarus, a figure in Greek mythology who was imprisoned with his father Daedalus behind the walls of the Labyrinth by King Minos. Icarus' father built a pair of wings for his son and warned him not to fly close to the sun or the wax that held the feathers together would melt. Icarus forgot the warning because he was so thrilled with the ability to fly, which resulted in the failure of the feathers and his subsequent death as he fell to the sea.[6]

The entire statue is supported on an octagonal marble pedestal base produced by a Tennessee marble company and shipped to the University after the statue's public unveiling. Two sides of the pedestal base bare relief work of WWI era airplanes that appear to float against the gray marble background paralleling flight among the clouds. One side is inscribed with the following "Soaring Like An Eagle Into New Heavens Of Valor And Devotion", while the back inscription states,

James Rogers McConnell.
Born March 14th 1887.
Student. University of Virginia.
Volunteer in the Army of France.
Sergeant. Aviator Lafayette. Escadrille.
Decorated with the Cross of War.
Killed in battle in the air. March 19th 1917.

The proliferation of American bronze statuary in the second half of the 19th century resulted from advances in bronze casting technology.[7] Economic security, stability, and national patriotism ensued as the bronze casting industry prospered giving rise to America's artistic independence from Europe.[8] Large foundries were formed throughout the United States who met the high demand for bronze sculpture in public settings. Bronze was an ideal medium for outdoor sculpture due to its hardiness and resilience. The Gorham Manufacturing Company in Providence, Rhode Island, ranked among the top producers of silverworks and also produced bronze statuary for well-known artists including Saint Gaudens and Daniel Chester French.[9] Several of Borglum's works were cast by the Gorham Manufacturing Company including the Mares of Diomedes (1902) and John Ruskin (1903). It is possible that the Aviator was cast there too. More than likely, the Aviator was cast using the lost-wax casting method that became popular after 1900. Unlike sand-casting method, lost-wax casting uses a gelatin mold that provides more precise details such as texture and it also allows the completion of complex programs in large single piece formats.[10]

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The sculpture known as "The Aviator", a bronze figural work located on the University of Virginia's Central Grounds, was executed in 1918-1919 by the American Renaissance era sculptor Gutzon Borglum, and erected in 1919 to commemorate a former university student, James Rogers McConnell, killed in air combat in France during World War I. McConnell volunteered to serve France before the United States had entered the war, and his expression of self-sacrifice was memorialized by the university to stand as an example of university ideals and to inspire future generations of university students. "The Aviator" embodies hallmarks of the American Renaissance era, combining the European artistic tradition with Classical motifs and an American theme. It is significant in the area of art with a period of significance of 1919, and is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period, for representing the work of a master, and because it possesses high artistic values.

Historic Analysis

"The Aviator" was sculpted by the American Renaissance period sculptor Gutzon Borglum in 1918, and erected at the University of Virginia in 1919 as a memorial to James Rogers McConnell. McConnell attended the university from 1907 to 1910, pursing the study of law. He volunteered to serve France during World War I, before the United States became involved in the war, and died on March 19, 1917 in aerial combat with two German planes. McConnell's service and self-sacrifice were seen at the time of his death to embody the ideals of patriotism, freedom and liberty, and the pursuit of these ideals by the initiative-taking individual. His actions were regarded as an example for future generations to aspire to, and were seen as an embodiment of ideals upon which the university was founded and sought to instill in its students. "The Aviator" was intended to be not only a memorial to a popular, well-known member of the University of Virginia's student body, but a tangible representation of ideals essential to the university's history and mission, and an inspiration to future generations of students.

James Rogers McConnell was born on March 14, 1887, in Chicago, Illinois, to Sarah Rogers McConnell and Samuel P. McConnell, a lawyer in Chicago from 1872 to 1889 and Judge of the Cook County Circuit Court from 1889 to 1894. Other than Chicago, James Rogers McConnell also lived in New York City before becoming a student at the University of Virginia in 1907. Following two years in the College, he spent a year in the Law School then withdrew from studies in the spring of 1910.[11] McConnell was active in several societies while at the university, with memberships in the Secret Seven Society, Beta Theta Pi, Theta Nu Epsilon, O.W.L., T.I.L.K.A., the New York Club, and the German Club, and served as King of the Hot Foot Society, Editor-in-Chief of Corks and Curls, and President of the Aero Club. Recollections of his personality portray a lively, active, and somewhat non-conforming individual: he was noted for "bonhomie and bagpipe-playing", College Topics referred to him as "a 'man of originality'", and a fellow American volunteer fighting in France remembered him as "a dreamer" whom "every one loved."[12]

Following his departure from the University of Virginia, McConnell became involved in business ventures in New York and in Carthage, North Carolina, where he served as a land and industrial agent for the Randolph and Cumberland Railroad.[13] At the time of his death, his father was also residing in Carthage (by this time his parents had separated and Sarah Rogers McConnell resided in Seabreeze, Florida).[14] In January 1915, accompanied by a friend, McConnell set sail from New York for France to enlist in military service. Initially he served as a driver in Section "Y" of the American Ambulance in the area around Pont-a-Mousson and the Bois-le-Pretre, in the midst of heavy fighting on the Western Front. McConnell's work for the ambulance service earned him the Croix de Guerre for conspicuous bravery.[15]

Desiring to do more for the French cause, McConnell applied for admission to the French aeroplane corps, and entered the aviation school at Pau late in 1915. With him at the school were three other American volunteers, Victor Chapman, Kiffin Yates

Rockwell, and Norman Prince. On April 20, 1916 McConnell joined the newly formed American Escadrille, later renamed the Lafayette Escadrille, which was stationed at its base in Luxeuilles-Bains, and was one of the first four of the seven original

Escadrille pilots to arrive. In May 1916 he took part in the squadron's first patrol, then in actions at Verdun against the German offensive and in Allied counter offensives in July and August 1916. McConnell was promoted to the rank of sergeant on July 1, 1916.[16]

On March 19, 1917, in aerial combat with two German planes, McConnell was killed near the village of Flavy-le-Martel, Aisne, over the Somme battlefields. He and another pilot were engaged in a firefight with German planes; when his comrade was wounded and withdrew from the conflict, McConnell continued the fight and was shot down. McConnell was the last American pilot of the squadron to perish during World War I under the French flag, as the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917.

McConnell was among many from the United States who volunteered to fight for France during World War I. However, in a speech made by Armistead M. Dobie at the dedication of "The Aviator" and its acceptance by the university, Dobie noted that McConnell was "among the first, if not the first of the students of the University to tender his services to the allied cause in the autumn of 1914", and "he was the first of the sons of the University to die in battle."[17] His decision to take personal action to aid the French and his death in combat made a strong impact on the university community: McConnell's career as a student there had left its mark, and he had become a spokesperson for the experiences of Americans volunteering to aid the French war effort through his published writings. Letters that McConnell wrote while serving with the American Ambulance on the Western Front were published in the September 15, 1915 issue of The Outlook. He also authored articles for the World's Work magazine while convalescing from back injuries sustained in a landing accident near Bar-le-Duc in September 1916, which were published in November 1916 and March 1917. These articles were again published as the book, Flying for France, in April 1917 soon after McConnell's death.[18] McConnell's decision to volunteer for France was described after his death as a decision to take personal initiative for human ideals, in spite of national reluctance on the part of the United States to enter into the war. He was remembered as "a fallen defender of human rights, a sacrifice for larger liberties and world peace." The commitment of McConnell and his comrades to the French cause evoked recognition of the French role in the American Revolutionary War, reflected in the name of the Lafayette Escadrille, which he helped found. World War I saw the first use of flight for fighting, and the solitary combat role of the aviator, taking on an enemy in a new, daring kind of machinery, was seen as fitting for McConnell's adventuresome, pioneering personality.[19]

A group of McConnell's friends and university alumni stepped forward to encourage the university to erect a memorial to McConnell less than a week after his death. These efforts were supported by the university's first president, Dr. Edwin Anderson Alderman, who had known McConnell personally. President Alderman became directly involved in the erection of a tribute to McConnell on university grounds and managed the undertaking throughout its duration.[20]

An early suggestion to erect a commemoration to McConnell on university grounds came also from McConnell's brother-in-law Mitchell D. Follensbee in a letter to President Alderman on March 25, 1918. Alderman's response on March 28th stated "We want to place a memorial on our grounds, or in our halls, to him", and noted that the university community supported this plan, stating "our students and his friends have the same feeling." The tribute's form was envisioned as something substantial: Alderman explained that "it should take, perhaps, a finer form that a mere modest plate." From the first Alderman and other supporters of the project felt that McConnell's career and his commitment to the ideals that led him to volunteer for French military service should be celebrated in a manner that would uphold him as an example to future generations of university students. The sculptor soon chosen to execute a tribute to McConnell is mentioned in Alderman's letter, and clearly was selected early on. Alderman proposed that "Some real artist of the type of St. Gauden, if he were alive, or French, or Borglum, or Taft, knowing the circumstances of his [McConnell's] death and life should create something for us that would carry a spiritual and patriotic appeal to generations of youth yet to be trained here." Funds began to come forward quickly, mostly unsolicited, from alumni, friends, and students, who took it upon themselves to enlist Gutzon Borglum to execute the commission; they made the offer in the presence of President Alderman and Borglum, and the commission was granted to Borglum in the summer of 1917.[21]

President Alderman's interest in the project to memorialize McConnell at the university included suggestions to Borglum about what form a figural representation might take: in March 1918, while asking Borglum to send "some photographic or some representation of the progress you have made, or the present concept in your mind about the McConnell matter", Alderman included with his letter "a printed paper which has to me interesting suggestiveness. I have sometimes thought that perhaps a greater artistic achievement would be attained if he were represented idealistically in his uniform, with background showing the air and the machine, etc., and not attempt a complete new figure." Alderman qualified his advice by noting that "All this, however, is mere amateur talk, and in the meantime I would like to see some representation of what you have worked out."[22] At this point several months had passed since Borglum was selected to create the memorial, and it is not clear if his intentions for its design had yet been developed. Fund raising continued to support the cost of its realization. President Alderman communicated the university's intention to erect a tribute to McConnell to McConnell's mother, Sarah Rogers McConnell, on October 18, 1917, and noted that fund raising for this purpose was ongoing. He wrote, "We are engaged in raising a considerable sum, around $5,000, to place here a really handsome and beautiful memorial to your boy. This money is now practically secured." Alderman further emphasized the high standing of the artist commissioned to carry out the work: "A very great American artist, Gutzon Borglum, has been given the task of making the memorial. Borglum's Lincoln at Newark, and some of his work at the Metropolitan Museum, are regarded as among the best things in American art." The basic concept for the tribute was in place at this time, as Alderman wrote to Sarah McConnell, "This memorial will be an outdoor structure of bronze, and I anticipate that it will have great beauty." At that point, Borglum was also expected to visit the university to discuss plans with Alderman, who explained to Sarah McConnell, "I am to see the first plans of it tomorrow, when Mr. Borglum comes here to look the ground over."[23]

Correspondence about the planning and design of "The Aviator" suggests that there were disappointing delays in its realization; these culminated in last minute problems with the arrival and installation of the sculpture, later lamented by Alderman as unnecessary given the two year time frame between awarding the commission to Borglum and commemoration of McConnell with the unveiling of "The Aviator" in June 1919. In March 1919 Borglum provided Alderman with "another" photograph of "The Aviator", and noted that "a perfect casting of the figure has been cast in bronze and will be delivered on time, as originally planned." It appears that Alderman's intention was to have the sculpture unveiled in April 1919. The university received the sculpture on April 10, 1919, without a base. Due to inability to erect the work without the base and remaining uncertainty about exactly where to install the sculpture, plans for installation that month were revised, with formal unveiling and dedication to be postponed until the next opportunity, at ceremonies for the university Finale on June 11, 1919. Alderman wrote to Borglum, "Dr. Lambeth, our Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, reports to me that a box from the Gorham people . . . has just arrived. There is no pedestal accompanying it. Of course, it would be impossible to have any unveiling of it on Saturday, as it would not be possible to set it up. It is a very heavy object, and we cannot be moving it to and fro. Two questions remain to be settled, and immediately: First, the pedestal must be suitably inscribed, and we must have knowledge of when it will be received. Secondly, we must decide precisely the location of the statue. I am unwilling to take that responsibility alone." Alderman continued, "It would seem that the next best time for its formal dedication and the ceremonies attending it would be at our Finale, June 11. The question of the location, however, is foremost."[24]

Alderman's appeal to Borglum resulted in a visit to the university by the sculptor four days after the date of his letter, on April 14, 1919. The statue's site was finally selected. The chosen spot met with Alderman's enthusiastic approval, as he wrote to his friend W.W. Fuller, "It is the place of all places for the statue." The selected location was on a green knoll beyond a low spot adjacent to the Jeffersonian Lawn where Alderman Library now stands, rising in the vista from the path leading from the Rotunda to the West Range. Alderman had also peeked through the crate containing the sculpture, as yet unboxed, and from what he could see, it was "very beautifully done, and the bronze tint . . . very exquisite." Alderman's concerns focused at this point on a base for the statue, and its receipt in time for the unveiling on June 11. Borglum assured him that the upper part of the

base was complete and ready to deliver, although the lower part, while not difficult to finish, needed to be readied. Alderman explained to Fuller that "A Tennessee firm is handling it, as it is of Tennessee marble." The university moved ahead to make preparations, as Alderman noted, "Dr Lambeth is to lay the concrete foundation [for the statue] immediately", apparently loosing no time once the site for the

statue was finally determined. Alderman put his trust in Borglum to meet the deadline, stating, "Borglum swears that he will see that the pedestal is here at least ten days before June 11, - that is to say, June 1. I shall go ahead with the program, and consider the matter in all my preparations as a fait accompli."[25] Borglum followed up on his visit to Charlottesville with a letter to Alderman, stating that he had ". . . ordered the stone forward and am fixing the 20th day of May as the last day for shipment. That allows ten days to reach Virginia after it is on the cars - - arriving there the 1st of June - - and that allows eleven days to set it. They ought to do it in five days, easily."[26]

Between Borglum's April 14th visit to the university and early May, decisions were made about the inscription for the base of "The Aviator". Alderman reviewed blueprints for the inscription, including lettering style, and left to Borglum placement of the "fact inscription" and what he termed the "sentimental inscription", which read, "'Soaring Like an Eagle Into New Heavens Of Valor And Devotion", on the east and west sides of the base.[27] By May 21st, President Alderman grew apprehensive about arrival of the base for "The Aviator" in time for the June 11th unveiling ceremony. In a letter to Miss Eugenia Flagg, Borglum's secretary, he wrote, "As the time approaches for our public ceremonies connected with the unveiling of the McConnell statue, and having heard nothing from you concerning the progress of the work on the base, we grow more and more uneasy." Eugenia Flagg responded by telegram on May 22nd that "Contractor informs me base about completed will ship very shortly." In a letter of the same date to Alderman, Flagg reassured him that while Borglum was detained on business in Cuba, "He told me this morning that there was no doubt but that the stone would be there in plenty of time", and that she would "do all in my power to prevent another disappointment."[28]

In spite of the efforts of Borglum's secretary, completion and receipt of the base for "The Aviator" and preparation of the statue for unveiling were fraught with problems that Alderman later described as "terrible fretful and nerve racking." On May 27th, Flagg notified Alderman that she had learned from the contractor that the base had not yet been inscribed, and therefore it had to be shipped to the university incomplete. Alderman expressed his regret but noted that the base should be sent without inscription, rather than again postponing the ceremony for the sculpture's unveiling. He also requested the presence of Borglum in time to set and secure the statue upon its base, since "no instructions, nor any specification, and no information concerning the anchoring of the statue upon the pedestal" had been provided. Flagg informed Alderman on June 4th, a week before the planned unveiling, that Borglum could not yet leave Cuba but would send someone in his place to superintend setting of the base. She included directions and a section sketch for construction of the foundation for the statue, although the university had prepared the foundation for the statue several weeks earlier when it was received.[29]

Problems attending preparation of the statue for the unveiling culminated in an inability to attach the statue to the base in time for the ceremony. Alderman later described the preparations to his friend W.W. Fuller:

> The stone arrived here Sunday, the 8th. It was hauled up to the site during Sunday and work begun on it and carried forward as far into the night as possible. Of course, all foundations, etc., needed had been long ago prepared. There was no carving on the stone. On Monday a carver appeared, sent from New York, who succeeded in getting the short inscription carved by about five o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday. He also was the only Borglum representative with reference to setting up the statue. Dr. Lambeth was quite unwilling to take responsibility for that. There was no way in the world to make it secure. Therefore, it was simply set up on the pedestal. A strong wind could have pushed it off. The carver was not at all in favor of leaving it that way, even for the ceremony, but proposed that we unveil a hideous thing bound around with greasy ropes and held up by ancient derricks. We took the responsibility, and by frantic work the debris, etc., was gotten out of sight, and . . . the occasion went off handsomely. Before the crowd had gotten out of sight, props were put up against the statue so that it could not be blown down by wind, and there they will have to stay until Mr. Borglum's people come to set it as it should be set upon the pedestal.[30]

Alderman's disappointment was apparently expressed to Eugenia Flagg, who explained in a letter of June 11, 1919 to Alderman that "It is not surprising at all that a figure of the proportions and composition of the "AVIATOR" should at the last moment have to be reinforced in some such manner. And I think everyone concerned is to be congratulated that the unveiling could go through

on schedule - - when I contemplate the enormous difficulties we have met and overcome." She continued, "Mr. Borglum is in no way at fault because the foundations were delayed. Everything that could be done to hurry the matter was set in motion by him before he left for Cuba," and noted that he expected to be in Cuba for only a few days, but that he was in Cuba "on a commission that means vital things to him - - his bread and butter, in fact."[31] As "The Aviator" was one of Borglum's smaller commissions, it is possible that he gave higher priority to other more financially rewarding assignments, which may have contributed to the difficulties and delays experienced by the university in getting the work executed and installed.[32]

In spite of these problems, Alderman described the unveiling ceremony as a "distinguished success", well attended, at which "speeches and ceremonies were exceedingly fine." Further, he noted that the statue was well-received, stating that ". . . everybody that I have seen, especially those that I did not expect to like it, are positively enthusiastic about the beauty and dignity of the work itself. There is unanimous agreement that there exists on the grounds of this University a great work of art and a noble conception of the Flyer." Alderman himself could not be present, so the university's receipt of the statue was handled by Major Armistead M. Dobie and a presentation address was given by a former classmate of McConnell's, Reverend Robert Williams. Following the ceremony, on June 14, 1919, Borglum's representative Mr. McMahon attended to fastening the statue to the base.[33]

John Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum was in many ways a logical choice to create a sculpture to commemorate James Rogers McConnell. He had achieved a national reputation by the 1910s for works largely figural in nature, typically depicting American subjects. By 1917 his works included sculptures of several figures from American history, and he was noted for the intensity of his patriotic feelings. Also, while his abilities were very highly regarded, he had not achieved the fame of the most celebrated American sculptors of his day, such as Daniel Chester French, and therefore was not out of reach for such a commission. While Borglum was American-born he was trained in the European tradition that held sway over the American arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and worked in the style that typified popular art of the American Renaissance period.

Borglum was born in St. Charles, Idaho, on March 25, 1867, to Danish immigrants James and Ida (Mechelson) Borglum. When Borglum was seven his family moved to Nebraska; when he was sixteen they relocated further west to LosAngeles, California.[34] Borglum attended college in Kansas, then studied art at the San Francisco Art Academy (also known as the Mark Hopkins Art Institute) and soon met Elizabeth Jaynes Putnam, a painter eighteen years his senior, who advised him on his career and artistic development. They married in 1889. In California, as a young artist Borglum learned the value of patronage and the cultivation of contacts to important social figures. During this period he painted the portrait of General John C. Fremont and later made connections through Fremont's widow to Leland Stanford and Theodore Roosevelt.[35]

In 1890 the Borglum's went to Paris to study art. Gutzon attended the Academie Julien and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and worked with individual masters including Auguste Rodin, who made a lasting impression on him. Borglum remained active in painting at this early stage in his career, exhibiting at the Old Salon in 1891 and 1892 as a painter. In 1891 he also exhibited as a sculptor in the New Salon with a work called "Death of the Chief", which won him membership in the Societe des Beaux-Artes.[36]

Following study in Paris, Gutzon worked for a year in Spain, returning to California in 1893; he then returned to Europe in 1896 and spent time in England painting portraits and murals, illustrating books, and producing sculptures including a piece entitled "Apache Pursued". Sculpture soon became Borglum's preferred medium of artistic expression. In 1901 Borglum left Paris to return to the United States. With his marriage failing, his wife remained behind; on board ship he met Mary Montgomery, an

American who had just earned a doctorate from the University of Berlin, whom he married in 1909 following divorce from his first wife. By 1902 Borglum was established in New York City. Soon after his return to the United States he was commissioned to create figures of the twelve apostles for Saint John the Divine Cathedral in New York City, and a bust of Lincoln, completed in 1908, for the U.S. Capitol building. This work was followed by a seated bronze of Lincoln in Newark, New Jersey, which President Alderman recognized as a leading American sculpture of the time during early coordination on creation of "The Aviator". In 1904 Borglum gained the attention of the American public, the arts community and critics with the exhibition of several works at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, including a work entitled the "Mares of Diomedes", a piece that

unites reference to Greek mythology with imagery from the American west. Throughout his career he sought to create images that were "'American, drawn from American sources, memorializing American achievement'". With about 170 statues and monuments to his credit, Borglum is best known for revolutionary monumental sculpture carried out at Stone Mountain, Georgia (his work at Stone Mountain no longer survives) and later at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, a project that occupied nearly the last fifteen years of his life.[37]

Borglum was part of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century movement in American sculpture led by native-born artists who studied abroad, typically in Paris, and created works in marble and bronze in the Beaux Arts tradition. Produced during the era later known as the American Renaissance, their works are typified by a heroic approach to design, usually drawing on figures and references from Classical antiquity, infused with optimism and often monumental in scale when intended for sites in American public buildings and public outdoor spaces. Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) and Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907) were considered the leaders in the American Beaux Arts tradition.[38] Among works produced by premier American sculptors during the early twentieth century, including French and Saint-Gaudens, there is a noticeable interest in depicting winged figures, possibly due to fascination with innovations made at that time in human flight. The Wright brothers conducted their widely publicized test flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in December 1903; by 1911, planes began to be used in warfare, and were called into use for battle early on in World War I. And, the winged motif could be readily employed for figures derived from Classical antiquity. Examples of this type are bronze memorial sculptures depicting standing, draped, winged female figures drawn from Classical prototypes, and include the relief sculpture "Amor Caritas" created by Saint-Gaudens in 1898, "Spirit of Life" by French, dating from 1914 and created for an outdoor setting, and "Benediction", created by French in 1922. Two other examples of this type are "Rising Day" and "Descending Night" by Adolph Alexander Weinman (1870-1952), a former apprentice of Saint-Gaudens; these two monumental winged figures of bronze were created for a fountain in the Court of the Universe at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, in San Francisco, California.[39]

Borglum chose the Greek mythological figure of Icarus as the theme for "The Aviator", which has been called one of his more unusual pieces.[40] At the time of its installation, it was termed a masterpiece; Borglum himself spoke of its "humbling, adventuring spirit". The statue was initially installed in a location at the University of Virginia west of the Rotunda, on a landscaped site bordered by trees and shrubs, positioned so that the statue's wings were silhouetted against the sky. Landscaping was planned to augment the statue: Alderman wrote in 1919 that "We shall want to do some landscape gardening about the site."[41] Before the late 1930s most of the vegetation around "The Aviator" had been removed. With the construction of Alderman Library in 1938, it appears that the statue was relocated to a spot slightly south of its original site. In the 1940s the statue served as the terminus of the walkway in front of Alderman Library, with its wings rising against the view of Lewis Mountain to the west of the Rotunda. It was installed at its present location on the terrace between Alderman Library and Clemons Library with the completion of Clemons Library in the 1970s; this spot is very close to the location "The Aviator" has had since the 1940s. It stands in alignment with the walk from the Rotunda to the Clemons Library terrace, where the land drops off quickly to the west.[42]

"The Aviator" is a unique feature on the University of Virginia grounds, due to the nature of its artistic representation and the type of commemoration that it represents. Other sculptures at the university include the statue of Jefferson by Moses Ezekie, dating from 1910 and located in front of the Rotunda; and "Homer with his Student Guide" (Ezekiel, 1907), Washington (copy of an original by Jean-Antoine Houdon, dedicated in 1913), and the statue of George Rogers Clark by Robert Aitken, located away from Central Grounds on University Avenue, dedicated in 1921.[43] Borglum's "The Aviator" is the creation of an artist

who played a major role in the development of American sculpture during the American Renaissance, with talents that spanned application to near life-sized works and to the monumental representations on Mount Rushmore. While commemorating an individual's commitment to ideals beyond the scope of national identity, with the intention of providing an example for others, "The Aviator" also marks popular sentiments at an important point in American history, the eave of the nation's involvement in World War I. In addition to its purely artistic merits "The Aviator" is also highly significant for its representational value.

ENDNOTES

[1] "James Rogers McConnell: Creation of the Aviator", University of Virginia Library, The James Rogers McConnell Collection (on line at http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/exhibits/mcconnell/intro.html), letter from President Alderman to Gutzon Borglum dated April 10, 1919.
[2] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Creation of the Aviator.", letter from President Alderman to Eugenia Flagg dated June 14, 1919.
[3] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Alumni Bulletin.
[4] Craven, Wayne. Sculpture in America. (New York: Growell, 1968), 489.
[5] Craven, 490.
[6] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Memorial Collections"
[7] Shapiro, Michael E. Bronze Casting and American Sculpture,1850-1900. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 15.
[8] Shapiro, 15.
[9] Shapiro, 15.
[10] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "American Bronze Casting", at http://www.metmusuem.org/toah/hd/abrc/hd_abrc.htm.
[11] "James Rogers McConnell: An Introduction", University of Virginia Library, The James Rogers McConnell Collection (on line at http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/exhibits/mcconnell/intro.html).
[12] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: An Introduction", and "Fear of Flying", The University Journal, November 10, 1982, and "Mac", by Emory Pottle.
[13] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Fighting for France", and Moore County News and Carthage Blade, Carthage, NC, April 1917.
[14] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Monuments and Memorials", letter from Mitchell D. Follansbee to Dr. Edwin Anderson Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, March 25, 1917.
[15] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Fighting for France."
[16] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Fighting for France." McConnell noted in his book about his experiences serving in France "that driving an ambulance was playing shirker's part" (Ibid., Moore County News and Carthage Blade, Carthage, NC, April 1917).
[17] Ibid., "Speech of Armistead M. Dobie Accepting the McConnell Monument on Behalf of the University of Virginia," University of Virginia Alumni News, July 1919; McConnell was the second North Carolina resident to die serving in battle with the French – the other was his acquaintance Rockwell, a member of the same squadron (Ibid., Moore County News and Carthage Blade, Carthage, NC, April 1917).
[18] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Fighting for France."
[19] Ibid., Moore County News and Carthage Blade, Carthage, NC, April 1917.
[20] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Monuments and Memorials."
[21] Ibid., letter from Mitchell D. Follansbee to Dr. Edwin Anderson Alderman, President of the University of and letter from President Alderman to Hon. S. P. McConnell, March 28, 1917, and untitled statement from Virginia, March 25, 1917, and letter from President Alderman to Mitchell D. Follansbee, March 28, 1917, the Office of the President, June 23, 1919. The suggestion was also made to bury McConnell in Charlottesville as an inspiration to others, by T.S. Fuller, friend of President Alderman's, who wrote in a telegram to Alderman, ""Have just learned that Jim McConnell has been killed in France while fighting three German aeroplanes single handed[.] French cavalry have recovered body[. A]ssuming consent of his parents what do you think of having body brought here and buried Charlottesville with appropriate funeral from university[?] I believe it a fitting honor to aid foreign courage and fellow who gave his life to an ideal and a good example" (Ibid., telegram from T.S. Fuller to Alderman, March 26, 1917).
[22] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Gutzon Borglum, March 25, 1918.
[23] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Sarah Rogers McConnell, October 18, 1917.
[24] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Gutzon Borglum, April 10, 1919. Apparently the statue was cast at the Gorham Foundry, located in Rhode Island.
[25] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to W.W. Fuller, April 14, 1919, and "Speech of Armistead M. Dobie Accepting the McConnell Monument on Behalf of the University of Virginia," University of Virginia Alumni News, July 1919.

[26] Ibid., letter from Gutzon Borglum to President Alderman, April 15, 1919.
[27] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Mr. W.H. Gallaher, c/o Gutzon Borglum, April 22, 1919 (Gallaher was an associate of Borglum's; at this point Borglum had traveled to Cuba on business).
[28] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Miss Eugenia Flagg, May 21, 1919, and telegram from Flagg to Alderman, May 2, 1919, and letter from Flagg to Alderman, May 22, 1919.

[29] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to Mr. W.W. Fuller, June 13, 1919, and letter from Flagg to Alderman, May 27, 1919, and letter from Alderman to Flagg, May 28, 1919, and letter from Flagg to Alderman, June 4, 1919.
[30] Ibid., letter from President Alderman to W.W. Fuller, June 13, 1919.
[31] Ibid., letter from Eugenia Flagg to President Alderman, June 11, 1919.
[32] Borglum is noted as not lacking commissions and attracting high prices: for portraits he could earn $2,500 to $5,000, and for an equestrian statue of General Philip Sheridan, unveiled in 1908, he was paid $50,000. A monument created in the late 1920s, "Texas Cowboys", 32 feet high and 40 feet long, brought $100,000. "The Aviator", for which donations of $5,000 were being raised, would have been among his lower-cost sculptures. Wayne Craven, Sculpture in America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), 489-491.
[33] "James Rogers McConnell: Monuments and Memorials", University of Virginia Library, The James Rogers McConnell Collection, letter from President Alderman to Eugenia Flagg, June 14, 1919, and letter from Alderman to W.W. Fuller, June 13, 1919. In his letter to Fuller, Alderman noted that "The occasion of the unveiling itself, in spite of every apparent effort of Borglum's, was a distinguished success. . ."
[34] "Gutzon Borglum", Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutzon_Borglum. Borglum's parents followed the Latter-day Saint or Mormon religion and practiced plural marriage; Ida Borglum was the second wife of James. His father is noted as being a physician, rancher, and also a woodcutter; when he decided to abandon bigamy he left Gutzon's mother, Ida Mechelson, and remained married to his first wife, Ida's sister (American Experience, "People and Events: Gutzon Borglum (1867-1941)", at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rushmore/peopleevents/p_gborglum.html, and Infoplease Encyclopedia, "Gutzon, Borglum", at http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0808364.html.
[35] Craven, 488, and American Experience.
[36] The Handbook of Texas Online, "Borglum, John Gutzon De La Mothe", at http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/fbo31.html.

[37] Springville Museum of Art, "John Gutzon Borglum, at http://www.shs.nebo.edu/Museum/borglum.html; Infoplease; Craven, 489; The Handbook of Texas Online; American Experience; Wikipedia.
[38] Susan E. Menconi, Uncommon Spirit: Sculpture in America 1800-1940 (New York: Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., 1989), 4; Sarah Gates with Thomas Eaton, Editor, From Neo-Classical and Beaux-Arts to Modernism: A Passage in American Sculpture (N.p.: Eaton Fine Art, 2000), 6.
[39] "Airplane Warfare in WW I", at http://www.cyberessays.com/History/1.htm; Menconi, 30, 35, 47-51; Eaton, 24, 26; Daniel Robbins, "Statues to Sculpture: From the Nineties to the Thirties", in 200 Years of American Sculpture (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1976), 117. Interestingly, the work entitled "Benediction" resulted from an aborted project to create a French monument to commemorate American World War I soldiers, and was revised to honor the mother of French's son-in-law.
[40] "The Aviator", University of Virginia Alumni Bulletin, vol. 12, no. 4, 1919, 354. Borglum explained his idea for the statue as follows, in an interview published in the New York Evening Sun: "'The vision of Daedalus, the Greek, who attempted to make wings for himself and his son has at last come true. Daedalus and Icarus, however, flew too near the sun and their waxen wings melted, but the aviator of today has combined the daring and fearlessness of the Greek with twentieth century science. The legendary dream is realized. The McConnell statue represents a modern Icarus just on the point of leaping off the world, the short knife that he carries in his belt symbolizing combat. To me and, I believe, to the average layman, the aeroplane as it rests on the ground with its static wings and huge fishlike body does not suggest the act of flying. Perhaps if we should see it on the water we might think of some kind of flying monster of the sea. Nevertheless to the mind of ordinary man, wings will always bring the idea of the bird, which lightly soars into ethereal space. I was asked to make a memorial to one of those young Americans who offered his life and gave it to France, fighting against her enemies and the enemies of mankind. I saw no better way of memorializing their great accomplishment than by making this modern Icarus a real man flying.'" Stuart Sorge, "The University's Jim McConnell And A Winged Piece Of Bronze", Cavalier Daily, February 3, 1960, in University of Virginia Library, The James Rogers McConnell Collection; Wikipedia.

[41] "James Rogers McConnell: Monuments and Memorials'", University of Virginia Library, The James Rogers McConnell Collection, letter from President Alderman to W.W. Fuller, June 13, 1919, letter from President Alderman to Eugenia Flagg, June 14, 1919, and letter from Gutzon Borglum to President Alderman, February 5, 1927.
[42] Ibid., "James Rogers McConnell: Photographs of 'The Aviator'". While correspondence from President Alderman to W.W. Fuller of April 14, 1919 relates that Borglum approved of the initial site for "The Aviator" (stating "Borglum is here today. I have just left him. The site has been definitely settled, and he is much pleased with it."), Borglum later wrote disapprovingly of the site and claimed he did not choose it (underlining included by Borglum): "I did not select the location. It was the least bad of two or three out of the way places and I was told there would be wonderful vistas etc = and there was no building at that time = some time ago I told Margaret Fuller "If I had five thousand I

would go to Charlottesville and move that statue = I haven't five thousand. My belief is it will remain where it is – I even suggest leave it there = those who care find it = tucked out of sight to the side or end of a building though it is. . . . When that place was the best offered I could not other than accept" (Ibid., letter from Gutzon Borglum to President Alderman, February 5, 1927, in "James Rogers McConnell: Monuments and Memorials"). It is likely that President Alderman and Dr. Lambeth, head of buildings and grounds at the university, made the final choice regarding the original site. Also, Borglum's mention of "five thousand" may reference the amount it appears he was to be paid for "The Aviator".
[43] Sarah Shields Driggs, comp., with John L. Orrock, Save Outdoor Sculpture! A Survey of Sculpture in Virginia (Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1996), 13.

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A Guide to the James Rogers McConnell Memorial Collections. A Collection in the Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Alderman Library, 1998. accessed online at http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/exhibits/mcconnell/intro.html

Repositories

Fiske Kimball Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

"The Aviator" statue is located on the University of Virginia campus in Albemarle County, Virginia, and surrounded by the City of Charlottesville. The sculpture is sited between Alderman Library and Clemons library. It is marked on the accompanying Charlottesville West USGS quadrangle, with the UTM reference point of 17, 718899E, 4212792N.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the sculpture is the perimeter of the pedestal base on which it rests.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information is common to all photographs
Name: The Aviator sculpture (VDHR File Number: 002-5073)
Location: Albemarle County, Virginia
Photographer: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
Date of Photo: April 17, 2006
Location of Negatives: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, VA
Negative Number: 22920

VIEW OF: The Aviator, Front Elevation/Adjacent Setting, Looking West towards Lewis Mountain
NEG. NO.: 22920/36
PHOTO: 1 of 6

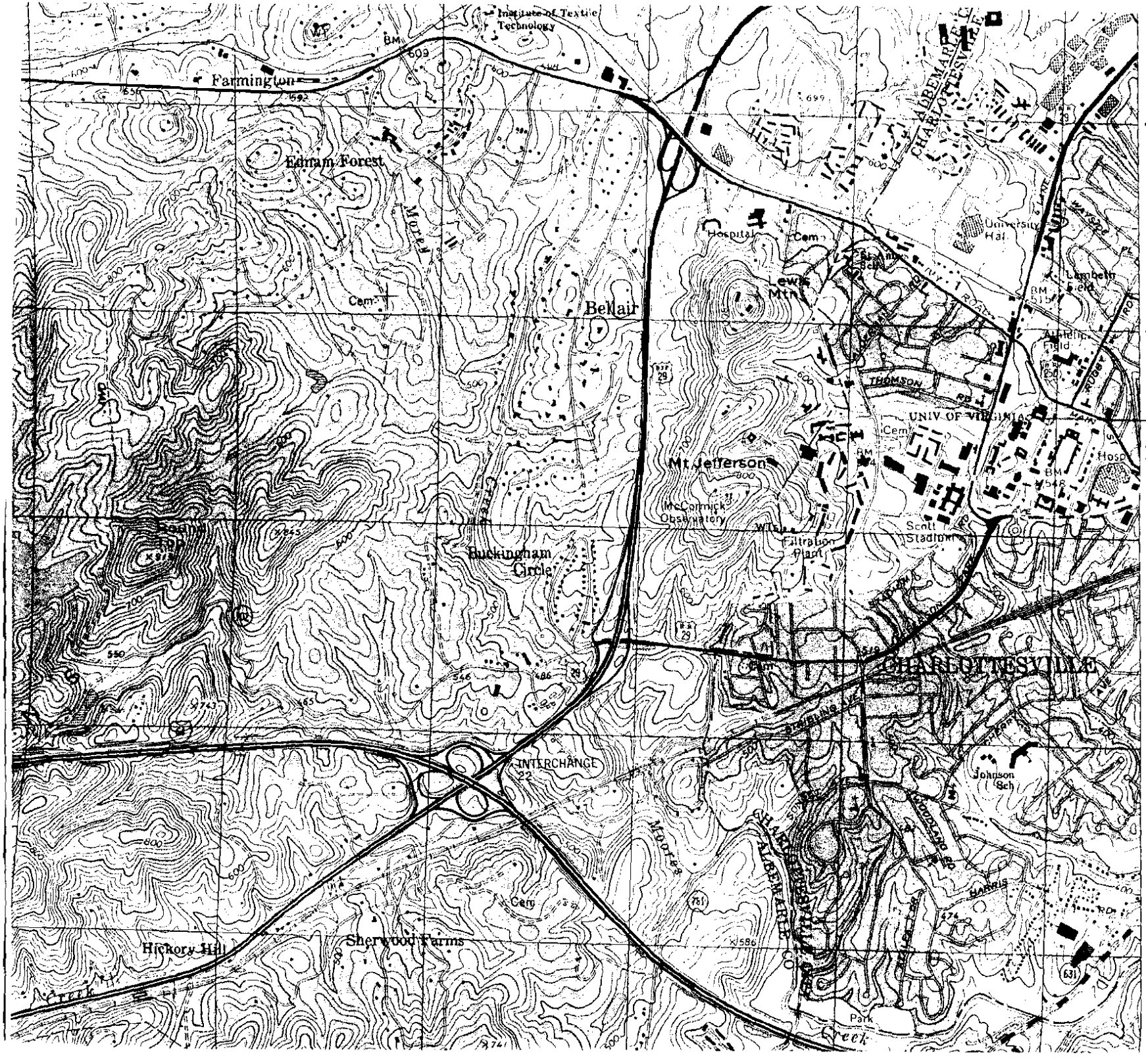
VIEW OF: The Aviator, Front Elevation, Looking West towards Lewis Mountain
NEG. NO.: 22920/20
PHOTO: 2 of 6

VIEW OF: The Aviator, Side Elevation, Looking South towards Harrison Institute and Small Special Collections Building
NEG. NO.: 22920/24
PHOTO: 3 of 6

VIEW OF: The Aviator, Back Elevation, Looking East towards the Rotunda
NEG. NO.: 22920/23
PHOTO: 4 of 6

VIEW OF: Pedestal Base Inscription
NEG. NO.: 22920/30
PHOTO: 5 of 6

VIEW OF: Pedestal Base Inscription
NEG. NO.: 22920/29
PHOTO: 6 of 6



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The Aviator,
Charlottesville, VA
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