





**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

   Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century \_\_\_\_\_  
   Greek Revival \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation    Brick  
roof    Metal -standing seamed  
walls    Wood, Metal sheathing  
  
other    Porch - Wood  
   Chimneys - Brick

**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.  
  X 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.  
   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

19-5168

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)  
U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-4018

Watkins House  
Charlotte Co., Virginia

Period of Significance ca. 1830-1866

Significant Dates 1851

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
William Benjamin Watkins

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

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

Name of repository: Charlotte County Court House, Clerk of the Court Office

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property 15.13 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	17	721666	4105973	2.	17	721884	4105755
3.	17	721564	4105679	4.	17	721508	4105928

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: Patricia L. Renn and Thomas O. Renn

Organization: N/A date June 23, 2003

street & number: 4429 Blackbeard Road telephone (757) 464-6602

city or town Virginia Beach state VA zip code 23455

**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 Thomas and Patricia Renn

street & number 3115 Briery Road telephone (434) 736-9079

city or town Keysville state VA zip code 23947

**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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Watkins House  
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**7. Summary Description:**

The Watkins property is located in northeastern Charlotte County, Virginia, three miles east of the Town of Keysville. The dwelling is a transitional Federal-Greek Revival, two-story, three-bay, I-house, constructed in the 1840s with a rear wing added in 1851. It is situated on 15.13 acres consisting of open pastures and mixed woodlands approximately 200 yards from Briery Road (State Route 652). It is a frame house with a diminutive Tuscan portico. The end chimneys of the main block are topped by pairs of hexagonal chimney stacks. This treatment is found on a small group of houses in the Charlotte County area and is assumed to be the work of a local mason who served the area, probably in the 1850s. Also on the property are five contributing resources: a tobacco barn, a wagon shed/granary, an equipment or storage building, a hay barn/stable, and a chicken coop.

**Detailed Description:**

The dwelling and its outbuildings sit in bucolic rolling pastures and woodland. The two-story, three-bay front section is typical of many Virginia farmhouses. The entrance is sheltered by a restored four-bay diminutive portico featuring Tuscan columns. The Greek Revival entrance features a pair of doors each of which has one long vertical panel. Sidelights frame the double doors and a wide transom extends over the sidelights. The house has six-over-six double-hung sash windows. There is a tall straight-sided chimney on each end. Each of them has stepped weatherings under a broad shaft. Each shaft is topped with a pair of hexagonal chimney stacks. This feature is found in a small group of buildings in this and the neighboring counties (many were added to older buildings). They were probably the work of a local mason. Their use probably reflects the use of pattern books of the day and the influence of the nearby mansion, Staunton Hill, the epitome of the Gothic Revival.

There have been additions to the rear of the house. The most interesting is the center section slightly off-center to the east. Its roof is lower than that of the main block giving the impression of being a half story, when in fact the second-floor room is full height. Its most unusual features are the second-floor windows that are horizontal in shape and have sashes that slide up into the wall instead of stacking. On all sides of this section one-story additions have been made. A modern wing with an octagonal end was added behind the north addition to the original west room. The house has been covered with synthetic siding.

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The first-floor rooms are finished with simple, but handsome, woodwork and plain plastered walls. All of the rooms in the front section of the house have simple flat chair boards with a molded cap and flat baseboards with a molded cap. The hall features crosstetted architraves framing the main door, with its large transom and sidelights, and the secondary doors. The doors all have two long vertical panels. The open-string stair is a steep one that has six initial winders that lead to a single long straight flight. The stair rail features posts square in section, a molded rail and simple balusters square in section.

The crosstetted window frames are repeated in the east room with panels below the windows. The mantel in this room was replaced by a brick one in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This and all the rest of the rooms have the same chair rail and baseboard. They also have mantels that clearly show the retention of old forms while rendering them in more up to date detailing. The fact that all the mantels are virtually identical indicates that there was not a long time between the construction of the main block and the rear wing. The mantels all have the simplest of pilasters supporting a plain shelf. The pilasters have a neck molding at the height of the top of the plastered fireplace surround. A frieze supports the shelf of each fireplace. In the west parlor the frieze is unadorned. All of the other friezes have two long very shallow raised panels. The moldings are flat Greek ones.

The second-floor room in the rear wing has a wooden octagonal frame set in the wall over its mantel. It is flanked by vertical boards ornamented with reeding and roundel corner blocks at top and base. This room has rare horizontal rectangular windows with sashes rise up into the wall cavity.

**Contributing Outbuildings:**

A late-19<sup>th</sup>-century double-story tobacco barn with standing-seam metal roof in fine condition.

A two-bay granary and wagon shed, metal, mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century

A mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century 3-bay south side Vernacular storage and equipment building with a loft accessible by exterior ladder.

A mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century metal hay barn and attached stable.

A mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century wood frame chicken coop with standing-seam metal roof.

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**Summary Statement of Significance:**

The Watkins House was the home of prominent Charlotte County citizen, William B. Watkins. He served in several military positions, and was a member of the Virginia General Assembly. He was primarily responsible for founding one of the first county school boards in Virginia. His house is worthy of study as a prominent local landmark. It exhibits an unusual transition from Federal into Greek Revival design and it features a pair of tall hexagonal brick chimney stacks, a local architectural feature found on perhaps a score of buildings built in the area in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Criteria Statement:**

The Watkins House is eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion B as a property associated with a prominent Charlotte County individual, William B. Watkins. The house is also eligible under Criterion C for architecture as an unusual example of the transition from the Federal to the Greek Revival styles and for its distinctive chimney stacks.

**Historical Background:**

William Benjamin Watkins (1780-1850), son of Benjamin Watkins, planter and owner of extensive acreage, was a state and local politician, a serious churchman, an officer in the army, and an attorney. He was included in the Muster Roll in the War of 1812. In 1814, he was an Ensign and rose to Lieutenant Colonel by 1822.

Although in the Virginia General Assembly for only one session, it was an especially important one from December 1818 through March 1819. The Assemblymen were to return to their home areas and appoint a School Board. Although few apparently did, Watkins did as was recommended and established a very early School Board in Charlotte County. Between 1818 and 1838 he served as one of the four county magistrates. In 1833 he was appointed Overseer of the Poor for the Fourth District. He was held in high esteem by family and friends and spoken of often and fondly, with many acts of kindness attributed to him. In 1810 he married Susan Spencer, a close neighbor and daughter of a close friend, Thomas Spencer, Jr., a prominent resident of Charlotte County.

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The Watkins house seems to have been constructed in two sections, the front I-house in the 1830s and the north (rear) wing in 1851. Notations in the county records from 1820 until his death in 1850 show Watkins' land holdings steadily increasing. With the coming of the railroad to the area, additions and enlargements to dwellings seem to have increased around the county, in general. Although plain and relatively unadorned, the distinctive double hexagonal-stacked chimneys, and the house's surviving original features are noteworthy. In Watkins' will it is referred to as "the Mansion House." The hexagonal chimney stacks reflect a local architectural tradition and a small group of Charlotte County buildings display this feature. A local mason was probably responsible for many of them, no doubt influenced by the chimney stacks at Staunton Hill, also in Charlotte County, completed in 1850.

Watkins was thirty years of age when he married Susan Spencer in 1810. Her mother was a Watkins, and was one of two sisters from Dinwiddie County that Thomas Spencer, Jr. married. Colonel Thomas Spencer, Jr. owned large parcels of land in the vicinity of William Watkins' house, and at the time of the death of Colonel Spencer in 1806, Benjamin Watkins purchased, or was given parcels of Spencer's land.

The house William Watkins built for his family, while plain, shows refinement. Although built by a local craftsman, he probably had the use of building pattern books, and seems to have put great effort into this work.

Watkins died in 1850 and at that time gave to all of his children land, slaves and goods and made provisions for his grandchildren. In 1866 Robert Watkins, oldest son of W. B. Watkins, was forced to sell the house and contents, due to Virginia's severely depressed economy following the Civil War. It remained within the family by way of intermarriages until 1905 when the Crymes family acquired it and owned it for the next 82 years. In 1987, Robert Shook purchased 20 acres from Mrs. E. Crymes Clement, and in 1998 sold 15.13 acres and the house to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Renn. The farm had shrunk from over 3,000 acres in ca. 1820 to 15.13 acres in 1998. The house and acreage has, for the last five years, been known as "Bonis Est Farm." The motto (It Is For Good), comes from Mrs. Renn's paternal family's Coat of Arms, bestowed to the Schindel family for service "To the King." The Watkins house remains essentially as built, with few major alterations other than the installation of synthetic siding.

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**Bibliography:**

Charlotte County Rich Indeed, Produced by T. S. Ailsworth, Ann P. Keller, Lura B. Nichols, B. R. Walker, 1979, publicly printed and oral history by Elsie Myers, 1976, Charlotte Gazette.

A Field Guide to American Houses, Virginia & Lee McAlaster, published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984.

Charlotte County Deed Books, 29, 30, 31.

Charlotte County Records Property Tax.

Oral and pictorial information from Edith Crymes Clements.

Historical Homes Survey, 1998, Charlotte County Reference Book.

A Guide to Old American Houses, 1700-1900, Henry Lionel Williams and Ottalie K. Williams.

APVA Publications and Overviews from 1984-Present time.

History of Charlotte County (Reference), Virginia Beach Central Library.

Kevin A. Tuck, This Cloud of Witnesses, 2000.

The Watkins family of Virginia (covering a period of approximately 300 years to 1960, ten generations), Co-authors Virginia Stephenson Watkins, Keysville, VA, and Robert Aubrey Watkins, Long Beach, CA, published Honolulu, Hawaii, 1959.

Peters, John O. and Margaret T., Historic Court Houses of Virginia.

Brownell, Charles, Roth, Calder, Rasmussen, William, M.S. Wilson, Richard Guy. The Making of Virginia Architecture, University of Virginia Press.

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Green, Bryan C., Loth, Calder, Rasmussen, William, M.S. Lost Virginia Vanished Architecture of the Old Dominion.

Rodriguez, Mario. Traditional Woodwork, The Taunton Press.

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The 15.13 acres being nominated are identified as parcel # 042-A-82A on the tax parcel maps for Charlotte County, Virginia.

**Boundary Justification:**

The property being nominated includes the house and outbuildings on the current tax parcel that are historically associated with the property.

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Section Photographs

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**Photograph List:**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Name of Property:	Watkins Property
Location of Property:	Charlotte County, Virginia
Date of Photographs:	February 2003
Negative Number:	VDHR # 21157
Photographer:	Patricia L. Renn
Photographs Filed:	Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

1 of 6. Exterior view of main house

2 of 6. View of outbuildings

3 of 6. View of outbuildings

4 of 6. Interior view of front hall

5 of 6. Detail of main stair

6 of 6. Detail of mantel, 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor room rear wing.



William B. Watkins  
 House  
 Charles Co., VA  
 UTM References  
 Zone 17

Eastings Northings  
 1. 721666 4105973

2. 721850 4105715

3. 721560 4105679

4. 721508 4105928

EUREKA QUAD  
 # 19-5168

4107  
 5'  
 4106  
 4105  
 (KEYSVILLE)  
 5358 III SW  
 4104  
 4103  
 2'30"  
 4102  
 KEYSVILLE I MI.