

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Somerset
Powhatan County, 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> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 4 </u>	<u> 1 </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> AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE </u>	<u> Storage </u>
<u> FUNERARY </u>	<u> Cemetery </u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> DOMESTIC </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> VACANT/NOT IN USE </u>	
<u> FUNERARY </u>	<u> Cemetery </u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 COLONIAL: Georgian

 EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof STONE: Slate

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

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 ca. 1775-1937

Significant Dates (Phase I) 1770s; (Phase II) late 18th c to early 19th c; (Phase III) early to mid-19th c

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 20 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17 757031	4159673	2	17 757430	4159823
3	17 757453	4159683	4	17 757237	4159422

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/Organization: Gibson Worsham date June 26, 2005
 street & number: 3601 Brook Road telephone (804) 353-4801
 city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23227

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 Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hatcher
 street & number 2310 Ballsville Road telephone (804) 492-5834
 city or town Powhatan state VA zip code 23139

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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7. Summary Description:

OVERVIEW

Somerset is a substantial frame dwelling of complex history and form located on a farm in rural western Powhatan County, Virginia. The frame house appears to have begun as a one-story, three-bay, one-room house with an integral shed at the rear, a full basement, and an internal chimney at the east end. It was probably built ca. 1775 (Phase I), extended in the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century (Phase II), and altered very thoroughly in the early to mid-nineteenth century (Phase III). The following will describe the house as it is then document the many changes that have thoroughly transformed it during the century following its initial construction.

The one-and-1/2-story frame house at Somerset today takes the two-room form known as the hall-chamber plan with an integral shed or lean-to across the rear (south) containing two bedrooms, a central passage with stair, and a modern bathroom in one of the bedrooms. The lean-to roof, which extends from the apex of the main roof, is original to the oldest (eastern) section of the house. It was extended to the west with the enlargement of the house during Phase II. The larger of the two main rooms (the "hall") is located on the east and the smaller room (the "chamber") to the west. Each of the four first-floor rooms is served by one of four exterior brick chimneys (here identified by orientation as northeast, southeast, etc.).

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The house has a four-bay, asymmetrical principal facade facing north, containing a double-leaf door opening into the center of the larger, east room and flanked by a window to each side. A single window at the west end of the north facade lights the smaller, west room. All the tall first-floor windows have early frames with two-part architrave surrounds made up of a square, applied, beaded stop for the weatherboards, an ogee intermediate molding, and an inner bead. The bullnose sills have been recently replaced. The openings are filled with mid-twentieth-century nine-over-nine sashes.

The roof is pierced by two, heavy, late nineteenth-century dormers with six-over-six sash and diagonal, beaded flushboard cheek walls. The front wall is sheathed with wide, beaded weatherboards and is topped by a modern (ca. 2000) modillion cornice based on examples at other Colonial-era houses in the region. Areas of brick nogging were uncovered during repair of sections of weatherboard by the current owner. The gable roof is covered with late nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century slate. The front door is reached by a modern wooden stoop.

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The east end is dominated by a large, two-story, red-painted, Flemish-bond chimney serving the northeast room and a smaller, one-story chimney, rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century, serving the southeast room in the lean-to. An early sash window between the chimneys, matching the others on the house, lights the northeast room. It is found just above a modern gabled basement entry occupying an early location. A pair of four-over-four-light garret sash windows flank the taller chimney and light the east garret room. Unlike the other early windows on the house with two-part architrave trim, these have conventional molded weatherboard stops. The east wall retains beaded weatherboard and early beaded and tapered rake boards.

The rear (south) wall is characterized by a wide expanse of sloping, slate-clad, shed roof and by the small and irregularly placed windows and rear door. The single windows lighting the chambers at the east and west ends contain six-over-six sashes. Only the window at the east end has an early, two-part architrave surround. The modern door currently serving the rear passage is protected by a small modern stoop and is flanked on the west by an added bathroom window. The wall is sheathed with original beaded weatherboard.

The central portion of the west end is obscured by a shed room from Phase III now fitted as a kitchen. The lower portion of the northwestern chimney, rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century on a concrete foundation, is completely hidden. The southwestern chimney protrudes at the south side of the shed. It is built in six-course American bond and was added or rebuilt during Phase III. Sash windows lighting the northwestern and southwestern rooms are visible at the outer ends of the west wall. Both windows are early in form and have two-part surrounds like the others on the house. The west garret room is lit by a six-over-six sash window on the south side of the larger chimney. The west shed addition has a modern six-over-six sash window on each wall and a modern door to the south. The west wall is sheathed with beaded weatherboard and has early rake boards.

The foundation, now entirely painted red, has been reworked several times during its history. Currently the north wall shows a seam where the house was enlarged to the west during Phase II. The brick is laid in Flemish bond to the east of the joint. The original, Flemish-bond, section of the north wall extends from under the central door to the seam indicating the end of the original house. It incorporates a short section of American bond where a vent was infilled under the present western hall window. The foundation wall to the west of the joint as originally built was of unknown bond pattern. It was rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century in American bond. The foundation at the northeastern corner and along the east wall for several feet has also been rebuilt inside and out in American bond. Immediately adjacent, however, the area to each side and behind the northeast chimney is laid in English bond with a grapevine joint and represents the oldest section of surviving foundation wall from Phase I, predating the northeast chimney itself.

A small section of nineteenth-century American bond brickwork survives at the south end of the east foundation wall, but the corner and several feet of the adjoining south wall, as well as the western half of the wall, were rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century. A modern glazed basement vent at the east end of the south wall is in an early location, and a section of foundation to the west of it is old and laid in Flemish bond.

The west end incorporates a small section of old American bond brick flanking a bricked up basement vent on the south side of the southwest chimney. This chimney and the vent were added during Phase II. The north end of the west foundation wall dates from the mid-twentieth century, and, like the adjacent section of the north wall, contains a modern glazed basement vent. The basement under the west shed addition is original: the walls were built during Phase III, laid in American bond brick.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The house contains five rooms on the main floor. A large hall at the east end is flanked by a slightly smaller chamber on the west. The two main rooms are paralleled on the south by an integral shed. The shed holds a pair of bedchambers on each side of a central passage containing a stair to the upper floor. The garret is comprised of one chamber on either side of the stair.

While the main floor shows a nearly consistent use of moldings and trim dating from Phase II, the foundation and the floor structure viewed from below tell a story of major changes and adaptations made over time to a house actually dating from the 1770s. Restoration in the 1980s resulted in a replacement of some of the plaster on the first floor, though it remains intact throughout the garret. The floors were extensively repaired in the mid-twentieth century. Most of the floors are original to one of the three historic phases of development.

The main room, located at the northeastern corner of the house, is a rectangular space lit on the north by two sash windows flanking a central double-leaf door. A large Federal-style mantel at the east end is flanked to the south by a third sash window, probably added when the western addition robbed the room of the additional light provided by a window on that end during Phase II. The firebox is headed by an iron lintel which supports this theory. The hearth was rebuilt in the twentieth century. The mantel has a Federal form with pilasters, a high frieze with end blocks and a central tablet, and a breakfront shelf with carved, fluted molding consisting of rows of vertical members like dentils of alternating convex and concave shape. A rough rope molding surrounds the inner opening. The mantel's form and scale suggest that it was added as part of the Phase III work. A mantel, probably the same, "in the front room," retained "carving"

which was described as "wonderfully intact" when it was inventoried in 1937.¹ A door in the center

of the west wall gives access to the western chamber. Closely spaced doors at the west end of the south wall open to the south: one into a small passage and the other into a stair leading to the basement.

There is little variation in the door and window trim and in the wainscot, giving the impression that the interior almost entirely dates from the early nineteenth century. The windows and doors are provided with two-part architrave trim with ogee intermediate and outer moldings and an inner bead. The room is provided with a flush wood dado incorporating a molded washboard. The window frames rest on a molded surbase with a beaded lower edge. A small crown molding was added in the late twentieth century. The front door consists of two three-panel leaves with flush panels on the exterior and recessed flat panels on the interior.

The door to the passage has six raised panels with 1/4-round surrounds and HL hinges. The adjacent basement door has a mid-nineteenth-century door with flattened Greek ovolo surrounds on six flat panels, although the trim is the same (probably reused) as other openings in the room. The basement stair and the door were added in the antebellum era. The jamb of an earlier door into the closet that formerly occupied the area under the stair can be seen in the passage in the plastered skirt of the stairway. The door to the west room is subtly different, though the trim is the same. It is a flat-paneled, six-panel door with 1/4-round molding on the west side and has no evidence of HL hinges.

The room to the west is very similar in finish to the northeast room (all from Phase III). It is, however, of shallower depth, so that the room's south wall is not in line with the south wall of the main room, but about two feet to the north. It has the same wainscot, washboard, and architrave trim, but the molded washboard appears to have been replaced with a beaded one on the two inner walls. A pin rail with beaded upper and lower edges surrounds the room on the south, east, and north side. A double-leaf door opens into the west shed, now used as a kitchen. The door is similar in form and date to the front door and has three panels in each leaf with flush exteriors and recessed flat interiors. This, together with the well-worn threshold, suggests that this was originally an exterior door to a porch or stair.

The ca. 1830 shelf-and-architrave mantel in the west room is not original to the house, but was added in the mid-twentieth century restoration. An elaborate paneled mantel shown in a 1958 survey photograph in the Historic American Building Survey files is said to have been located at Somerset.² Although it is possible that it occupied this spot in the west room, since the entire chimney and hearth were apparently rebuilt after the photo was taken, it seems unlikely. There is insufficient space available for the mantel as shown to have fit between the fireplace and the door to the west lean-to. It is possible that the photo was taken elsewhere and mislabeled.

In addition, the mantel appears to be too old to date from the period during the Phase III work when the corner chimney was removed at the west end. There is no reason to think that an earlier mantel would be reused there and no evidence in the trim to support such a contention.

The bedchamber to the south of the northeast room opens out of the small south passage. It has a small, off-center, shelf-and-architrave mantel, an old brick hearth, beaded wash board on each wall, and a raised-panel, six-panel door with ghosts of HL hinges and narrow, square trim. The window trim, which sits on the top of the chair rail, is similar to that in the front section of the house. The chair rail consists of a plain board with a top and bottom bead.

The passage has single architrave door trim like that in the north rooms with an outer ogee and an inner bead. It contains a wide stair on the west wall rising from just inside the south exterior door. The stair was apparently added during Phase III when the main east and west chimneys were altered. It has a large turned newel dating from the late nineteenth century, and a mid-twentieth-century door at the foot gives access to the bathroom inserted west of the passage.

The bedchamber at the southwestern corner of the house was reduced in size by the addition of a partition to create a closet and bath, as mentioned above. The added partition has a door that led to the bathroom and a door that gives access to a large, unfinished closet north of the bathroom. The bedroom has a modern square baseboard and an off-center fireplace with a plain shelf-and-architrave mantel and a rebuilt hearth on the west side. The door and window trim is like that in the rest of the house, except for the south window and the bathroom and closet doors on the partition on the east, which have modern surrounds. The modern character of the interior and exterior of the south window suggests that this opening has been moved or otherwise changed, perhaps when the bathroom partition was added.

The partition between the chamber and the room to the north appears to date from the Phase III changes. It was added immediately after the removal of the corner chimney that formerly heated the northwest room and the adjacent southwest chamber. The door itself has six flat panels with flattened Greek ovolo trim. Its late nineteenth-century character suggests that there was no connection between the chamber and the northwest room and that the door was added after the partition was built.

The upper floor consists of two rooms of roughly the same size. Both rooms have two-part architrave trim matching that on the first floor, early plaster wall and ceiling finishes, beaded base, and double beaded chair rail on the inner partitions and end walls. An added dormer on the north lights each room and both rooms have a knee wall along the north and south sides.

The east room has an old brick hearth at the east end flanked by garret casements. The original mantel is gone and the firebox sealed. The knee wall is pushed back and the ceiling flattened at the southeast corner to make headroom for a low door to the unfinished garret in the rear shed. The garret door has a surround different from any other in the house. It incorporates a two-part architrave with an outer quarter-round molding, an intermediate ovolo, and an inner bead. Both the trim and the raised-panel, four-panel door appear to date from Phase I. There is a seam in the floor corresponding to the outline of the flat section of the ceiling and the Phase I fireplace location. The evidence indicates that this was the Phase I stair location, just south of the large interior chimney. The west room has a 1830s shelf-and-architrave mantel with a flattened Greek ovolo outer molding at the mid-twentieth-century replacement chimney and hearth.

The current stair rises within the rear shed into a wide passage at the center of the upper floor. The stair ceiling follows the underside of the long sloping shed roof. The doors to the garret chambers open at the head of the stair. The doors are identical, with raised panels with quarter-round moldings facing the passage, flat panels facing toward the rooms, and HL hinges. The detail of the architrave trim at the two doorways is very subtly different, although they take almost identical form. The doors are surrounded by a single architrave molding to the passage with an inner bead and outer ovolo molding similar to the trim on the first floor. The door trim facing the interiors of the two rooms is a simple board with a beaded inner edge. The west door has a narrower bead and a wider ovolo molding than the east door, which is more similar to the first-floor trim.

The shed garret is unfinished and the roof structure of the entire eastern end of the house is visible from it. The stair enclosure conceals the added western end of the house, so comparison was not possible of the east and west sections of the roof. The eastern section of the main part of the house has a conventionally framed gable roof with hewn common rafters pegged at the apex, lapped and pegged collar beams, and rafter feet aligned with the joists and resting on a false plate. The rafters at the east end are cut where the Phase I interior chimney originally rose through the roof. The south slope of the main roof has never been sheathed or used as a roofing support. Instead, the rafters of the rear shed rise from the shed plate to the apex of the main roof, where they are scabbed onto the main rafters. A small closet for winter storage of clothes has been inserted in the twentieth century into the garret.

The basement has a mostly open plan partially divided by sections of brick partition. The first-floor structure reveals a series of changes over many years. The house is made up of two sections not legible at all from the main floor. The eastern two-thirds of the house is from the earliest construction period with a nearly square footprint. It is provided with a square wood sill on all sides and is divided into two sections by an east-west summer beam: a rectangular front

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section corresponding to the main roof above and a narrower section to the south corresponding to the rear shed. Conventional hewn pine joists span from north to south between the sills and the summer beam. This section appears to date from Phase III.

The northeast corner is occupied by a massive brick bulk (ten feet wide and six feet deep) under the hearth area of the northeast chimney. This is a support for a former interior chimney from the earliest period of the house. The chimney base is laid in English bond as is a portion of the exterior foundation wall immediately adjacent to it (see exterior description). It is hollow, and an exploratory hole made in it by the current owner shows it to contain a void with splayed cheek walls which provided support for the fireplace walls that originally stood above. While the original outer walls extend to the basement floor, the void inside and the foundation of the chimney start about three feet above the floor and rest on an earth ledge that spans the east end of the basement. It is held back by an original retaining wall that is an extension of the English bond inner face of the chimney.

The outer walls of the chimney base carried the original first-floor hearth, removed in Phase III. On the south side there is a double wall containing a second void, built, perhaps, to serve as a side wall of a basement entry stair. Trimmers or headers project from the east sill on either side of the former chimney location over the outer brick walls. These originally framed a very wide hearth opening. The joists to the north side are mortised into the northern header. However, on the south side of the former hearth, the joists are merely carried on top of the outer brick wall in an unusually sloppy detail concealed by the extra depth of the chimney base there. The area within the former hearth is infilled with later joists. The gauged tongue-and-groove flooring throughout the northeast room above is continuous and postdates the removal of the interior chimney. The wider, gauged, flooring in the shed area to the south appears to be original.

The inner foundation walls of this section are much reworked. The northwest corner was rebuilt in the nineteenth century in five-course American bond on the interior and the exterior, except for a short section to either side of the fireplace, where English bond was employed on both inner and outer faces. The north front has a section of early or original Flemish bond on the exterior and four-course American bond on the lower parts of the interior of the north front. There were originally two vents under the first floor windows above. The eastern one has been replaced and the western one was bricked up when the house was extended during Phase II. The east wall to the south of the northeast chimney support is pierced by a modern basement door and covered exterior stairs, but closers in the brickwork at the south jamb suggest that it is an original entry location. A large fireplace is bricked up in the base of the southeast chimney. A shallow hearth above is carried on boards spanning between the chimney and the first, first-floor joist. Most of the south wall is rebuilt and the western wall is entirely gone, although a

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seam representing its location is visible in the north foundation wall. The south vents appear to

be in their original location, although the glazed casements and frames were replaced in the mid-twentieth century.

A central brick pier carrying the summer beam is built of brick laid in English bond. It appears to be original from the 1770s, unlike the long, six-course, American bond brick partition under the added Phase II wall between the two main rooms in the house above. It extends from the north front toward the summer beam. Another added brick partition extends from the south wall to a point under the partition dividing the western addition into front room and shed room.

The stair, added in the mid-nineteenth century, descends into the rear shed area of the basement. The stair has a beaded stringer, an added, partly beaded, enclosure on the east side, a flush board skirt on the west side, and a rail supported by a square newel at the bottom. There do not appear to have ever been any enclosing partitions in this section of the house, nor is there any sign of a ceiling, except in the area at the bottom of the steps, where there is evidence of boards covering the joists.

The area to the west is a major addition to the original house. It represents a wing of the same depth and vertical profile, but only about a third as wide. It originally was equipped with an interior corner chimney supplying two fireboxes in rooms in the main section and in the shed. The two sections are separated by the original sill of the west end of the first part of the house. All that remains of the corner chimney is the pair of angled trimmers or headers that originally defined edges of the hearths. The brick chimney base and stack are gone. The northern diagonal header extends to the old west sill and is now carried on the westernmost of the two added, six-course, American bond brick partitions. The southern diagonal header is mortised into the northern one. The diagonal headers come together at a point where the original partition would have separated the added front and rear rooms in the west (Phase II) addition. That point is aligned with the south wall of the northwestern room and the roof structure above and not with the current south wall of the northwest room above.

Conventional hewn pine joists originally extended from the principal north and south sills and were mortised into the diagonal chimney members, but those on the north now stop at an east-west support beam added when flooring, joists, and part of the diagonal header were removed and replaced in the mid-twentieth century in a band along the rear of the northwest room. Other joists were added during Phase III to fill in the area where the corner chimney was removed. These are let into the top of the diagonal members.

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During Phase II, the other basement partitions were added, the corner chimney was removed and an east-west brick partition was added under the new south wall separating the

present northwest and southwest rooms. Exterior chimneys were added serving the two western rooms. These included a large fireplace in the room in the southwest corner of the basement formed by the added partitions and now fitted up as a bathroom. A vent to the south of the chimney has been bricked up. Since the northwest chimney was rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century, no evidence remains of a basement fireplace there, as documentary sources suggest. The brick walls of the areas in the northwestern part of the house are whitewashed and the unpainted joists retain nail holes for a board ceiling. In contrast, the joists in the room at the southwest corner are whitewashed. Tradition holds that the basement at one time held a dining room, kitchen, and pantry.³

The former wall between the two western chimneys is gone and gives access to the basement of the western shed addition, which dates from the Phase III work. An angled notch for added headroom in the back of the sleeper and lines of cut and patched joists in the shed floor suggest that a stair from the basement rose in that area. The west shed may have been built after the demolition of the corner chimney in part to shelter or contain a stair to the western end of the kitchen, giving more convenient access to a basement kitchen or dining room.

The property contains four contributing resources and one non-contributing resource. In addition to the house (a contributing building), the property includes two contributing structures, a well and a corn crib, as well as to a contributing site, a cemetery. The rectangular Brown family cemetery located across the Ballsville Road to the west contains conventional tombstones dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. It is surrounded by a nineteenth-century stone wall with a projecting stone stile on the southeast side. The enclosure was expanded to the east in the mid-twentieth century with an extended stone wall, angled to correspond to the west edge of the Ballsville Road. The early twentieth-century frame corn crib is located to the southeast, and the stone-lined well is found to the immediate east of the house. A mid-twentieth-century silo (non-contributing resource), approximately 35 feet tall, stands next to the corn crib. It incorporates a vertically ribbed exterior surface. The silo is built of pre-cast concrete panels bound with tension rings and has no roof.

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8. Statement of Significance

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Somerset was built on a tract of land located on the south side of the Middle Road (Old Courthouse Road) in western Powhatan County. The house appears to date from the 1770s, based on elements of its fabric, including the massive English bond chimney base in the basement. The finishes and much of the surviving fabric otherwise date from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The house plan can be found on Plates 1 and 2, attached. Somerset is significant under National Register Criterion C as a 1770s house that contains important architectural information about domestic life in the Powhatan county region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It demonstrates the way that houses were altered over time to suit changing mores and standards.

HISTORY NARRATIVE

Phase I (1770s)

The original form of the house may have contained three rooms. The large 20 by 24-foot main section contained one room facing north, heated by a large interior chimney at the east end. The weatherboarded frame house appears to have had an English bond brick foundation, small portions of which survive only on the east end. An integral shed or lean-to to the south contained two small rooms of nearly equal size. The rear rooms were likely divided by the partition that survives between the current passage and the adjacent southeast chamber. It is not clear whether either chamber was provided with a fireplace or how the two chambers and the main room were interconnected. Cooking was probably provided in an outbuilding in the earlier periods of the buildings history (it appears to have been moved indoors at a later date).

The garret over the main room appears to have been reached by a small winder stair in the southeast corner beside the interior chimney. A seam in the floor of the southeast corner of the east garret chamber and the raised ceiling just above both suggest a stair there. The full basement below was unheated and built with exposed English-bond brick walls. The ceiling has never been painted or plastered. The raised ledge at the east end supporting the massive brick chimney base was fronted by a low English bond retaining wall.

The property on which Somerset was built was owned in mid-eighteenth century Cumberland County by Absalom Davenport. Elizabeth Blaikely McLaurine (1734-1803), a
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widow, purchased a fifty-acre tract from Davenport in 1774.⁴ Her son, James, bought an additional 36 acres adjoining it in 1788⁵ and sold it to his mother three years later.⁶ Comparison of the 1777 map of this area of Cumberland County, an 1858 Powhatan County map, and the description of the three tracts involved, indicate that the dwelling stands on that 86-acre tract.

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The house was either standing already, having been built previously, or it was built new for the McLaurine family in the 1770s.

Elizabeth McLaurine, who purchased the tract on which the house stands in 1774, was the widow of the Rev. Robert McLaurine. McLaurine served as the rector of the Anglican Parish of St. James Southam in the Cumberland County area south of the James River from 1751 to 1772. Robert McLaurine was born in Scotland and was assigned the parish upon his arrival in Williamsburg. He was given a salary of 16,000 pounds of tobacco per year. In 1753, he married Elizabeth Blaikely, daughter of merchant William Blaikely of Williamsburg and his wife, midwife Catherine Kaidee Blaikely. McLaurine served churches at Tar Wallet, Manakin, and Peterville until his death in 1773.⁷

The couple were the first to occupy the St. James Southam parish glebe, a farm which was purchased in 1762 to support and house the minister. However, McLaurine gradually acquired land for a second farm, undoubtedly in order to provide additional income, a place for retirement, and an inheritance for his three sons and four daughters after his death. In 1762 and 1766, he purchased adjoining tracts totaling 633 acres on the north side of the Middle Road.

McLaurine's will, probated in 1773, provided for 200 acres to be set aside for his wife and that the plantation he had acquired be divided between his oldest sons, James and William, then 14 and 11 years of age.⁸ The 633 acres were not, however, put into the two sons' names until their mother's death in 1803, when each received title to a tract comprising half of their father's farm. The profits from all the property were to be used to support Elizabeth "as full compensation of [her] dower" rights as his widow and to maintain and educate the children. Some books and household goods were to be sold, either to raise money to build a house on the two-hundred-acre tract or to educate his children. While his younger boys were to be educated or apprenticed for "such trades or callings as they. . . shall chuse [sic]," the oldest boy, James, was to receive "education such as shall entitle him to be called a scholar."

The need for a new house suggests that there was no house on the McLaurines' farm. The couple had apparently made their home at the glebe during their married life and it would be necessary to provide housing for the mother and her young children after Robert McLaurine's death. Rather than build the house on the 200-acre dower section of the property as suggested in the will, a new 50-acre tract on the south side of the Middle Road was acquired in 1774 from neighbor

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Absalom Davenport. The tract was located between the farm of Francis Steger to the west, Absalom Davenport on the east and the larger Robert McLaurine property to the north. In 1777, the new dividing line between Cumberland and Powhatan counties ran through the 633-acre McLaurine property, but the house at Somerset ended up in Powhatan.⁹

It would thus appear that the house now known as Somerset was built (possibly at the direction of the executors of her husband's will) for Elizabeth McLaurine in about 1775 to serve as a home for her young family. Elizabeth McLaurine is shown in the 1783 census as the head of the family of five, with twenty-five taxable slaves.¹⁰ The family chose to live on an adjoining new tract instead of the main farm. This small farm may have been intended to provide a place for the mother to live out her years with her youngest son, Joseph, and those of his sisters who didn't marry. It also prevented any compromise of the extent of the properties of the two older boys by dividing off the 200-acre dower tract as called for in the will.

Joseph McLaurine (1766-1814) did not choose a different career than his brothers. All three McLaurine sons were active in the local affairs and in the military. The two older sons settled on the tracts left them by their father. James (1758-1837), who served at Valley Forge, married Catherine Stegar in 1789 and lived across the road from Somerset at the house he called Edgemont.¹¹ Their grandson, brought up at Edgemont, was Confederate military hero, John Singleton Mosby. William (1761-1845), who served extensively in the Revolutionary War, married Elizabeth Swann in 1782 and named his adjoining farm Fairfield. Joseph lived on the 86 acres with his family as his older brothers married, moved away, and built houses on their inherited farms. He lost a race for Congress by fourteen votes and died in the War of 1812.¹²

Phase II (late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century)

A major rebuilding effort in the late eighteenth century significantly altered the form of the house and gave it a complex plan and a more horizontal appearance. The west wall of the house was removed, including the basement wall, and a new west end wall added twelve feet further to the west. A new internal partition was extended across the original room six feet to the east of the former west wall. This addition reduced the size of the original main room, but extended the overall dimensions of the house. It continued the lines and form of the original dwelling and gave it two main rooms instead of one. The new west room appears to have been the principal chamber. The rear shed continued behind the new section and contained another small chamber. A corner chimney on the interior of the west gable end provided heat to the western room in the main section and the room in the shed. The corner chimney was commonly provided in the region as a means of providing heat to adjacent rooms, including major rooms

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and smaller rooms in leantos. A recent study in Goochland County has revealed a number of smaller rural houses dating from the late eighteenth century which embodied this feature.¹³

New brick partitions were added in the basement to support the relocated first-floor partitions. A new south central-passage entrance and stair were added in the location of the former southwestern bedchamber in the leanto. The foundation was apparently almost

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completely rebuilt in Flemish bond. A few very early areas of the foundation on the east are in English bond, while the oldest surviving sections of the front and rear are in Flemish bond.

It appears that the McLaurine family made significant improvements to the house in the later eighteenth century. The house was enlarged and altered. In 1790, Elizabeth was listed as the person chargeable with personal property tax. Her youngest son, Joseph, was the only free male tithable over 16 years of age. Also listed were seven blacks over 16, one over twelve, and two horses. Clearly the twenty-five slaves recorded there in the 1783 census had been distributed to Robert McLaurine's heirs. On July 21, 1791, Elizabeth McLaurine sold "for love and natural affection which she hath and bears toward her son, Joe McLaurine" eighty-six acres of land for five shillings.¹⁴ Changes made to the house in the 1790s would have made it a more fashionable and comfortable house for Joseph McLaurine's new bride, Susannah Ellis. They are likely responsible for the extension and additions associated with Phase II.

Phase III (early to mid-nineteenth century)

The house was further rethought in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and altered to more closely resemble the wide, center-passage-plan dwellings with matching pairs of exterior end chimneys popular in the region. The corner chimney at the west end was demolished and the partition dividing the shed room and the west room was rebuilt several feet to the north. The foot of a post or stud in the closet off the southwest room is evidence of the original wall location.

The interior chimney at the east end was also removed and replaced by a new Flemish-bond stack on the exterior. The Federal-form mantel in the east room appears to date from Phase III, as its form and scale suggest that it was added in the early nineteenth century. A mantel, "in the front room", probably the same, retained carving which was said to be "wonderfully intact" when it was described in 1937.¹⁵ A photograph from 1958 showing an elaborate mantelpiece with a segmentally arched fireplace opening, cornice and shelf with dentil moldings, paneled overmantel, and flanking, full-height, fluted columns consistent with a late eighteenth-century date may be from another house.¹⁶ There is no evidence of it in the woodwork of either room. A smaller southeast exterior chimney was built probably at about the same time to serve the shed.

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Almost all the interior woodwork, which is, for the most part, consistent from room to room, appears to date from this period, including two-part ogee architrave trim, flush horizontal wainscot, and molded surbase. The front door was replaced with the present double-leaf door at the same time. It matches a new west door between the two chimneys. The current west addition was apparently added as a porch or partially enclosed stairway to the basement. The direct access to the basement suggests that the west basement room, by then ceiled with boards, may have served as a kitchen and the west room above, reached by the stair, as a dining room, in the third

period of the building's history. It probably refers to a slightly later period, but oral history in 1937 indicated that the basement held a kitchen, pantry, and dining room.¹⁷ The current interior stair to the basement dates from a later period. It was probably needed to give family access to a dining room in the basement.

The entire house must have been in very poor repair and must have never been finished on the interior to have received so complete a remodeling in the early nineteenth century, since it was not otherwise enlarged or augmented at that time. Joseph and Susannah McLaurine stayed at Somerset with his mother until her death in 1803. He and Susannah sold the 86-acre tract to a James Gilliam in the following year.¹⁸ Gilliam put together a larger farm by purchasing tracts from adjacent landowners. Gilliam's heirs sold 216 acres including the McLaurine's house to Littleberry H. Mosby in 1816.¹⁹ Mosby and his wife, Louisa, sold the same tract to Daniel Brown in 1821 for \$5,750.00.²⁰ The land tax records for 1822 list Daniel Brown with 215 acres transferred by deed from Littleberry H. Mosby, with the substantial value of \$1500.00 added to the land on account of buildings.²¹

Daniel Brown, his wife Nancy, and their children proceeded to farm the tract, which eventually grew to 1,087 acres, for nearly seventy years. Among their other children, artist Henry James Brown (1811-1854), grew up at Somerset. He was later to achieve some fame as a competent regional portrait painter, listed in several artist indexes.²² A drawing of the house (Plate 3) said to have been done by Henry James Brown, shows a naive or remembered version of the house, with the two dormers shown with shed rather than gable roofs and a confused view of the two chimneys at the west end.²³ It does show a gabled central porch known otherwise only from its shadow or ghost on the paint in a 1937 WPA photo (Plate 4).²⁴

The name of the farm (written "Summer Set" by James McLaurine's granddaughter Cornelia in a family register dated 1890) appears in an 1844 journal entry of Martha Ann Brown as the home of her mother Mrs. Daniel (Nancy) Brown, and in the diary of her sister Mary Cristiana Brown, who recalled moving from Woodlawn to Somerset at the age of two in 1821.²⁵

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The Browns were leaders in their community. On July 6, 1847 the Browns conveyed one acre to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South.²⁶ Hopewell Methodist Church, attended by many of the neighboring families, was built on the tract. Daniel Brown died in 1863 and was buried in the cemetery just to the west of the house. Surrounded by a stone wall with a stone stile and accented by old boxwoods, the graveyard also contains the grave markers of Henry James Brown, other family members, and a minister of the Hopewell Methodist Church.

It is not clear whether the major improvements of Phase III were made for James Gilliam,

Littleberry Mosby, or Daniel Brown. The value of improvements of \$1,500 in the tax records for 1822 suggests that the house was already in good shape when Brown acquired it (although the value for buildings was not provided in the records before 1820). The improvements, which did not increase the size of the house but probably corrected inadequate or deteriorated conditions, were probably made for James Gilliam in the 1810s. Architectural details confirm that date.

Later Alterations

The house had by the later nineteenth century acquired a full complement of outbuildings, several of which survived when the house was surveyed in 1937 as part of an historical inventory project sponsored by the Works Progress Administration. Somerset was described as “very small” but possessing a mantel in the “front room” with intact hand carving. The surveyor felt the basement was the most interesting feature and mentioned that it had contained a kitchen, pantry, and dining room, now “in such a bad condition as to render them unsuitable for use,” but retaining “pegs where shelves once were, frames for drawers, [and] iron fixtures [from which] an old fly fan hung.”²⁷

Exterior features in 1937 included old brick walks; an open, stone-lined well (this still survives); a smokehouse covered in tightly fitted vertical boards; and a frame loom house, said to have been the owner’s first house and relocated from the road to its then-current site. The surveyor interviewed members of the Brown family, who described a three-story granary built into a bank, old barns, and the old Brown family cemetery with its boxwoods and stone wall.

The house received more work in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. A porch was added at some point, centered on the front door and sheltering the flanking windows. The photograph associated with the 1937 survey form (Plate 4) shows the house in poor condition with the ghost of the porch at the entry and louvered blinds at the windows. The slate roof probably dates from the late nineteenth century, as do the two heavy dormer windows. The foundation wall was repaired using American bond brick at some point after the Civil War.

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The house was altered little until the mid-twentieth century, when a bathroom was added on the west side of the rear passage. The west porch or addition was modernized to form a kitchen, although it is not clear just what form it first took or if the addition was always enclosed. While there was no front porch in 1937, there was a new gabled one at the doorway with square, wood posts, in 1958, when the house was surveyed as part of a nationally coordinated Historic American Building Survey project. An interior photograph from 1958 shows the very elaborate classical mantelpiece discussed under Phase II. A note on the form indicates that “drawings of minor architectural details” were deposited with the University of Virginia Library, although a search of their collections has not revealed their location.²⁸

New owners in the mid-twentieth century made repairs to the house without seriously compromising its integrity. They replaced the northwest chimney, repaired the floors, added a bathroom, and replaced several missing mantels. Finally, the exterior was sheathed with aluminum siding. These improvements were probably undertaken by E. M. and Rosalee Walton, who owned the house from 1946 to 1963.

The Waltons were only one couple in a long series of owners who each briefly held the house after the extended and stable period of ownership by the Brown family. The farm called "Somerset," which was platted in 1884, was sold by Daniel Brown's heirs in 1890 to J. O. and A. A. Scott, who sold 885 acres of it to R. B. and Sarah Chaffin in the following year.²⁹ It was foreclosed on five years later by John N. Chaffin and John C. Easterly, trustees, to secure payment of debts.³⁰ They sold it to William Aitkin in 1899.³¹ It was owned from 1914 to 1919 by W. E. Merritt and R. B. Short of Surrey County, North Carolina.³²

W. O. Jackson and his wife, S. A. Jackson bought the property from Merritt and Short in 1919.³³ They, however, defaulted on a \$9,000 deed of trust against the property after the crash of 1929, and it was sold at auction in 1930 to C. R. Merritt, a relative of the previous owner, W. E. Merritt, for \$2,000.00.³⁴ C. R. Merritt divided up the farm into parcels by plat, each of which was divided into smaller tracts. On October 23, 1933, for the sum of \$1,574.00, R. F. Fulton purchased all three tracts of parcel 1 from C. R. Merritt and his wife Lucy O. Merritt.³⁵ Fulton held the 157-acre tract until 1946, when he deeded it to E. M. and Rosalee Walton.³⁶

James Raleigh and Kathleen Willis received the tract, reduced in size by five acres, from the Waltons in 1963.³⁷ Four years later, on April 29, 1967, James Raleigh Willis and his wife, Kathleen Willis sold to Roland Temple Carlton the third tract of Parcel 1.³⁸ Roland Carlton died in about 1980. The Bank of Virginia Trust Company, executor and trustee under his will, transferred the property to Myles and Nancy Lewis.³⁹

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Restoration

Donald H. and Karen M. Hatcher purchased the property, approximately 33 acres, from the Lewises in 1984.⁴⁰ They proceeded to restore the house based on thoughtful consideration and research. The work was done with the advice of Williamsburg architect G. Alan Morledge.⁴¹ Moisture problems were addressed. The beaded weatherboard was exposed, louvered blinds installed on the exterior, the roof and foundation repaired, and the interior plaster and woodwork restored. A modillion cornice was installed on the exterior. Although the surviving outbuildings described in 1937 were demolished in the mid-twentieth-century, the eighteenth-century stone well located a few yards to the east of the house was still being used as late as 1985 and survives

today.⁴² When an intensive survey was performed for VDHR in 1991, a noncontributing twentieth-century frame barn, silo and milk house were still standing.⁴³ They have since been demolished, except the silo.

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Boundary Description

Boundaries for the property at Somerset correspond to the boundaries of lots 17 and 18 on Map 22 on the tax maps of Powhatan County, Virginia. Lot 17 is the small family cemetery on the west side of Route 630 and lot 18 is the 20-acre tract directly across the road associated with the historic Somerset house.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were selected to include all structures that contribute to the historic character of the property.

Section Photos Page 23

Photographs

All photographs are of:

Somerset
Powhatan County, Virginia
Photographer: Gibson Worsham
Date of photograph: May 2005
Location of negative: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
Negative Number: 22761

1. VIEW OF: North front from the NE
PHOTO 1 of 10

9. VIEW OF: Cemetery and wall with stile from E
PHOTO 9 of 10

2. VIEW OF: East end from the SE
PHOTO 2 of 10
3. VIEW OF: South elevation from the SW
PHOTO 3 of 10
4. VIEW OF: Detail of foundation to
north side of east chimney
PHOTO 4 of 10
5. VIEW OF: East end of the NE Room
PHOTO 5 of 10
6. VIEW OF : West end of the NW Room
PHOTO 6 of 10
7. VIEW OF: Passage seen from the NE Room
PHOTO 7 of 10
8. VIEW OF: Interior foundation of
the east chimney
PHOTO 8 of 10
10. VIEW OF: Shed and the adjoining silo from W
PHOTO 10 of 10

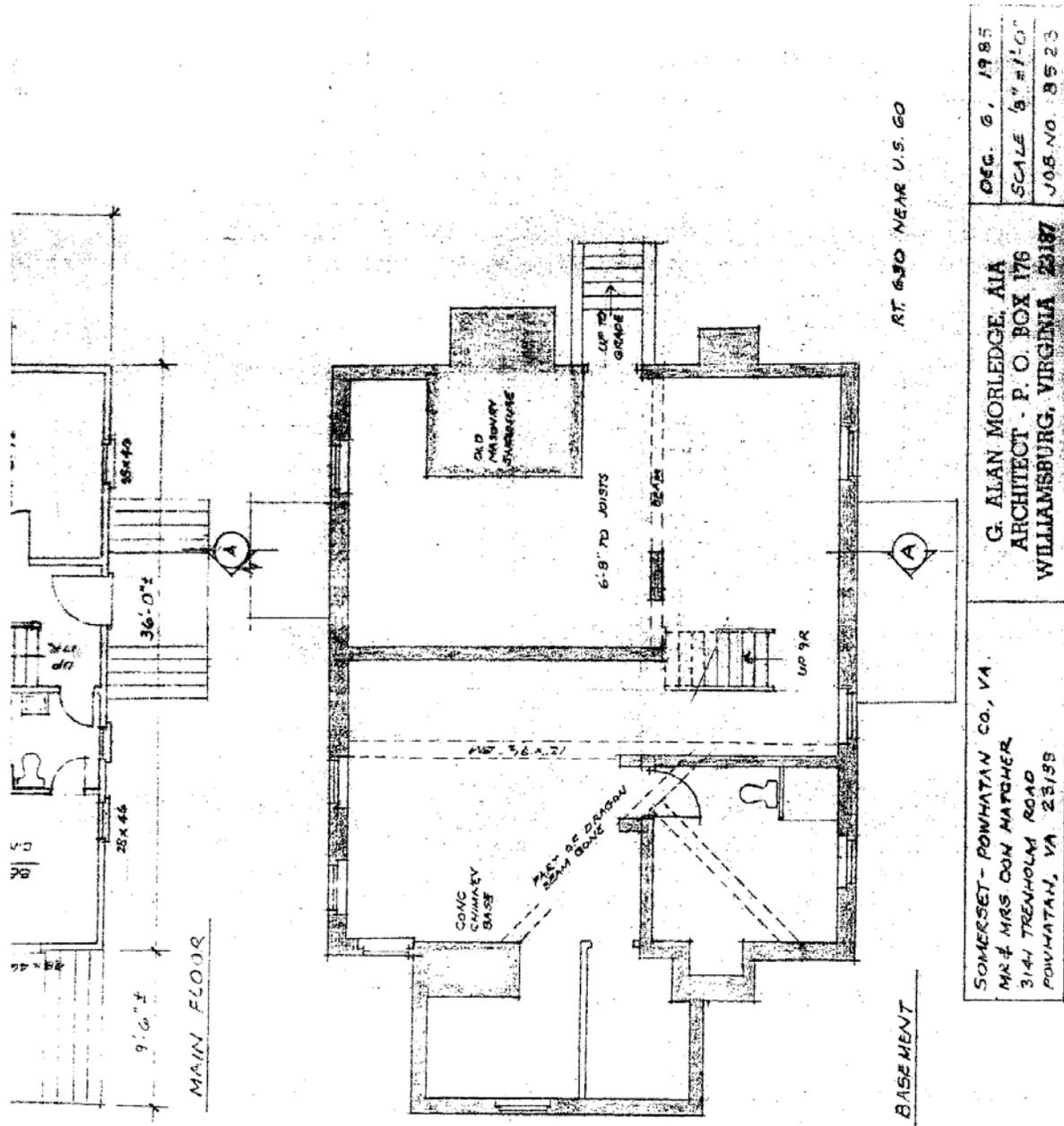


Plate 1
Basement Floor Plan

G. Alan Morledge, A.I.A. Measured drawings. Somerset, Powhatan County. 6 Dec 1985.

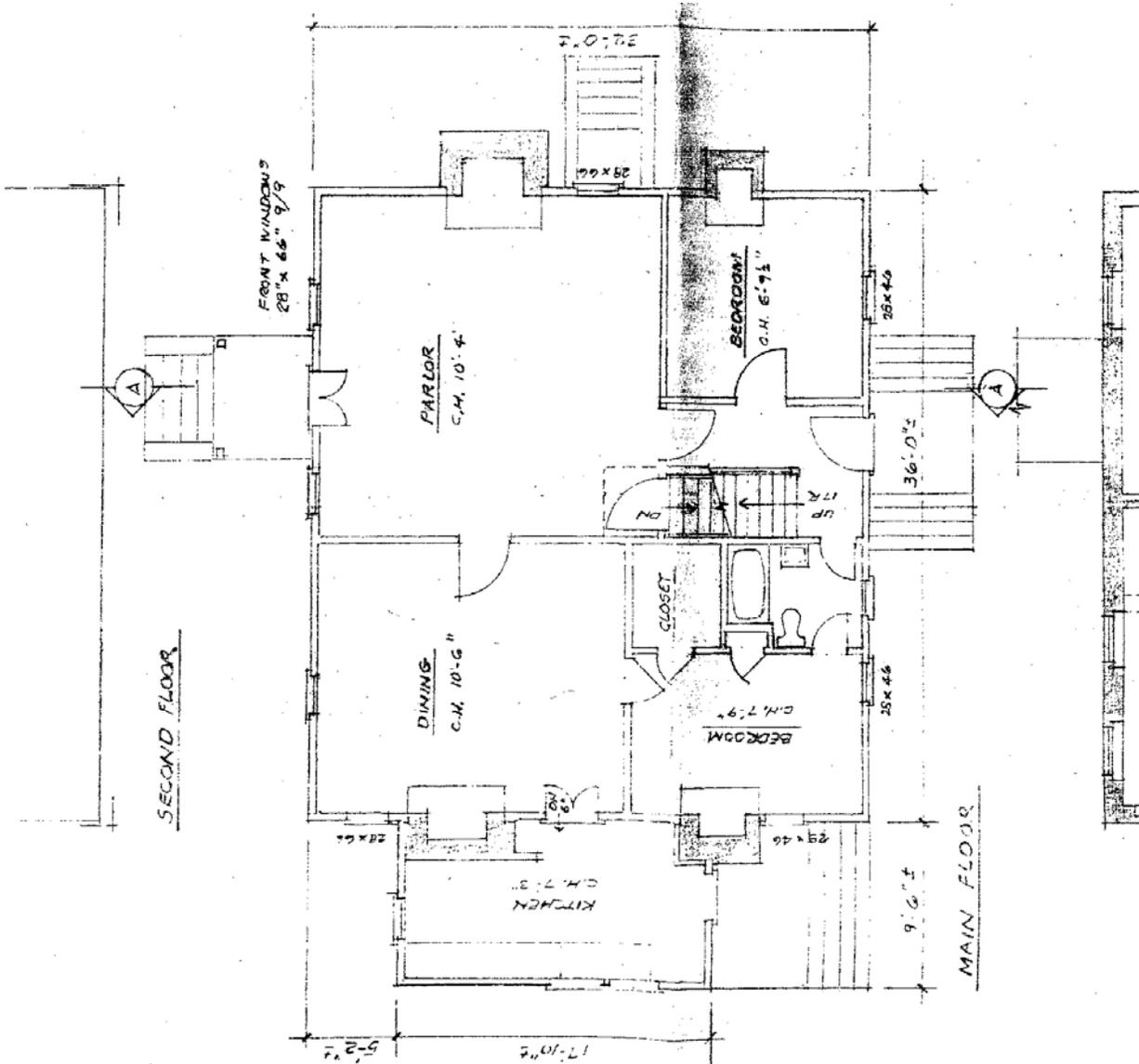


Plate 2
First Floor Plan

G. Alan Morledge, A.I.A. Measured drawings. Somerset, Powhatan County. 6 Dec 1985.

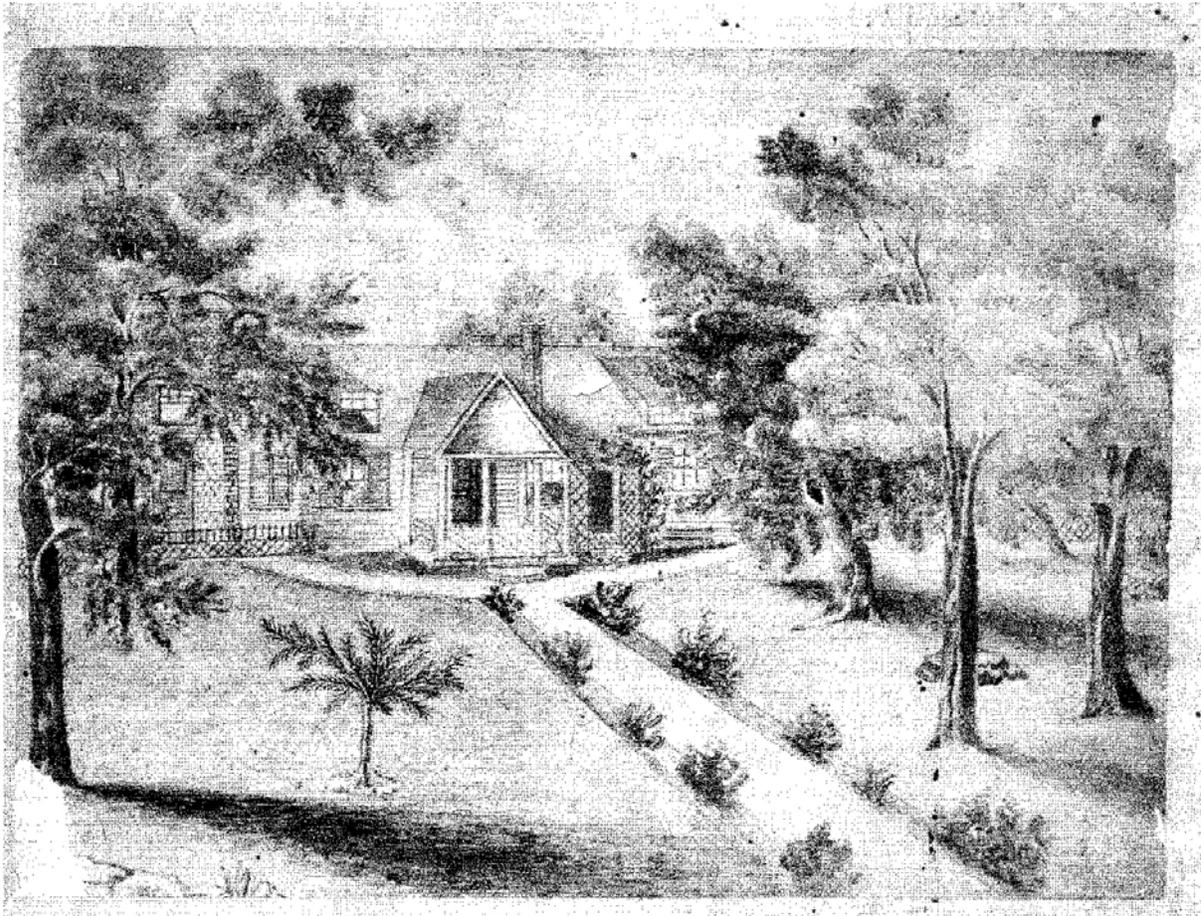


Plate 3

“Somerset- Home of Henry James Brown”

A drawing of the house said to have been done by Henry James Brown, Brown family papers

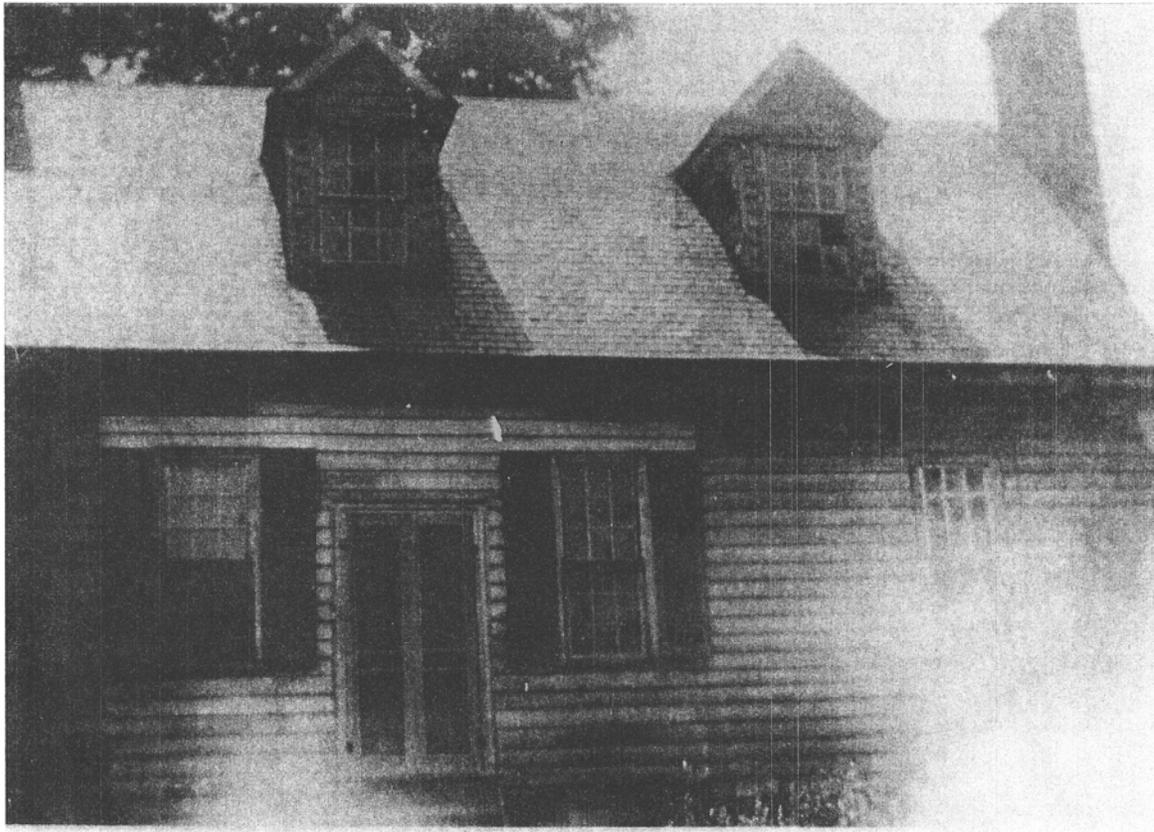


Plate 4

Photograph associated with the 1937 survey form. Elizabeth A. Rust. Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historical Inventory. "Somerset," Site # PO-113, 1937. Library of Virginia, Richmond VA.

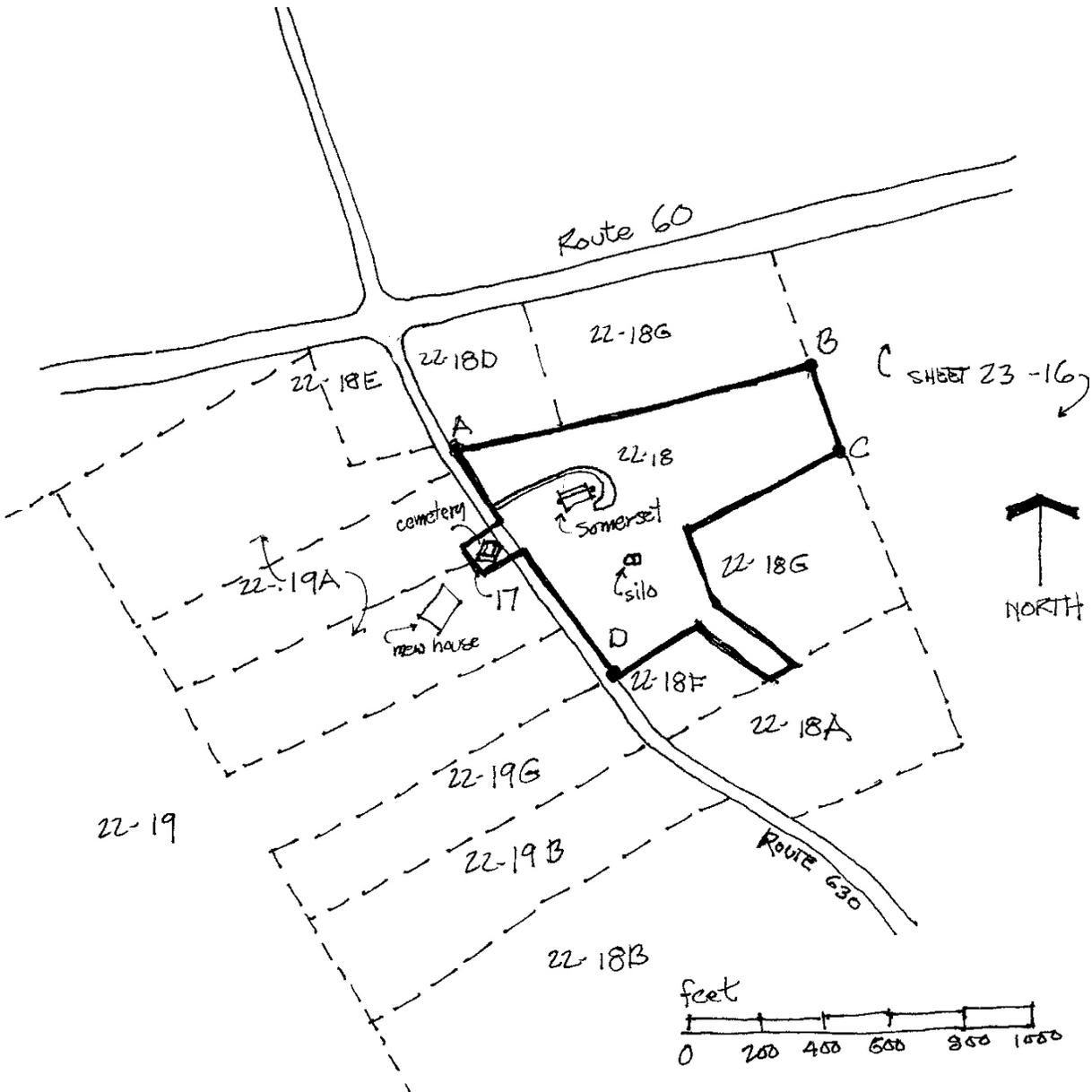


Plate 5
Map of Somerset Tract

Endnotes

- ¹ Rust 1937
 - ² Wiggins 1958
 - ³ Wiggins 1958
 - ⁴ Cumberland County Deed Book 5: 252
 - ⁵ Powhatan County Deed Book 1: 462
 - ⁶ Powhatan County Deed Book 1: 615
 - ⁷ Goodwin: 289
 - ⁸ Cumberland County Will Book 2: 104
 - ⁹ McLaurine 1950: 147-151
 - ¹⁰ McLaurine 1950: 163
 - ¹¹ Powhatan County Marriage Register
 - ¹² McLaurine 1950: 147-151
 - ¹³ Worsham 2004
 - ¹⁴ Powhatan County Deed Book 1: 669
 - ¹⁵ Rust 1937
 - ¹⁶ Wiggins 1958
 - ¹⁷ Rust 1937
 - ¹⁸ Powhatan County Deed Book 3: 219
 - ¹⁹ Powhatan County Deed Book 6: 93
 - ²⁰ Powhatan County Deed Book 7: 638
 - ²¹ Powhatan County Land Book 1822
 - ²² Wright 1983
 - ²³ Brown family papers
- Section 8 Page 19**
- ²⁴ Rust 1937
 - ²⁵ Brown family papers
 - ²⁶ Powhatan Deed Book 17: 440

²⁷ Rust 1937

²⁸ Wiggins 1958; Johnson 2005

²⁹ Powhatan Deed Book 27: 586

³⁰ Powhatan County Deed Book 29: 334

³¹ Powhatan County Deed Book 30: 328

³² Powhatan County Deed Book 37: 463

³³ Powhatan County Deed Book 41: 138

³⁴ Powhatan County Deed Book 47: 38

³⁵ Powhatan County Deed Book 48: 484

³⁶ Powhatan County Deed book 57: 193

³⁷ Powhatan County Deed Book 79: 255

³⁸ One of the three tracts shown on the plat of 1933, recorded in Powhatan County Deed Book 48: 484 and
Powhatan County Deed Book 85: 616

³⁹ Powhatan County Deed Book 150: 1

⁴⁰ Powhatan County Deed Book 170: 427

⁴¹ Morledge 1985

⁴² Rust 1937

⁴³ Driggs 1991

Somerset
Powhatan Co.
072-0040

Zone 17

Easting Northing

1) 757031 4159673

2) 757430 4159823

3) 757453 4159683

4) 757237 4159422

TRENHUM QUAD

4158

