

VLR-10/21/80 NRHP-6/28/82

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United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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

For HCRS' use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Alexander St. Clair House

and/or common Same

## 2. Location

street &amp; number Rt. 650 not for publication

city, town Ist. Clair  vicinity of Ninth congressional district (William C. Wampler)

state Virginia code 51 county Tazewell code 185

## 3. Classification

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Alexander St. Clair

street &amp; number Fincastle Road

city, town Bluefield state Va. Zip Code 24605

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tazewell County Courthouse

street &amp; number

city, town Tazewell state Virginia

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  nodate 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia Zip Code 23219

## 7. Description

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

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

The Alexander St. Clair house is a handsome dwelling that is distinguished by its well-executed details (which combine both traditional and more citified qualities) and by its interesting interior decoration. Documentation as well as architectural characteristics verify that the prominent local builder, Thomas Masten Hawkins, was responsible for constructing the St. Clair house ca. 1879.

The St. Clair house is a two-story, brick "I" house with an integral ell. The south and west elevations are identically detailed principal facades, although the south elevation functions as the main entrance leading to the center passage. The south and west elevations are laid in stretcher bond, and the east wall of the "I" house is laid in five-course American bond to mid-wall and in stretcher bond above. The remaining walls are laid in five-course American bond. Gables break the roof line over the center bays of the west, south, and southeast elevations, a detail often used by Hawkins. \* Identical porches shelter the center bays of the west and south elevations. There is one balustrade at the second story. This portico is similar in detail and execution to those at other Tazewell County homes, including the Willows, the Thomas Witten house, and the G. O. Thompson house, perhaps indicating a common craftsman. These center bays are further emphasized by their prominent door and window treatments. Both first-story doors are bordered by pilasters and sidelights which in turn are surrounded by an architrave surmounted by a label molding. Sidelights frame each 6/6 sash second-story window which is also crowned by a label molding. All other windows are 6/6 sash and are circumscribed by wide architraves. Two interior chimneys offset left and right straddle the ridge of the front block. A single interior chimney projects through the ell roof. Like many local houses, the roof of the St. Clair house is covered with patterned tin, known in the area as Cartwright shingles. The house has no cellar. A modern shed addition containing a laundry room has been attached to the east wall of the ell. While there has always been a covered walk between the house and original brick kitchen, this walk was enclosed by the present owners. The two-room kitchen is now used as a family room and work room.

A center passage separates the parlor and living room. The dining room and kitchen are contained within the ell. All second-floor rooms are used as bedrooms. Interior trim is quite simple. Baseboards are found throughout the house, and mantels are plain with carved friezes, characteristic of the late 19th century. But the painted and grained doors, the alternating ash and walnut floor boards, and the marbled mantels and baseboards distinguish the interior. The marbled parlor baseboard is of special note. The artists responsible for the work, F. T. Wall and O. T. Jones, signed and dated the baseboard so that the signatures and date were incorporated into the marbled pattern. Wall was a well-known local painter who advertised his services in the Clinch Valley News. These artists likely were responsible for the marbled mantels in the parlor and second-floor west bedroom. The other mantels and baseboards are painted, though it is probable that at one time they too were marbled. The center passage is short and narrow. Tradition relates that the large curved stair that fills the space was ordered from Baltimore. Indeed the stair details and other woodwork closely resemble illustrations in the 1879 catalogue of George P. Stevens, a Baltimore builders' supply company. By the late 19th century many local builders were ordering their fancy details from such commercial establishments rather than crafting them themselves. The striped ash and walnut floors found in the dining room, kitchen, and the second-floor landing are also a feature often associated with Hawkins' work. The cabinets that are built into the jambs of the door between the dining room and kitchen are an interesting detail. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

\* A deep cornice circles the structure, with decorative paired sawn brackets at the west, south, and southeast elevations, which also identifies Hawkins' work.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates      1879      Builder/Architect      Thomas Hawkins

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in 1879-80 for Alexander St. Clair, a prominent Tazewell County banker and farmer, the Alexander St. Clair House is a documented work of the well-known local builder Thomas M. Hawkins, who was responsible for the construction of approximately twenty fine houses in the area. The modified Italianate-style dwelling, which is the only known brick house built by Hawkins, stands on land inherited by Maria J. St. Clair from her father, Charles F. Tiffany. The house replaced an earlier log structure which had been Tiffany's residence until his death in 1876, and it illustrates the introduction of stylish catalogue-ordered motifs onto traditional house forms in the farther reaches of the state. The marbled interior woodwork is signed by Frank T. Wall and O. T. Jones, skilled local artisans and painters.

Alexander St. Clair, born in Tazewell County in 1845, was the son of an Irish merchant who came to Wytheville, Virginia in 1833. St. Clair's father purchased land in the town of Tazewell in 1842 and became a successful farmer, accumulating before his death in 1862 a modest holding on the Clinch River with buildings valued in excess of \$4,500. Young St. Clair left Roanoke College in 1863 to join the 16th Virginia Cavalry on its return from Gettysburg. He saw active service as a dispatch carrier until the war's end when he resumed his studies at Roanoke. He was appointed deputy sheriff of Tazewell County in 1870 and married Maria Tiffany in 1871. In 1876 his wife inherited the substantial tract on which the house was erected three years later.

St. Clair's subsequent career was varied and successful. An affluent farmer, a pioneer merchant in the town of Pocahontas, and president of the Bank of Clinch Valley, he also served in an official capacity with the banks of Pocahontas, Bluefield, and Graham. Thrice elected to the state Senate (in 1896, 1898, and 1900), he later served as a member of the county pension board and as president of the Tazewell Historical Society. For many years he was also an active member of Main Street Methodist Church. He died in 1921.

Thomas M. Hawkins, the builder of the Alexander St. Clair House, first is known to have lived in Tazewell County in 1870. Born in Halifax County in 1826, he married the daughter of a Franklin County house joiner and is thought to have learned the building trade from his father- and brothers-in-law. His first major project was the Gogginsville Methodist Church in Franklin County which he built in 1855. Following service in the Civil War as a forage master, he settled in Tazewell County where, for the next twenty years, he established a reputation as a meticulous builder. His advertisement, which ran regularly in the Clinch Valley News, states:

"Thomas M. Hawkins and Son still hold the fort. The senior member of this firm takes pleasure in stating that he has been successful in pleasing some of the most exacting men in Virginia in the matter of building fine houses. He points to the houses he has built in Tazewell as his best recommendation...They refer to A. St. Clair, Joseph Gillespie, and A. White."<sup>1</sup>

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Harman, John Newton, Sr. Annals of Tazewell County, Virginia From 1800-1924. Richmond: W. C. Hill Printing Company, 1925.
- Hollowell, Betty. Unpublished paper on Thomas M. Hawkins, 1980.
- Pendleton, William C. History of Tazewell County and Southwest Virginia, 1748-1920. Richmond: W. C. Hill Printing Company, 1820.
- St. Clair, Alexander. Obituary. Clinch Valley News. 28 October 1921.

## 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property 9 1/2 acres

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Cove Creek, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	4	7	2	0	7	0	4	1	2	0	5	4	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point 1100' E of U.S. Route 19/460, about 2000' S of St. Clair, 950' NE of intersection of routes 650 and 640; thence extending 650' E; thence extending 600' S across said route 650; thence extending 650' W; thence extending 600' N across said route to point of origin.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code
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state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date September 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:

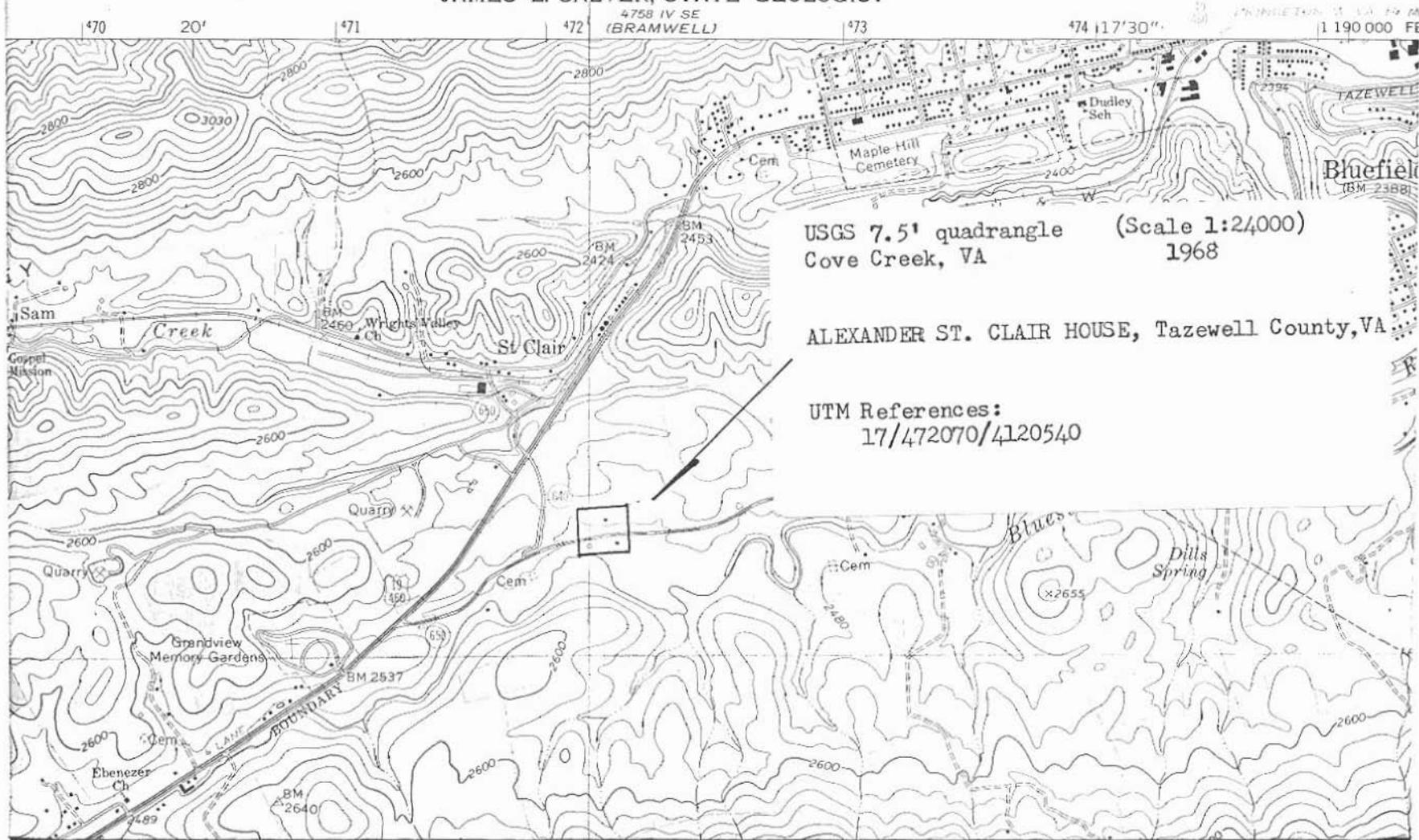
national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature] Resubmitted 5/10/82: H. Bryan Mitchell, Exec. Director  
Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
 title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date OCT 21 1980

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	date
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	date

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES  
JAMES L. CALVER, STATE GEOLOGIST



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (Scale 1:24,000)  
Cove Creek, VA 1968

ALEXANDER ST. CLAIR HOUSE, Tazewell County, VA

UTM References:  
17/472070/4120540