

VLR 6-18-3
NRHP 10-23-3

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 Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House (087-5377)

other names/site number Zebulon Simmons Tract

2 Location

street & 17123 Cary's Bridge Road not for publication
number _____
city or town Courtland vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Southampton code 175 Zip 23837

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 9/4/03
Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. Rational Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: _____ other (explain): _____
_____ entered in the National Register _____ Date of Action
_____ See continuation sheet.
_____ determined eligible for the National Register _____ Signature of Keeper
_____ See continuation sheet.
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register
_____ removed from the National Register

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: _____ other (explain): _____

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

Date of Action

_____ determined eligible for the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of Keeper

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

Name of Property: Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
Location: Southampton County, Virginia

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation CONCRETE

Roof METAL

Walls WOOD

Other

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.
- 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)

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Name of Property: **Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House**
Location: **Southampton County, Virginia**

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1858

Significant Dates 1858 – Expansion of house

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder James Edward Sebrell

See Continuation Sheet for other Architects

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 54.57

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

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Name of Property: **Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House**
Location: **Southampton County, Virginia**

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing		
1	<u>18</u>	<u>310120</u>	<u>4073000</u>	3	<u>18</u>	<u>310020</u>	<u>4073020</u>
2	<u>18</u>	<u>310040</u>	<u>4073080</u>	4	<u>18</u>	<u>309160</u>	<u>4073160</u>

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: Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian

Organization _____ date: 15 April 2003

street & number P. O. Box 7638 telephone 757/623.3456

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23509

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 Stafford Vermont Camp, III

street & number 18466 Plank Road telephone 757 / 653 . 2477

city or town Courtland state VA zip code 23837

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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**Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
Southampton County, Virginia**

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Architectural Description

Summary Architectural Description

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House is an Italianate-style, frame farmhouse situated at an 18th century crossroads community. Originally constructed in circa 1770, the main dwelling was expanded in the mid-19th century to its current appearance. The building has a symmetrical façade with an elaborate two-story porch. There is a secondary entrance on the northeast elevation, within an incorporated porch. The house has an irregular plan, which is evidence of its evolution from a modest late 18th century dwelling to its current state. The two entries access an L-shaped hall off of which the primary rooms are situated. There is a stair ascending to the second story to a similarly planned floor. Evidence of the building's expansion in 1858 can be seen in the repair of the wood floor in the second story hall and the remaining roof structure in attic. Additionally, a 2002-rear addition replaces the original kitchen and ell that connected the main house to the kitchen.

There are four outbuildings on site, which support the agricultural function of the property. A brick cellar is located to the east of the dwelling, and three larger-scale frame agricultural buildings are located to the southeast. In addition, two agricultural fields flank the dwelling and outbuildings.

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House consists of one contributing building, four contributing structures, and two contributing sites. The property has a high architectural style with decorative elements, which support National Register Criteria C.

Architectural Description

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House is located in Southampton County, which is situated in the southeastern part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The house is located approximately a ½-mile from the town of Sebrell at an intersection of roadways that comprises the former 18th century village of Barn Tavern. The land is open and flat, and the buildings in the village are primarily sited away from the roadways. There is a cemetery adjacent to an early 19th century tavern keeper's house, which is positioned at the head of the T-shaped intersection.

The primary building on the Simmons-Sebrell-Camp property is the single-family dwelling, which is located on the south corner of the intersection of Barn Tavern Road and Cary's Bridge Road, facing northwest to Cary's Bridge Road. The building is sited approximately 350 feet from both roadways. There is a long unimproved driveway leading from Cary's Bridge Road to the dwelling. Located to the rear of the dwelling, at the southeast, are outbuildings supporting the agricultural function of the

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Southampton County, Virginia**

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property. Flanking the dwelling and outbuildings are two flat agricultural fields. Trees are mainly found around the dwelling and at the south boundary.

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House is a two-story, Italianate, single-family dwelling. The dwelling was constructed circa 1770 and has been in continuous use as a dwelling. The main house was originally a smaller two-story building expanded in 1858 to its current appearance. A two-story porch with bracketed cornice dominates the northwest façade. The façade is symmetrical and has five bays with a central entrance. Additional Italianate details, such as full-height windows are seen on the façade. The main door is paneled, double-leaf, wood and is flanked by sidelights, and surmounted by a transom.

The building has a secondary façade on the northeast elevation, with a rounded arch entrance within an incorporated porch. The projecting wall has articulated surrounds on the segmental-arch, full-height windows. In addition, there are verge boards in the gable and a raking, bracketed cornice with dentils and a wide frieze. The porch posts, which shelter the secondary entrance, have decorative elements and support a hipped roof, which joins the main roof.

The main roof is a side-gable with a cross-gable to the rear, treated with standing-seam metal. Piercing the roof on the southwest elevation is an interior brick chimney. There is another interior chimney located near the secondary entrance on the northeast elevation at the junction of the cross-gable. In addition, there is an interior brick chimney at the southeast end of the cross-gable block. It was added in the 1858 addition to the room that extends off the rear of the dwelling and now houses the dining room and bedroom.

The rear of the building has an addition made in 2002. It is frame with similar proportions found on the original dwelling. It replaces a 1945-era ell that linked the original detached kitchen to the main house. The house had an extensive renovation in 2002, which included a restoration of the exterior elements and a replacement of the foundation to concrete block piers with a brick skirt.

The interior of the dwelling reflects the expansions with its L-shaped hall and irregular floor plan. The dwelling is comprised of the 1858-expanded house and 2002 addition. The house contains three rooms in the original 1858 portion, which are accessed by the L-shaped main hall. The hall surrounds the living room, which is believed to be a portion of the older segment of the house. There is a mid-19th century chimney and mantel on the southeast wall of the living room. The flooring is wood and the walls are plaster on lathe. The windows are double-leaf, two-light, casements with a two-light transom, and are full height.

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There is a wood stair ascending to the second story along the southwest wall of the hall. The balusters and newel post are turned. The hall is configured so it is centered on the main door and secondary door. The stair is not centered in the hall, which creates an asymmetrical space.

The original dwelling's layout encompassed a typical two-room, hall-parlor plan. The area that comprises the original layout is comprised of the first story bedroom to the southwest, the main hall to where the southeast wall of the living room is visible in the L-shaped hall, and living room to the front of the fireplace on the southeast wall. The stair was located along the living room's southeast wall adjacent to the former chimney located at the original northeast wall.

During the expansion in 1858, the rooms of the original dwelling were subdivided, which included the formation of the existing hallway. The hall was formed by the division of one of the original rooms. The house was also lengthened, which is seen in the expansion of the living room to its current size. The northeast wall was moved approximately 10 feet out to its current location. The stair was relocated to the newly configured hall. The hall was extended northeast along what would have been the exterior wall of the living room to the secondary entrance. Remnants of the original are visible in the attic with extant wood shingles. The house's original form would have been similar to the adjacent properties constructed during approximately the same period.

To the rear or southeast of the hall extension is another room that was added to the first and second stories. It is currently the dining room on the first story and a bedroom on the second story. This room is accessed off the expanded hall. It contains a wood mantel with simplified classical decoration. To the rear of this room is the 2002-addition, which is similar in size and scale to the original ell and detached kitchen. It is one-story with wood flooring and modern windows. It houses a family room, kitchen and lavatory.

The wall finishes are plaster on lathe and the flooring is wood. Doorframes are simple with 6-panel and 2-panel doors. The second story has a lower ceiling and shorter door openings. Simplified, classical mantels are retained on the second story as well. The stair balustrade that surrounds the second story opening is turned and there are two turned posts that mask metal pipes, which support the second story hall from the roof structure.

Above the hallway at the entrance is a lavatory with modern fixtures. There is another modern lavatory to the south of the first story bedroom. It is tucked under the stairs as well as within the mid-19th century cross-gable block.

The 2002-renovation included the addition of articulated pantries, closets, chair rail and cornices. The

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**Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
Southampton County, Virginia**

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baseboards are original.

To the southeast of the dwelling are four outbuildings. There is a low 1-story brick building directly to the east of the dwelling, which is a former cold storage building or cellar. The bond is irregular with stretcher and header bonds at varying intervals. It has a gable roof and low wood door. The roof is treated with standing-seam metal and wood weatherboard dominates the gables. It most likely dates to the mid-19th century.

To the southeast are three larger-scale agricultural support buildings. They are frame with standing seam metal roofs. The barn closest to the dwelling is wood weatherboard and has two stories. There is a wood door and flanking shed-roof open storage bays. It dates to the late 19th century. The two other outbuildings are one-story with openings at the gable ends. These date to the early 20th century.

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Statement of Significance (con't)

Summary Statement of Significance

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House was constructed in the late-18th century on lands between two Nottoway Indian parcels that the tribe sold off in the 18th century. The dwelling is one of four prominent buildings situated at a crossroads community known as Barn Tavern. Barn Tavern was located 7 miles from Jerusalem, now Courtland, the county seat of Southampton County, on a roadway that led from Jerusalem and points southeast to Petersburg. Barn Tavern was named for a tavern that was situated at the crossroads. In addition to the tavern at Barn Tavern, there were three farmhouses privately owned by the families associated with the tavern. John Simmons had the house constructed circa 1770 and James Edward Sebrell had the dwelling expanded in 1858. The Simmons family is primarily responsible for the settlement in the area of Barn Tavern and was active in local politics. James E. Sebrell, who married into the Simmons family, continued the Simmons tradition of political involvement bringing a County office to the small village.

The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House meets Criteria C. The high architectural style with decorative elements supports Criteria C.

Statement of Significance

Barn Tavern and the Simmons Family

The Nottoway Indians originally occupied the land on which Southampton County is located. The English settlers did not encounter the Indian settlement until 1650 when a merchant, Edward Bland, heading to North Carolina, discovered an Indian village, which was 25 miles southeast of Petersburg.¹ The contact between the English and Nottoway was occasional until 1677 when the authority was given to the Indians for “free and full liberty” to trade with the English.² The relationship between the Nottoway Indian tribe and the English settlers was friendly as compared to the hostilities the English suffered from the Algonquian Indians, who were still raiding English settlements and settlers in the 1670s.

In 1677, the Nottoway and the English signed a revised *Treaty of Middle Plantation*, which made them a tributary of the colony of Virginia.³ The English provided protection to the Nottoway from aggressors and the Nottoway agreed to provide advance warning of attacks by Indian tribes located to the west. The Nottoway upheld their portion of the agreement, but felt that the English did not fulfill their responsibility to the treaty. This led to the tribe’s move farther inland away from English settlements near the Assamoosick Swamp, which is located in present-day Sussex and Southampton Counties, north of Sebrell.

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There they founded *Indian Town*, as named by the English, with a fort and village supplied with water.⁴

With profitability of tobacco crops and the financial instability of the Virginia Company, lands were needed by English settlers for planting. The settlers' occupation of new lands gradually expanded southward toward the Nottoway village. Officially the land in the Nottoway region was not open to English settlers until 1699. There was some conflict between the English and Nottoways prior to 1699, which were primarily due to English squatters occupying Nottoway lands and the killing of Nottoway hogs, which ran unmarked and free in the area surrounding the village.⁵

Increased conflicts between 1699 and 1705 led to the establishment of boundaries delineating the Nottoway Indian lands. The House of Burgesses established an area defined as a three-mile radius forming a circle around the Nottoway village, and another tract south of the Nottoway River, six miles square. The circular tract was located north of the Barn Tavern area, and the square tract was located approximately 1-1/2 miles southwest of present-day Sebrell and Barn Tavern, on the south side of the Nottoway River.⁶

The Nottoway village became isolated from its traditional cultural means of survival, and limited by its new geographic restrictions. The lands surrounding the village became predominantly agricultural to support the four hundred villagers. The wildlife, which the Indians had hunted for food had become scarce due to the open cultivated fields. Trade with English settlers was not profitable enough to support the village and the debts owed by the Nottoway steadily increased. Unable to adequately support themselves and pay debts, they petitioned the House of Burgesses in 1734 to sell the land surrounding the village.⁷

The House granted their request and appointed trustees to oversee the sale. The trustees appointed were John Simmons, Thomas Cocke and Benjamin Edwards, residents of the Barn Tavern area.⁸ In 1735, 22 tracts, which was one-fourth of the circular tract around the village, had been sold at auction. They were primarily located along the fresh-water Assoomosick Swamp.⁹

Purchasers of the west side of the Assomoosick from the approximate center of the tract to the southeast portion of the tract and two parcels on the east side of the swamp at the south end were made by the Simmons family. John Simmons Minor, John Simmons Jr., William Simmons, William Simmons Jr., Colonel John Simmons, and Benjamin Simmons had purchased tracts along the swamp, while Charles Simmons and Henry Simmons had purchased parcels at the southeast edge, which was adjacent to present day town of Sebrell and village of Barn Tavern.¹⁰ The Simmons family was prominent in the development of the village of Barn Tavern, which was a crossroads for two major land routes between North Carolina and Petersburg, Virginia.

The village of Barn Tavern is located just southeast of the 3-mile circle surrounding the Nottoway village.

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According to documents made by the Division of History in 1937, there was a plank road, which was an improved road primarily of planks laid on the dirt tracks, leading to Petersburg from Jerusalem, currently Courtland, the county seat of Southampton County. A tavern was constructed at the intersection of the Belfield Road that led south to North Carolina, and Plank Road, which led from Jerusalem, which met with Belfield at this location. The tavern was named, Barn Tavern, and is noted as a stopping place for Senators heading to Washington from the south.¹¹ William Simmons constructed the tavern in circa 1761.¹²

According to William Simmons' will of 1775, he had a plantation house and other plantation houses and lands, which he willed to his wife, who was guardian for his son, Daniel, and his two sons, John and Thomas. The document states that Daniel would inherit from his mother, the plantation "where he lives now lying between the village branch of the Cossunkahanah (sp) branch leading from Cary's Bridge to Wolf Pit, being part of a tract he bought from Henry Browne" and the use of a 350-acre tract on the north side of the Cossunkanahah (sp) branch bound from Thomas Langley.¹³ Daniel would later be actively involved in the operation of the Barn Tavern and with the village's development.

Early documentation referring to Barn Tavern appears in a post office directory of early 19th century post offices. According to the records, a post office was located at Barn Tavern with the appointment of Richard H. Simmons as the postmaster in October 1810. The date of creation of the post office is unknown, as well as if there was a postmaster that predated Richard Simmons. This post office was extant until 1814, when it was discontinued.¹⁴

By 1831, a post office was established at Farm Tavern with Daniel Simmons, mostly likely a descendant of William Simmons, as postmaster. It was only extant for 11 months, and was discontinued in January 1832.¹⁵ Farm Tavern most likely was Barn Tavern, possibly renamed for an unknown reason. The name, *Farm Tavern*, appears again in 1835 in Martin's Gazetteer. It is listed as one of the main towns, villages or post offices in Southampton County. Farm Tavern had a post office and was 90 miles south-southeast of Richmond and 210 miles south of Washington, DC.¹⁶

The following year, 1836, a new reference appears, which is Farmers Grove. Farmers Grove appears in the 1836 edition of Martin's Gazetteer and in the early post office records. The location of Farmers Grove is identical to the location of Farm Tavern, which appeared in the 1835 Gazetteer.¹⁷ The post office was founded at Farmer Grove 7 April 1836.¹⁸ Early maps such as the Burr Map of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware of 1839 shows Farmers Grove located near the intersection of Belfield and Plank Roads just north of Barn Tavern.¹⁹ Additionally, the official post office records show the post office at the intersection.²⁰ The renaming of the town may also be due to the destruction of the tavern in 1835 by a tornado. According to local history, the tavern was blown across the road into the fields of an adjacent farm.²¹

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Barn Tavern or Farmers Grove was a thriving village in the 1800s. There was a school, Barn Tavern Academy, which has its earliest reference in 1840.²² The school was expanded in 1853.²³ James E. Sebrell, the future member of the House of Delegates and County Treasurer, was the headmaster from 1853 to the outset of the Civil War.²⁴ In addition, there was a cemetery, slave cemetery, and small shops that lined the Plank Road leading from Jerusalem at the intersection with Belfield Road.²⁵ The crossroads community was prominent in Southampton County outside of Jerusalem and Franklin.

In the late 19th century, a prominent citizen of Barn Tavern was appointed to state legislative offices as well as county offices. In 1874 James E. Sebrell was elected County Treasurer of Southampton County. He then was elected to the House of Delegates in 1887, serving one term.²⁶ Sebrell had also been postmaster of the Farmers Grove post office from 1856 to 1866. Following him in this position was his wife Anne.²⁷

The post office had been renamed Sebrell in 1880 with the appointment of Tim M. Sebrell.²⁸ It is noted in local history that the village was named Sebrell in honor of the Sebrell family. Most likely, the town of Sebrell continued the name of the post office, which would have been a unique name in Virginia. Though the post office was renamed, there are still references to Barn Tavern in documents from this period. The village continued to grow steadily until the arrival of the Virginia Railroad.

In 1908, the Virginian Railroad purchased a right-of-way near Barn Tavern, approximately ½-mile south of the village. The railroad crossed both the Belfield and Barn Tavern Roads. Part of the railroad plan included a stop at Sebrell, which at this point had become a flourishing crossroads village.

The Virginian Railroad was a major contribution to the settlement of Sebrell in the 1910s. The Virginian Railroad was a “dream” for former Standard Oil magnate, H. H. Rogers. Rogers was a New Englander who made his first millions affiliated with John D. Rockefeller in the investment of the oil fields in Pennsylvania. Rogers associated with Colonel William N. Page of West Virginia to form the Virginian Railroad, which connected the coalmines of western Virginia and West Virginia to Sewalls Point (currently Sewells Point) in Norfolk, Virginia. This connection provided a means of shipping coal via ship various locations from Sewalls Point.²⁹

The Virginian Railroad was formed from a merger of the Tidewater Railroad and the Deepwater Railroad in 1907. The Deepwater Railroad was begun in 1898 by Colonel Page in West Virginia to facilitate the transport of goods from Page’s lumber business. The railroad was comprised originally of a 4 mile spur that connected to the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Deepwater, West Virginia. In 1902, their charter allowed them to extend to the Virginia coalfields.³⁰

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Colonel William N. Page began the Tidewater Railroad in 1904 with financial backing from H. H. Rogers. The goal of the railroad was to run a track from Sewalls Point to the coalfields in western Virginia, which would eventually connect with the Deepwater Railroad. In March 1907, Tidewater Railroad was in the process of laying 330 miles of track from Sewalls Point to western Virginia, when the Deepwater Railroad merged with it. The two became the Virginian Railroad in 1909 when the track had been completed and the railroad opened.

Passenger service began July 12, 1909 on the Virginia Railroad stopping at stations between Sewalls Point and Deepwater, West Virginia. One of the stops along the route was Sebrell Station, which was a daily stop on the railroad. The station was located on the railroad tracks and Plank Road near their juncture.

In 1925 Rogers agreed to lease the Virginian Railroad to Norfolk and Western Railroad for 999 years due to Norfolk and Western's interest in acquiring the lines from the coal piers on Sewalls Point. Permission was denied by the Interstate Commerce Commission due to the concern over the monopoly of the coal piers and shipping from Norfolk. In 1959, permission was finally granted and the Virginian officially became Norfolk and Western's line. It was closed shortly thereafter since established routes to the western part of the state were already in possession by Norfolk and Western. Sebrell no longer had an active railroad traveling through its community.³¹

Most of the town's development occurred near the intersection of the roadway and the railroad, which was approximately a ½-mile from Barn Tavern. The buildings within the village of Sebrell date between 1910 and 1920, and most were constructed near the intersection of the Plank Road and railroad. The school, post office, and shops were relocated to the village center.

The addition of the Camp Stave Mill and a cotton gin to Sebrell were indicative of the types of agribusiness that developed out of rural life in Southampton County. These industrial businesses grew out of the abundance of timber and the fields of cotton and various other crops grown in the region. The railroad enabled these businesses to flourish and transport their product to the eastern and western parts of Virginia.

The railroad also enabled area merchants to transport goods to market directly from Sebrell versus traveling on land routes to navigable waterways. The Nottoway River was navigable by ship, while the nearby creeks were navigable to boats with a shallow draft. Farmers had a new way to truck produce to market, which was much quicker for goods that spoiled or ripened faster. While the waterways were still used as a source to transport goods, the addition of the railroad brought farmers to Sebrell to deliver their agricultural goods for transport. In addition to farmers within the immediate

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area, surrounding farmers converged on Sebrell for access to the railroad.

The decline of the village of Sebrell as a commercial center is attributed to the rise of the automobile and the poverty caused by the Great Depression. The first and foremost was the rise of the automobile as a source of transportation. The ability and flexibility of farmers to move their produce to market bypassed the village center. The goods could be transported to the ports of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Elizabeth City, NC without intermediate stops. The automobile also provided residents with the mobility to travel to adjacent towns, or the city for their shopping needs. This increased competition for the small commercial interests that had developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were unable to compete with cheaper markets in the larger cities.³²

The Great Depression affected the rural farming communities in the United States. Farmers' markets were cut short, which lessened their cash flow. The lack of local income proved to precipitate the demise of the commercial core. Storeowners, whose businesses had thrived, saw losses since the farming community could not afford to purchase items with cash.

In 1931 the roadway that was Plank Road between Courtland, now renamed Jerusalem, and Barn Tavern was reoriented to skirt both Sebrell and Barn Tavern. It allowed traffic to continue at an accelerated rate without stopping in the small town. This allowed both Barn Tavern and Sebrell to retain their historic character, but effectively lessened the outside traffic flow through the commercial core.³³

The decline reached its peak after World War II, when many families had left the rural towns for work in larger cities. The cities afforded better wages, and employment opportunities were much more plentiful in the industrial urban centers. While the decline was steady in the 1940s, the closure of the railroad in 1959, and finally the post office in 1968 were the last two major links to the outside world.

Barn Tavern's growth from an 18th century crossroads community to Sebrell a rural 20th century village occurred within a 200-years span. From its humble beginnings as a small late 18th century crossroads community to an early 20th century vibrant small town, the two communities are vestiges of their own periods. Both lie intact quiescent.

Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House

From early records, it appears that John and Lucy Simmons divided their 800-acre lands between their two sons, Charles and Benjamin. In 1797, a 350-acre parcel of land was deed to Charles, and Benjamin received a larger parcel of 450-acres. There is no reference to the location of the lands, but it is the earliest

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document that conclusively is linked to the sale of the Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House.³⁴

John and Lucy Simmons were married in 1768 and John was the son of Charles, whose father was John Simmons, Jr.³⁵ According to family genealogy and county records, there were numerous Johns, designated as John Sr., John Jr., Captain John, John of Charles, John of William, etc. Earlier documentation of the house and lands is difficult due to number of Johns that appear during the late 18th century and their relationships to one another.

It is suspected that John and Lucy Simmons constructed the dwelling on lands they most likely inherited or purchased from other Simmons family members. Their 1797 deeds to their sons do not outline a location of the parcels nor refer to buildings or other improvements to the property. It is not until Charles Simmons will that a reference to the dwelling house appears. He and his wife, Hannah, sold a 136-acre portion of the lands to Benjamin Simmons in 1829. A reference in this will lists this parcel as “the part on which the dwelling house stands.” It also lists property owners that bound the property. Daniel Simmons, Mason Simmons, Ames Drake and John Simmons are immediate neighbors.³⁶ It is known that Daniel Simmons owned and operated the Barn Tavern.

The property was used for farming, which was the primary business of those residing at Barn Tavern. From early tax records, the Simmons family owned large parcels of land ranging from 500 to over 1000 acres. To support their farmers they employed the use of slaves. In the 1780s, the Simmons families had anywhere from one to 29 slaves in their possession. In addition to slaves, they held horses, and heads of cattle.³⁷

Benjamin and Laura Simmons only owned the parcel for five years before selling it to Zebulon L. Simmons and his wife Louisa in 1834.³⁸ Like Charles Simmons, Zebulon only owned the house a short number of years before selling it to Sterling Lanier of Washington County, Mississippi. By this point the parcel had grown again and was 224 acres.³⁹ The property was then used to secure payment for a debt by Daniel W. Simmons, who had become the trustee for the property he had acquired in 1845 from Sterling Lanier. Simmons sold two parcels to William J. Sebrell, which were the Zebulon Simmons tract and a 300-acre tract called the Barn Tavern tract.⁴⁰

The Sebrells and Simmons were related by marriage in the early 19th century. William Jones Sebrell was a Whig and served in the House of Delegates in 1857.⁴¹ His son, James Edward, to whom he willed the plantation property also served in the House of Delegates in 1887-1888. In addition, Sebrell was the County Treasurer from 1874 until 1887.⁴² It was James Edward Sebrell who was responsible for substantially improving the plantation house in 1858 into its current appearance.

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James Edward Sebrell, in addition to serving in the House of Delegates, was also the postmaster of Farmers Grove. He has graduated from Richmond Medical College in June 1853 and was principal of the Barn Tavern Academy, for boys, until the outset of the Civil War. From 1 February 1864 until the close of the Civil War, Sebrell was a sergeant major in Company A, 18th Virginia Battalion Infantry. During the Civil War, he was captured by the Union and held at Point Lookout.⁴³ He relinquished his role as postmaster of Farmers Grove in 1866 to Anne, his wife, who held the position until 1880.⁴⁴

His major renovation project at his plantation house included the expansion of the dwelling to approximately twice its size. He retained the original portion and added a new stair, perpendicular hall and block to the rear. The changes also included the secondary entrance that faced the Plank Road (also called Jerusalem Plank Road and now called Barn Tavern Road). Most of the house's details, such as doors, doorframes, and mantels were updated to the current taste in architectural design. The most extensive remodeling occurred at the northeast elevation. He removed an original chimney, and constructed another at the southeast wall. In addition, he elongated the house to create the symmetry seen today on the façade.

The house style is Italianate vernacular with the overall proportion and verticality that defined the style. The northeast elevation, with its secondary entrance exhibits the tall vertical windows with decorative window surrounds. This elevation lends much more to the Italianate style in terms of proportion and decoration. The façade retains the Italianate symmetry reinforced by the symmetrical porch. This was achieved by relocating windows on the façade and extending the northeast wall.

The Italianate style was a reaction to the formal classical ideals of architecture and an embrace of the Picturesque movement precipitated by Andrew Jackson Downing. He had published various pattern books that exhibited rural picturesque houses that typified the English countryside. This style was reinforced by the writings of Calvert Vaux, Samuel Sloan, and others.⁴⁵ The style was defined by decorative cornices, windows that display arched hoods, and decorative porches. The Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House is an example of a vernacular Italianate, rural, single-family dwelling.

Documentary evidence of the house's expansion is seen in the County tax records. An increase in taxes to \$400 in 1858 was twice the former year's assessment. It was also twice the amount of the assessments of the surrounding properties in Barn Tavern.⁴⁶

To serve the citizens of Southampton County, Sebrell constructed a two-story office, which no longer remains, in front of the dwelling on Belfield Road, now Cary's Bridge Road.⁴⁷ Sebrell occupied the dwelling until 1895, when he sold the parcel to W. H. Gray.⁴⁸ Gray, like Sebrell, assumed control of the post office shortly after acquiring the house in 1898.⁴⁹ His death in 1908 left unpaid debts and his family was forced to sell the parcel to the highest bidder who was Stafford Vermont Camp.⁵⁰

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Camp, who had been born in 1873, had been reared at the house by James E. Sebrell in his younger years.⁵¹ His wife, Romaine Sebrell, daughter of Benjamin Sebrell of Barn Tavern, was orphaned at 4-1/2 years and also became a ward of James E. Sebrell. The two grew up together at the dwelling, later marrying in 1893.⁵²

Camp assumed the property in 1909, and like the previous two owners also assumed control of the post office.⁵³ The post office was located on the Camp parcel near the north end adjacent to Camp's Stave Mill and the Virginian Railroad Tracks which had been constructed in 1908. Camp made minor changes to the property adding only an ell between the house and kitchen house in 1945. In addition the property was electrified. The house and parcel was passed to Stafford Vermont, Jr. in 1954 and then to Stafford Vermont III, who renovated the property in 2002. During this renovation, Camp III removed the 1945 addition and kitchen house, which had become deteriorated, and modernized the dwelling to 2002 standards. The renovation included a restoration of the original 1858 dwelling with minimal changes and a reconstruction of the 1945 addition. Additional changes made to the parcel include the demolition of the two-story office in the 1950s.⁵⁴

Today, the house appears virtually just as it did in 1858 when the substantial renovation was completed. And Barn Tavern appears as it did in the early 19th century. The house remains a testament to the significance of the prominent individuals who lived in it during its over 200-year existence.

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Southampton County Land Tax Records. Microfilm.

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**Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
Southampton County, Virginia**

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Geographical Data (con't)

UTM References (con't)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
5	<u>18</u>	<u>309380</u>	<u>4073400</u>
6	<u>18</u>	<u>309600</u>	<u>4073600</u>

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House include 56 acres of the original tract south of the junction of Cary's Bridge Road and Barn Tavern Road, and bound on the south by the railroad right-of-way now lined by trees. The Parcel is noted as Parcel A of 43-4A in the Southampton County Tax Assessor's Records. The boundaries can be seen on the attached map.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries presented maintain the visual sense of the parcel, and best represent and support the period of significance, historic contexts, architectural significance and historic significance of the property.

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Photographs

All photographs were taken by Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian, February 2003.

Photograph List:

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- View to Barn Tavern, looking northeast
 7. Photograph Number 1
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- NW façade
 7. Photograph Number 2
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- North oblique
 7. Photograph Number 3
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- East oblique
 7. Photograph Number 4
-

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1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- South oblique
 7. Photograph Number 5

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--1st Story, Hall, looking NW
 7. Photograph Number 6

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--1st Story, Living Room, looking east
 7. Photograph Number 7

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--1st Story, Bedroom, looking west
 7. Photograph Number 8
-

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-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--1st Story, Dining Room, looking east
 7. Photograph Number 9

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--1st Story, Stair, detail of newel
 7. Photograph Number 10

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--2nd Story, Hall, looking west
 7. Photograph Number 11

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--2nd Story, Hall, looking west
 7. Photograph Number 12

-
1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--2nd Story, Hall, looking north

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7. Photograph Number 13

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View--2nd Story, Bedroom, looking north
 7. Photograph Number 14
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- View of original roof in attic, looking NW
 7. Photograph Number 15
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- Cellar building, SW façade
 7. Photograph Number 16
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
 2. Southampton County, Virginia
 3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
 4. February 2003
 5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- Agricultural building, west oblique
 7. Photograph Number 17
-

1. Simmons-Sebrell-Camp House
2. Southampton County, Virginia
3. Kimble A. David, Architectural Historian
4. February 2003

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5. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia
 6. View-- Agricultural buildings, NW elevation
 7. Photograph Number 18
-

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Endnotes:

- ¹ Briggs, Martha Wren and Pittman, April Cary, "The Metes and Bounds in a Circle and a Square: The Nottoway Indians in Virginia." (Virginia Cavalcade, Richmond, VA, v. 46, no. 3, Winter 1997), p. 132.
- ² Ibid., 134.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Camp, Stafford Vermont, III, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, unpublished manuscript by author, n.d., 13.
- ⁹ Briggs, 134.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Virginia Conservation Commission. Division of History. "Daniel Simmons Tavern: survey report, 1937 Nov. 19 / research made by Louise H. Macon. Record number VHIR/26/0913.
- ¹² Hart, Lyndon H., The Sebrell family of Virginia: descendants of Nicholas Sebrell. Petersburg, VA: Sebrell Family Members, 1993, 26.
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- ¹⁴ Axelson, Edith F. Virginia Postmasters and Post Offices, 1789-1832. Athens, GA: Iberian Publishing Co., 1991.174.
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- ¹⁶ Martin, Joseph of Charlottesville, VA. A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Charlottesville, VA: J. Martin; Moseley and Tompkins, printers, 1835, 279.
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- ²⁰ United States Post Office. Virginia Post Office Records on Microfilm
- ²¹ Camp, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, 28.
- ²² United States Census Records.
- ²³ Camp, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, 28.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 26.
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- ²⁸ Ibid.
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- ³⁰ Ibid., 261.
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- ³² Cross, Charles B., Jr. and Eleanor Phillips Cross. Chesapeake: A Pictorial History. (Norfolk, VA: the Donning Company Publishers, 1985), 109.
- ³³ Camp, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, 30.
- ³⁴ Southampton County Deed Book 8, p. 409-410.

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³⁵ Southampton County Marriage Records, Book 1.

³⁶ Southampton County Deed Book 22, p. 201.

³⁷ Land Tax and Personal Property Tax Records 1780-1850.

³⁸ Southampton County Deed Book 23, p. 179.

³⁹ Southampton County Deed Book 24, p. 523.

⁴⁰ Southampton County Deed Book 25, pp. 224-225 and Southampton County Deed Book 261, p. 331.

⁴¹ Hart, 24.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Camp, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, 63.

⁴⁴ United States Post Office. Virginia Post Office Records on Microfilm

⁴⁵ Lanier, Gabrielle M. and Herman, Bernard L., Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), 149.

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⁴⁷ Interview with Stafford Vermont Camp III, February 2003.

⁴⁸ Southampton County Deed Book 43, p. 615.

⁴⁹ United States Post Office. Virginia Post Office Records on Microfilm

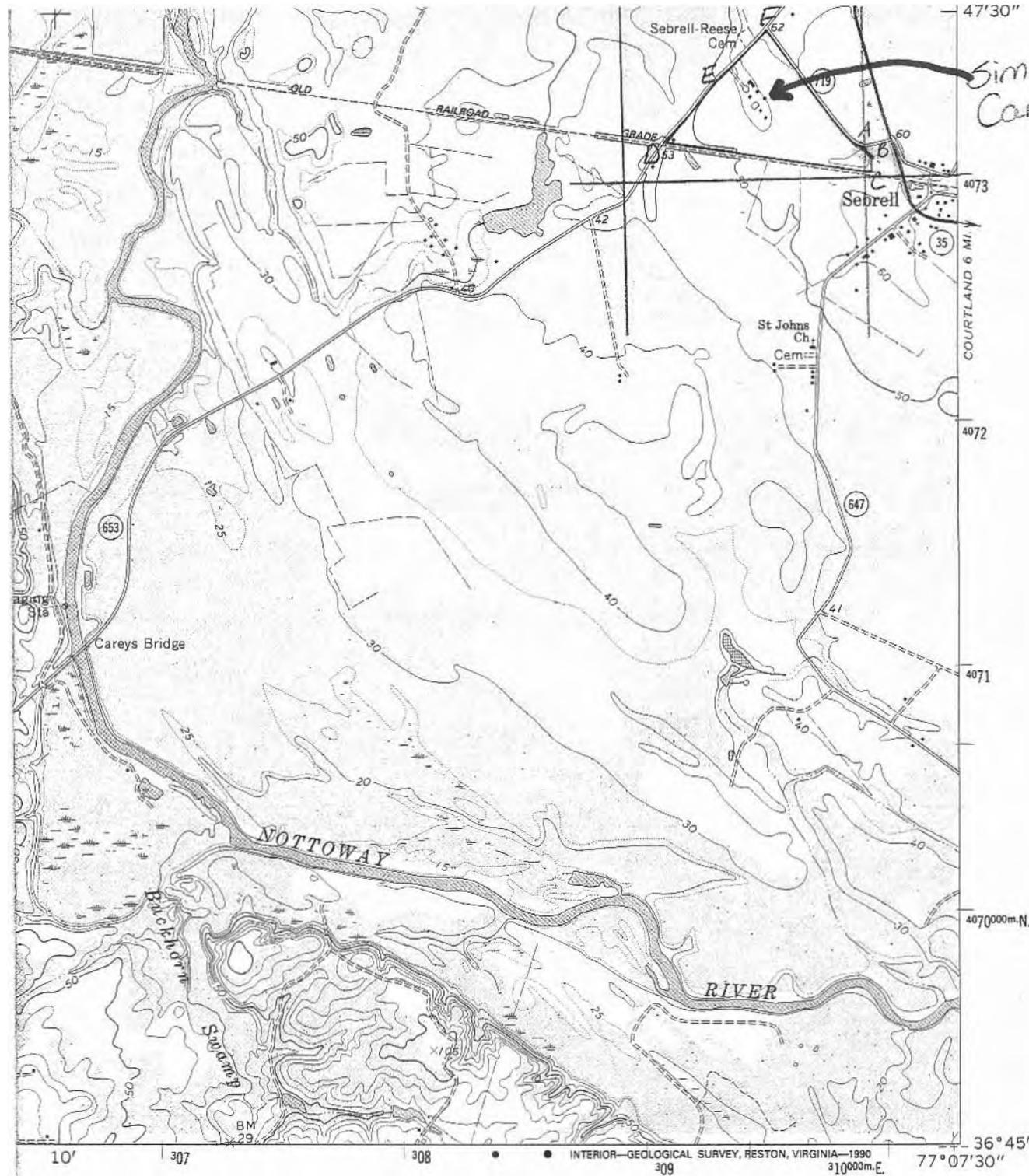
⁵⁰ Chancery Order Book, April 1903-Jan 1909, pp. 449, 495, 476, and Southampton County Deed Book 53, p. 311.

⁵¹ Camp, *The Sebrells and Camps of Barn Tavern*, 74.

⁵² Ibid., 75.

⁵³ United States Post Office. Virginia Post Office Records on Microfilm

⁵⁴ Interview with Stafford Vermont Camp III, February 2003.

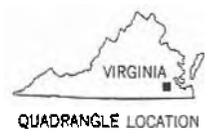


Simmons-Sebrell Camp House

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- | | |
|---|--|
| Primary highway, all weather, hard surface. | Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface _____ |
| Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface, _____ | Unimproved road, fair or dry weather _____ |
| ○ State Route | |

(COURTLAND)
5557 LINE



Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1987 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1990

SEBRELL, VA.
36077-G2-TF-024
1968
PHOTOREVISED 1990
DMA 5557 I SW-SERIES V834

