



**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	2	buildings
1	0	sites
2	1	structures
0	0	objects
<hr/>		
12	3	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	multiple dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
AGRICULTURE	storage
AGRICULTURE	animal facility
AGRICULTURE	agricultural outbuilding
FUNERARY	cemetery

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	multiple dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
AGRICULTURE	storage
AGRICULTURE	animal facility
FUNERARY	cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Federal
- Greek Revival
- Victorian

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Stone
- walls Brick
- roof Asphalt
- other Wood

**Narrative Description**

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- X 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.
X 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Period of Significance

Ca. 1825-ca. 1950

Significant Dates

Ca. 1825

1880

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property approximately 21,266 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	721320	4283270	3	17	721580 4283030
2	17	721480	4283340	4	17	721360 4282800

X See continuation sheet.**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>	date	<u>March 7, 2001</u>
organization	<u>Landmark Preservation Associates</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 464-5315</u>
street & number	<u>6 Houston St.</u>	zip code	<u>24450</u>
city or town	<u>Lexington</u> state <u>VA</u>		

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>James Ruffner Sr. and Judith W. McNeely</u>		
street & number	<u>440 Ruffner House Lane</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 743-7855</u>
city or town	<u>Luray</u> state <u>VA</u>	zip code	<u>22835</u>

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

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

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### Summary

The Ruffner House and its associated resources occupy a 21.266-acre parcel at the northern edge of the historic downtown area of Luray, Virginia. The principal architectural resource is the Federal and Greek Revival brick dwelling known as the Ruffner House, built in two phases ca. 1825 and ca. 1851 and remodeled in the 1920s. The house features an asphalt-shingled hip with deck roof, a stone foundation, and one-story porches on the two fronts, one facing southeast and the other northwest. The two-room-deep center-passage-plan interior is distinguished by ornate Federal mantels and Greek Revival trim. Near the house stand a rambling two-story frame residence known as The Cottage; a stone springhouse with attached brick pumphouse that served an adjacent tannery; and a swimming pool among other resources. To the south of these resources is a farm complex including an 1890s bank barn, and to the west is the small Ruffner Cemetery.

The property includes a modern spring-fed pond that drains into nearby Hawksbill Creek, a tributary of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River and ultimately the Potomac River. US 340 bounds the property on the west, and its intersection with the US 211 Luray bypass lies just to the north. The Luray Tannery, with which the property has strong associations from 1880 on, adjoins on the south. In the far distance there are glimpses of the town of Luray and the mountains that encircle the Page Valley. (Note: information about the function and historic associations of resources is largely derived from architectural analysis, from historic maps, and from information supplied by James B. Downing Jr., grandson of Thomas Deford, owner of the property during the second quarter of the twentieth century.)

### Inventory

1. Ruffner House. Ca. 1825; ca. 1851; 1920s. Contributing building.
2. The Cottage. 1880s; 1920s; early 1940s. Contributing building.
3. Schoolhouse and shop. Late 19th c; early 20th c. Contributing building.
4. Root cellar. Early 20th c. Contributing structure.
5. Swimming pool. Ca. 1930. Contributing structure.
6. Ruffner Cemetery. 19th c.; 1997. Contributing site.
7. Springhouse and pumphouse. Early 19th c.?; ca. 1900. Contributing building.
8. Main Barn. 1890s. Contributing building.
9. Secondary barn. Ca. 1900. Contributing building.
10. Dairy. 1940s. Contributing building.
11. Machinery shed. Ca. 1950. Contributing building.

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**Description (continued)**

12. Chicken house. Ca. 1920. Contributing building.
13. Greenhouse. Ca. 1950; late 20th c. Noncontributing building.
14. Pole barn. Ca. 1980. Noncontributing building.
15. Pond. Late 20th c. Noncontributing structure.

**Ruffner House Exterior**

The two sections of the Ruffner House, built ca. 1825 and ca. 1851, are unified in form and material so that to cursory examination the house reads as a single integral building. The original southeast-facing front of the ca. 1825 southeast section features Flemish bond brickwork and the ends are constructed of brick laid in an irregular American bond, as are the ends of the ca. 1851 addition. The secondary northwest-facing front of the addition is also of Flemish bond construction, although the bricks are offset so that the stretchers create a vertical striped pattern. The top courses of brick of both sections step out to form a cornice, which is painted white, and mortar joints are pencilled. The stone foundations of both sections, which rise to a point just below the top of the basement windows, are also painted white. A triangular shadow on the brickwork of the northeast end of the original section suggests a one-story gabled wing formerly attached there.

Both fronts have five-bay elevations with center entries. Extending across much of the southeast front is a one-story hip-roofed porch supported by classical wood columns with neckings well below their capitals and connected by a turned balustrade. The entry sheltered by the porch has a round-arched fanlight with radiating muntins and an ornately carved wooden Federal surround. The arched portion of the surround combines cable, pearl, and dentil-like moldings with a molding composed of acorn-like carvings, and it has a keystone-like element at its top. At the base of the arch and spanning across the doorway is a cove molding above another run of acorn-like elements. The jambs have narrow arched and molded panels on their faces flanked by vertical elements with spearhead tops and with elliptical sunburst motifs at the bases. The fanlight surround is contained within an arch of rubbed and gauged bricks. The northwest front has a one-story entry porch with classical wood columns, rectangular-section balusters, and brick steps (ground level is lower on this front than on the other). The porch shelters an entry with sidelights, a transom, and a simple Greek Revival surround with fillet moldings and blank corner blocks. This and a similar second-story entry above have double-leaf doors with panels defined by astragal-like moldings.

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**Description (continued)**

Other exterior features include four side chimneys with stepped shoulders (two exterior chimneys on the southwest elevation and two interior chimneys on the northeast elevation), cylindrical metal ventilators and a modern deck balustrade on the roof, and a basement entrance under a small shed roof on the southwest elevation. The six-over-six windows do not have shutters, and three windows were infilled with brick during the period of significance, most likely the 1920s. The windows on the southeast front have rubbed and gauged jack arches. A shallow foundation well with a concrete retaining wall and brick pavement extends along the northwest front.

**Ruffner House Interior**

The interior is characterized by plaster on lath and plaster on brick wall and ceiling finishes, wood floors, molded baseboards, and simple molded cornices of historic and modern date. Six-panel doors hung on butt hinges are typical, with porcelain, pottery and metal knobs. The first-floor north and south rooms have paneled wainscots. When the northwest addition was made in the 1850s it was given Greek Revival door and window trim and the trim in the original section was replaced in kind. On the first floor the trim typically consists of jambs and lintels with fillet moldings enclosing a center half-round molding, and there are turned corner blocks with center buttons. The second-floor trim in the passage features a wide cyma molding. The doorway between the south first-floor room and the passage has an unusual Greek Revival surround with fillet moldings flanking double half-round moldings which curve at the top corners to link the jambs and lintel, rather than terminating at corner blocks. The continuous flowing effect is almost Art Deco in character. This surround may date to a 1920s remodeling.

The house has Federal mantels in three of the four downstairs rooms and in the two second-floor bedrooms of the original section. (The east first-floor room, remodeled as a kitchen in the mid-twentieth century, has no mantel, nor do the two upstairs bedrooms in the addition, which may never have had fireplaces and mantels.) Most of the mantels may be salvaged pieces added to the house in the 1920s (see architectural analysis in section 8). The most ornate mantel is in the south first-floor room of the addition. It has a three-part form with three elliptical sunbursts in the frieze, reeded tablets at the ends of the frieze, double colonnette pilasters with ram's-horn like caps and bases with unusual curved chevron-pattern reeding, and delicate petal-like incised ornament throughout the frieze.

The west first-floor room of the addition has a mantel with a frieze band of squares with chevron-pattern reeding, frieze end tablets with chevron-pattern reeding, and pilasters with slightly convex reeded faces. In the recesses flanking the chimney breast are shelves above and

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**Description (continued)**

cabinets below, both framed by reeded pilasters. One set of shelves occupies a space formerly taken up by a window, suggesting both sets may be cleverly designed additions from the 1920s remodeling. The north first-floor room in the original section has a mantel with reeded frieze tablets and a center tablet with a half sunburst motif, delicate moldings, and pilasters with smooth concave faces defined on the edges by reeded projections. Two or more bricks in the hearth have inscriptions that appear to have been made when the bricks were wet. One has a numeral, the other appears to be inscribed with the surname Ruffner and a first name that may be David.

The fourth downstairs room, in the east corner, was subdivided in the 1920s into a kitchen, water closet, storage closet, office nook and passage. The kitchen has molded Victorian window surrounds with turned corner blocks, and base cabinets and glass-fronted wall cabinets, some of which were built in the 1950s by a former occupant of the house (August Nollert) and moved to the kitchen from a former upstairs kitchen. The other downstairs space is the passage, which features a single-run stair with simple turned balusters and newel post and scrolled tread brackets. The entry at the southeast end has a surround with sawtooth and punch molding and a keystone-like element at the top of the arch.

The plan of the second floor is similar to that of the first floor, except that a 1950s kitchen occupies the southeast end of the center passage. The mantel in the south room is similar to that in the first-floor north room. The mantel in the east room has an eared architrave form with a gougework band under a floating shelf. The south room was modified by the addition of a bathroom during the mid-twentieth century, and the room was painted blue and decorated with a Colonial Revival stencilled border of white swags with geometric pendant elements, probably in the 1940s. (Remnants of this decorative finish survive under more recent wallpaper.) The attic is reached by a steep enclosed stair at the southwest end of the second-floor passage. In the attic appear construction details such as plaster on split lath on the stair enclosure, straight-sawn lumber, and common rafters joined with cut nails.

The basement, reached by a stair created under the center-passage stair, features concrete floors and parged brick and concrete walls. The ceiling under the original section had whitewashed exposed members before a mid-twentieth-century sheetrock sheathing. The ceiling under the addition retains some sections of its original or early plaster-on-lath finish with circular-sawn laths attached with cut nails. Between the two rooms under the original section is a beaded batten door constructed with hand-headed nails and hung on decorative strap hinges with spade-like ends and double swellings along the shafts. (According to an informant whose father lived in the



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**Description (continued)**

house in the 1850s, the hinges were made on the farm.) The lift latch has a handle with spade-shaped attachments to the door. Other basement features include one blocked-up fireplace, one fireplace with a mid-twentieth-century brick resurfacing and iron rotisserie, and molded and beaded window surrounds under the addition. (According to several informants the basement was used as a kitchen and dining room--a common nineteenth-century usage.) Two basement rooms were made into an apartment in the 1950s and provided with kitchen equipment and a small bathroom.

**The Cottage**

The original section of this two-story frame house (also known as the White House and The Lodge) appears to be the gabled northeast wing, which probably dates to the 1880s. Added to the original section is the larger hip-roofed southwest wing, which attained its final form and appearance in the 1920s after it became the residence of Thomas Deford. The house has novelty weatherboard siding, metal and slate roofing, a concrete foundation, and six-over-six and eight-over-eight windows. The northeast wing has a one-story wraparound porch with slender classical wood columns and turned balusters. The southwest wing has a glassed-in one-story porch of curving form with thick classical wood columns and a black and white marble tile floor. Other exterior features include brick chimneys and flues, a porch extension from the west corner with a basement-level garage underneath with beaded matchboard doors, and a vent in the gable of the northeast wing with perforations in the form of a letter D lying on its side. A wing containing a storage room was removed from the west end of the house during the mid-twentieth century.

The interior was divided into its present configuration of three apartments in the early 1940s. Typical finishes and details include plaster-and-lath walls and ceilings, wood floors, four-panel doors, and Victorian molded trim with turned corner blocks. There are three stairs, the one near the entrance to the curved porch with a chamfered newel post and rectangular-section banisters. A southwest-facing second-floor bedroom has a window bay with a decorative surround and flanking glass-fronted closets (the glass has been replaced with clear plastic panels). A skylit lightwell provides illumination to several interior closets. (The Cottage was assigned an individual VDHR site number in 1998: 159-5049.)

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Description (continued)

**Outbuildings and Landscape Features**

The *schoolhouse and shop* is a one-story frame building of unknown original function that was apparently used as a furniture-making shop by Thomas Deford in the 1930s and early 1940s and was identified as a "carpenter shop" in a 1947 deed. It is earlier said to have been used as a schoolhouse. The building has novelty weatherboard siding, a metal-sheathed front-gable roof with modern skylights and a shed extension over a side wing, and six-over-one windows with peaked lintels. The foundation piers and an exterior gable-end chimney are brick. The front entry is sheltered by a porch with turned posts. On the inside are exposed framing members and a Craftsman brick mantel. The building is constructed with circular-sawn lumber and wire nails.

The *root cellar* is a small structure of stretcher-bond blond brick construction with a metal-sheathed front-gable roof and a beaded matchboard ceiling with insulation above. The building was used as a root cellar in the 1950s.

The concrete *swimming pool* is situated on a rectangular man-made terrace with stone retaining walls and a spruce border. The pool has a three-compartment frame bathhouse with novelty weatherboard siding and an asphalt-shingle shed roof. The pool was built by Thomas Deford; in the late 1930s it had been disused for a number of years, and it is presently out of use owing to flood damage from 1996.

The sole above-ground historic feature of the *Ruffner Cemetery* is an ornamental cast-iron fence enclosing monuments for three graves. The enclosure was erected by a Ruffner family descendent in the late nineteenth century. Two white marble headstones with segmental tops and matching footstones are inscribed to Elizabeth Ruffner (d. 1854) and Jonas Ruffner (undated). Between them stands the small cast-iron head marker of Elizabeth Ann Williams (1829-29?), which has a half-round tympanum and a smaller, uninscribed, matching foot marker. Placed in the enclosure are several marble tombstone fragments. Nearby stands the modern chain-link enclosure of a light gray granite memorial to Peter (1713-78) and Mary Steinman Ruffner (1714-98), dedicated in 1997. Many graves in addition to the ones now marked are thought to exist at the cemetery.

The *springhouse and pumphouse* has a springhouse at its northeast end, a pumphouse at its southwest end, and a covered open-air patio between. The northeast end is a stone springhouse with an asphalt-shingled front-gable roof that cantilevers to shelter the entry and a small roofed structure that may have functioned as an ash pit. Inside are a concrete floor and troughs,

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Description (continued)

whitewashed walls, a ca. 1900 door and roof structure, and a single hewn plate. The pumphouse is a seven-course American-bond brick building with a metal-sheathed gable roof, nine-over-six windows, and a tie rod. On the interior are a concrete floor, circular-sawn common rafters with a ridge board, and old electrical equipment (the pump machinery has been removed). Only wire nails were observed in the building's construction. The covered area has a brick barbecue and a brick pavement which extends to form a larger patio on the southeast side.

The *barn* has a bank-barn form and is constructed of circular-sawn mortise-and-tenon framing members with pegged joints. The barn has board-and-batten siding (originally painted red, now painted light gray as are most of the farm buildings), a metal-sheathed gable roof with three louvered ventilation cupolas arranged along its ridge, rectangular louvered gable vents, large doors with (reused?) strap hinges, and a shed extension along the northwest side. An open drive-through passes through the center. On the south end of the southeast side is an open shed supported on stout chamfered posts (and one reused hewn post) adjoined by a concrete watering trough with a base formed by three segmental arches. A stone pier stands at the barn's east corner, possibly a remnant of an earlier building on the site (see section 8). Inside are more chamfered posts, a built-in ladder to the hay loft on the southwest side of the drive-through, and a metal rail and hay fork suspended from the ridge. The barn is used for stabling horses and for farm machinery storage.

The *secondary barn* has board-and-batten siding, a metal-sheathed gable roof, a stone foundation, an integral shed extension, and a louvered rectangular vent and a nine-light window in opposite gables. On the inside are revealed circular-sawn, mortise-and-tenon frame construction with pegged joints, and a hay drop. The hay drop suggests the building was formerly used as a hay barn, but its form is more akin to granaries of the era.

The *dairy* is a one-story frame building with weatherboard siding, a metal-sheathed gable roof with exposed rafter ends, a concrete foundation to hip level, a brick flue, six-over-six windows, and panel doors. The two-room interior is sheathed with horizontal beaded matchboards and has a sink and concrete floors with drains.

The *machinery shed* is a long frame building with a concrete foundation, vertical-board siding, a metal-sheathed gable roof, and an open front. The shed's frame construction incorporates several reused circular-sawn timbers from a mortise-and-tenon building. The shed is presently used for storing farm machinery.

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**Description (continued)**

The *chicken house* is a one-story frame building with novelty weatherboard siding, a metal gable roof, and a concrete foundation. The building was used as a chicken house in the 1930s and 1940s, but its form and its relative lack of windows suggest a different original use.

The *greenhouse* is a one-story frame building with a concrete foundation, weatherboard half-walls, and corrugated fiberglass upper walls and gable roof. The building was converted from a chicken house in the late twentieth century. A small hatchway on the southeast elevation was used by the chickens.

The *pole barn* is a small one-story hay barn of pole construction with vertical-board siding, a metal-sheathed shed roof, and an open side.

The *pond* was formed by damming the spring branch that formerly flowed from the vicinity of the springhouse to Hawksbill Creek (the end of this branch near the springhouse has been buried). In addition to the pond are a number of natural and man-made landscape features of note. The slope behind the two houses has natural limestone outcrops that were modified into a rock garden by Edith Deford, Thomas Deford's wife, probably about 1930. The garden includes a grotto-like goldfish pond that formerly featured a waterfall replenished by a circulating pump, and yuccas survive from the original planting scheme. The goldfish pond lies directly behind the Ruffner House; north of it extends a brick retaining wall from the same period. To the west of the dwellings are rows and groupings of boxwood that had already grown to large size by the 1930s. The south edge of the nominated parcel is formed by Hill House Lane, which is bordered by a double row of deciduous trees planted after the 1930s (the north line of trees is included in the parcel). Several minor features dating to the mid-twentieth century and later dot the parcel such as small brick and cinder-block foundations.

**Integrity Statement**

The Ruffner House nominated parcel possesses good integrity from the period of significance. The house itself is unaltered from its historic form and plan, and it retains most of its character-defining exterior features. Much of the interior detail appears to be salvaged historic material that was added to the house in the 1920s during the period of significance. The Cottage is well preserved from the 1920s-1940s period when it attained its final form. With the exception of the springhouse, the Ruffner House has lost its complement of early-nineteenth-century outbuildings, but the property retains virtually complete sets of domestic and agricultural outbuildings from the 1890-1950 period. The immediate setting retains its historic character with plantings and

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**Description (continued)**

other landscape features from the period of significance, and with fields in agricultural use for horse pasture occupying most of the western portion of the parcel. The parcel's broader setting features a mix of historic and natural features such as the tannery, woods, and an early twentieth-century mansion and its curtilage on the east and south, and modern features such as the four-lane US 340 and 211 highways and their intersection on the west and north. The highways are effectively screened from view and hearing by vegetation and by the location of the Ruffner House and associated resources at the far end of the 21.266-acre parcel.

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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary**

The Ruffner House, located in Luray, Virginia, is a Federal- and Greek Revival-style brick residence built in two phases about 1825 and 1850. The original section was built for Jonas Ruffner, whose family had owned the property since the mid-1700s, and who served as one of Luray's first trustees when the town was established in 1812. In the 1840s Jonas's widow Elizabeth sold the property to William A. Chapman, who shortly thereafter enlarged the house to its present size. The house features a richly ornamented Federal entryway and other Federal and Greek Revival decorative elements. In the early 1880s the property became a part of the Deford family tannery, and an 1885 map refers to it as the Luray Tannery Farm. The Defords added the majority of buildings between 1890 and 1950, including the rambling Victorian and Craftsman dwelling known as The Cottage, an 1890s mortise-and-tenon frame bank barn, and a ca. 1930 swimming pool. The Defords also remodeled the main house, adding elements from other houses. During the tannery period the main house and The Cottage served as residences for tannery owners, superintendents, and workers, and a pumphouse supplied water to the tannery operations. Today this architecturally varied property is operated as The Ruffner House Bed & Breakfast and is honored as the Ruffner family homeplace in America.

**Applicable Criteria**

The Ruffner House nominated parcel meets Criterion C and is eligible in the architecture area of significance for the quality of its Federal and Greek Revival detail and for the richness and variety of its domestic and agricultural resources from the period ca. 1825 through ca. 1950. The property also meets Criterion A and is eligible in the industry area of significance for its long-term association with the adjacent Luray Tannery, historically one of the town's leading industries. The property is eligible at the local level of significance. Information in support of designation appears throughout the historic context.

**Acknowledgments**

A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report. Foremost among these were the owners of the property and the nomination's sponsors, James Ruffner McNeely Sr. and Judith W. McNeely, who also gathered historical information in support of the nomination. Others who provided assistance included Howard M. Chapman, Keeler Chapman, James B. Downing Jr., Vera Lushpinsky, William Page Menefee, August and Mia Nollert, and David Edwards, June Ellis and Marc Wagner of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. This project builds upon information gathered during the 1997-1998 Page County Historic

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Resources Survey, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Page County, and the Page County Heritage Association, and conducted by Landmark Preservation Associates.

**Historic Context**

Tax records and architectural evidence suggest the original section of the Ruffner House was built about 1825, but the Ruffner family connection with the property dates back to the initial settlement of Page County. The property is situated near the north end of the 1,300-acre Hawksbill Patent, obtained by Francis Thornton in 1734. In 1737 Thornton sold the tract to Joseph Steinman (or Stoneman) of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and two years later Steinman's son-in-law Peter Ruffner (1713-78) settled on the tract at or near the site of the Ruffner House. Ruffner, a native of Switzerland, purchased the Hawksbill Patent in its entirety by 1743, and by mid-century he had acquired nearly the entire stretch of Hawksbill Creek from its mouth on the Shenandoah River to the village of Stony Man at the foot of the Blue Ridge, including the future site of the town of Luray. Ruffner's settlement followed soon after the Germanic Massanutten settlement and ranked among the earliest in the county.<sup>1</sup>

Ownership of the property passed to Peter Ruffner's son, Peter Ruffner Jr. (1746-1811). A branch of the family relocated to the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia in the 1790s where they numbered among the Charleston area's most prominent early settlers and helped establish the region's salt and coal industries. The noted nineteenth-century Virginia father and son team of educators Henry and William Henry Ruffner belonged to this branch. By the mid-1810s the Page County homestead had passed to Peter Sr.'s grandson Jonas Ruffner (d. 1839). Jonas was active in the establishment of the town of Luray on his brother Isaac Ruffner's land in 1812, and with his brother-in-law William S. Marye and two others he served as an original town trustee. Luray prospered as the largest community serving the Page Valley for much of the nineteenth century, and in 1831 it was made the seat of newly formed Page County (until then the Ruffner property was situated in Shenandoah County).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Strickler, *Short History of Page County*, 113, 364; Wayland, *History of Shenandoah County*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sheets, "Master Plan: The Ruffner Homestead"; Strickler, *Short History of Page County*, 100, 104-05; Cohen and Andre, *Kanawha County Images*, 42; and Wayland, *History of Shenandoah County*, 558.

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Ruffner House  
Page Co., Va.

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Shenandoah County tax records suggest that the original portion of Jonas Ruffner's house was built in 1825. Tax records for 1820, the first year value of buildings was listed separately from land, show Jonas as the owner of a 366.67-acre tract with \$1,000 in buildings. He acquired another tract with \$800 in buildings in 1822 and consolidated his acreage in 1825. That year the value of buildings jumped to \$2,520, and a marginal note in the records reads "Improvement added." The Federal detail and certain construction features of the original section of the house support a date of construction in the 1820s. The value of buildings remained constant at \$2,520 into the 1840s. Jonas Ruffner and his wife Elizabeth (d. 1854) had twelve children, so the original house and its various wings were presumably put to maximum use.<sup>3</sup>

After Jonas Ruffner's death in 1839 his lands were divided among his heirs. Elizabeth received as her dower right sixty-eight acres including the house. Beginning in 1841 William Allen Chapman (1808-72) began to purchase lots from the various heirs. The wording of deed and tax records for these transactions are somewhat confusing. In 1841 Chapman purchased two parcels described as the "same land on which Jonas Ruffner resided at his death," but in 1848 Chapman acquired Elizabeth's dower tract, which is clearly indicated as the house site on a March 1840 plat. Tax records suggest that Chapman did own the homeplace by 1849, and in 1851 the value of buildings on his consolidated acreage jumped to \$3,000. This increase may indicate the construction of the addition, which has Greek Revival detail from the period. Chapman's addition is said to have replaced a rear ell.<sup>4</sup>

Like the Ruffners, William Chapman and his wife Elizabeth Forrer Chapman (1811-91) of the iron manufacturing Forrer family reared a large family following their marriage in 1837. The 1850 census shows five children and by the 1860 census the number had increased to nine, ages six through twenty-one. In both 1850 and 1860 the Chapmans also kept boarders, two each year, and in 1850 Chapman owned eleven slaves. Chapman's farm operation in 1850 was impressive. Herds of cattle, sheep and swine and nine horses are listed, and the \$14,000 farm produced over a thousand bushels each of wheat and corn. The 1850 industrial census lists William A. Chapman as the owner of a mill that produced \$5,200 worth of flour and \$1,600 of "other articles". By

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<sup>3</sup> Shenandoah and Page county tax records.

<sup>4</sup> Page County tax records; Page County Deed Book E, pp. 30 and 96; Deed Book F, pp. 319 and 524; and Deed Book G, p. 334; and Kerkhoff, *Old Homes of Page County*, 27. Howard M. Chapman confirms that his grandfather William A. Chapman made the addition to the house.



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Ruffner House  
Page Co., Va.

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

1860 the value of Chapman's property had risen to \$20,000 and his personal estate stood at \$10,893.<sup>5</sup>

The Chapmans lived in the Ruffner House during the Civil War, and a number of traditions relate to the property's association with the conflict. According to family tradition, three of the Chapman sons served in the Confederate army. Confederate troops are said to have camped in the field to the west of the house, provided with water by the Chapman sons who carried it from the spring near the house. On another occasion Federal soldiers are said to have camped nearby and to have been provided with meals cooked in a kitchen in the basement of the house. A mill, blacksmith shop, schoolhouse and weaving house are said to have stood on the property during the period, and the teacher and weaver are said to have lodged with the family (perhaps explaining the male and female boarders noted in the censuses).<sup>6</sup>

In September 1880 Elizabeth Chapman and her sister Hannah Forrer deeded a 138-acre tract including the homeplace to Thomas and Benjamin Franklin Deford of Baltimore. The Defords were associated with the Baltimore-based Deford Co., which operated tanneries in several southern states. In 1881, the same year the Shenandoah Valley Railroad completed its line through the property, Deford Co. erected an extensive facility known as the Luray Tannery. The plant employed about a hundred workers in the production of sole leather, and it ranked as Luray's largest industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Ruffner House became the Luray Tannery Farm, so named on the 1885 Lake map of Luray, and the house was used as a dwelling by several tannery superintendents and their families. Superintendents who lived in the Ruffner House before 1940 included (in order of their residence) John H. Sherman, Henry M. Falkenstein, H. Eugene Weiner, and William C. Zepp.

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<sup>5</sup> Vogt and Kethley, *Page County marriage bonds*, 14; U.S. census.

<sup>6</sup> "The Ruffner House among sites to be featured"; Howard M. Chapman personal communication. The spring gave rise to two additional names that are said to have been applied to the property: Big Spring and Cool Spring (Sheets, "Master Plan: The Ruffner Homestead"). The name Big Spring may actually have applied to another Ruffner property in the county. A story relating to the period of slave ownership by the Chapman family has been handed down to Howard M. Chapman. As a boy Chapman's father, Andrew Chapman (1854-1941), spoke rudely to one of the family's slaves and was spanked by the slave. When Andrew complained to his father, William A. Chapman, he received a second spanking.

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Page Co., Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

The first three were tannery employees in 1897; Zepp was listed in the 1920 census as the head of a household that included his father, two sisters, and a niece.<sup>7</sup>

The Lake and Sanborn maps provide detailed information on the property and its relation to the tannery. In 1885 the principal buildings were a barn, located on the same spot as the present barn; a dairy comprised of the springhouse and a connected building off its southwest end (see below); the main house; and two dwellings to the northeast of the main house, one of which may now comprise the northeast end of The Cottage. Interestingly, the 1891 Sanborn map designates the barn as a store; either this was a misidentification, or the building had been pressed into service as the tannery commissary. The 1897 Sanborn map shows the present barn and notes that a frame shed stood 125 feet to the northeast. This shed would have stood in the approximate location of the dairy shown on the 1885 Lake map, and its description suggests the brick pumphouse now attached to the springhouse had not yet been built. Sanborn maps from the early twentieth century show further elaborations to the barn and its surroundings: the erection of the secondary barn by 1902, additions of a silo and corn cribs (now gone), and use of the northeast end of the barn as a "carriage & auto shed" in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Deford (ca. 1875-ca. 1946), a grandson of Benjamin F. Deford, one of the original owners of the tannery, acquired the property in the 1920s. In the early twentieth century Thomas and his brothers ran the family's tanneries in Luray, Baltimore, Boston, and the Richmond area. According to his grandson James B. Downing Jr., Thomas Deford was something of a "sport" who enjoyed quail hunting and entertaining his friends in a rustic log cabin that formerly stood to the east of the property. While Thomas managed the tannery and lived the sporting life, his second wife, the Swedish-born Edith Johnson Deford, concentrated on beautifying the grounds

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<sup>7</sup> Page County Deed Book W, p. 104; Owens, *Items of Interest, 1881-1885*, 21; Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 39, 41; Strickler, *Short History of Page County*, 334; Lake's atlas; Kerkhoff, *Old Homes of Page County*, 25; "McNeelys purchase Peter Ruffner Homestead"; Campbell, *Page County Virginia Wills*, 92; and U.S. census.

<sup>8</sup> Lake's atlas; Sanborn maps. The Sanborn maps only depict the barn and its immediate surroundings, although the 1891 map does show a three-inch water pipe extending off frame toward the main house. According to one account the Ruffner House and The Cottage were also connected to the tannery heating plant by steam lines ("Ruffner House among sites to be featured").

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Statement of Significance (continued)

by creating a rock garden, waterfall and goldfish pond, among other enhancements. The Defords enlarged the tannery worker house that stood to the north of the main house, converting it into the dwelling now known as The Cottage, and they made improvements to the Ruffner House.<sup>9</sup>

The Deford Co. ceased tanning operations at its Luray plant in 1936 (union activity and the high cost of hides may have been factors), and in 1941 the Virginia Oak Tannery, Inc. acquired the facility. The new concern was organized by Arthur and Stephen Blaut; Arthur's father Marcus had operated one of Germany's leading tannery corporations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stephen Blaut and his wife Cornelia used the Ruffner House as a summer and holiday home while maintaining a principal residence in New York City. According to August and Mia Nollert, who lived on the farm from 1952 to 1979, Cornelia Blaut "with expert help redecorated the [Ruffner House] in a Williamsburg color scheme," and also developed the "breezeway" between the springhouse and pumphouse into an entertaining area. The Blaut family converted The Cottage into three apartments in the early 1940s (presumably in response to war-time housing shortages), and tannery superintendents, chemists, and other management-level employees lodged there.<sup>10</sup>

In 1947 Edith Deford sold the Ruffner House to the New York-based Export & Import Leather Co., Inc., and the house was divided into apartments in the 1950s. The house was occupied by tannery superintendent August Nollert in the early 1960s. The Weinstein family acquired the property in the late 1970s, and in the late 1980s they operated the Ruffner House as a bed and breakfast inn, employing Vera Lushpinsky as their inn keeper. Vera's husband Roman maintained the grounds and the Ruffner Cemetery on a volunteer basis. The house and grounds sustained damage in 1996 during flooding associated with Hurricane Fran. In 1999 the property was purchased by the present owners, James and Judith McNeely, who operate it as The Ruffner

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<sup>9</sup> Page County Deed Book 88, p. 194; Deed Book 92, p. 491; Deed Book 109, p. 50; and James B. Downing Jr. and August and Mia Nollert personal communication.

<sup>10</sup> Nollert, "Virginia Oak Tannery"; Kerkhoff, *Old Homes of Page County*, 25; "Ruffner House among sites to be featured"; and Judith W. McNeely, August and Mia Nollert, and James B. Downing Jr. personal communication.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

House Bed & Breakfast.<sup>11</sup>

Architectural Analysis

The Ruffner House and its associated resources possess a number of architecturally notable features. The house itself contains Federal and Greek Revival elements of considerable quality and interest. The Federal features include the richly decorated southeast entry surround, one of the foremost examples of exterior Federal detail in the county, and the five mantels--especially the first-floor south room mantel--which combine high style and vernacular decorative treatments. Most or all of the Federal mantels in the house are not original to it. According to August Nollert, Thomas Deford refurbished the house in the 1920s by adding "choice building elements collected from all across Virginia, such as doors, windows, staircase-bannister [and] fireplace mantels." This would explain the mix of form and detail displayed by the Federal mantels, and also their presence in the 1850s section of the house.<sup>12</sup>

The Greek Revival influence, which is most apparent in the first- and second-story northwest entries and the interior door and window trim, includes the unusual surround of the doorway leading from the south first-floor room into the center passage. Considering the degree of alteration from the 1920s, it may be that this surround is a reworking. However, the abundance and consistency of the other Greek Revival trim suggest these elements date to the 1850s. The offset Flemish bond construction of the northwest front of the 1850s addition is more common in Page County houses built during the late 1860s and early 1870s. In the later houses the vertically striped effect is emphasized by the use of grayish vitrified stretcher bricks that contrast with the reddish headers (an occupant of one such house has used the term "zipper style" to describe the dramatic visual effect). The Ruffner House represents a locally early use of the

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<sup>11</sup> Page County Deed Book 125, p. 227; Deed Book 340, p. 202; Nollert, "Virginia Oak Tannery"; Kerkhoff, *Old Homes of Page County*, 25; "Ruffner House among sites to be featured"; "Ruffner House Bed & Breakfast"; and Judith W. McNeely, James B. Downing Jr. and Vera Lushpinsky personal communication.

<sup>12</sup> Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 32-33; August Nollert personal communication.

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Page Co., Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

construction technique, apparently before the contrasting gray-red effect was adopted.<sup>13</sup>

The 1890s barn possesses several refinements. The posts that support the hay mow floors and the open side shed are chamfered, a treatment that is both decorative and practical in that it spared farm workers and animals from striking against sharp corners. The concrete water trough that runs the length of the side shed has three arches in its base, a decorative/practical treatment that conserved concrete. Materials are also a notable feature of the Ruffner Cemetery. The cast-iron fence and marble headstones are typical in elite Victorian contexts and might be encountered anywhere in the nation. The cast-iron head and foot markers of the Williams burial, on the other hand, belong to a tradition of local artisanship. The Isabella Furnace, where they were likely cast, stood less than a mile to the north of the Ruffner property.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Giles and Pezzoni, "Page County Historic Resources Survey Report," 34-36.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27.

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**UTM References (continued)**

5. 17 721120 4282970

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated parcel corresponds to the modern property lines of the parcel on which the Ruffner House and associated resources stand (Page County tax parcel map Section 42A4 ((10)) 6B). The boundaries are depicted on the 1:200-scale map included as Exhibit A.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel include the Ruffner House and associated contributing resources and acreage.



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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. 1. Subject: Ruffner House (same for all photos)  
2. Location: Page Co., Va. (same for all photos)  
3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)  
4. Photo date: February 2001 (same for all photos)  
5. Original negative (VDHR # 19017) archived at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond (same for all photos)  
6. Description of view: northwest elevation of Ruffner House. View looking east.  
7. Photograph number appears at beginning of entry (same for all photos)
2. 6. Springhouse and pumphouse (lower left), Ruffner House (upper left), and The Cottage (right). View looking north.
3. 6. Ruffner House (left) and farm complex (right) as seen from Hill House Lane. View looking east.
4. 6. Barn with dairy on left and end of machinery shed on right. View looking west.
5. 6. Ruffner Cemetery. View looking southwest.
6. 6. Ruffner House southeast entry detail.
7. 6. Ruffner House first-floor south room mantel detail.

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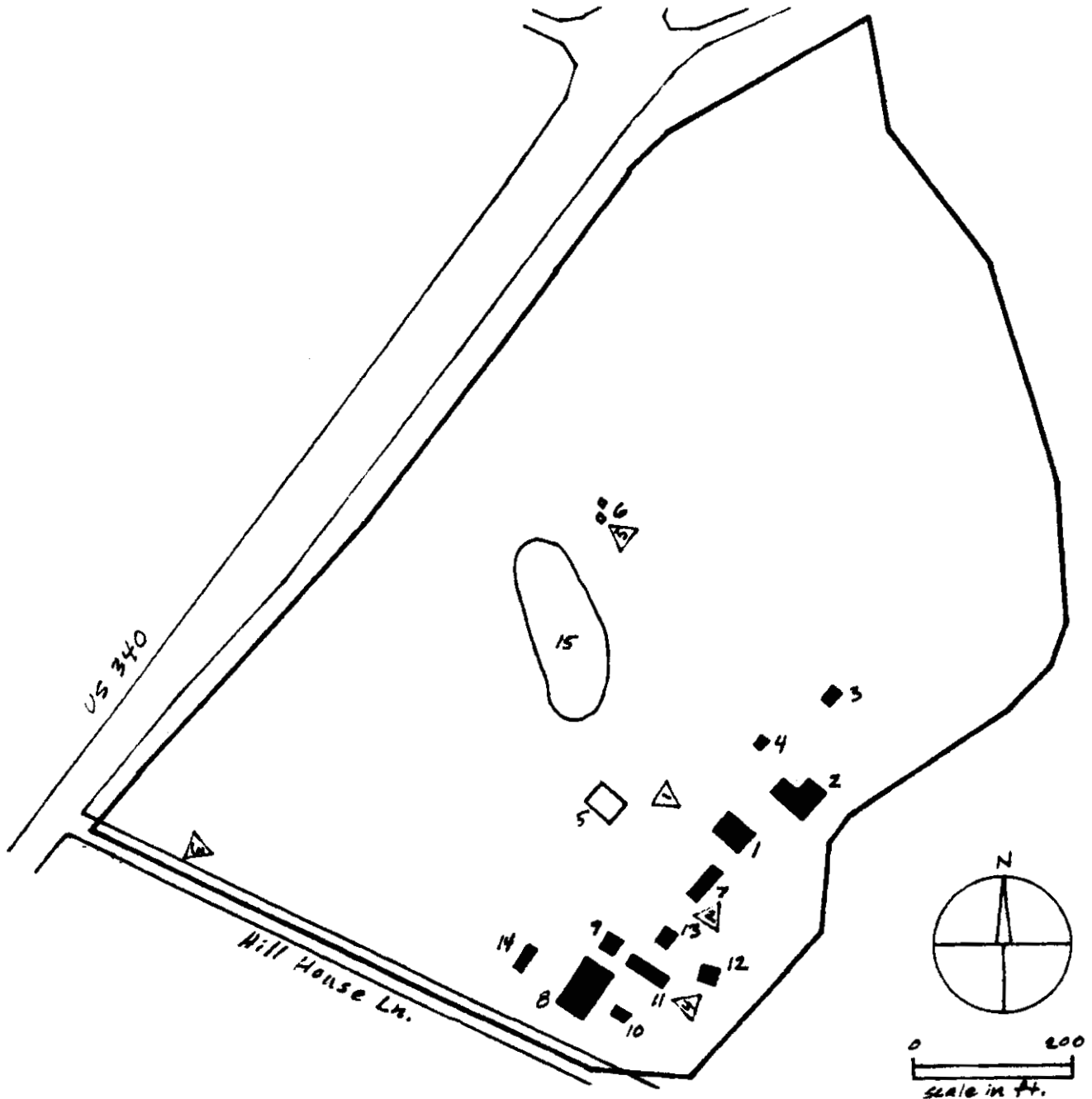


Exhibit A: The Ruffner House nominated parcel. Scale: 1 inch equals 200 feet. Resources keyed to inventory by number. Number and direction of view of exterior photographs indicated by triangular markers.

Ruffner House  
Page Co., Va.  
UTM refs (zone 17)  
1. E721320 N4283270  
2. E721480 N4283340  
3. E721580 N4283030  
4. E721360 N4282800  
5. E721120 N4282970

