

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:  
VLR 12/13/2012  
NRHP 02/05/2013

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Stoner-Keller House and Mill  
Other names/site number: Abraham Stoner House; John H. Keller House; Stoner Mill; Keller Mill; VDHR File Nos. 085-0084; 085-0910-0011; 44SH0459  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 2900 Battlefield Road  
City or town: Strasburg State: Virginia County: Shenandoah  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   X   local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
  X   A     B   X   C     D

 <hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>	 <hr/> <b>Date</b>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
<p>In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	
<hr/> <b>Date</b>	
<hr/> <b>Title :</b>	<hr/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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Shenandoah County, VA

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain :) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary dwelling

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: mill/gristmill

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: outbuilding/barn

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: irrigation facility/dam

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary dwelling

DOMESTIC: lodging/meeting space

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: building/barn

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: irrigation facility/dam ruin

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY: Greek Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE: limestone

Foundation: STONE: limestone

Walls: BRICK  
STONE: limestone

Roof: METAL: tin

Other: WOOD: weatherboard

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Stoner-Keller House (also known as the Abraham Stoner House), 2900 Battlefield Road, Fisher's Hill (Strasburg vicinity), Virginia, in northern Shenandoah County 2.5 miles west of Strasburg, was constructed in 1844. The house faces northeast to Battlefield Road. It is a brick, two-story, five-bay, gable-roofed I-house with integral rear ell and a frame, one-story, three-bay, hip-roofed front porch that has late-Victorian sawn- and turned-wood trim. Two small, frame additions (1994 and 2004) square off the original L-shape of the house. The house was constructed as the miller's residence for the gristmill with which it is historically associated—the Stoner-Keller Mill. The mill, a gambrel-roofed, four-story, limestone building, was originally constructed in 1772 on the north bank of Tumbling Run, its water source, with a steep, gable roof. Ca. 1855, the mill's roof was raised and reshaped into a gambrel roof. Ca. 1895 the original wooden water wheel was replaced by the present Fitz steel wheel. Two small rooms and a loading dock were added ca. 1895; they included a small post office. Ca. 1920, side additions

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including a store were made; these were later rebuilt. The mill is situated to the west of the house, across a wide driveway off Battlefield Road. The house and mill are part of the tiny rural village of Fisher's Hill, across Battlefield Road from the rest of the village. The nominated property consists of 2.5 acres in a picturesque setting on Tumbling Run, surrounded by rolling fields backed by distant mountains. The house and mill are in excellent condition, and the property as a whole retains historic and architectural integrity. The property contains four contributing secondary resources: a 1772 tailrace trace, a contributing site; a ca. 1880 frame tenant house and bank barn; and a ca. 1920 dam ruin, a contributing structure. There are two non-contributing structures: a small frame shed and a non-functioning well; both were constructed after the period of significance.

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## Narrative Description

### Setting

The miller's house and mill complex is set along a picturesque section of Tumbling Run in the rural hamlet of Fisher's Hill at the intersection of an old road (Middle Road) and Battlefield Road, where they jointly cross Tumbling Run on a low-level concrete bridge. The overall area surrounding the valley created by Tumbling Run is marked by rolling hills. The nominated site comprises 2.5 acres, extending from the bridge northwest to Tumbling Run and Battlefield Road in an area that remains rural except for the few structures of Fisher's Hill. To the east is the high bridge of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, originally the Manassas Gap Railroad. At the northwest end of the property, Tumbling Run splits into two sections with the northern branch crossing Battlefield Road again. The topography is discussed at length in a report entitled "The Erbach Parcel: Battle of Fisher's Hill", from the Shenandoah Battlefield Foundation.

### Stoner-Keller House

The substantial brick house was constructed in 1844<sup>1</sup> in an unornamented, vernacular Greek Revival style as the residence of mill owner Abraham Stoner. It is a two-story, five-bay, gable-roofed I-house with an integral one-story rear ell that was raised to two stories, probably before the Civil War. There are four chimneys, all brick: two interior-end brick chimneys in the main block, one large exterior brick chimney on the ell, and one in the modern addition. The plain wood cornice has a deep fascia and deep returns on the gables. The walls are laid in seven-course American bond; the foundation is of rubble limestone. Roofing material throughout is standing-seam sheet metal. A vertical second-floor joint line distinguishes the otherwise similar brickwork of the raised ell.

The original L-shape of the house became nearly square with the addition of two frame, weatherboard-clad sections at the rear (1994 and 2005) to expand the kitchen and add living space.

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The three-bay, one-story, 8-foot-by-20-foot, hip-roofed front porch (ca.1880) has turned and sawn decorative millwork and chamfered posts, typical of the Victorian era. Attached to the ell is a 7-foot-by-12-foot, one-bay porch. In the center bay is the original wood, six-panel front door; it has a rectangular five-light transom but no sidelights.

There are four 9/6 double-hung, wood-sash windows on the first floor (northeast) façade of the main block; the second floor has five 6/6 double-hung, wood-sash windows. All windows in the ell have 6/6 double-hung wood sash. Those in the main block and the first floor of the ell have brick jack arches, while those on the second floor of the ell have no jack arches. The 2007 first-floor addition has grouped, large, triple-casement windows on the back and both sides. There are louvered wood shutters on all windows in the main block and ell.

A partial basement is under the northeast portion of the main block of the house and the southeast part of the additions. There is an attic in the main block, accessible by the main stairs. There is an unusual, original, sliding door from the stairway to the attic. The attic is floored in 10 inch-wide boards. There is a small window in each gable end and a crawl space over the ell.

### House Interior

The house was originally constructed with a center-hall plan, but the southeast wall of the hall was removed in the mid-1970s to expand the living room; the location of the former wall is marked by a girder. The room now measures 16 feet by 18 feet. The front door opens directly into the living room, facing the main stairway to the second floor. The two-run stairway has plain rectangular balusters and a rectangular newel post with a ball finial. The front door is an original six-panel door with a five-light rectangular transom that has diamond-patterned etched glass. The living room has an original, large, wood mantelpiece with pilaster trim and deep frieze, and a brick fireplace surround and hearth. It is flanked by a four-door cabinet on the right side. There are wide-board floors. The walls are plaster with deep baseboards and a chair rail but no cornice. Ceilings throughout are approximately 8 feet, 6 inches high. On the other side of the center hall is the dining room, 12 feet, 6 inches by 16 feet, which has a similar fireplace, mantel, and wood trim, with single-door cabinets below open shelves on each side of the fireplace.

Behind the living room in the original ell is a den, 13 feet by 17 feet, 6 inches, with a large, deep fireplace with only a plain mantel shelf, brick firebox, and brick hearth. To its left are enclosed L-shaped stairs to the second floor. There is a door to the side porch on the northwest wall.

Filling in the south corner of the original L-shaped house are two additions: first, a modern kitchen and, around it, a living porch that extends partially across the rear and encompasses the old, exterior basement stairs. (The 1994 VDHR intensive survey form includes an accurate first-floor plan of the house before the 2005 addition, measured and drawn by Nathaniel P. Neblett, AIA.)

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The second-floor original front portion has two bedrooms flanking the main stair hall. Each has a simple, original, wood mantelpiece, brick hearth, and a closet at its side. There are plastered walls and ceilings, wide-board floors, and a baseboard. The old ell second floor has a bedroom accessed from the first-floor rear stairs. The second floor of the 1994 addition is accessed from the landing of the main stairs by a short run and contains two rooms.

### Stoner-Keller Mill

The Stoner-Keller Mill is the oldest of six surviving mills in Shenandoah County, including three listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): Edinburg Mill (DHR #085-0110, listed in 1979); Lantz Mill (DHR #085-0973/085-0933-0001, listed in 2007); and the Zirkle Mill (Forestville, DHR #085-0122/085-0405-0001, listed on the VLR 1982 and the NRHP in 1983). The unlisted mills are Spengler Mill (Strasburg, DHR #085-0017), and Thundershower Mill (Armentrout Mill, Timberville, DHR #085-0035). The Stoner-Keller Mill is a large, four-story, three-bay-wide and three-bay-deep gristmill built by 1772, when the court was petitioned to open a new road to Stoner's "new" mill from Back Road.<sup>2</sup> It is located between Battlefield Road and Tumbling Run, adjacent to the 1844 miller's house and next to the intersection of Battlefield Road with Middle Road.

The stone portion was originally built three stories high, with a front-gable roof; later (ca. 1855) the roof was raised to accommodate a fourth story, and the gable roof was replaced by a gambrel roof. The line of the original roof is visible on the northeast-facing façade. The street front is at the second-floor level, while the first floor is at grade on the remaining sides. The primary entrance is on the street front, with doors at all three levels, as well as secondary entrances on three sides, and the power wheel at the south corner.

Although the mill sits near the site of the Battle of Fisher's Hill (September 21-22, 1864), no record has been located of any Civil War damage from it or from the "Burning" carried out in the Shenandoah Valley by Federal troops in October 1864; neither is there any surviving architectural evidence of such damage or fire, although minor damage is possible, given its location between opposing lines in the Battle of Fisher's Hill.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mill operation was altered according to principles laid out by Oliver Evans in his 1795 book, The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide, which were generally adopted by Shenandoah Valley mills. The original stone mill was enlarged ca. 1855, raising it to four stories with a gambrel roof. Ca. 1895, the façade was enlarged on the second-floor street level by the addition of two small, frame rooms flanking the central mill entrance and loading dock; all are covered by a plain shed roof. It was probably at this time that the wood flutter wheel was replaced by the steel overshot wheel that is in place today, and the mill operation converted to roller-mill machinery. The oldest photograph, a postcard use-dated 1902, Photo #18, shows this configuration with the Fisher's Hill U.S. Post Office in one of the new front rooms. Ca. 1920, a frame addition was constructed on the east side for use as a store on the first and second floors, extending forward to the street front and replacing one of the added front rooms on the

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corner. Ca. 2000, this addition was rehabilitated with a partial expansion for a first-floor garage. A second frame addition was added ca.1920 on the west side; ca. 2000 it was removed, in seriously deteriorated condition, and replaced by a partial, plain second-floor deck. At the same time, a partial plain rear deck was added and the stonework and clapboards of the mill thoroughly repaired into good condition.

The mill continued in operation until 1958 and the store until ca. 1968. Ca. 1923 the post office was moved to a building across Battlefield Road, now the Fisher's Hill Store.

The original stone mill, as enlarged ca. 1855, substantially retains its architectural integrity, as well as its power wheel and millstones. Modern alterations and additions that were made onto the sides and front and the insertion of an interior fire stair stack are architecturally reversible. The 1772 stone portion facing Battlefield Road is 35 feet, 10 inches wide and 45 feet, 3 inches deep. It was built in dressed-rubble limestone, with its wheel pit at the south rear corner of the building. It is in fine condition, and was carefully rehabilitated ca. 2000. The original windows, with six-over-six wood sash, remain in place. The original doorways on all three sides remain in place, with modern doors on the north (front) and west, and modern doorways to the rear deck. The gambrel roof and east-wing shed roof are covered in standing-seam metal, and the three dormer windows on each side are also covered in sheet metal around their 6/6 double-hung wood sash. There is a modern interior brick chimney. On the façade, the old front frame addition of ca. 1895 remains on the right side, and the 1895 loading dock has a handicapped ramp placed in front of it; the shed roof remains.

The third-floor front door has been reduced to a window within the original aperture and is flanked by small four-light casement windows, which are original openings. To the sides of these small windows, the trace of the original gable roof can be seen in the stone work, as the raised story was done in matching stone on the third floor, but in frame on the rear. The fourth floor exterior walls are in plain weatherboards, and there is an original doorway with flanking 6/6 double-hung-sash windows. The southwest rear is partly in old frame on the second floor. The third and fourth floors are frame.

At the south corner is a steel overshot wheel, ca. 1895, installed when the mill was converted to roller-mill operation, at some time before the photograph on the use-dated 1902 postcard was taken. It is believed to be a Fitz Waterwheel Company (Hanover, PA) wheel, as they were the primary manufacturers of steel water wheels used in the Shenandoah Valley region. It is a large, 26 feet in diameter with a 31-inch-wide wheel. It was restored and placed on new bearings in the original wheel pit in 2008. Parts of the old gear wheel also survive. Other Shenandoah County mills with similar steel wheels include Spengler (Strasburg), Lantz Mill (Lantz Mill), and Zirkle Mill (Forestville). It replaced the original smaller and wider wooden wheel. It is probable that the original wooden wheel was located on the southwest rear of the mill.

Upstream are the ruins of the ca. 1920 concrete mill dam, a contributing structure, which was overturned in a 1936 flood. Earlier dams were log or frame and were presumably rebuilt over the years. The mill race was originally an in-ground race, and later converted to a conduit and

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elevated wooden flume when the steel wheel was installed. This was replaced with an in-ground pipe hydraulic system with a concrete conduit that rose at the mill in the extant vertical concrete stanchion that powered the wheel with a short wooden flume. When the dam overturned, the mill operation was converted to electric power. The tailrace from the wheel to Tumbling Run, a contributing site, survives as a depression in the ground.

### Mill Interior

The interior of the mill is in four stories, with the street front and principal entrance at the second-floor level. The ground floor of the original stone section is in one room, with exposed massive timber framing. At the southwest end are the original two sets of millstones with three of the four stones in place along with most of their Hurst frame enclosure. This was framed separately from the building in order to dampen vibration. The fourth stone is embedded in the front entranceway. The use of two sets of millstones usually indicated one set for wheat and one for corn. Below the wheels is the well where the power gears entered the building to power the wheels. In addition to the millstones, there are fragments of the wood elevators and the canvas belt and metal cup system that carried the ground grain upward. Although most of the system is missing, fragments of individual pieces are preserved on this floor and in situ on the second floor. There are original doorways and windows on the northeast and southwest elevations. The massive timber structural frame is original, with 10-inch-square posts supporting a 10-inch-square girder running front to back, and in turn 3-inch by 8-inch joists. In the south corner of the room a modern enclosed fireproof stair stack has been installed within the original walls, providing a secure fire stair for the four-story building. On the southeast side of the original stone portion is a one-room-deep frame addition used primarily for a garage and storage. At the south end is a one-story-deep masonry section.

### Second Story

The original stone portion of the second floor is in one room. On the northeast street front is the original doorway, with a modern door and flanking 6/6 wood-sash windows in their original frames. On the east side is a doorway, originally a window, and a 6/6 double-hung, wood-sash window in its original frame. On the northwest side is a doorway, originally a window, with a modern exterior door. In the east corner is an original, angled, stone fireplace, no longer in use, whose chimney is missing in the ca. 1902 photograph. On the southeast side is the ca. 1920 addition, built onto the side of the stone wall of the mill and rebuilt ca. 2000. This housed a store; it is now a function room, in one space. There is a pair of 6/6 double-hung sash windows on the front and four pairs on the side of this addition, all modern, but recalling the 1920 paired sash. On the addition's rear are two modern, single, 6/6 double-hung, wood-sash windows. In the original stone portion, modern wood flooring covers original wide boards. The interior walls of the stone portion have exposed stone. There is a fire stair inserted in the south corner of the stone mill. On the rear wall, one of two windows has been converted to a sliding door opening to a

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new frame deck on the rear. At the front north corner the ca. 1895 added room survives; it was probably the mill office.

### Third and Fourth Floors

The third floor is accessed by the fire stair and is divided into two sections, leaving intact the original window-openings wall structure. In the front is a three-room apartment; to the rear, an office and library, opening with a sliding glass door to the new rear deck. The rehabilitation was completed ca. 2000.

The fourth floor is in one space, used as storage. The original windows, front and rear, are in place, and the original street-front door opening has been closed. The walls and ceiling are covered in plasterboard.

### Mill Machinery

As converted presumably ca. 1800, as were other Valley mills, the Stoner-Keller Mill functioned on the principles laid out in Oliver Evans' The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide. "Shenandoah County millers and millwrights were among the first Virginians to acquire Evans' handbook and to apply the patented machinery to the process of flour milling in the Valley." At least three local men were among the first subscribers to the book, according to the National Register nomination for Zirkle Mill. The stone mill has preserved its grinding machinery of two sets of millstones and their Hurst enclosure and the remnants of the supply and product elevators with them, although one of the four wheels has been placed in the entrance way. The ca. 1895 water wheel, headrace, tailrace, and dam ruins have been discussed, but it is significant that all four parts are on the nominated property. The large 26-foot-diameter Fitz overshot steel wheel is itself a significant example of this late-19<sup>th</sup>-century technological development in power wheels. The company's wheels were the standard in the southeast. They claimed to have more than 700 in Virginia alone. The mill was converted to a roller-mill operation, probably at the same time that the new wheel was installed, as was done in most substantial mills in this area. Following the dam failure in 1936, the operation was converted to electricity. Although most of the interior machinery and fittings are missing, there is a fine floor scale labeled "Gump" and sections of ceiling-mounted iron supports for power supply wheels, gears, and shafts, all on the second floor. Several pieces of these parts are preserved in the mill, as well as fragments of the vertical grain elevators and sections of canvas belts and metal scoops that were originally housed within wooden shafts. An internet search revealed no information about Gump scales. Although the surviving machinery is limited to the power wheel, Hurst frame and millstones, it should be noted that few Virginia mills survive today with their own original or early machinery.

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Mill Dam Ruins, Contributing Structure, ca. 1920

There are remains of a concrete dam, ca. 1920, a contributing structure that overturned in a 1936 flood. The ruins are approximately 450 feet west of the mill wheel and extend across Tumbling Run to near the side of Battlefield Road. Some sections are in place, others are overturned. Fragments of the concrete pipe outlet that carried water to the mill survive with it. The concrete dam replaced an earlier log or frame dam, which was in turn presumably repaired or rebuilt periodically after 1772, when the mill was originally constructed. The original in-ground headrace was replaced ca. 1895 by an elevated frame flume that was built to power the high ca. 1895 Fitz wheel. The concrete pipe fragments represent the most recent water power and were part of an underground pipe that extended to the wheel and there rose in the existing concrete stanchion adjoining the wheel to power it.

Tailrace Trace, Contributing Site, 1772

Exiting from the wheel pit, a ground depression extends toward Tumbling Run, marking the tailrace location.

Tenant House (Contributing Building), ca. 1880

This is a small, two-story, frame house facing southeast located on the southeast side of the mill owner's house. The construction date is estimated to be ca. 1880, as it shows on the 1885 Lake Atlas Map in Fisher's Hill. It faces on the old Middle Road section of Battlefield Road and carries the address of 2045 Battlefield Road. The house has a two-bay front and is two bays deep, including a rear side shed-roofed, one-story addition. It has a side-gable roof and is approximately 24 feet wide by 20 feet deep. There is a large stone and brick chimney on the south side of the house, larger than would be suggested by the small size of the house; possibly it survives from an earlier house on the site. Earlier surveys call this a wash house, which might indicate an earlier structure or use. There is a hipped-roof frame front porch on a concrete pad; the porch is three bays wide and one bay deep. The roofing is standing-seam sheet metal. There is a sash front door and one front window with 6/6, double-hung wood sash, and two windows on the second floor.

Barn (Contributing Building), ca. 1880

This is a medium-sized, old barn, presumably ca. 1880, located south of the mill owner's house, directly on Middle Road on the north side of Tumbling Run. It is a frame bank barn on a limestone-rubble foundation. It has an end-gable roof covered in sheet metal. There are two additions: a two-story rear addition on the southwest, elevated over a semi-enclosed ground floor and a one-story addition on the southeast. Both additions have shed roofs covered in sheet metal. Overall, the barn is approximately 45 feet wide by 48 feet deep. On the main façade, facing

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northeast, is a pair of large, sliding, frame barn doors. There are no windows except on the rear addition, where there is a small door and a casement window. The interior of the main floor is in one large space with a heavy timber frame. The construction date is unknown, but is possibly ca. 1880.

Shed (Non-contributing Structure), ca. 2000

This a small, modern, one-story utility shed.

Well, Non-contributing Structure, ca. 2000

The well is non-functioning; it has a low stone wall surrounding a hoisting frame.

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## 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1772-1958

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1772

1844

ca. 1855

ca. 1895

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Stoner, Abraham

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**8. Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Together, the Stoner-Keller House and Mill are an unusually complete, lengthy, and eloquent statement of rural life in the northern Shenandoah Valley of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Stoner-Keller House (also called the Abraham Stoner House), constructed in 1844, and the adjacent Stoner-Keller Mill (1772 and ca. 1855) are located at 2900 Battlefield Road on Tumbling Run in the rural village of Fisher's Hill in northern Shenandoah County, Virginia, 2.5 miles west of Strasburg, at the intersection of Battlefield Road (VA Rt. 601) with Copp Road (VA Rt. 757, originally Middle Road). The brick I-house with integral first-floor wing was constructed as the residence of Abraham Stoner, a grandson of Frederick Stoner, builder and original operator of the mill. The house and the stone mill constitute an unusually intact historic mill complex representing Shenandoah County's once-vital milling industry as it evolved over the course of 176 years. As a pair, they are locally significant under Criteria A and C. The Stoner and Keller families, early residents of Fisher's Hill, were closely related through marriage. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house became locally known as the John H. Keller House and the mill as Keller Mill. The house is architecturally significant under Criterion C as a handsome, well-preserved example of a predominant type of mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century residential construction in the northern Shenandoah Valley. It is the only brick house within the village of Fisher's Hill. The mill, the oldest of the six extant Shenandoah County gristmills, is historically significant under Criteria A and C, as one of the earliest surviving mills in the northern Valley and for its continuous use from 1772 until 1958. The mill retains its large, ca. 1895 steel overshot water wheel and early mill stones. The nominated property contains 2.5 acres and includes two contributing secondary buildings: a frame, one-story barn, ca. 1880, and a frame, two-story tenant house, ca. 1880. There is one ruin, a contributing structure, the remains of a concrete dam, ca. 1920, 450 feet west of the mill; and a contributing site, a trace of a tailrace from 1772. The period of significance, 1772-1958, begins with the construction of the mill and ends with its final year of operation. Two non-contributing structures, a small frame shed and a non-functioning well, were constructed after the period of significance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Historical Background

The Stoner-Keller House was constructed in 1844 by Abraham Stoner. His grandfather, Frederick Stoner, had built the adjacent mill on Tumbling Run by 1772, when he petitioned the court for a road to his "new mill". Frederick's son William (Abraham's father) later operated the mill.

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The grinding of wheat, rye, and corn, as well as plaster, was a vital industry in the Shenandoah Valley throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. By 1850, the Stoner Mill was one of three in or very near Strasburg, including Fisher's Mill, to the south on Tumbling Run, and Spengler's Mill, on the Shenandoah River at the edge of Strasburg on the Valley Turnpike (U.S. Rte. 11). The United States Census of 1850 showed 51 residents of Shenandoah County as millers and another fifteen as millwrights, who would have been responsible for the construction and maintenance of mills and their machinery. Of the various types of mills listed in Lundgard's 2005 publication, Mills and Mill Ruins in Shenandoah and Warren Counties, VA, approximately fifty in Shenandoah County probably are gristmill sites, ruins, or existing structures. Only six of the mills are still standing today. While the Stoner-Keller Mill is not the largest of these, it is thought to be the oldest and the one with the longest operating history.

As Robert D. Mitchell points out in Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley, both the prevalence and the importance of gristmills in the lower Shenandoah Valley, which includes Shenandoah County, were well established before the Revolution, when farms in the Valley's three lower counties contributed 75% of the two million pounds of flour sold from the area. By 1800 the Valley had become the dominant wheat-producing region in the South, and up to half of the typical farmer's output was available for sale. Commercial production after the war was sustained by growing demand in Alexandria (Shenandoah County's most convenient outlet) and other market ports. Flour was shipped by boat on Shenandoah and Potomac River navigation routes, overland by wagon, and, after 1836, by rail from Winchester. The 1850 Agricultural Census (Products of Industry) for the 58<sup>th</sup> District in Shenandoah County places the Stoner Mill solidly in the mid-range of twenty mills operating in the district. In that year it produced 1,200 barrels of flour from 6,000 bushels of wheat, with a total value of \$6, 600.

On the death of William Stoner in 1843, Abraham inherited the stone mill and the land on which he would build his new dwelling, as well as the old miller's house across the road, in which he had been living.<sup>3</sup> Stoner's new house was a substantial gable-roofed I-house with integral one-story wing, constructed in the undecorated Greek Revival style that was popular with prosperous Shenandoah Valley farmers, merchants, and millers.

In 1853, Abraham Stoner sold the brick house and mill to Obed Coffman, who in turn sold the property two years later to Levi Pifer and his wife, Elizabeth Keller Pifer; Elizabeth Keller's brother Philip Keller; and Philip's wife, Elizabeth Stoner Keller.<sup>4</sup> Philip and Elizabeth Keller soon sold their interest in the brick house and mill to Levi Pifer. Pifer owned and operated the mill and occupied the brick house during and after the Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its location in the area in which the Battle of Fisher's Hill was fought on September 21-22, 1864, no major engagements took place on the property itself, and the house and mill escaped significant damage.<sup>6</sup> The opposing forces were aligned along opposite sides of Tumbling Run--the attacking Union troops on the north and Confederates in defensive positions in the hills to the south. During the engagement Union forces advanced across the property and Tumbling Run, routing the Confederates.<sup>7</sup>

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The buildings also lay in the path of the infamous “Burning” of October 1864, when Union troops were ordered by General Philip H. Sheridan to carry out systematic destruction of livestock, barns, and mills in order to cripple the ability of the Shenandoah Valley to serve as the so-called “Granary of the Confederacy”. The operation destroyed 47 mills and 560 barrels of flour in Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties. Pifer’s property, located some distance from the Turnpike and Back Road where most of the barn and mill burning took place, appears to have remained unscathed. Most of the destruction occurred between Harrisonburg and Woodstock, and the troops may simply have lost interest as they neared their campground at Strasburg at the northern end of their path.<sup>8</sup> They did, however, set a fire in the mill of David Fisher, Pifer’s neighbor to the south on Tumbling Run, which was closer to the Turnpike. Fisher’s Mill, though damaged, also survived.<sup>9</sup>

The 1870 U. S. Census indicates that by June of that year, the Stoner-Keller Mill was once again meeting its 1850 production level of 1,200 barrels of flour from 6,000 bushels of wheat, valued at \$7,200 for the grain and \$8,400 for flour. The same year, it also processed 500 bushels of rye worth \$625; 500 bushels of corn worth \$625; and 30 tons of plaster worth \$360.

The last miller, George H. Keller, ran the mill until 1946, though the mill continued in use until 1958 and the store until ca. 1968. In the 1890s, the mill also contained a small U. S. Post Office, which was moved ca. 1923 across the road to what is now the Fisher’s Hill Store, where it continues in partial use in 2012.

Throughout the long history of the mill and house, the Stoner, Keller, Coffman, and Pifer families were closely related through marriages, and the property passed out of the hands of descendants of the original owners for only one five-year interval before 1973. It was purchased in that year by its present owners, William W. and Martha S. Erbach. The Erbachs rehabilitated the house, adding the wings as noted in the house description above, and thoroughly rehabilitated the mill, including repairing the mill wheel. The property, carefully maintained by the Erbachs, continues to present an unusually full and compelling picture of the industrial and social life of Shenandoah County in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Stoner-Keller House Architecture

The Stoner-Keller House, 2900 Battlefield Road, Fisher’s Hill, Virginia, in northern Shenandoah County 2.5 miles west of Strasburg, was constructed in 1844 as the miller’s residence for Stoner-Keller Mill, the gristmill with which it is historically associated. The house, which faces northeast to Battlefield Road, is a brick, two-story, five-bay, gable-roofed I-house with integral rear ell and a frame, one-story, three-bay, hip-roofed front porch that has late-Victorian sawn- and turned-wood trim. Two small, frame additions (ca. 1994 and 2004) square off the original L-shape of the house.

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The house is a superior example of its type in Shenandoah County, where most rural residences are of frame. The relatively few brick houses, such as this, were limited to prosperous farmers and business owners like the Stoners. The architecture of the house is plain, emphasizing primarily the solid character of the brickwork, with the traditional small-pane sash of the pre-Civil War era. It has a bold cornice and deep fascia typical of the Greek Revival period, with deep, projecting eaves at the gable ends. The porch is of the post-Civil War period, but it is a common and compatible addition to such a house, lending an air of gracious comfort to the simple house. The interior woodwork is typical of plain Greek Revival design, with substantial, flat pilaster mantelpieces flanked by paneled cabinets.

Brick construction appeared in Shenandoah County, ca. 1810, notably in the large, Federal-style Mount Pleasant [DHR #085-0072, listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2011], 1812, and Spengler Hall (DHR #085-0009), ca. 1813, both near Strasburg. Brick houses are relatively large, substantial two-story constructions, whereas the majority of houses were built of frame or log. The building of stone houses sharply declined in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with brick being the most common replacement material. Brick continued in use throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, usually for a limited number of houses of substantial and more costly type. The use of brick reflected not only its higher cost, but modernity in replacing stone, and was socially indicative of a solid middle class owner taking pride in his business or farm success. In style, houses like Stoner-Keller descend from a straightforward Federal style with gable roof, individual small paned windows, and a simple cornice. While the largest brick houses were generally of a center-hall double-pile plan, the center hall single-pile plan, usually with an integral wing and always with a subsequent addition or enlargement, reflects the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of this house type, which is not seen again until the later Victorian era. Though the plan, an I-house with integral wing, became the most common house type in the county, largely replacing the hall-and-parlor plan, the construction type of the Stoner-Keller House was reserved for the best quality of construction, with relatively few examples in the county. Around 1840 they quickly modernized to Greek Revival detail, such as found on the Stoner-Keller house, and later exhibited Italianate form with large, bold cornices and rooflines. There are several rural examples in Shenandoah and the surrounding counties including: the Daniel Munch House (DHR#085-0363, listed on the VLR in 2001 and the NRHP in 2002), ca. 1840; Liberty Hall (DHR #093-0061), Warren County; the Wine House, (DHR #085-0173), 1849; 2074 South Pifer Road (DHR # 034-0124, Star Tannery, Frederick County) 1836; and the Fisher House, Fisher's Hill (DHR #085-0253), which was also a miller's house. A later example in the Italianate mode is the Jacob Pence House (DHR #085-0209), near Edinburg.

Some brick houses of the period continue the double-pile form but exhibit stronger Classic Revival influences of the Greek Revival, such as the Barb House near Fisher's Hill (DHR #085-0087), and the double-pile mansion form in Greek Revival seen at Edge Hill (DHR #085-0783), and, thus, are not directly comparable to the Stoner-Keller house.

The mill, a gambrel-roofed, four-story, limestone building, was originally constructed in 1772 on the north bank of Tumbling Run, its water source, with a steep, gable roof. Ca. 1855, the roof was raised and reshaped into a gambrel. Ca. 1895 the original wooden water wheel was replaced

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by the present Fitz steel wheel. Two small rooms and a loading dock were added ca.1895; they included a small post office. Ca. 1920, side additions including a store were made; these were later rebuilt. The mill is situated to the west of the house, across a wide driveway off Battlefield Road. The house and mill are part of the tiny rural village of Fisher's Hill, across Battlefield Road from the rest of the village. The nominated property consists of 2.5 acres in a picturesque setting on Tumbling Run, surrounded by rolling fields backed by distant mountains. The house and mill are in excellent condition; the tenant house and barn are in good condition.

Mills were an integral part of the farming economy, located near the farms and where an adequate flow and drop of the water was available, as at Tumbling Run. Like most mills, the Stoner-Keller Mill processed small grains and corn, both for local use and for shipment to urban areas. The Stoner-Keller Mill is distinctive for its early and prolonged use, from 1772 until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and for its continued operation by many generations of the same family.

### Archaeological Potential

Although no archaeological investigations have been conducted on the nominated property, there is potential to yield information as related to former buildings and structures, material culture and lifeways, and the industrial use of the site. The substantial Geier report on the Erbach property is primarily concerned with land area lying beyond the immediate cluster of house, barn, and mill structures and their adjoining roadsides. It does, however, examine the more remote mill dam ruins. It indicates that there is disturbed soil around the buildings, leaving that area without archaeological investigation. The area around the mill itself, in particular, in operation since 1772, may be seen as having potential; this includes the headrace and later waterpower system, the site of the probable original wooden power wheel on the southwest rear of the mill, and possible changes to the tailrace. This area of the mill and races appears to have been changed with fill rather than having been cut. The house area has less land change except for the addition to the building. Old photographs indicate a small structure between the house and mill and another toward the barn, probably an outhouse. The barn's post-Civil War construction date leaves uncertain whether there may be physical evidence of an earlier structure. Similarly, the tenant house, of post-Civil War construction has a massive end chimney, suggesting the possibility of an earlier structure on its site. Changes to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century roadway on two sides of the property and the loading area between the mill front and the road also offer potential for examination. To summarize, there may be good archaeological potential for additional study, particularly from the point of view of construction history.

Stoner-Keller House and Mill

Shenandoah County, VA

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Shenandoah County Land Books, 1858, 1869, 1870, 1877, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1890, 1895, 1900,  
1901, 1902, 1908, 1911, 1915, 1919, 1924, 1929,

United States Census, Products of Industry, 58<sup>th</sup> District in the County of Shenandoah, during the  
year ending June 1, 1850.

United States Census, Products of Industry, 58<sup>th</sup> District in the County of Shenandoah, during the  
year ending June 1, 1870.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency

Stoner-Keller House and Mill

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Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** VDHR File Nos. 085-0084; 085-0910-0011; 44SH0459

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** approximately 2.5 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                  |                   |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 725040  | Northing: 4318300 |
| 2. Zone: 17 | Easting: 725290  | Northing: 4318220 |
| 3. Zone: 17 | Easting: 725270  | Northing: 4318160 |
| 4. Zone: 17 | Easting : 725080 | Northing: 4318200 |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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The nominated property includes all of Parcels 23 and 24 on Map 24 of Shenandoah County Land Records, a copy of which is attached.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the mill owner's house, the mill, and related structures, including the mill dam ruins and tailrace traces. Together these form an unusually intact grouping of a historic mill complex dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The nominated property, including these buildings and structures, and comprising Parcels 23 and 24, also has natural boundaries formed by Battlefield Road and Tumbling Run.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: James C. Massey, Architectural Historian and Shirley Maxwell, Historian

organization: Massey Maxwell Associates, Historic Preservation Consultants

street & number: P.O. Box 263

city or town: Strasburg state: VA zip code: 22657

e-mail: masmax@shentel.net

telephone: (540) 465-4566

date: September 25, 2012

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

1. Stoner-Keller House and Mill Site Plan
2. Photo Key
3. Tax Parcel Map 24, Shenandoah County Land Records

Stoner-Keller House and Mill

Shenandoah County, VA

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

The following information is common to all photographs:

**Name of Property:** Stoner-Keller House and Mill

**City or Vicinity:** Strasburg vicinity

**County:** Shenandoah

**State:** Virginia

**VDHR File Number:** 085-0084; 085-0910-0011; 44SH0459

**Photographer:** James C. Massey

**Date Photographed:** 2011

**Digital Images Stored at:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

### Photo Log

PHOTO 1 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0001

VIEW: General view with mill and Tumbling Run, looking NW

PHOTO 2 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0002

VIEW: House, façade, looking S

PHOTO 3 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0003

VIEW: House, front porch, looking S

PHOTO 4 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0004

VIEW: House, SE elevation, looking S

PHOTO 5 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0005

VIEW: House, S elevation, looking N

PHOTO 6 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0006

VIEW: House, first floor, living room, looking W

PHOTO 7 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0007

VIEW: House, first floor, family room, looking SW

PHOTO 8 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0008

VIEW: House, first floor, dining room, looking SE

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PHOTO 9 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0009

VIEW: House, second floor, bedroom, looking E

PHOTO 10 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0010

VIEW: Mill, façade, looking SW

PHOTO 11 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0011

VIEW: Mill, SW elevation, looking NE

PHOTO 12 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0012

VIEW: Mill, second floor, looking east

PHOTO 13 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0013

VIEW: Mill, power wheel, looking N

PHOTO 14 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0014

VIEW: Mill, first floor, grindstones, looking SW

PHOTO 15 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0015

VIEW: Barn, looking SW

PHOTO 16 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0016

VIEW: Tenant house, looking W

PHOTO 17 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0017

VIEW: Mill dam ruins, looking W

PHOTO 18 of 18: VA\_ShenandoahCounty\_Stoner-KellerHouseAndMill\_0018

VIEW: Old photo (copy), pre-1902 of house and mill

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Stoner-Keller House and Mill

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Name of Property

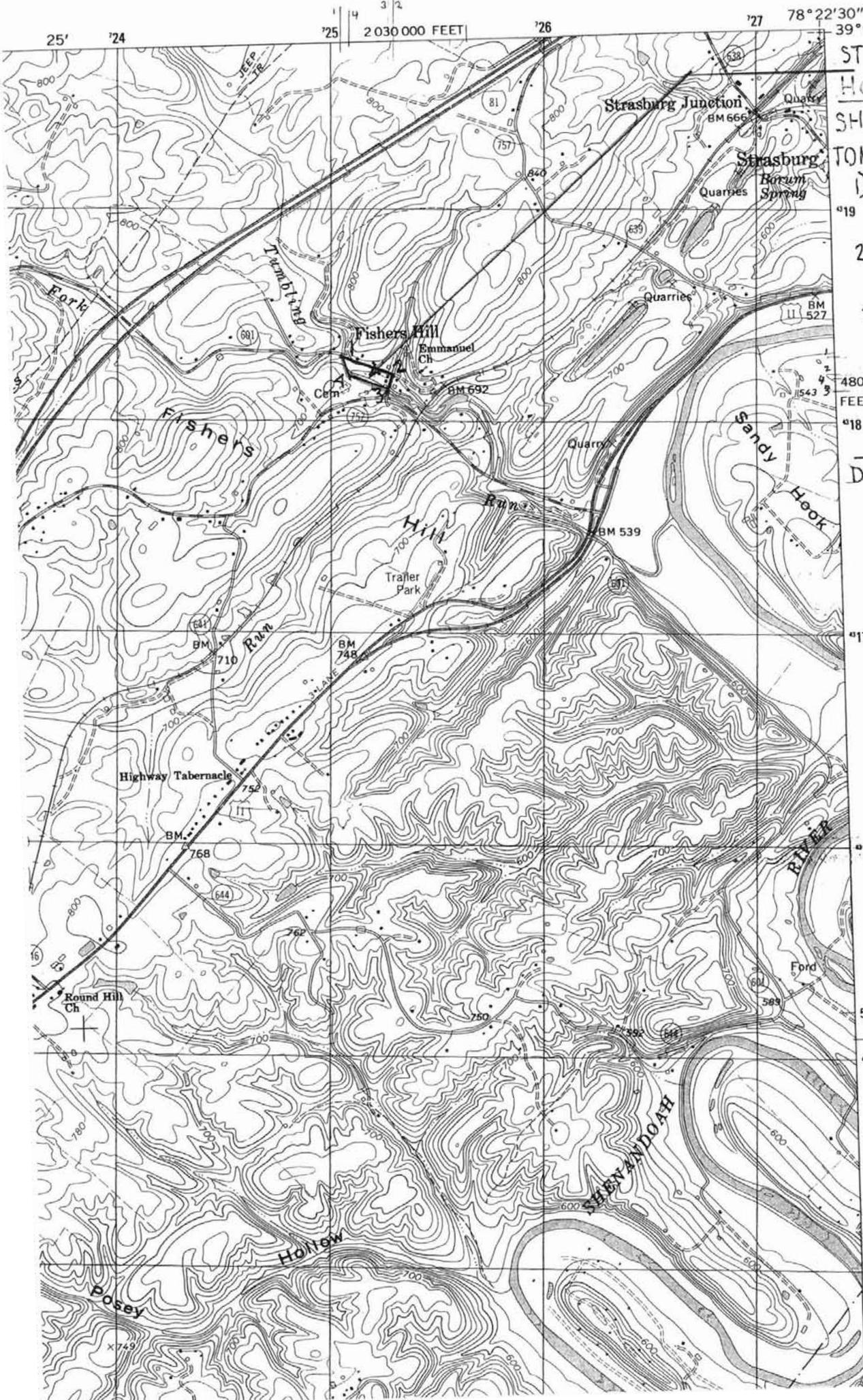
County and State

**ENDNOTES**

1. Zula Gochenour. "Architectural Description of Building called for in 3686 5-A of Bulletin 3400". Two undated 1930s WPA survey forms recording the "John H. Keller Home" and "Old Stoner Mill". Copies in Virginia Department of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
2. Martha Erbach. "The Stoner/Keller Mill", and "The Abraham Stoner House". House, Undated house-tour fact sheets in Erbach files.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
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6. Clarence Geier, Alyson L. Wood, and Joseph A. Whitehorne, "The Erbach Parcel: Battle of Fisher's Hill". Report Submitted to the Shenandoah Battlefield Foundation. Harrisonburg, VA: James Madison University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, April 2011.
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STONER-KELLER  
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 TOMS BROOK QUADRANGLE  
 1) 17 725 040 E  
 4318300 N  
 2) 17 725290 E  
 4318220 N  
 3) 17 725 270 E  
 4318160 N  
 4) 17 725 080 E  
 4318200 N  
 1927 DATUM  
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