

VLR 12/1/14
NHP 3/10/15

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, material, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Point of Rocks

other names/site number _____ DHR File Number 020-0123

2. Location

street & number 1005 Point of Rocks Road not for publication

city or town Chester X vicinity _____
state Virginia code VA county Chesterfield code 041 Zip 23836

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 _____ Date _____

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau:

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites (natural feature – rock cliffs)
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 3 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> Domestic </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> Landscape </u>	<u> Natural Feature </u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> Domestic </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> Domestic </u>	<u> Secondary Structure </u>
<u> Landscape </u>	<u> Natural Feature </u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone _____
roof Metal _____
walls Wood Weatherboard _____

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture _____
 Military _____

Period of Significance _ca. 1840-1938_____

Significant Dates _ca. 1840; 1864_____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder _Strachan, John Alexander_____

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __10_____

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing				
1	18	292880	4	133090	2	18	292970	4	132990
3	18	292760	4	132770	4	18	292670	4	132850

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: Crystal C. Monroe and Department of Historic Resources Staff

Organization: _____ date August 30, 2004

street & number: 2205 Mount Blanco Road telephone _____

city or town Chester state VA zip code 23836

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 Crystal Lou Cox Monroe

street & number 2205 Mount Blanco Road telephone 840-530-2420

city or town Chester state VA zip code 23836

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA

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7. Summary Description:

Point of Rocks, in eastern Chesterfield County, Virginia, takes its name from a nearby 60-foot high sandstone cliff projecting into the Port Walthall Channel of the Appomattox River. The rock formation sits about 200 yards in front of the house known as Point of Rocks. The house is a one-story, three-bay dwelling with weatherboard siding and a low-pitched hipped standing seam metal roof. The double-pile dwelling has a modified center-hall plan with four equal-size rooms. Two large chimneys serve four fireplaces. A small one-bay gable-roofed tetra-style porch, centered on the front of the house, appears to be the original. Now enclosed with screen, it features square Greek posts with molded capitals and double-denticulated entablature. The house was built circa 1840 by the Reverend John Alexander Strachan. According to the late architectural historian, Jeffrey M. O'Dell in *Chesterfield County Historic Sites and Structures*, his survey of the county's architectural resources, the house is architecturally unique in Chesterfield County.

Detailed Description

The house at Point of Rocks is a one-story, three-bay frame house set on a stuccoed stone foundation. It has a low-pitched hipped roof with two interior chimneys. The original section of the house has a double-pile, modified center-hall plan with four equal-size rooms. The original rectangular floor plan measured approximately 48' by 32' with an open porch measuring approximately 15' x 17', centered on the front façade. The front porch appears to be an original feature and is tetrastyle, one bay wide with a gable roof.

The house was constructed using rough-sawn 8" x 12" timbers. The structure was covered with weatherboard siding and sits on its original 20-inch-thick stuccoed stone foundation. The molding around windows and doors, along with their hardware, support an antebellum date of construction. The roof is a shallow hipped standing-seam metal roof that is painted. The porch has a gable roof supported by Greek square posts with hand-hewn dentil cornice and fascia boards. There are two interior chimneys constructed of handmade bricks serving four fireplaces.

The original interior walls were constructed of horsehair plaster over lathe. The majority of the original plaster still exists and has seen only minimal repairs. Most of the original heart pine floors also still remain and have had only limited repairs.

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The house contains about eleven windows; some paired, others single. All single windows are six-over-six double-hung sash, while all paired windows are four-over-four double-hung sash. Most of the remaining interior trim is original and includes four-panel, recessed-panel doors that were painted and wood grained with post-Greek cyma moldings. Other interior trim includes wide architrave surrounds also with the same post-Greek cyma moldings, plain Greek mantels with pilasters and 1 1/2-inch baseboards, painted black. Ceilings are 9' 8" in height.

The present house was added onto and a garage was constructed in 1938. The garage is a frame building with two large openings, one open and one with double doors. It has a standing seam side gable roof. The garage is a contributing building.

Between 1938 and 1943 some mechanical systems were modernized and an interior bath and running water were brought to the house. Prior to this time, water was pumped by hand up a steep hill, and, at times, had to be hauled by pail to the house. The interior bath was constructed by closing off a rear door and enclosing part of the hall sometime between 1938 and 1943. In 1938 a small but functional kitchen with breakfast nook was added to the rear of the house, however, plumbing was not added until later, sometime before 1943. The exterior kitchen, slave quarters and other storage buildings were in disrepair and were torn down in 1938.

Point of Rocks remains snugged in a rural setting with many of its natural rock cliffs remaining. These rock cliffs, a contributing site, still provide a panoramic view of the Appomattox River today.

8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement of Significance

The house at Point of Rocks stands overlooking the 60-foot high rock cliffs, from which the property received its name. These elevated rock cliffs overlook the Appomattox River some three miles west of its junction with the James River. The rock cliffs have been known since early days. Tradition holds that Indians used them as camping areas or points for observation and caves at the foot of the cliffs along the riverbank may have also provided shelter. The house known as Point of Rocks dates to ca. 1840 and is a well preserved example of a unique house type, a one-story dwelling on a stone foundation. It retains good integrity. The house differs from other plantation houses of the period because it lacks a raised basement. The property served as an excellent observation point during the

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Civil War for the Union Army's General Benjamin F. Butler and also was the site of a hospital constructed for Union troops. The house was used as quarters for the surgeons.

Criteria Statement

Point of Rocks is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. As the location of a Union military observation point, headquarters and hospital in 1864 during the Civil War, Point of Rocks is associated with the Bermuda Hundred campaign. The house is also an unusual Greek Revival house type for Chesterfield County and possesses good integrity.

Historical Background

Although Point of Rocks has a long documented history, there is unwritten word passed down through the years that the Woodland Period Indians utilized this land, traveling through it and using its heights for camping and for observation of the Appomattox River and surroundings. There is a cave, often referred to locally as the "Indian Cave," at the base of the bluff along the riverbank. This cave is now much smaller in diameter than it once was. Members of the current owner's family ventured into it, only to hear running water and proceeded no further.

Abraham Wood established a trading post at this site as part of a 700-acre tract in 1642. Thomas Chamberlayne, his son-in-law, inherited the property, which later passed to his heirs, the Stratton and Batte families. They became long-term owners. In 1813, Jane H. Stratton and Dr. Alexander Glas Strachan married and moved to the Point of Rocks property, residing in a brick house about 100 feet south of the present house. That earlier house no longer stands. Their son, John Alexander Strachan (1814-1875), built the house now standing on the property ca. 1840. Strachan was born in Petersburg. In 1844 he married Emily Adkins, a daughter of Daniel Adkins of "Locust Grove" in Chesterfield County.

The area of Point of Rocks was without a convenient church so Strachan started a church and a Sunday school. He was ordained in October of 1849. Strachan donated the property on which Enon Baptist Church was built and served as pastor there from his ordination until his death in 1875. Strachan apparently preached at several congregations in the area at different times, including churches in the town of Broadway (now vanished), just across the Appomattox River, at Old Shop Church in Prince George County and at Salem Baptist Church near Centralia. Family stories describe

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Rev. Strachan rowing a boat across the river to preach at Broadway with his "great brindle dog...sometimes swimming behind the boat." Strachan's children included two sons and three daughters. His daughter, Ada Rebecca, married Oliver Wade Cox, and their descendants still own the property.

Point of Rocks is located just west of the Bermuda Hundred peninsula. The peninsula narrows and resembles the neck of a bottle with the area to the west of the tip of the peninsula forming the bottle. This description for the area as a bottleneck was used frequently during the Civil War. Situated, as it is, north of Petersburg, on the opposite side of the Appomattox River, the Bermuda Hundred peninsula was the scene of much activity during the Civil War. Petersburg, with four railroads bringing supplies from the south converging into one line, was an object of Union military attention as early as 1862. In 1864 Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard succeeded in blocking Union General Benjamin Butler's exit to the west and was able to "bottle up" the Army of the James on the peninsula where Union troops had established a large camp.

Prior to Union occupation of the Point of Rocks area, a Confederate signal station was located there. The memoirs of Private B. W. Jones recount an episode where a small band of Confederates at Point of Rocks repulsed the Union Army three years before the siege of Petersburg. The elevated location of Point of Rocks provided a logical point for a signal station or observation tower. The clearest accounts of this action were printed under the *Stars and Bars: A history of the Surry Light Artillery, Reflections of a Private Solider in the War Between the States*. The Everett Waddy Company privately printed this account in Richmond in 1902.

Private Jones' account, recorded June 28, 1862, recounts that on June 26th as a roll call was being taken, a boom of a cannon was heard downriver, and a shell flew through the camp signaling the approach of the Union Army gunboats on Point of Rocks. There were other rounds of fire that apparently tried to uncover where Confederate troops might be located. There were about 60 Confederate troops at Point of Rocks, concealed by the large boulders on the bluff. The leading Union gunboat was some 50 yards from the Confederate position when they were halted by Confederate fire. The fall of darkness and the elevated position of the Confederate troops aided their defense. Confederate reinforcements under the command of J. T. West took up a position behind the large boulders on this bluff. They fired into the gunboats' portholes when they opened. The infantry remained sheltered by the "masses of rock that lie around on either side of the Point." The battle lasted for over two hours. The Confederates placed a shell through the hull one of the boats "that

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obliged them to run the craft aground," to keep it from sinking in deep water. The Union troops took off their valuables and then burned and abandoned the boat. The natural bluffs at Point of Rocks therefore checked this Union advance and probably prolonged the life of the Confederacy and the war.

In May of 1864 General Benjamin F. Butler brought the Army of the James, some 40,000 strong, up the James River from Yorktown and Gloucester Point to City Point (now within the City of Hopewell) and Bermuda Hundred. A large camp was established there that extended along the north side of the Appomattox River, east of the Strachan house at Point of Rocks.

General Butler took possession of the Strachan house after the family abandoned it, fleeing for their safety and refugeeing at Locust Grove about five miles from Chesterfield Courthouse. Butler established a field hospital on the property north of the house where wounded soldiers from the fighting at Drewry's Bluff and other nearby actions were brought. Surgeons and attendants used the Strachan dwelling as their quarters. Family history recounts that Butler's men took personal belongings left in the house and tossed them down the hill toward the river. Tradition has it that Enon Church, founded by Strachan, was demolished by the Union troops to provide materials to construct the hospital which, according to one account, was built high off the ground so that the wounded could easily be lifted into the doorway from the wagons that carried them there. Given the elevation of the area, General Butler erected an observation tower -- or built onto the former Confederate signal station - between the house and the river.

There were several unsuccessful movements toward Petersburg with fighting in May of 1864 at Port Walthall Junction, Chester Station, Fort Clifton, Ware Bottom Church, Branders Bridge and Swift Creek as Union troops destroyed parts of the railroad. The Army of the James made attempts to break through the Confederate defenses at Drewry's Bluff between May 12 and 16 in hopes of moving toward Richmond, but they were forced back and returned to the line of defenses between Ashton Creek and the James River that were constructed earlier in the month. From then on the Bermuda Hundred front declined in importance. Many of the troops encamped there eventually were sent to join General U. S. Grant at Cold Harbor in Hanover County in late May and then participated in assaults on Petersburg. From about September of 1864 until June 2, 1865 when the Confederate lines were abandoned, the Bermuda Hundred front was quiet.

Following the war, Point of Rocks was used as a freedmen's village. General Butler described the

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property in a July 12, 1865 letter to Major General O.O. Howard, commander of Freedmen's Affairs. Butler writes "I caused a very substantial hospital to be built at Point of Rocks, near Bermuda Hundreds, on the peninsular (sic) between the Appomattox and the James, of logs, composed of many buildings, with the design that after the capture of Richmond the structures should be used as a freedmen's village..." He concludes, "It should not be permitted to go back into the hands of the former disloyal owner, because, among other reasons, hundreds of our soldiers' graves are in the cemetery near it."

A letter from John A. Strachan to General Howard, dated June 22, 1865 includes "a statement of facts in regard to my farm" and submits "my petition for the restoration of my land...known as 'Point of Rocks.'" Strachan writes that he has "done nothing during the rebellion that was in any way detrimental to the Federal Government." He also mentions that he has taken both the oath of allegiance and the amnesty oath and suggests that there is nothing about his property that makes it particularly well suited for a freedmen's camp. He notes that there are other parties willing to sell land in the same locality, if the government insists on having such a camp in the area. He then makes a poignant plea for the return of his property:

This land is my homestead, the place of my birth and a life time residence and, has attractions for me which could not render it particularly advantageous for a freeman's camp. I have nothing left me now but my land, all my other property have been destroyed, even including my wearing apparel and I am the husband of a delicate wife and the father of several children. I most respectfully ask that my land may be at once restored to me by your order.

Strachan's request was returned without action and the United States retained possession of his property until he could prove his title in U.S. Court. Strachan and his family returned to their property in 1866 and he spent the rest of his life there as a farmer and a preacher. The Cox family, descendants of the Strachan family, acquired the property in 1938 and members of that family still own it today.

Tradition holds that rock from the bluffs at Point of Rocks was later sold by the Strachan family to construct a wall around the City Point National Cemetery now in Hopewell. That cemetery was established in July of 1866 and received burials recovered from the cemetery at Point of Rocks as well as others at City Point and Harrison's Landing in Charles City County. A monument at the City Point National Cemetery is dedicated to the memory of

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the dead of the Army of the James and identifies George Suckley, a surgeon with the U.S. Volunteers as colonel and medical director at Point of Rocks Hospital, and H. B. Fowler, one of the doctors at the hospital and surgeon with the 12th New Hampshire Volunteers.

Section 9: Bibliography

"City Point National Cemetery National Register Nomination." Therese T. Sammartino, Staff Assistant, National Cemetery System. March 8, 1995. Copy in archives at VA Department of Historic Resources.

"Civil War Activity at Point of Rocks Park" in *History and Archaeology at The Point of Rocks Park Chesterfield County, Virginia*. Leslie D. Jensen, 1979. Copy in archives at VA Department of Historic Resources.

Cox, Evelyn L. "History of Point of Rocks." Unpublished. 1974.

Farrar, Emmie Ferguson. *Old Virginia Homes Along the James*. New York, 1957.

O'Dell, Jeffrey M. *Chesterfield County Historic Sites and Structures*. Chesterfield, VA, 1983.

"Rev. John Alexander Strachan of Point of Rocks." Biographies by the Federal Writers Project. August, 1939. Notes by R. B. Gill and T. B. Robertson from family research and article on Enon Church by Rev. W. C. Shawen.

War of the Rebellion, The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Section 10: Verbal Boundary Description

The property being nominated is identified as tax parcel 820641972500000 on the tax parcel maps for Chesterfield County, Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The boundary for Point of Rocks includes the house and its historic setting near the natural rock bluff above the river.

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Section Photo List Page 8

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: Point of Rocks
Location: Chesterfield County, Virginia
Photographer: Carol Moore
Date of Photographs: September 2004
Negative Number:
Negatives stored: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Photo 1 of 11
View: Front (west façade) of house

Photo 2 of 11
View: North side of house

Photo 3 of 11
View: South side of house

Photo 4 of 11
View: East side of house (showing kitchen addition)

Photo 5 of 11
View: Detail of front porch

Photo 6 of 11
View: Front entrance

Photo 7 of 11
View: Garage

Photo 8 of 11
View: Bedroom showing plain mantel and wide baseboard trim

Photo 9 of 11
View: Living room showing plain mantel, wide door opening and wide baseboard trim

Photo 10 of 11
View: Plain mantel in secondary room

Photo 11 of 11
View: Detail of living room and double-leaf door opening

Point of Rocks
 Chesterfield CO,
 070-0123
 Zone 18
 Easting Northing
 1292880 4133690
) 292970 4132900
) 292760 4132710
) 292670 4132350

4135
 20' 00"
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