

VLR-6/16/81

NRHP-9/16/82

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic James Alexander House (Preferred)

and/or common Alexander-Long House, Alexander House

**2. Location**

street & number State Route 671 n/a not for publication  
city, town Spottswood X vicinity of congressional district Sixth (M. Caldwell Butle  
state Virginia code 51 county Augusta code 015

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mrs. Louise H. Bradley

street & number N/A

city, town Tyro n/a vicinity of state Virginia 22976

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Augusta County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Staunton state Virginia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date December 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The James Alexander House and springhouse are situated along Poor Creek at the headwaters of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. The two-level design--with lower service rooms and upper living and sleeping level--evolved from the bank form of central Europe that was transplanted to Pennsylvania in the 18th century. According to the traditional idea, the entrance to the living area is on the bank side, and access to the service area is on the opposite, or downhill, side. At the Alexander house, with a less-dramatic bank siting, the lower level projects almost a full height on all sides, and the main level actually appears as a second story without a ground-level access. The paired central doors in the southeast four-bay facade display another vernacular Pennsylvania characteristic, but they are found here on both levels.

This vernacular mid-Atlantic form has been cloaked in a popular, stylish brick shell. The segmental-arch doorways, jack window arches, molded brick cornice, and Flemish-bond brickwork with four-course American bond side walls illustrate the decorative features for the 1820s in southern Augusta County. The original two-bay porch to the main level entrances was replaced by the present four-bay neocolonial porch design around the turn of the century. This new porch interrupts the segmental door arches which have been boarded over.

The double-pile, hall-and-parlor plan of the Alexander house is an unusual design for the early 19th century. The traditional, asymmetrical two-room plan has been rationalized by construction, moving the central plaster partition to the middle and creating a bilaterally symmetrical design. The balanced facade and double cross passages reveal the equal division of the front rooms. Although the four exterior chimneys may suggest an equal division of the double-pile arrangement as well, the front rooms are actually considerably deeper than the rear rooms. An open, single-run staircase ascends off the south door along the southwest side of the central partition. This stair location reflects a response to the new Georgian central passage idea which had begun to circulate in the Valley by the early 19th century.

The main level rooms display the Federal style of woodwork that became popular with the building boom of the 1820s. Three rooms--to the northwest, southeast, and southwest--retain their original mantels. The light delicate carving characterizes the more Scotch-Irish-dominated settlement in southern Augusta County in contrast to the robust, three-dimensional, German-inspired interpretations in northern Augusta and Rockingham counties. The Alexander house mantels adhere more closely to popular pattern book designs. The northwest mantel matches one of Owen Biddle's plates from the Young Carpenter's Assistant-- an architrave fireplace opening supporting end blocks and shallow cornice shelf. The other two designs are organized in the typical tripartite Federal fashion with fluted pilasters, frieze decorated with end blocks and central tablet, and shallow shelf with molded cornice bands. Chair railing stretches across all three rooms and frames the paneled wainscoting in the southeast parlor. Only the northeast room has been remodeled. In the mid- to late 19th century, a simpler Greek Revival mantel was added, and the segmental arch over the doorway was infilled with brick. The kitchen was moved to this room from the lower level in the 20th century, and plumbing was added. At this time, a small pantry was enclosed off the back porch. The front staircase was also remodeled in the 20th century when the treads, newel, and handrail were replaced.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

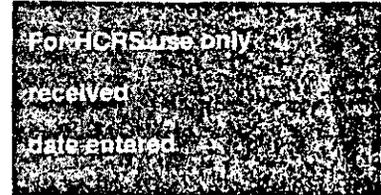
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

James Alexander House, Augusta County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1



7. DESCRIPTION

On the lower service level, only the front two rooms had originally been finished. The southwest room was particularly decorative for a basement room with chair railing, wainscoting, and another Federal mantel design. The band of carved urns below the cornice shelf is a popular Valley decoration. The single-run staircase is original but has been remodeled. The simple, carved stair brackets remain, but the newel and treads have been replaced, and the space below has been enclosed with beaded boards. The adjoining front room was remodeled in the late 19th century; the narrow beaded board wainscoting suggests its use as a kitchen. A short passage divided the back spaces into two rooms. The northwest room remains unfinished with the earthen floors, wooden food storage frames, and wood slats in the windows. The northeast room had been cut open up to the kitchen in the 20th century but was still never finished.

The walls of the two garret rooms have been covered with sheetrock, but the old six-panel doors with spring locks remain in the hall.

The two-level limestone springhouse also reflects a strong Pennsylvania influence. The siting reflects the tradition of building the springhouse into a bank against the spring. A stone wall encloses the spring off the northwest end and is presently covered by a flat roof of squared logs. Inside, a wood beam supports the wall above the sunken spring opening.

One of the most distinctive features is the exterior fireplace. This has been considered primarily a Valley characteristic, but only three have been found in Augusta County. Although folk life research suggests that these were used for laundering, butchering, soap making or apple butter cooking,<sup>1</sup> this example appears small for such heavy household chores.

The springhouse contained two rooms on the lower level, each with a separate entrance, but the central partition has been removed. The two beaded board-and-batten doors are paired under a wide stone jack arch on the southwest wall. On the opposite wall, vertical wooden slats in the two windows provide ventilation for these sunken rooms. The exposed floor joists and beaded-board ceiling have been whitewashed, but there is no indication that the earthen floor had been finished nor had the stone walls been plastered.

The entrance to the second level is on the banked, west gable end. At one time, a small frame structure had also been constructed here, providing access to the door which is several feet above the spring. This level provides two additional rooms--a small entrance room and larger working space to the east. The walls had been roughly plastered at one time, but most of the plaster is now gone. Oak slats had been inserted in the two windows flanking the chimney, but all four windows show evidence of a later, primitive sash.

The original half-lapped common rafter system survives. Boards had been laid across the collar beams to provide additional storage space. A standing-seam metal roof covers the building.

The frame barn, smokehouse, and livestock houses completing the farmstead date to the late 19th and 20th centuries. The main house is currently being restored. The springhouse is sound but in need of repair.

AMCC

<sup>1</sup>Glassie, Henry, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States  
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962, p. 75.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	ca. 1827	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James Alexander House and springhouse are a significant pair of early vernacular farm buildings in Augusta County. Both reveal the flow of central European-inspired building forms from Pennsylvania to the Valley of Virginia in the early 19th century. Here, the traditional forms blended with the new, popular architectural ideals during Augusta County's growing prosperity in the 1820s. The house integrates the traditional, two-level bank form with rationalized Georgian ideals and stylish Federal detailing. The unusual, double-pile hall/parlor plan reveals the variety of house plans during these decades of experimentation in the early 19th century. The springhouse similarly retains the two-level bank siting and limestone construction that characterize these structures in Pennsylvania. One of the most distinctive features is the exterior fireplace; only a few examples are found in the Valley.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Alexanders were a prominent early family in Augusta County. Like many of the 18th-century settlers in the Valley of Virginia, Robert Alexander emigrated from Donegal, Ireland, to Pennsylvania in 1743 and moved down to Augusta County when William Beverly began to divide and sell his large grant lands in the 1740s. Alexander purchased 314 acres at the headwaters of South River at the southern tip of the Beverly Manor Grant. He became involved with the South Mountain Meeting House at Steele's Tavern, one of several Presbyterian congregations that developed in the mid-18th century, and helped establish a classical school near the church.

Robert's will, dated February 20, 1781, specified that the land "where he lived" was to be divided among his three sons--Peter, Hugh, and James. James acquired one section and purchased Hugh's land which contained the "old dwelling" in 1817 after his death. The tax records reveal that "new buildings," most likely the present house, were added in 1827. James acquired another adjoining piece of land in 1832 and eight years later sold the entire farm of 321 acres for \$5,000 to Andrew D. Johnson.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Augusta County Land Books, 1, 6, 33, 40, 54, 61.

Augusta County Tax Records, 1820-1829.

Campbell, Mrs. Margaret Alexander. Lake Ozark, Missouri. Telephone Interview, February 9, 1981.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 55 acres

Quadrangle name Vesuvius, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7
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6	5	8	1	4	0
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4	2	0	3	2	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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6	5	7	8	6	0
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4	2	0	2	8	3	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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6	5	7	5	0	0
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4	2	0	3	1	6	0
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D 

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6	5	7	7	4	0
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4	2	0	3	4	8	0
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E 

1	7
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6	5	7	9	0	0
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4	2	0	3	4	6	0
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F 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point on W side of I-81, about 5,100' NE of VA 620; thence extending about 1,600' SW along said side; thence about 1,100' NW to bend in VA. 571 and cont. across said route about 500' NW, following NE side of route for first 300'; thence about 1,350' NE; thence curving about 600' eastward, paralleling contour lines, to SW side of Va. 6.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** (See Continuation Sheet # 2)

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date May 1981

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*H. Bryan Mitchell*

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date MAY 10 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

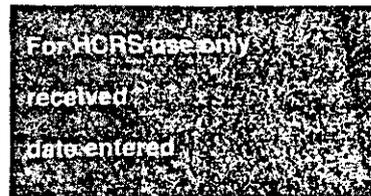
James Alexander House, Augusta County, Virginia

Continuation sheet

#2

Item number 9, 10

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Glassie, Henry. Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968.

Hotchkiss, Jed, and Waddell, Joseph A. "Map of Riverheads District." Historical Atlas of Augusta County. 1885.

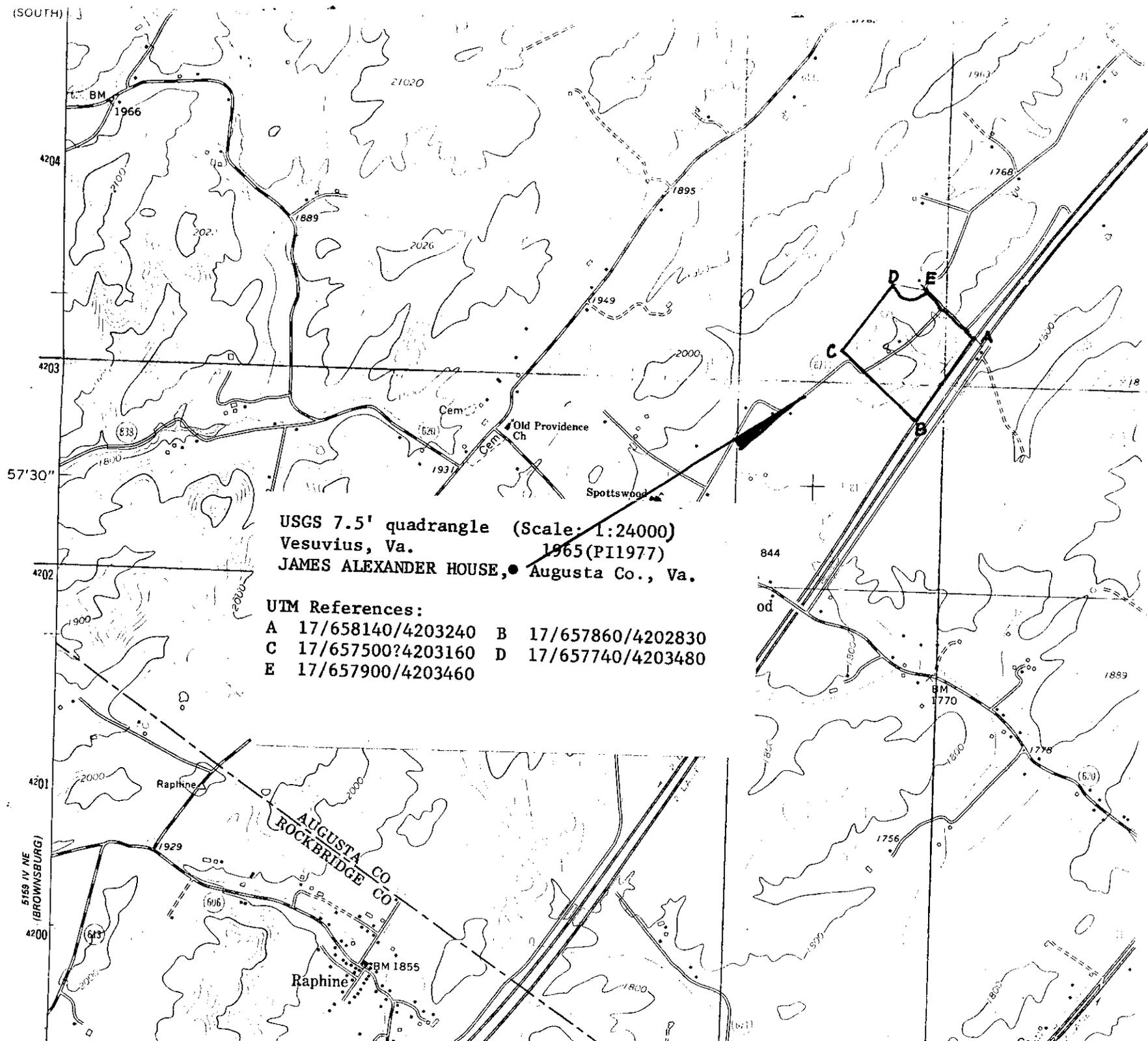
Wilson, Howard McKnight. The Lexington Presbytery Heritage. Verona, Va. 1971.

10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary description and justification, continued

thence about 400' SE along said side, crossing Va. 671; and ~~cont.~~ about 500' SE along SW side of access road to bend in said road and cont. about 150' SE to point of origin.

JUSTIFICATION: The boundary has been drawn to include 55 acres on both sides of Va. 671 encompassing the main house, the spring house, and associated farm buildings, and the unobstructed view from I-81.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (Scale: 1:24000)  
Vesuvius, Va. 1965 (PI1977)  
JAMES ALEXANDER HOUSE, • Augusta Co., Va.

UTM References:  
A 17/658140/4203240 B 17/657860/4202830  
C 17/657500/4203160 D 17/657740/4203480  
E 17/657900/4203460

(SOUTH) J  
4204  
4203  
57°30"  
4202  
4201  
4200  
5159 IV NE  
(BROWNSBURG)

ALGUSTA CO  
ROCKBRIDGE CO

Raphine  
BM 1855

Cem  
Old Providence Ch  
Spottwood

