

VLR-4/15/80 NRHP-7/30/80

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Montezuma

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

State Route 626

CITY, TOWN

Norwood

STATE

Virginia

VICINITY OF

Seventh (J. Kenneth Robinson)

CODE

51

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

COUNTY

Nelson

CODE

125

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Robert F. Somerville

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Norwood

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 24581

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Nelson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lovington

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1957

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR
 DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From a cursory inspection of the exterior of Montezuma, Nelson County, Virginia, it could easily be assumed that the structure is part of the homogenous group of Virginia's 18th-century Georgian houses. However, the near-balanced facade and assumed symmetrical plan belie the unusual spacial arrangement contained within. In addition to its distinctive floor plan, Montezuma is a highly visible component of the 18th-century landscape because it is a sizable two-story brick structure which was constructed at a time when most vernacular houses were one-story, frame, hall-parlor or one-room plans. Historically, Montezuma is prominent because of its association with the early settlement of the Cabell family in Nelson County.

Montezuma is one of a group of approximately eleven 18th- and early 19th-century Cabell family houses built along the James River in Nelson County. Most are immediately distinguished by their sensitive siting, usually positioned on a hill overlooking the river. Composed of a two-story main block with a 1½-story wing, Montezuma is similarly sited, its facade set toward the river. The entire structure is laid in Flemish bond. The main block is capped by a gable roof, and its facade (south elevation) is apportioned by three bays of openings. A gable roof also covers the 1½-story original wing which is attached to the main block at the east elevation. Both sections are underpinned with brick which has been stuccoed up to the water table. The original pegged wooden frames and grilles remain in many basement windows. The north elevation is comprised of a bank of windows. All windows are 9/9; the sash of the wing are smaller than those of the main block. Four interior end chimneys with simply corbeled caps, two each at the east and west elevations, terminate the gable end walls. An interior end chimney breaks the gable of the wing at the east elevation. The front (south) and rear (north) elevations of the main block are crowned by a large entablature which rests on the second-floor window architraves. A similar entablature runs the length of the wing's south elevation and rear porch. Composed of modillion blocks, a plain frieze, and a thin architrave, the entablature is closed by end boards. Raking boards mark the gable line of the east and west elevations. The only significant alteration of the exterior fabric is the wooden window hoods which were a Victorian attempt to modernize the structure. The Roman Doric portico visually dominates the structure, imparting a great deal of formality to the entire composition. It also functions to tie the facade together, negating the asymmetrical arrangement of openings. A doorway is positioned slightly left of center, a function of the floor plan. The portico is supported by a brick foundation; four stuccoed brick columns and two engaged columns buttress the pediment and entablature. An H-fret fills the dentil band and describes the tympanum. Scarring from a greenhouse, now removed, is visible in the wing's east wall. A porch with a shed roof supported by chamfered posts screens the rear elevation. The gable roof at this elevation is broken by a half-gable dormer which provides light for the rear stair hall.

Montezuma's interior is sophisticated both in plan and in detail. Because of his friendship with the Cabell family, the use of the Roman Doric order, certain exterior details and the floor plan, Thomas Jefferson is often associated with the design of Montezuma. It is certain that specific details are Jeffersonian, true also that the floor plan is very similar to Plate 1, Select Architecture by Robert Morris, a handbook Jefferson is known to have possessed. No documentation has surfaced to confirm this tradition, although Jefferson or his builders may have indeed directly influenced the parti.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

§ 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"/> RELIGION | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1790 BUILDER/ARCHITECT _____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Erected around 1790, Montezuma is a notable example of Piedmont Virginia Federal architecture. Its impressive scale, distinctive plan, fine woodwork, and Roman Revival dwarf portico set it apart from more standard farmhouses of the period and region. The house was built at a time when substantial and sophisticated brick houses were still the exception in central Virginia. Montezuma also derives significance from its associations with the Cabell family, who settled in Nelson County in the second quarter of the 18th century. The prominent family built nearly a dozen architecturally distinguished houses in the area, of which Montezuma is one of the few remaining examples. The property has also been referred to as Spring Hill, since there were several good springs located there. According to the 1930s W.P.A. report, the Montezuma site was an early Indian site and graveyard, and it was the Indians who gave it the name "Montezuma", although this explanation cannot be substantiated.

The land on which Montezuma was built was probably part of one of the first patents issued in the area. It was issued to Dr. William Cabell who immigrated ca. 1724-25. Dr. Cabell was a native of the English town of Warminster, the name of which he gave to the settlement he founded in Nelson County. Dr. Cabell was prominent in local affairs, and before his death in 1774, he had amassed substantial acreage in the area of his first patent. In 1763 Dr. Cabell formally deeded 1,785 acres on the north side of the Fluvanna River (now James) to his son, William Cabell, Jr. This parcel plus 400 additional acres comprised the Union Hill plantation where William Cabell, Jr., had been living since 1752. He added substantially to this tract, and it was on these added tracts that Montezuma was built. Although William Cabell, Jr., kept complete and extensive records regarding his business transactions, no documentation has been found in which he mentions Montezuma. However, it is likely that he built the house, because he owned the land until his death in 1798, and family history relates that his son, Landon, lived at Montezuma briefly following his marriage in 1794. Importantly, William Cabell, Jr., had built Soldier's Joy on adjacent property for his son Samuel Jordan in 1783-84, and the two structures are similar in some interior details.

Hector Cabell, William's youngest son, married about 1798 and under his father's will inherited the Montezuma property. According to William Cabell's diary, it would seem that Hector was the disreputable son of the family and was often in trouble during his youth. Apparently William Cabell had some reservations about his youngest son, because he specified in his will that should Hector die without heirs, the property was to be divided up among his other brothers, a restriction he did not apply to his other offspring. Hector died in 1807, leaving no heirs, so the property and Montezuma passed to his surviving brothers.

In 1813 Landon Cabell, who by this time held full title to Montezuma, sold the house to his brother-in-law, Thomas S. McClelland, a noted attorney from Lynchburg. McClelland had married Margaret Cabell, Landon's sister. In the deed, reference is made to the building lately occupied by Hector Cabell, deceased. Reference is also made to the fact that

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Amherst County Tax Books 1783-1800.

Will Books 3 (1786-1800), 4 (1807).

Brown, Alexander. The Cabells and Their Kin. Richmond, VA. 1939 (revision of 1890 edition).

Nelson County Tax Books 1809-1863.

Deed Book 2, 1813 (p. 186).

Will Book D, 1835 (p. 444).

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 7 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Shipman, Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 693980 4168880
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point on N side of State Route 626, about 3550' W of the western intersection of routes 626 and 647; thence extending about 400' W along said side; thence extending about 700' N; thence extending about 450' E; thence extending about 600' S to N side of 626, point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

April 1980

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 X

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE APR 15 1980

FOR NPS 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

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Montezuma, Nelson County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6,7

PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1968, 1977, 1979, 1980 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION

The first floor of the main block is composed of four rooms and a short passage. This passage separates only the southeast and southwest rooms. It is terminated by an arch; to the left of the arch is the stair which rises steeply between two walls; beyond the arch is another large chamber. The remaining chamber is to the right of this room. Grained doors, many with pen-lined panel fields and jambs, are found throughout the house. The fireplace wall of the southeast room exhibits the finest woodwork. A pair of arched openings flank the mantel; one is a deep cabinet with glazed doors above and solid doors below, while the other marks the entry into the wing. This arched entry is notable for the cabinets and drawers found to the side of the pilasters which form part of the architrave. The arch's intrados, like the pilasters on which it rests, is reeded. The molded keystones and gougework further enrich the arches. This gougework is identical to that once found at nearby Soldier's Joy in the now-dismantled west wing. William Cabell had the houses built on adjacent property for his sons. The west wing of Soldier's Joy and Montezuma were constructed within a short time of each other, and it is likely the same craftsman was responsible for the work at both houses. A chair rail with a molded pedestal cap and a baseboard, consistent with that which is employed in all rooms, is found on three walls of this room. The small southwest room, perhaps once used as an office or pantry, has cabinets on three walls.

All first-floor mantels are simply detailed. The second-floor mantels are more decorative, as they are embellished with reeded pilasters and panels, swags and frets. The second-floor mantels and the woodwork in the first-floor southeast room are painted with lampblack. The wing, now partitioned for use as a kitchen and bath, was originally a single room. A built-in cabinet found in the northeast corner is the room's distinguishing feature. The half-story room above the kitchen probably functioned as living quarters; it is connected directly to the kitchen by a stair.

A linear grouping of several outbuildings, most 20th-century, is positioned north of the house. The kitchen, which is partially log construction, is the most important. Ruins of an ice house and what are reputed to be slave quarter ruins are found north-east of Montezuma. Substantial remnants of a formal boxwood garden which once contained two gazebos are also found north of the structure, behind the row of dependencies.

(See Continuation #2)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Montezuma, Nelson County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #2

ITEM NUMBER 7 & 9 PAGE 2, 1

7. DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The total nominated acreage for Montezuma is seven acres. This includes all dependencies, the garden ruins, and the main house.

MEH

8. SIGNIFICANCE

McClelland was already living in Montezuma by that time, the deed therefore being a formality. McClelland had served in the House of Delegates from Amherst from 1801-03, and, unlike his in-laws, he was a loyal Whig and not a supporter of Jeffersonian political philosophy. McClelland died in 1835, and Montezuma was left to his minor son, James Bruce McClelland. The management of the estate was assumed by another Cabell, Mayo, who lived next door at the paternal home, Union Hill.

James Bruce McClelland was educated at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) and operated a commission business in Richmond. He served as a major in the Quartermaster Corps during the Civil War. He and his wife both died of typhoid fever at Montezuma in 1863.

Montezuma and its dependencies were valued at \$4,000 throughout the period 1820-1865, indicating that few changes were made to the building. The census of 1850 reveals that the real property of the McClellands was worth \$25,000. These figures disclose that Montezuma, along with others of the Cabell houses, were among the most highly assessed in the county.

Following the Civil War and the death of Margaret Cabell McClelland, Montezuma was sold at public auction in 1873 to W. B. Hubbard. The Somervilles acquired the property in 1920. Robert F. Somerville is the present owner.

MEH/MTP

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Richmond, Va. Virginia State Library. WPA Records, "Montezuma, Nelson Co., Va.", 1938.

