

VLR-6/2/70 NRHP-9/15/70

Form 10-300
(July 19693)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Sussex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON
Fortsville

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Fortsville

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
S side of Rt. 612, 1.6 mi. SE of intersection with Rt. 611 (Grizzard vic.)

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE: Virginia CODE: 45 COUNTY: Sussex CODE: 183

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<u>Vacant</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
~~H. Lee Bain~~ MR. EARL S. SOWERS

STREET AND NUMBER:
ROUTE #2

CITY OR TOWN: Gapron EMPORIA STATE: Virginia CODE: 23847 45

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Sussex County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Sussex STATE: Virginia CODE: 45

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: 1959 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D. C. CODE: 08

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia
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DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fortsville is a frame, two-story structure set on a brick foundation with two shallow, one-story wings flanking the pedimented gable end (north) facade. The two-bay wings are flush with the north end of the deep, three-bay center section. The use of a modillioned and dentilled cornice and an elliptical fanlight in the pediment give sophistication to an otherwise simple structure. The one-story porch on the center section is possibly original but has been altered. Two brick chimneys, rising from the wings, flank the center block; a brick exterior end chimney with flanking one-story, frame pent closets is located at the rear of the center section. Portions of the foundation reveal Flemish bond brickwork, although the masonry has been extensively repaired. The west side of the center block has been considerably hidden by additions, but the exposed eastern foundation wall shows basement vent openings with vertical wooden bars set diagonally to the plane of the wall. The east and west facades behind the wings have central entrances with double, four-paneled doors and transom above.

The interior plan of the central block is focused on a room entered from the northern (main) facade that has a hall and a room behind, with a single room in each wing. The hall behind the entrance room is narrower than its adjacent rooms and has the two aforementioned double-door entrances on the east and west. Access to the second floor is by an enclosed stair between the center room of the north facade and the west wing; the low attic room in the west wing is reached by an enclosed stair in the southwest corner of the room below.

Architrave framings are used on all door and window openings, and a considerable variety of mantel designs exists. The mantel in the west wing dates stylistically from the second half of the eighteenth century in the Southside Virginia manner, using a broad architrave framing around the fireplace opening abutting two panels directly above. Just above the panels, a beautifully molded mantel shelf projects. The architrave on a second-floor mantel is similar in feeling to the one just described, but the framing surrounds both the opening and a horizontal, rectangular panel. Several of the other mantels date from about 1900.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fortsville was the home of John Y. Mason (1799-1859), member of Congress 1831-37, Secretary of the Navy 1844-45, Attorney General 1845-46, Secretary of the Navy 1846-49, and minister to France 1853-59. Mason was one of the three diplomats who in 1854 met unofficially at Ostend, Belgium, and wrote the Ostend Manifesto, that called on the United States to take possession of Cuba. Mason married Mary Ann Fort, whose family had owned the property on which Mason built his house, and he named his estate in honor of his wife.

With its impressive three-part composition and pedimented gable-end front, Fortsville dates stylistically from the period 1780-1820, although two of the mantels could appear in Southside Virginia houses of an earlier date. Fortsville's three-part plan relates to other houses of this period, such as Eppington in Chesterfield County, the Semple House in Williamsburg, and Belnemus in Powhatan County, as well as the five-part compositions at Battersea in Dinwiddie County, and Brandon in Prince George County. All of these houses were inspired directly or indirectly by Palladio's smaller Roman country house design, as noted by Thomas T. Waterman. While Fortsville is obviously not alone in having a Palladian inspiration, the location of such a structure in an isolated corner of Sussex County is almost as surprising as its stark and lonely hilltop site.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dictionary of American Biography, Volume XII, 369-370.
 Stephenson, Mary A., Old Homes in Surry & Sussex (Richmond, 1942).
 Waterman, Thomas Tileston, The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776 (New York, 1945).
 Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture since 1780; A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds 36 ° 43 ' 02 "	Degrees Minutes Seconds 77 ° 25 ' 07 "		Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	
NE	36 ° 43 ' 02 "	77 ° 24 ' 37 "				
SE	36 ° 42 ' 34 "	77 ° 24 ' 37 "				
SW	36 ° 42 ' 34 "	77 ° 25 ' 07 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 100 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE: March 9, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:
 Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date _____

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

VIRGINIA-NORTH CAROLINA
ARRINGDALE QUADRANGLE

W
 CORPS OF

GRID ZONE "8"

(INCORRECTLY)
 77°30' JARRATT 4.5 MI.

36°45'

1550

House (91-12)

Fortsville (91-7)

1545

10 MILES

9

8

7

6

1540

(EMPORIA) EMPORIA 4.2 MI.

U.S.G.S. 15' quadrangle (scale: 1:62500)
 Arringdale, Va., N.C.

1942

Fortsville

Latitude

Longitude

NW 36°43'02"

77°25'07"

NE 36°43'02"

77°24'37"

SE 36°42'34"

77°24'37"

SW 36°42'34"

77°25'07"

BM 91 78 62

