

**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.

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Monroe, James, Birthplace, Updated Nomination
other names/site number Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources: 096-0046; 44WM0038

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2. Location

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street & number State Route 205 not for publication x
city or town Monroe Hall vicinity x
state Virginia code VA county Westmoreland code 193 zip code 22443

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official Virginia Department of Historic Resources Date _____
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Signature of commenting official/Title Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper _____
Date of Action _____

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5. Classification
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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>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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

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6. Function or Use
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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>agricultural outbuilding</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>storage</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>animal facility</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>agricultural field</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>cemetery</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
<u>Landscape</u>	<u>forest</u>
<u>Recreation and Culture</u>	<u>monument/marker</u>
<u>Recreation and Culture</u>	<u>outdoor recreation [boat dock]</u>
<u>Funerary</u>	<u>cemetery</u>

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals / Beaux Arts

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
roof _____
walls _____
other [roadways]: other [gravel]

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

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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)

Archaeology: Historic--Non-Aboriginal (same as original 1976-9 nomination)

Period of Significance 1752-1899 (same as original 1976-9 nomination)

Significant Dates 1758 (same as original 1976-9 nomination)

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation Euro-American, African-American

Architect/Builder _____

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research; Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 75 acres (specific boundaries drawn, which differ slightly from the original polygon boundaries)

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18-325890	4234549	2	18-326032	4234524	3	18-326048	4234384	4	18-326232	4234353

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 David W. Lewes / Project Manager
 organization William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research date August 1, 2007
 street & number 327 Richmond Road (P.O. Box 8795) telephone (757) 221-2580
 city or town Williamsburg state VA zip code 23185 (23187-8795)

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 Westmoreland County (c/o Norm Risavi, County Administrator)
 street & number Stratford Hall Road (P.O. Box 1000) telephone (804) 493-0130
 city or town Montross state VA zip code 22520

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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7. Description

Summary Description

The James Monroe Birthplace comprises the core of the plantation where the fifth president of the United States was born in 1758 and spent his formative first 16 years. Located in rural Westmoreland County, a mile southwest of Colonial Beach, the property's immediate environs remain rural, though threatened by high-density residential development. The 74-acre wooded tract extends southeastward from State Route 205 to the upper reaches of Monroe Creek. About 500 ft. southeast of the main road are the archaeological remains of the frame dwelling built in the early 1750s by the president's father, Spence Monroe. Archaeological investigations on the property also have identified 18th-century activity areas and three additional, non-contributing house sites and a cemetery dating to the late 19th/early 20th century. Areas along the northeastern and eastern edges of the property have been subjected to gravel mining. A clearing and open woods between the birthplace house site and the main road contain a granite obelisk memorial and metal marker commemorating James Monroe, and a shrubbery outline of the dwelling's footprint (to the west of the actual house remains). An elaborate gravel road network on the property includes access roads, a roundabout, spurs, and a sinuous touring loop. Built in by the State Department of Highways in 1956 and designated State Route 209 until the 1970s, the distinctive roads were intended as the first stage of an ambitious but uncompleted site plan developed by celebrated Virginia architect Milton Grigg (1905–1982).

Site/Structure/Object Inventory

- (1) James Monroe Birthplace Site (44WM0038); 1750s-early 19th century, late 19th/early 20th century; Contributing site
- (2) Site 44WM0287; Non-Contributing site
- (3) Site 44WM0288; Non-Contributing site
- (4) Stewart family burial ground; 20th century; Non-Contributing site
- (5) Road Network; 1956; Non-Contributing structure
- (6) Commemorative obelisk monument; 1993; Non-Contributing object
- (7) Commemorative plaque; 1989; Non-Contributing object
- (8) Commemorative garden and plaque; 2003; Non-Contributing object

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Detailed Descriptions

(1) James Monroe Birthplace Site (44WM0038)

The multi-component James Monroe Birthplace Site (44WM0038) contains the 18th-century structural remains of the dwelling where James Monroe was born, associated activity areas and features, and the archaeological remains of a non-contributing late 19th-/early 20th-century house. The stump of a large locust tree marks the location of the Monroe dwelling remains. The site boundaries encompass 14.4 acres extending approximately 650 west from Route 205 and 400 feet north and south of the entrance road. Currently, the setting consists of lawn, shrubs, and open pine woods crisscrossed by the network of gravel roads constructed on the property in 1956. The level soils consist of deep, poorly drained loams and sandy loams.

Since the late 19th century, documentary and oral history research by Judge Wat T. Mayo had indicated this was the probable site of Monroe's birth.¹ A detailed historical report completed by National Park Service historian Dr. Charles W. Porter III in 1937 added weight to Mayo's research, but Porter cautioned that only careful archaeological research could confirm the site as the birthplace.² After local historian Virginia Sherman rediscovered the site's location in the 1960s, her determined urging of county and state officials led to a 1974 surface reconnaissance of the area by archaeologists from the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology (VRCA, now the Virginia Department of Historic Resources [VDHR]). In 1976, a VRCA excavation team headed by Keith Egloff uncovered the complete footprint of a 58 by 24 ft. domestic structure occupied from the mid-18th through early 19th century. Despite damage to the northern end of the footprint area by road construction in 1956, the exposure of brick foundation trenches, cellar fill, and chimney base trenches allowed the archaeologists to extrapolate a detailed floor plan of the former structure. The result was a remarkable match with an engraving of the Monroe birthplace dwelling that appeared in an 1839 issue of *The Family Magazine*. As a result of this fieldwork, the Monroe birthplace was listed on both the National Register and the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1979.³

Based on the archaeological research and documentary information, the dwelling included a cellar with bulkhead entrance on the east end, two chimneys, and a two room addition on the west end. A 1780 newspaper advertisement placed by James Monroe mentioned a passage, implying that the first floor of the original section was divided into at least three rooms.⁴ The depth (3 in.), width, and straight sides of the trench features under the original portion indicated a one-and-a-half course foundation. Shallower (2 in.) foundation trench features on the west end of the house suggested brick piers supported the addition, while the main block had a continuous brick foundation. All but three bricks had been removed in the early 20th century.

The VRCA archaeologists uncovered a chimney base trench feature (8 by 5 ft. and 6 in. deep) with a 5 by 3 ft. fireplace opening that heated the original portion of the house. Four 1 ft. 1 in. deep scaffold holes, containing brick rubble and an 18th-century ceramic vessel sherd, formed a 13 by 8 ft. rectangle around the chimney. The shape of the chimney base trench revealed a smaller fireplace in the west side of the chimney for heating the south room of the addition. Pier hole features north and south of the chimney cheeks marked the location of a

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partition wall between the house and addition.

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The cellar feature on the east end of the house originally measured 16 ft. 6 in. square. However, due to the 1956 road construction, only the bottom 8 in. of a 7-ft.-wide swath of the fill in the road bank remained undisturbed. An indentation in the east wall of the cellar suggested the location of the east chimney. Profiles of the cellar and bulkhead features revealed a soil deposit dating to the 18th-century construction of the house, with a gravel layer, occupation-related soil lenses, and destruction-related brick rubble above. At the base of the construction stratum in the cellar, a possible scaffold hole containing delftware most likely dated to the initial construction of the house ca. 1752. The cellar originally was dug to a depth of 4 ft. 6 in. into natural clay, had a gravel floor for drainage, and was walled with brick. Artifacts recovered from the cellar fill confirm the ca. 1752 construction date of the house. None of the ceramic artifacts in the rubble layer postdate 1770, while the gravel floor layer contained artifacts dating to the mid-18th century.

In addition to the 100 ft.² excavation block encompassing the dwelling footprint, 186 ft.² of excavation area (consisting of four blocks and individual 10 by 10 ft. units) was opened around the perimeter of the main block. These areas were identified as having high potential during a preliminary surface reconnaissance of the property and environs (approximately 100 acres) by the VRCA in 1974. Drainage features and a post mold were identified east of the house and midden areas to the southwest. An excavation unit located 120 ft. east of the house uncovered a brick rubble and pebble surface that may represent a structure or walkway. Five scatters of artifacts across the southern half of the property appeared to represent 19th- to 20th-century house sites. An isolated find of three colonial period artifacts was located near the eastern end of the property.

At the conclusion of fieldwork, Egloff's team reburied the Monroe dwelling site leaving pieces of plastic to mark the base of their excavations. Portions of foundation trenches, the chimney trench, and the western portion of the cellar were left unexcavated for the benefit of future research. One obvious improvement to future excavation techniques would be the use of wire mesh screening to recover artifacts. Although the VRCA excavators were remarkably skillful in identifying features, time and budget limitations only allowed for trowel sorting of excavated soils during the 1976 field session.

In 2003 the Center for Historic Preservation at Mary Washington College conducted an archaeological survey of portions of the birthplace parcel that could be affected by construction of a visitor's center and parking lot.⁵ The survey area extended eastward from State Route 205 toward the Monroe house site. Two large concentrations identified within the proposed parking lot and in the vicinity of the 1976 excavation area date to the mid-18th- through mid-19th-century period when the Monroe birthplace house was occupied. The parking lot concentration was confined to a 100 by 100 ft. area adjacent to Route 205 and south of the southern access road. Diagnostic artifacts here dated mainly to the 19th century. The survey also revealed a circular area of sheet midden extending up to 300 ft. to the east and west of the birthplace dwelling. North-south boundaries of the concentration were not determined due to the limits of the 2003 survey area.

In 2006, the James Monroe Memorial Foundation (JMMF), with funding from the Jesse Ball DuPont Fund, sponsored a comprehensive, systematic survey of the 74-acre property by William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (WMCAR). The purpose of the survey was to locate archaeological remains of

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outbuildings and activity areas associated with the Monroe birthplace dwelling. A survey strategy of shovel testing at intervals of 50 ft. or less was considered the most appropriate on this forested property with very little

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ground surface visibility. Only areas that were waterlogged or sloped more than 10 percent were excluded. To determine the limits of artifact clusters and sites identified on the 50-ft. survey grid, "radial" shovel tests were excavated in each grid direction at intervals of 25 ft. until at least two consecutive negative tests (without artifacts) defined the cluster or site limits. All soils were screened through quarter-inch wire mesh to ensure adequate recovery of artifacts. Although the WMCAR used a metric survey grid, for the sake of consistency English units are used in the description of those archaeological findings.

As a result of the systematic approach, the WMCAR team identified the limits of Site 44WM0038, which encompass 14.4 acres rather than the 4.5 acres shown on the previous State site inventory form. Within these extents, concentrations of various types of artifacts were plotted using a 3-dimensional mapping program. The highest concentrations of 18th-century artifacts occurred in an oval swath extending north-south through the house site. A high concentration of architectural and 20th-century artifacts was identified in the southern third of the site. Documentary evidence identifies this area as the house site of African-American Samuel Stewart and then his son, the Rev. Cornelius Stewart.

Following the survey, the WMCAR team excavated three 3.3 by 6.6 ft. test units next to shovel tests or shovel test clusters with the largest numbers of diagnostic 18th-century artifacts. Test Unit 1, approximately 75 ft. north of the Monroe dwelling, contained roughly 8 lb. of brick fragments, and 15 metal, ceramic, and glass artifacts dating to the 18th to early 19th century. Test Unit 2, located 25 ft. southeast of the dwelling, revealed complex stratigraphy (five strata above subsoil) related to both the dwelling and the 1956 roadways. The assemblage from Strata I through IV consisted overwhelmingly of 18th to early 19th century artifacts, including ceramics, window glass, bottle glass, wrought nails, oyster shell, and more than 4 lb. of handmade brick fragments. A possible post hole identified in the wall of Test Unit 2 may date to the period of occupation of the dwelling, based on its position relative to the surrounding stratigraphy. Test Unit 3 was placed approximately 60 ft. south of the dwelling, in the location of a probable midden area suggested by the VRCA and WMCAR surveys. Stratum I contained roughly 9 lb. of oyster shell, as well as handmade brick and 18th- to 19th-century ceramics. Stratum II contained fewer artifacts but an equivalent amount of oyster shell.

Based on the totality of the test unit results, the following conclusions were reached. It is likely that a dependency once stood in the vicinity of Test Unit 1. The quantity of handmade brick recovered here was much greater than in the other two units. In Test Unit 2, a high density of ceramic fragments (80 percent of the assemblage from all three units) confirmed the domestic nature of activities just 25 ft. southeast of the house and may indicate the presence of a kitchen nearby. The relatively large quantity of oyster shell in Test Unit 3 was consistent with interpretation of this area as a midden. A small quantity of architectural materials also suggested proximity to an unidentified structure.

Engineering drawings for the complex of roadways built on the property in 1956 locate an early well a few yards south of the outer edge of the roundabout. This may be the location shown in Charles Porter's 1930s photograph of local youths standing next to an "old well." The well's proximity to the Monroe dwelling site suggests it could be contemporary. Alternatively, the well may be associated with the property's occupation by

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Samuel Stewart or his son Rev. Cornelius Stewart in the late 19th and early 20th century.

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(2) Site 44WM0287 (Non-Contributing)

Site 44WM0287 is a late 19th- to early 20th-century domestic occupation identified during the WMCAR's 2006 systematic survey of the property. It is located nearly 500 ft. south of the property entrance and measures approximately 345 by 460 ft. Egloff had previously identified this site as JM45 through surface reconnaissance in 1976.⁶ The site was defined by the WMCAR on the basis of a scatter of surface debris and 25 positive shovel tests. Soil profiles revealed two silt strata with a cumulative thickness of 0.8 ft. above clay-silt subsoil. The surface of the site is littered with enamel basins, glass bottles and jars, appliances, and automotive parts. In addition, a decorative iron wire fence is still extant in portions of the site.

The assemblage of 330 artifacts consists mainly of miscellaneous glass fragments (135), iron scrap (74), and nails/nail fragments (63). Various diagnostic 19th- and 20th-century material includes window pane glass, a doorbell mechanism, asphalt siding, whiteware, porcelain, oil lamp chimney, and bottle glass. A single porcelain doll part and other toys were observed. The assemblage is consistent with a domestic occupation dating to the turn of the 20th century, and is likely associated with a dwelling shown on a 1932 topographic map of the area.⁷

(3) Site 44WM0288 (Non-Contributing)

This late 19th- to early 20th-century domestic occupation is located just inside the far end of the loop tour road, approximately 5,000 ft. east of Route 205. A fairly dense scatter of surface debris and positive shovel tests excavated during the 2006 WMCAR survey delineated site boundaries measuring 250 by 200 ft. Egloff had previously identified this site as JM48 through surface reconnaissance in 1976.⁸ Shovel test profiles revealed two strata, silty loam and sandy clay with a cumulative thickness of 0.9 ft., above silt-clay subsoil. Both gravel mining and road construction have adversely affected the site.

Five of the 12 shovel tests at Site 44WM0288 were positive, yielding a total of 42 artifacts. Architectural debris included one cut, one wrought, and six unidentified nail fragments, 20th-century window pane glass, but only 0.2 g of handmade brick. Domestic artifacts consist of 13 fragments of 19th- to 20th-century ceramic vessels, an oil lamp chimney fragment, bottle fragments, and a reed pipe bowl. The date of the assemblage suggests the site is related to a dwelling observed on a 1932 topographic map of the area.⁹

(4) Stewart family burial ground (Non-Contributing)

A family burial ground used by the family and descendants of Cornelius Stewart is located north-northwest of the Monroe dwelling at the northern edge of the property. The 160-ft.-square plot is defined on a 1956 engineering drawing of the sand-clay road network. A wide range of grave markers includes iron stakes, headstones of inscribed, polished granite, and more crudely inscribed limestone markers. The convex roofs of several concrete vaults also are visible. From the markers, it is evident that the cemetery was in active use from the early 20th century through the 1950s. The size of saplings throughout the graveyard indicates it has not

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been maintained for several decades. Objects such as plastic flower stands suggest memorial activities within the last 10 to 20 years. Signs of vandalism are evident from overturned and broken markers.

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(5) Road Network (Non-Contributing)

An elaborate network of 22-ft.-wide sand-clay roads built on the property in 1956 remains distinctly visible on current aerial photographs. Although fallen trees block some areas, large segments can be driven in a standard two-wheel drive automobile. Intended as access and touring roads, the network represents the first stage of an ambitious, but uncompleted site plan for a memorial park designed by architect Milton L. Grigg. A roundabout and loop tour road would lead visitors past a large statue of Monroe circled with flags from 21 Latin American countries and Canada, and then a series of woodland clearings decorated with flags and statuary from these countries. Two spurs or connectors, one on either side of the entrance gave the visitor the option of heading to a museum building or repeating the tour without having to return to State Route 205.

The straight, parallel entrance and exit roads (100 ft. apart) extend nearly 600 ft. southeast from Route 205 to a roundabout, centered 150 ft. southeast of the Monroe dwelling remains. The exit road (north) was constructed directly over the eastern end of the site, damaging some of the archaeological features. Following the entrance road and veering right off the southern edge of the roundabout, the loop road heads southeast and then curves gradually counterclockwise near the eastern end of the property. Heading back to toward the entrance in a northwesterly direction, the return portion curves gently inward and then outward. At the apex of the outward curve the loop road turns southeastward, back to the roundabout and exit road. The same apex also joins a spur that curves inward then outward before heading west and merging with the exit road about 100 ft. from State Route 205. A similar spur veers away from the entrance road about 150 ft. from the park entrance, makes a bulging outward loop and then merges with southern half of the loop touring road.

(6) Commemorative obelisk monument (Non-Contributing)

At the western edge of the property, a 12-ft.-high granite monument faces west toward State Route 205. The quarry-faced base, slightly tapered at the top, supports a granite die and an obelisk. The molded profile of the die's top 3 in. tapers upward to meet the base of the obelisk. An inscription on the west face of the die identifies the birthplace and lists highlights of James Monroe's career as follows:

BIRTHPLACE OF JAMES MONROE / JAMES MONROE / APRIL 28, 1758 / JULY 4, 1831 / FIFTH
PRESIDENT OF THE / UNITED STATES / 1817-1825 / GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA / 1799 AND 1811 /
PROCLAIMED THE MONROE DOCTRINE / DECEMBER 2, 1823 / DECLARES THE AMERICAS / NO
LONGER SUBJECT TO / EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

A rectangular granite slab lying flush with the ground surface and the front edge of the monument's base bears a smaller bronze plaque with raised, polished lettering and frame. The effect of the polished metal is gold-colored lettering against a slightly textured brown background. In crediting the presentation of the memorial, the plaque first lists the Northern Neck Ladies Auxiliary to Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 7197, Warsaw. Other contributors include V.F.W. Post 7197, William I. Cooper Memorial and the Ladies Auxiliary and V.F.W. Post 10574 of Colonial Beach. The memorial was erected after the Westmoreland Board of Supervisors organized a groundbreaking ceremony at the site in 1993.¹⁰

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(7) Commemorative plaque (Non-Contributing)

Approximately 25 ft. southeast of a locust tree stump that marks the Monroe dwelling footprint, a bronze plaque with raised, polished lettering and frame commemorates Monroe's military service. The tilted plaque is mounted on a diagonally sawn half-course of brick, atop a nine-course brick pedestal. The foundation for the pedestal is a poured concrete slab that emerges an inch above the ground surface. The brick is laid in a variation of Flemish bond, with half- and full-width headers in alternating courses. Four wooden posts with beveled tops are driven vertically into the ground, forming a square with approximately 15-ft. sides and the plaque at its center. Titled, "Soldier-Statesman James Monroe," the plaque's long inscription (147 words) recalls Monroe's leadership and wounding at the Battle of Trenton. He is praised as a "citizen soldier" who followed his military heroism with service as a "statesman and president." A final paragraph dates the plaque to a ceremony held on April 22, 1989, and lists the key participants who performed the dedication: Sen. John Warner, Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, Jr., Everett W. O'Neill of the Westmoreland Board of Supervisors, Col. Larry E. Gilman of the Virginia National Guard, the Rev. Charles Keyser, and local historian Virginia Sherman.

(8) Commemorative garden and plaque (Non-Contributing)

This commemorative planting of boxwoods replicates the configuration of the Monroe dwelling footprint. It is located approximately 25 ft. east of the archaeological remains. A brown and gold sheet metal plaque screwed to a section of tree trunk identifies the planting as the "James Monroe Birth Site Garden / sponsored by Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc." The plaque also acknowledges a 2003-2005 grant by National Garden Clubs, Inc. and Prudential Financial Group. A low concrete bench has been placed inside the west end of the planting. Although the interior of the planting is mulched and weeded, some of the boxwoods are rather thin and others have been removed.

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

The approximately 75-acre James Monroe Birthplace property in rural western Westmoreland County comprises the core of the plantation where President James Monroe was born in 1758 and lived until the age of 16. Monroe inherited a portion of the property in 1774 and then acquired adjoining land. He continued to operate the expanded plantation after he had begun his illustrious public career, not selling the property until 1783. By the mid-19th century, the property had passed through multiple owners and the Monroes' dwelling no longer was standing. Through oral tradition and documentary research, the approximate location of the house site was known when preservation-minded local citizens purchased a small parcel surrounding the house site in 1929. Commemorative efforts progressed gradually over the next 50 years, punctuated by acquisition of additional land by a commemorative association in 1941 and the construction of roadways for an uncompleted park in 1956. It was not until 1976, however, that archaeologists uncovered the remains of the house site. Three years later, the property was listed on the National Register because of the significance of these archaeological resources. Following additional archaeological and documentary research conducted in 2006, the nomination form merited revision to reflect newly discovered documentation. Additional deposits, features, and activity areas identified beyond the area investigated in 1976 enhance the property's archaeological significance. A more thorough examination of the site's history revealed that the property's association with James Monroe held greater significance than is typical for the birthplaces of historic figures.

Criteria Statement

The property is eligible under Criterion D because of significant archaeological resources. Specifically, the structural remains of the Monroe birthplace dwelling, related features, and activity areas (44WM0038) retain integrity and research potential. The resources can contribute to our understanding of the physical appearance of the interior and exterior of the Monroe dwelling and daily life on the property during the 18th century. On a broader level, plantation organization, master/slave relationships, among other issues, potentially can be addressed through archaeological research at the James Monroe Birthplace. Such studies would significantly expand the understanding of 18th-century plantation life in Westmoreland County and Virginia's Upper Coastal Plain region.

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Historic Context

James Monroe and the Birthplace Site

Until the late 1640s, only limited English settlement occurred on the Northern Neck of Virginia. A 1646 treaty reserved this peninsula between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers for local Indian groups. Besides the Native American population, the only other inhabitants were Virginians expelled by the Maryland Proprietary government from a fur trading colony on Kent Island in 1637. Restrictions on English settlement in the Northern Neck were short-lived, however. In 1648 the formation of Northumberland County established the first local government in this region. The vast new county encompassed the entire Northern Neck and the northern half of the Middle Peninsula. Only a year later the English population had swelled to about 15,000.¹¹ Land that had been patented earlier in the decade was seated and new patents were issued. With the influx of settlers, Northumberland was subdivided into smaller, more manageable units. Westmoreland County was formed in 1653. Its present boundaries were achieved in 1664 with the separation of the western portion to form Stafford County.

Among the Northern Neck's earliest patent holders was Andrew Monroe, President Monroe's great-great-grandfather, who arrived in the New World only a generation after the settling of Jamestown. In 1637 Andrew Monroe had immigrated from Fowlis, near Dundee in the Scottish Lowlands. He arrived in Kent Island, the location of the disputed trading colony established by Virginian William Claiborne within the Catholic Calvert family's Maryland Proprietary. In 1637 the proprietary government ejected Claiborne's traders and took temporary control of the island, but the territorial dispute would continue until the American Revolution. Subsequently, Monroe worked for the Proprietary, commanding a pinnace for Lord Baltimore's general agent Cuthbert Fenwick. Monroe also had connections to another high-level Catholic official, Captain Thomas Cornwaleys, who stood as proxy for him at meeting of the Maryland Assembly in 1642.¹²

Despite these ties to Maryland's Catholic elite, in 1645 Andrew Monroe sided with Protestant Richard Ingle in his overthrow of the proprietary government.¹³ Within one year, Leonard Calvert had regained control of the Maryland colony, Ingle was executed, and many of his followers fled to Virginia.¹⁴

By 1648, Andrew Monroe had moved to present Westmoreland County. He was joined by a large group of Ingle's rebels who later would become prominent in the area.¹⁵ A Maryland contract dated April 6, 1648, records Andrew Monroe "of Appomattox [Mattox Creek in present Westmoreland]" selling a heifer."¹⁶ Evidently, he was disposing of Maryland assets after moving to Virginia. In the same year, his name also appeared in the index of the Northumberland County order book.¹⁷ In 1652 he was among 97 local settlers who took an oath of allegiance to Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth government.¹⁸

Shortly after arriving in Virginia, Andrew Monroe began patenting large tracts of land in the vicinity of Monroe Creek. In 1650 he patented 200 acres "abutting North East Upon a Creeke issuing out of Potomock river."¹⁹ An atlas of early Westmoreland land grants situates this holding near the mouth of Monroe Creek, southwest of the James Monroe Birthplace tract.²⁰ In 1652 he patented 440 acres just north of his first patent.²¹

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Finally, in 1666, Monroe obtained a 920-acre grant in 1666 that included both previous grants and added 280 acres of adjacent property.²² The consolidated property encompassed the entire peninsula of land between the head of Monroe Creek and the mouth of Monroe Bay.

Although Andrew Monroe had signed his name with a mark when selling his heifer in Maryland, his lack of education did not prevent him from rising to prominence.²³ Before a rigid social order took shape at the beginning of the 18th century, Virginia’s social hierarchy was relatively fluid. Especially in a frontier area like the Northern Neck, political and social status was open to ambitious colonists best able to meet the challenges of labor-intensive land clearing and tobacco cultivation, uncertain food supply, and high mortality.²⁴ The vast tracts

of land available for patenting only were valuable if a sizable portion could be cleared and cultivated. If at least some of the 19 transportees mentioned in Monroe’s patents were servants, he would have had access to labor—a prized commodity in the undeveloped, wooded wilderness. With land and labor, Monroe was well situated to take advantage of opportunities on the Virginia frontier for himself and his descendants.

Consistent with his status as a major landowner, Andrew Monroe appears in the local records taking part in civic life. In the early 1660s, he was recorded as serving on the jury of a coroner’s inquest and as a justice and member of the Appomattox parish vestry.²⁵

No will or inventory has been found to provide a more complete account of Monroe’s status or lifestyle. We know that he died sometime between the last mention of his name in county records in 1664 and 1668, when his widow Elizabeth conveyed his livestock to her children, Elizabeth, Susanna, Andrew, George, and William.²⁶ Later records indicate that the large property between Monroe Creek and Monroe Bay descended to Andrew Monroe (II).²⁷

Unlike his father, the second Andrew Monroe apparently did not choose to play an active role in public life. Only his will, proved in 1714, hints at his status through the mention of various luxury items, including a silver-hilted sword, a gold ring, his horse, knives and forks, and three large pictures.²⁸

According to the stipulations in his will, the property of Andrew Monroe (II) was to be divided between his sons Andrew and Spence. The wording of the will suggests that Andrew (III) received roughly the northern half and Spence the southern half. The younger Andrew also was to have “a 40 foot tobacco house and a dwelling house 24 ft. long × 18 ft. planked above & below, to be built on Andrew Monroe’s share of land.”²⁹ In 1767 Andrew Monroe (III) advertised a property consisting of 400 acres in Westmoreland County “situate on a creek the most remarkable of any in the colony for fishing and fowling...and where there is plenty of good oysters, and navigation for the largest craft.” The tract included a brick dwelling, kitchen, “meat-house,” and other outbuildings.³⁰ Perhaps Andrew Monroe (III) had upgraded the will’s specifications for his house from wood to brick. Alternatively, the brick house could have been an older home previously occupied by Andrew (II).

In the early 1930s, the remains of one of these houses was discovered just northwest of Doctor’s Point (along the western shore of Monroe Bay). While excavating the site’s colonial-period brick house foundation, Wat Mayo and H. H. Nichols recovered a bottle seal embossed with “A Monro.” Other artifacts from the site

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suggest a fairly high status occupation over an extended period: a brass escutcheon, a bottle seal marked "Tyler" (Spence Monroe was married to Christian Tyler), several wine bottles, knives, forks, buckles, and keys; a 1774

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coin also was recovered.³¹ To the southeast of the old foundation lay the Monroe family's burial ground. By the time it was rediscovered by Mildred Townsend's husband in the early 20th century, all of the headstones had been removed. The farmer who owned the property in the second half of the 19th century had reused the stones for various utilitarian purposes.³² Local resident H. H. Nichols and other founding members of the Monroe Birthplace Monument Association eventually recovered fragments of one or two of the gravestones, which Mrs. Townsend donated to the James Monroe Museum.³³ The only decipherable name on the stone fragments is Spence Monroe, indicating the burial of the president's father or else the son of Andrew Monroe (II).

In 1693 Andrew Monroe (II) also had acquired the lands patented by Thomas Mountjoy on the west side of Monroe Creek, encompassing the present birthplace property. By this time, Andrew's widowed mother Elizabeth had married one of Thomas Mountjoy's heirs (possibly his son), Edward Mountjoy. Together they sold to Andrew Monroe "all Lands and tenements, houses, orchards...whatsoever which did belong or now doth belong to me the said Edward Mountjoy and Elizabeth my wife, as her right of Dower & thirds of lands as aforesaid..."³⁴ Sometime in the following 20 years, Andrew conveyed the property to his brother William. Andrew's 1713 will mentions a road leading from the "plantation whereon I now live...over the head of the creek to my brother William Munroes."³⁵

In 1694, William Monroe acquired 60 acres in the vicinity of the Mountjoy properties through a grant from the Northern Neck Proprietary. Since William Monroe's property adjoined the lands of Robert Foster, Andrew Munroe, Thomas Mountjoy, and John Lancett, it most likely lay on the west side of Monroe Creek and was acquired before William's brother Andrew conveyed the Mountjoy holdings to him. In 1730 William Monroe purchased from James Bowcock an additional 103 acres described as "standing in the White Oak Swamp, which is located west of Monroe Creek near the birthplace property."³⁶

William Monroe's will and 1737 estate inventory show that he headed a moderately prosperous plantation household. Much of his wealth consisted of land and slaves, while his personal estate tended toward utilitarian rather than luxury or fashionable items. Monroe's most valuable asset by far was his 12 slaves.³⁷ When the estate appraisers visited Monroe's plantation, there were large quantities of cash crop on hand as well as ample livestock and produce to sustain the household and the labor force of slaves. The 10 hogsheads of tobacco (9,060 lb.) attest to the typical agricultural focus of the period. The appraisers also found 40 barrels of corn, one "parcel" of wheat, four bushels of beans, and five bushels of salt. Livestock included 29 head of cattle, five sows, 26 pigs, 11 young hogs, two horses, a colt, nine "old sheep," and seven lambs. Monroe was equipped to entertain large gatherings, with 28 dishes, 36 plates," a baker and cover, 18 "basons," four tankards, a two-handled cup with lid, five porringers, 12 knives and forks, and 26 spoons (two of them silver). He also had a dozen leather chairs, 14 chairs with rush seats, three oval and four square tables, and three mirrors. Standard kitchen items were on hand along with more specialized equipment such as an "egg slice" and graters, as well

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as basic seasonings such as salt, mustard, and sugar. Eight of the nine feather beds had bedsteads. A rather large amount (103 3/4 yards) and varied selection of cloth suggests use beyond his plantation household. It was not uncommon for planters like William Monroe, who were situated with good access to merchant shipping, to purchase imported goods in bulk for resale.

According to the terms of William Monroe’s will, his real and personal estate were to be divided among his

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children and grandchildren. His son William (II) received the half of the “house tract” located on the south side of “spring branch” that flows into Monroe Creek. Other landmarks denoting the boundary include ditches and the “Irish Neck path,” the forerunner of State Route 632. Since the elder William Monroe’s son Andrew had died before 1737, he left the other half of his home tract to Andrew’s son Spence, the father of President Monroe. Until Spence reached 18 years of age, the property was to be “kept in the hands of” his uncle William.³⁸ In the 1930s, Wat Mayo, a local judge, conjectured the location of the William Monroe dwelling and the layout of the 1737 property division based on documentary descriptions, excavations, field checking of old boundary lines, knowledge of local place names, and conversations with long-time residents. According to Mayo, the dwelling had once stood on the spot then occupied by the residence of a Mr. Ambrose, and the younger William’s land arced northwestward around the current birthplace property.³⁹

In 1743, at the age of 16, Spence Monroe was bound out as an apprentice to Robert Walker, a joiner in neighboring King George County. In return for his service to Walker, he would learn “how to make furniture, how to prepare and install architectural trim, and perhaps how to perform some heavier sorts of carpentry.”⁴⁰ Even though he was styled “gent.” in some documents, Spence Monroe’s pursuit of a trade was not unheard of for a Virginia planter below the uppermost elite social status.⁴¹ Spence and his guardians may have foreseen the need to supplement the income he could derive from his plantation. The property lacked the promise of his ancestors’ more productive lands across the creek, judging from the indifferent, poorly drained soils found on much of the present birthplace tract. Regardless, Spence Monroe continued in his trade through adulthood. In 1751, Spence took on an apprentice of his own, a William Thompson to whom he would teach the trade of joiner and carpenter.⁴² A 1764 deed describes Spence Monroe as a “Cabinet maker.”⁴³ In 1765 he took on an apprentice joiner, James Walker, perhaps a relative of his original mentor.⁴⁴

In 1752 Spence Monroe married Elizabeth Jones, the daughter of James Jones of King George County. Monroe may have become acquainted with the family through his trade since Jones was an “undertaker in architecture.” A marriage bond with this architect or builder no doubt would have furthered his prospects for future work.⁴⁵ Family ties to Elizabeth’s brother would eventually prove valuable as well. As the executor of Spence Monroe’s will, Judge Joseph Jones would take charge of James Monroe’s education, enrolling him in the College of William and Mary and encouraging his interest in the study of law, which in turn was key to a successful political career.

According to James Monroe’s unfinished autobiography, his father was “a very worthy and respectable citizen possessed of good landed and other property.”⁴⁶ A useful description of his landed property appeared when James Monroe advertised the property for sale in 1780, six years after his father’s death:

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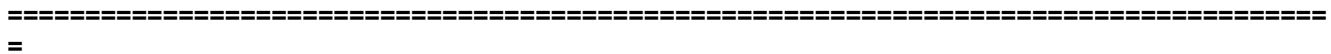
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For SALE, the fifth of January next, on the premises,

About 500 acres of land in Westmoreland county on Monroe's creek, within a mile and an half of Potowmack river. It is perfectly level and rich; has standing on it, a quantity of valuable oak timber, an excellent apple and peach orchard, and where it adjoins the creek, large marshes which with part of the adjoining land, may be turned into a good meadow. There are also on the tract, a dwelling house with a passage and several rooms below and above, with a kitchen, barn, stables, and other necessary out-houses. The time and means of payment

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will be ascertained on the day of sale, and made as convenient as possible to the purchaser.

JAMES MONROE

Later transactions would show the property actually comprised 550 acres. At the time of James Monroe's birth in 1758, however, his father owned only 250 acres. Six years later, Spence Monroe purchased an adjoining 100-acre tract from Francis Gray.⁴⁷ Throughout much of James Monroe's youth, then, the family lived on a plantation of 350 acres extending west from Monroe Creek. Even though the 1780 advertisement understandably put the property in its best light, the plantation would not have been expected to produce great wealth. The modern county soil survey indicates most of the soil types on the current 74-acre birthplace have limited

agricultural value, although the portions of Spence Monroe's property on the west side of present State Route 205 are more fertile.⁴⁸ Mention of "a barn, stable, and other necessary out-houses" suggests the presence of horses and other livestock such as cattle; pigs are indicated in Spence Monroe's 1774 will by a reference to a hog pen along the property's northern boundary.⁴⁹

With 250 to 350 acres and income from the joinery trade, Spence Monroe ranked among the upper middling planters of Westmoreland society, though not at the pinnacle of elite figures like the Lees of Stratford, for example. In 1782, the earliest year from which complete land tax records survive, a 250-acre property would have ranked its owner among the 62nd of percentile of the Northern Neck's 1,588 landowning households (another 1,141 did not own land), and a 350-acre property in the 78th percentile.⁵⁰

Although remembered by his son as a "worthy and respectable citizen," Spence Monroe did not generally play an active role in public life, only appearing twice as an estate executor in the local court records.⁵¹ One momentous exception to his quiet civic career occurred on February 27, 1766, when he joined 120 other Westmoreland planters in signing the Leedstown Resolves.⁵² In opposition to the 1765 Stamp Act, this historic document was the first to assert that Britain had no right to impose taxes on American colonists without their adequate representation in Parliament.

It is not clear exactly when Spence Monroe took up residence on his property in Westmoreland, but his marriage in 1752 would no doubt have spurred him to build a house. Besides the description in the *Virginia Gazette* advertisement, the house is further documented by a 19th-century illustration and the results of archaeological excavation. The illustration is a woodcut that first appeared in an 1839 issue of *The Family Magazine*, a popular periodical published in New York City; a slightly cropped version later was printed in Robert Sears' (1845) *Pictorial History of the American Revolution*.⁵³

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The one-and-a-half-story, three-bay frame structure with two chimneys and a small addition may appear modest to the modern observer. In fact, James Monroe Memorial Foundation President Laurence Gouverneur Hoes was convinced the illustration showed only a dependency or slave quarter, not the plantation house.⁵⁴ Recent scholarly research into the region’s vernacular architecture, however, suggests the house was typical for someone of Spence Monroe’s status.⁵⁵ Archaeological excavation of the house footprint revealed robbed out trench features, where a brick foundation and piers once stood, measuring a total of 58 by 18 ft.; a 16.5-ft.-square cellar with bulkhead entrance and gravel floor was located under the east end of the house. Subtracting 13 ft. for the addition that most likely was built in the late 18th or 19th century, the footprint of the house would have covered 810 ft.² According to a comparative study of 43 18th-century houses on the Northern Neck, which

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includes a discussion of footprint square footage in proportion to acreage owned, the size of the Monroe dwelling was consistent with the size of the surrounding plantation.⁵⁶ The modest height of the house also is not surprising; the same study found two-story houses were rare among planters owning fewer than 500 acres.

Documentary sources also suggest the configuration of the dwelling’s floor plan, a useful indicator of social status and aspirations. James Monroe described his home as “a dwelling house with a passage and several rooms below and above.”⁵⁷ From the placement of the door and windows in the woodcut illustration (possibly showing the rear of the house), the house appears to have followed a center passage plan, with one or two rooms on either

side of a hallway entered through a central doorway. As colonial society became increasingly stratified, the center passage allowed the planter to control access and circulation within the house, symbolizing his importance within his plantation and the surrounding community.⁵⁸ Although the popularity of houses with passages gradually filtered down through lower social strata over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, at the time Spence Monroe built his house many planters of his upper middling status continued to build plain houses with simple floor plans.⁵⁹ Spence Monroe’s choice of a center passage plan indicates he was conscious of this recent trend (perhaps partly through his trade) and its social implications. The symmetrical facade of the dwelling’s original portion also was consistent with the aesthetic sensibilities of a refined, genteel culture that gained popularity among the upper classes over the course of the 18th century.⁶⁰

With less than 1,600 ft.² of floor space, the house eventually may have become somewhat crowded. Elizabeth Monroe bore five children: Elizabeth (in 1753), James (in 1758), Spence (sometime between 1758 and 1764), Andrew (1764), and Joseph (1772). In addition, orphan Lizzie Whiting came to live with the Monroes when her father died in 1757.⁶¹ The separate kitchen building (common on Virginia plantations) mentioned in the advertisement would have freed up some living space. It is unlikely, however, that the addition on the west end would have been available for the growing family. Because of the incongruous appearance of the half hipped roof shown in the woodcut, architectural historians doubt that it was added during the Monroes’ occupation.⁶²

As the eldest son, James Monroe benefited from four years of formal education (1770–1774) at the nearby school of the Rev. Archibald Campbell, an Anglican clergyman from Scotland.⁶³ Before attending the school, he had been tutored at home by William Douglas.⁶⁴ Classes were taught at Campbell’s house, probably the

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upper glebe of Washington Parish.⁶⁵ The clergyman’s excellent reputation as a scholar and teacher drew pupils from outside the county, including John Marshall, whose family sent him to the academy after moving from Westmoreland to Fauquier County. For at least one year, John Marshall may have been a classmate of James Monroe.⁶⁶ There is also indirect evidence that he lived with the Monroes during his attendance.⁶⁷

When Spence Monroe died in 1774, the appraisers of his estate left a detailed inventory that provides further details about the family’s status and daily life on the plantation.⁶⁸ By this time, the plantation had a labor force of 10 slaves.⁶⁹ Six plows, two yoke of oxen, and various agricultural tools suggest the importance of grain cultivation and possibly other crops such as tobacco. Additional income along with home consumption may explain the large number of livestock: 31 head of cattle, 49 hogs, 38 geese, and 40 sheep. Whether Monroe continued his trade himself or delegated some or all tasks to his slaves, the presence of 52 chairs in various stages of completion, leather for chair bottoms, vises or clamps, a froe, and an auger points to furniture-making

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as another source of income. Other evidence of work and trade includes a spinning wheel, 32 lb. of feathers, 80 lb. of wool, steelyards (a type of scale), and blacksmith’s tools. High status is not especially evident in personal goods or household items. Instead, much of Monroe’s wealth was invested in livestock, slaves, and other capital. The main outward display of luxury may have been his seven horses and a small riding chair.

Spence Monroe’s 1774 will called for his plantation to be divided between his two eldest sons, James and Spence.⁷⁰ Each inherited a young slave and 175 acres on either side of Freeneck Gut, which flows eastward along the northern edge of the present birthplace property and empties into Monroe Creek. James Monroe’s portion lay on the south side of the dividing line, described as “...beginning at the mouth of Freeneck Gutt, extending up the meanders of the said Gutt to the present Hogpen, from thence a course until it intersects Monroe’s line...”⁷¹ The younger Spence Monroe received the northern half, which included the 100-acre property his father had acquired from Francis Gray in 1764.⁷²

In 1774 James Monroe was only 16 and therefore too young to take charge of his inheritance. Instead, his uncle Joseph Jones enrolled him in the “philosophical school” at the College of William and Mary. Young James’ “classical acquirements” at the Reverend Campbell’s academy had equipped him well, and he passed the entrance examination.⁷³ Although he would soon distinguish himself through military and political service, his youthful carelessness brought about his only mention in the College records. He was reprimanded for signing a petition against a College employee when the complaints in the petition were found to be spurious.⁷⁴

Soon after entering the College, Monroe had to contend with the distraction of events in the colonial capital on the eve of the Revolution. In 1775 he took part in one of the war’s very first episodes in Virginia. After Lord Dunmore fled Williamsburg with the town’s gunpowder supply, Monroe was the youngest of 24 men who seized the firearms stored at the Governor’s Palace.⁷⁵ By January 1776, with the College “being essentially shut up by the procession of the war, he left it in his eighteenth year” and joined the Third Virginia Regiment. At the Battle of Trenton, Second Lieutenant Monroe again found himself in the thick of a historic event. He was selected to join a “vanguard” of 50 men in the opening attack. After the commanding officer was severely wounded, Monroe briefly took charge of the unit before he also fell with a musket ball wound to the

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shoulder. Commended for his courage during the battle, Monroe was promoted to captain.⁷⁶ By the time he left military service in 1780, he had achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel.⁷⁷

Upon Monroe's return to Williamsburg, Thomas Jefferson made his acquaintance and became his mentor. Jefferson steered Monroe toward the study of law as a stepping stone to a political career. Having passed into adulthood, Monroe did not return to his boyhood home on Monroe Creek. Instead, in 1781 he moved to a farm in King George County where he planned to finish his law studies. The following year, he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates and in 1783 to the Confederation Congress in Annapolis.⁷⁸

Sometime during the eventful decade after his father's death in 1774, Monroe appears to have acquired the entire plantation where he had lived as a boy. The younger Spence Monroe disappears from the records after being mentioned in his father's will. If he died intestate, it is likely the property was transferred to his older brother James. By December 23, 1780, James Monroe was advertising "about 500 acres" of Westmoreland property for sale in the *Virginia Gazette*. This could have included his own inheritance, his brother's, and an

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additional 200 acres he had acquired from Nathaniel Gray for 150 pounds current money of Virginia.⁷⁹ Although the deed from Gray was dated February 20, 1781, Monroe may have felt certain enough about the agreement to take the chance of advertising the property three months earlier. When James Monroe sold all of his Westmoreland property to Gawen Corbin in 1783, the deed recorded its size at 550 acres, probably due to a resurvey.

Given the property's significance for association with James Monroe, his remarkable career deserves to be briefly sketched. After completing a sufficient study of law, Monroe was admitted to practice in Virginia before the Court of Chancery, Court of Appeals, and General Court. In 1787, he began to practice law in Fredericksburg, where he also served on the Common Council, the vestry of St. George's Church, and as a Trustee of the Fredericksburg Academy. In 1788 Monroe was elected to the Virginia State Convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution. In 1789, he moved to Albemarle County and then entered the national political scene the following year with his election to the U.S. Senate. For the next 35 years, his career at the highest levels of federal and state government was virtually continuous.⁸⁰ According to Laurence Gouverneur Hoes, Monroe's great-great-grandson, no individual before or since has held such a variety of high offices.⁸¹ Sent as Minister to France in 1794, Monroe was recalled by George Washington two years later because of political differences over the Jay Treaty.⁸² Soon after his return, he served for two terms as Governor of Virginia. With the election of his friend and political ally Thomas Jefferson to the presidency in 1801, Monroe returned to the national scene to negotiate the purchase of the Louisiana Territory (1803) with Robert Livingston and later the purchase of Florida (1806). Diplomatic appointments then took Monroe to England and Spain through 1807. After a brief interim in the Virginia Assembly and governorship, he returned to Washington to serve another close Virginia associate, President James Madison, as Secretary of State during Madison's first and second presidential terms; late in the second term, he served simultaneously as Secretary of State and War.⁸³ The pinnacle of Monroe's career was reached between 1817 and 1825, during his two terms as President. Known as the "Era of Good Feelings," the Monroe presidency enjoyed unprecedented popularity and good relations with opposing parties.

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In his 1820 reelection, only one electoral vote was cast against Monroe.⁸⁴ His most enduring legacy, the Monroe Doctrine, was articulated in his December 2, 1823, message to Congress. Monroe declared “that the American continents...are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”⁸⁵ Since that time, the Monroe Doctrine has remained a key component of American foreign policy, by promoting solidarity with republics in this hemisphere and opposition to outside interference in the region’s affairs.

Beginning with Gawen Corbin’s ownership of the Monroe birthplace property, the property passed through a succession of owners who likely lived elsewhere and used the old Monroe dwelling to house slaves or tenants. On April 1, 1799, Corbin sold the 550 property and “mansion house...wherein Spencer [*sic*] Monroe formerly lived” along with 312 1/3 acres that had purchased from Thomas Threshly in 1794.⁸⁶ The purchaser of the expanded 862 1/3 tract was Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee. By this time, the Revolutionary War hero had become embroiled in land speculation schemes along the Upper Potomac. Lee’s investment in the Monroe property may have been part of a temporary shuffle of assets as he attempted to stave off his ultimate bankruptcy.⁸⁷ After owning the property for less than eight months, on November 26, 1799, Lee and his second wife Ann sold it to Isaac Pollock of Washington, D.C.

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Only two years later, in 1801, Isaac Pollock conveyed the same 862 1/3 acres to Marcia Burns. After Burns married John P. Van Ness, he acquired title to the property in 1802. In 1847 General John P. Van Ness’s 12 heirs, all residents of Washington, D.C. or New York, conveyed his Westmoreland property and the rest of his \$42,334 estate, to Richard Smith as trustee.⁸⁸

In 1849 Smith sold Van Ness’s 862-acre Westmoreland property to Thomas R. Ditty and Joseph F. Harvey of Westmoreland County for \$3,000. Through separate deeds conveyed in October 1853, Ditty and his wife Eliza sold one-third of their interest and Harvey sold his entire stake in the property for a total of \$1,800 to George W. Bourne and Henry W. Kingsberry, “shipbuilders and partners trading under the name and style of Bourne & Kingsbury of Kennebunk Maine.” In 1857 Kingsbury and his wife Julia, Jane J. Bourne, and Elizabeth J. Bynum of Kennebunk, Maine, and Thomas and Eliza Ditty of Westmoreland sold the property to Joshua and Thomas B. Reamy of Stafford County and Randall B. Sutton of Westmoreland County. This deed marks the first recorded instance of the name Monroe Hall; perhaps reflecting a new survey, the property’s size was recorded as 836 acres.⁸⁹

Based on the dates of artifacts recovered from the 1976 excavations, the Monroe dwelling was no longer occupied and possibly completely destroyed by the mid-19th century. Land tax records are inconclusive because buildings were not assessed as separate values until 1820, by which time the acreage of James Monroe’s property had increased by more than half. The total value of buildings on John Van Ness’s 833 acres amounted only to \$200 from 1832 to 1839. A decline to \$100 in 1840 may reflect the dilapidation or complete demise of the Monroe house or may just as well point to changes in other buildings on this large property. A building value of zero does not occur until 1871. By way of comparison, in 1851 Nomini Hall was assessed at \$300, William Wirt’s Glebe at \$300, and Stratford at \$2,500.⁹⁰

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On August 12, 1868 the Reamy family and Randall Sutton sold Monroe Hall to Henry B. Gouldman, agreeing to the price of \$6 per acre. By this time, the tract was estimated to be much smaller than indicated in previous deeds. According to an “old survey,” it contained 706 acres, “but the exact quantity hereafter to be ascertained by an actual Survey of the Same.”⁹¹ Only three days after the purchase, Gouldman sold the property for \$6,000 to Robert Bell, Jr. and Samuel Baker of Alexandria. Bell, Baker, and their wives conveyed 50 acres in trust to Beulah B. Augustine, the wife of F. A. Augustine, and then sold 654 acres of the Monroe Hall tract to George J. Haines of Washington, D.C.⁹² Through his local agent F. A. Augustine, Haines had most of the timber cleared from the property.⁹³

Although the Monroe dwelling was no longer standing in the second half of the 19th century, the ruins and their association with James Monroe were still well known to local residents. In the 1920s or early 1930s, the daughter of F. A. Augustine told Judge Wat T. Mayo that between 1869 and 1875 “she and her sister frequently played around the ruins of the old dwelling. The brick foundation was intact and one chimney lying on the ground where it had fallen.” Previous owner Thomas R. Ditty, who was in his eighties, had told the girl these were the ruins of President Monroe’s birthplace. Ditty’s testimony may be reliable since he could have remembered at least as far back as the first decade of the nineteenth century, when James Monroe’s association with the area would have been fresh in the minds of local residents. Another local resident, Robert J. Washington, had shown Mayo the site in 1899.⁹⁴

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George J. and Mary E. Haines were the last owners to hold most of the former Monroe plantation intact. Beginning in 1871, the couple subdivided the property and began selling the land to various buyers. In 1872 an 84-acre portion containing the birthplace dwelling remains was conveyed to Moses Watts and Samuel Stewart.⁹⁵ In 1874 Watts and Stewart, both identified as “colored” in the tax records, had no buildings on their 84-acre tract in 1874. A building value of \$150 assessed beginning in 1890 suggests a modest dwelling on the property, possibly inhabited by Samuel Stewart and then his son the Reverend Cornelius Stewart. Remains of this structure are represented by a cluster of late 19th-/early 20th-century artifacts south of the Monroe dwelling site identified during the WMCAR’s 2006 investigations. The artifact concentration matches the location of the Stewart house depicted on a 1933 plat.⁹⁶

After returning from service in World War I in 1918, Samuel Stewart’s grandson Cornelius B. Stewart removed the remaining foundation and chimney bricks from the Monroe dwelling site. The bricks were used at various house sites in the nearby African-American community of Monroe Hall and in the New Monrovia Baptist Church.⁹⁷

In 1929 Charles Stuart purchased a 6-acre parcel surrounding the birthplace site. In 1941, five years after it was formed, the Monroe Birthplace Monument Association (MBMA) acquired Stuart’s parcel and surrounding acreage from three other landowners. A 0.5-acre cemetery plot within the Newton parcel was reserved as a burial ground for the descendants of Cornelius Stewart.⁹⁸ Through these transactions, the property achieved its current boundary.

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Various ideas were put forth for developing the Monroe birthplace property as a shrine or commemorative site. Finally, in 1952 under the leadership of Laurence Gouverneur Hoes, the MBMA secured the services of accomplished architect Milton L. Grigg, who prepared a "Preliminary Study" sketch for the "James Monroe Birthplace Memorial." The design included a statue of Monroe, a Georgian Revival building with a memorial hall, library, and offices, and a neo-classical shrine set within fenced and walled formal gardens. The building also would "house the activities of a Foundation for furtherance of Democracy etc."⁹⁹

In 1953, a more sprawling and ambitious design was attached to a letter that Laurence Hoes sent to the State Department of Highways. This plan incorporated the prominent statue with a more vernacular building, but expanded the visitor's experience over the entire property.¹⁰⁰ Visitors could tour the 74-acre property by car, viewing a large statue of Monroe and then a series of woodland alcoves with statuary and flags representing 21 Latin American republics and Canada. The essential first component of this design was an elaborate network of elegantly curved roadways. After Hoes secured \$15,000 of state funding, the State Highway Department built the complete system of roads in 1956.¹⁰¹ Integral to the park design was a loop road that would allow visitors to view the alcove exhibits by car. The additional branches and circle near the entrance were designed to allow visitors multiple options for touring the lodge area and/or the alcoves without having to exit the park.¹⁰²

After accomplishing the first step of building a road network on the birthplace property, the MBMA made no further progress toward their goal of an elaborate memorial park and museum on the property. In fact, later research by Virginia Sherman revealed that the organization was dissolved in 1959.¹⁰³ In a 1969 letter, Hoes blamed the abandonment of the grand park development plan on opposition from key board members and the

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wider membership's general lack of commitment to the MBMA's goals.¹⁰⁴ While the pattern of roads is still visible in aerial photographs, the Virginia Department of Transportation blocked access to Route 209 in 1971 and deleted it from state highway maps.¹⁰⁵

The property was conveyed to the Westmoreland County Historical Preservation Corporation in 1973.¹⁰⁶ During the 1980s, a portion of the property was deeded to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities for interpretive development, but the deed was never recorded. When the development plans were abandoned, the parcel reverted to the County.

Further efforts to have the site recognized by the National Park System failed, but efforts at interpretation were revived in 1997. In a letter dated May 12, Beverly Wellford, Director of the Northern Neck Branch of the APVA, urged the County to follow through with the planning efforts made in the late 1980s. In response, County Administrator Norm Risavi offered to meet with Wellford to discuss the previous plans. On January 20, 1999, the County submitted a proposal for a Transportation Enhancement Grant to the Virginia Department of Transportation. The costs of planning and design for developing the property were estimated at \$100,000; the county offered to provide 20 percent and requested 80 percent of the costs from the federal program.¹⁰⁷

By July 1999, the grant was approved and the planning phase began with preparation of a master plan by

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Susan Nelson-Warren Byrd Landscape Architects of Charlottesville. The 2001 “James Monroe Birthplace Park Master Plan” proposed to site a parking area and visitor center near the entrance at the northwest edge of the property. To provide a view of Monroe Creek, a swath of forest would be cleared and converted to meadow to reflect the 18th-century landscape. The 1956 roadways would be preserved for the most part, and much of the property would remain wooded. Some rather radical imprints on the landscape were proposed, however. Parallel trenches and mounds with brick seat walls and dates would intersect a “timeline walk” perpendicularly at intervals of 215 feet. Each seat wall would bear the date of a ten-year interval in Monroe’s life, and the walkway in the wall opening would contain an inscribed interpretive plaque. In addition, a pond would be created just inside the southeastern end of the old loop road and a canoe landing would provide visitors with water access.

A modified version of the master plan is now being put into execution, while omitting the more resource-intrusive aspects such as the ditches, mounds, clearing, walkway, and pond. A 99-year lease granted to the JMMF on April 4, 2005, calls for the Foundation to “restore the Birthplace farmhouse, establish an educational visitor center, and remain the faithful steward of the Birthplace farm.”¹⁰⁸ Using information from archaeological and historical findings, the JMMF plans to reconstruct the dwelling and interpret the entire property to the public as the 18th-century plantation of Spence Monroe and birthplace and boyhood home of President James Monroe.

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10. Geographical Data

UTM References (continued)

- 5 18-326215-4234282
- 6 18-326376-4234241
- 7 18-326328-4233970
- 8 18-326423-4233923
- 9 18-326303-4233900
- 10 18-325995-4233841
- 11 18-325725-4234028
- 12 18-325690-4234165

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary line is indicated on the USGS map attached to this nomination form. The UTM points making up the entire boundary are as follows: 1. 18-325890E-4234549N; 2. 18-326032E-4234524N; 3. 18-326048E-4234384N; 4. 18-326232E-4234353N; 5. 18-326215E-4234282N; 6. 18-326376E-4234241N; 7. 18-326328E-4233970N; 8. 18-326423E-4233923N; 9. 18-326303E-4233900N; 10. 18-325995E-4233841N; 11. 18-325725E-4234028N; 12. 18-325690E-4234165N.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the archaeological site of the James Monroe birthplace dwelling, associated activity areas, and features (44WM0038) as well as the contributing network of roads designed by Milton Grigg. While the plantation owned by Spence Monroe and James Monroe between 1752 and 1783 encompassed a larger area, the present 74-acre tract is the extent of acreage preserved from development and other impacts through the ownership of Westmoreland County and lease by the James Monroe Memorial Foundation.

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: James Monroe Birthplace; Location: Westmoreland County, VA

Date of Photographs: July 2007 (unless otherwise indicated);

Photographer: William H. Moore (unless otherwise indicated);

Digital images archived at Va. Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

VIEW OF: View of property entrance, looking southeast

PHOTO 1 of 16

VIEW OF: View of wharf and bench along Monroe Creek, looking east

PHOTO 2 of 16

VIEW OF: View of Monroe Creek from property, looking northeast

PHOTO 3 of 16

VIEW OF: View of birthplace dwelling site (44WM0038) with locust stump in foreground, looking west

PHOTO 4 of 16

VIEW OF: View of birthplace dwelling site (44WM0038), looking south

PHOTO 5 of 16

VIEW OF: View of archaeological shovel testing on birthplace dwelling site (44WM0038), looking east (Date: July 2006; Photographer: Elizabeth J. Monroe)

PHOTO 6 of 16

VIEW OF: View of archaeological test unit excavation in wooded portion of birthplace dwelling site (44WM0038) (Date: October 2006; Photographer: Elizabeth J. Monroe)

PHOTO 7 of 16

VIEW OF: View of Stewart family burial ground, looking northwest

PHOTO 8 of 16

VIEW OF: Typical view of 1956 roadway condition, looking southeast

PHOTO 9 of 16

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VIEW OF: View of 1993 commemorative obelisk monument, looking northwest
PHOTO 10 of 16

VIEW OF: Detail of inscription on 1993 commemorative obelisk monument
PHOTO 11 of 16

VIEW OF: Detail of plaque in front of 1993 commemorative obelisk monument
PHOTO 12 of 16

VIEW OF: View of 1989 commemorative plaque on brick pier, looking east
PHOTO 13 of 16

VIEW OF: Detail of 1989 commemorative plaque on brick pier
PHOTO 14 of 16

VIEW OF: View of 2003 commemorative garden, looking north
PHOTO 15 of 16

VIEW OF: Detail of plaque on tree stump in 2003 commemorative garden
PHOTO 16 of 16

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¹ *Potomac Interest*, "Has Proof Where Monroe Was Born Says Judge Mayo – Gives Interesting Date in Support of an Old Controversy," November 29, 1934.

² Charles W. Porter, III, "Report on Proposed Monroe Birthplace National Monument or Park at Monroe Hall, Virginia," 1937, National Park Service Library, Washington, D.C.

³ Tucker Hill, Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Letter to Hon. James G. McCann, Jr., Chairman, Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors (Westmoreland Museum, Montross, Va., 18 December 1979).

⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, "Richmond: Purdie and Dixon," December, 23, 1780.

⁵ Crissy Wample, Emily Lindtviet, and Mike Klein, "Archaeological Survey of Selected Portions of the James Monroe Birthplace Historic Site" (Center for Historic Preservation, Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1976).

⁶ Keith T. Egloff, and Martha W. McCartney, "Final Report: James Monroe Project" (Virginia Research Center for Archaeology [now Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond], 1976).

⁷ U.S. Geological Survey (hereafter USGS), "Wakefield, VA-MD quadrangle, 15-minute topographic series," (Washington, D.C.: USGS, 1932).

⁸ Egloff and McCartney, 51.

⁹ USGS (1932).

¹⁰ Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors, "James Monroe...Welcome, Groundbreaking Ceremony," Program, 12 October 1993, Westmoreland Museum, Montross, Virginia.

¹¹ Robert H. Wheeler, *Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650–1750: The Evolution of a Southern Tidewater Community* (Ph.D. diss., History Department, Brown University, 1972), 14–16.

¹² Archives of Maryland, "Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, January 1637/8 – September 1664 (General Assembly, Upper House [Proceedings] Liber MC, 1637-1658, p. 248 [MSA S977-1])," Archives of Maryland, Vol. 1:167 (Baltimore, Maryland: Maryland Historical Society, 1883). <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1—167.html>; Monroe Johnson, "The Maryland Ancestry of James Monroe," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 1928, 23(2):193–195; Walter Briscoe Norris, Jr., ed., *Westmoreland County, Virginia, 1653–1983..* (Montross, Virginia: Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors, 1983), 161.

¹³ Norris, 161–162.

¹⁴ Frederick J. Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds: Anglo-Indian Interest Groups and the Development of the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. by Louis Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 78–80.

¹⁵ Joe B. Jones et al., "Comprehensive Archaeological Survey of George Washington Birthplace National Monument" (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. Submitted to George Washington Birthplace National Monument National Park, 1999), 19.

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⁸⁹ WC D&W 33, 176–178; WC DB 35, 10–17; WC D&W 37, 621–625.

⁹⁰ Wells, 283; Porter, Appendix I.

⁹¹ Porter, Appendix I.

⁹² WC DB 37, 637–639; D&W 38, 131–132; 38, 464–465.

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