

VLR-1/20/8 NRHP-7/8/82

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic Stephen Harnsberger House (preferred)
and common Harnsberger Octagonal House

2. Location

street & number Holly Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Grottoes N/A vicinity of congressional district 7th (J. Kenneth Robinson)
state Virginia code 51 county Rockingham code 165

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <u>N/A</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. and Mrs. Carl D. Swanson
street & number Holly Avenue
city, town Grottoes ob vicinity of state Virginia 24441

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockingham County Courthouse
street & number N/A
city, town Harrisonburg state Virginia 22801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible? y e s no
date January 1983 federal state county local
depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street
city, town Richmond state Virginia 23213

7. Description

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|-----|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site | N/A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input 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 Harnsberger House sits on the eastern side of the South River in southeast Rockingham County, south of the early commercial center of Port Republic. When Stephen Harnsberger built the house in 1856, this land formed part of a very large Harnsberger farm along the river, but it is now in the northwest corner of the incorporated town of Grottoes.

This unusual house is one of only a few examples of octagonal buildings in the central Valley of Virginia. The general shape, construction, and exterior detailing reflect the influence of mid-19th-century architectural pattern books, particularly Orson Fowler's A Home For All, published in 1853. The main walls are constructed of rough stucco added over the brick walls in 1916. As Fowler urged, the cellar story has been raised, so the "whole of the room enclosed by the foundation" has been put "to some good use." Stone steps below the present concrete steps led to a dug-out cellar entrance with a large, two-paneled door. The Greek Revival entrances on both the first- and second-floor levels are framed with transoms and sidelights, and the first-floor entry has been decorated with a variation of the Greek fret motif. The front concrete steps replace steps descending from each side of the porch. Each side is punctuated with a tall, framed window bay enclosing narrow, paired 4/4 sash on both stories. The bracketed eaves and raised one-story, one-bay porch with second-floor balustrade provide the decorative touches for this design.

This shell actually masks the more vernacular, double-pile Georgian plan commonly found in larger houses in the Valley by the mid-19th century, rather than the pie-shaped room designs prescribed in the pattern books. The central passage, which extends over half the depth of the main level, is flanked by two deep front rooms. The two back rooms are considerably smaller--a dining room opening off the back of the passage to the east and a tiny triangular room in the west corner. Two central chimneys between the front and back rooms provide fireplaces in each room. On both the second and basement floors, the central passage extends the entire depth of the house, with two rooms to each side.

The interior woodwork survives in very good condition. The open-string staircase is composed of a heavy turned newel post, square balusters, and plain brackets and spandrels. Two different mantel styles frame the eight fireplaces. Recessed-paneled Tuscan pilasters, plain friezes, and deep shelves compose the mantels in the front rooms on both floors as well as in the rear dining room. The other fireplaces are finished with more plain, Greek Revival designs. Symmetrically molded trim with square corner blocks encloses the first-floor doors and windows, but a simpler Greek Revival architrave molding finishes the second-floor openings. The basement rooms are plastered and have cement floors.

By the 1890s, a narrow, frame kitchen ell had been added to the main octagonal block. This addition is illustrated on the early plat maps of Shendun (now Grottoes) ca. 1890. Such kitchen ells, with side porches, had become standard features in local farmhouses by the end of the century. The kitchen has been remodeled but retains the molded door and window trim with bull's-eye carved corner blocks that characterized local building from the turn of the century. The plat map also shows a smaller, hexagonal structure off the ell, but this has been replaced by a one-story, rectangular, frame service building. The large fireplace, which runs parallel to the longer side walls, quite possibly served the earlier building in this location. A frame, post-Civil War, gambrel-roof barn survives near the house.

According to local history sources, the house was remodeled once in 1916, but no major structural changes are visible from this time. In 1978, the new owners restored the house and added some panel molding, bookshelves, and bedmolding in a few rooms.

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/ humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates 1856 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Harnsberger House, built in 1856, is a rare Rockingham County example of the mid-19th-century octagonal building fad. While most country builders were constructing single- and double-pile, Georgian-plan houses, Stephen Harnsberger chose the octagonal shape espoused in Orson Fowler's A Home for All, or the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building (1853). Although the facade and shape clearly reflect an awareness of new styles, the interior retains the traditional arrangement of spaces in a double-pile, Georgian design. Harnsberger's brother, Robert Samuel Harnsberger, apparently became intrigued by the new fashion as well; he had an octagonal barn constructed on his farm in neighboring Augusta County. The house, together with the barn, reflects local interpretations of the pattern book styles in this conservative agricultural area -- both insert traditional plans and ideals into octagonal shells.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first Harnsberger in the Virginia colony was John Harnsberger who settled near Germanna between 1717 and 1719. By 1760, one of his descendants, Stephen Harnsberger, Sr., was settled near Elkton, Rockingham County, on the South River. Local historians indicate that the Harnsbergers were of Swiss descent. The 1789 Rockingham County tax books show Stephen Harnsberger charged with 298 acres. Although many of Rockingham County's records have not survived, an extant index shows numerous deeds to both Stephen Harnsberger, Sr., and his son, Stephen, Jr., for land on the Shenandoah River.

Stephen Harnsberger, Jr., had become quite prosperous by 1850. The Census of that year indicates that he and his five children lived on real estate valued at \$18,900, a very high sum for that county. It can be conjectured that Stephen Harnsberger built the large octagonal house in 1856 for his son, Stephen M. Harnsberger. The tax books indicate a substantial increase in improvements on the property in that year. Following the Civil War, a deed was re-entered from Stephen Harnsberger to his son Stephen M. Harnsberger. The house was involved in some fairly complex litigation in the 1880s and was finally sold at auction to George M. Nicholas in 1895. Twentieth-century owners include the J. L. Leeth family (1914-1954) and the B. F. Castle family (1954-1978). The present owners are Dr. and Mrs. Carl D. Swanson.

AMc/MTP

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Fowler, Orson S. The Octagon House--A Home for All. New York: Random House, 1973 (reprint of 1853 edition).
- Rockingham County Deed Books 0, 1, 16, 27, 31, 53, 92, 101, 249, 370, 521.
- Rockingham County Land Tax Books, 1851-1863.
- U. S. Census, Rockingham County, Va., 1850. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 6 acres

Quadrangle name Grottoes, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>1</u> <u>7</u> | <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>9</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> | B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point at a jog in the NW boundary line of the town of Grottoes, about 1250' E of South River and about 1200' NW of intersection of Town Route 1001 and Town Route 1002; thence extending about 400' SW, crossing NW extension of TR 1002 in process; thence extending about 600' NW to town boundary; thence extending about 400' NE along said boundary; thence extending about 600' SE, thereby following jog in town boundary, to point of origin. These register bounds encompass the house and the barn to the west.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date January 1981

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 H. Bryan Mitchell

title H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date JAN 20 1981

For HCPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

Stephen Harnsberger House, Rockingham County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7,9

Page 1

| |
|-------------------|
| For HCRS use only |
| received |
| date entered |

7. DESCRIPTION

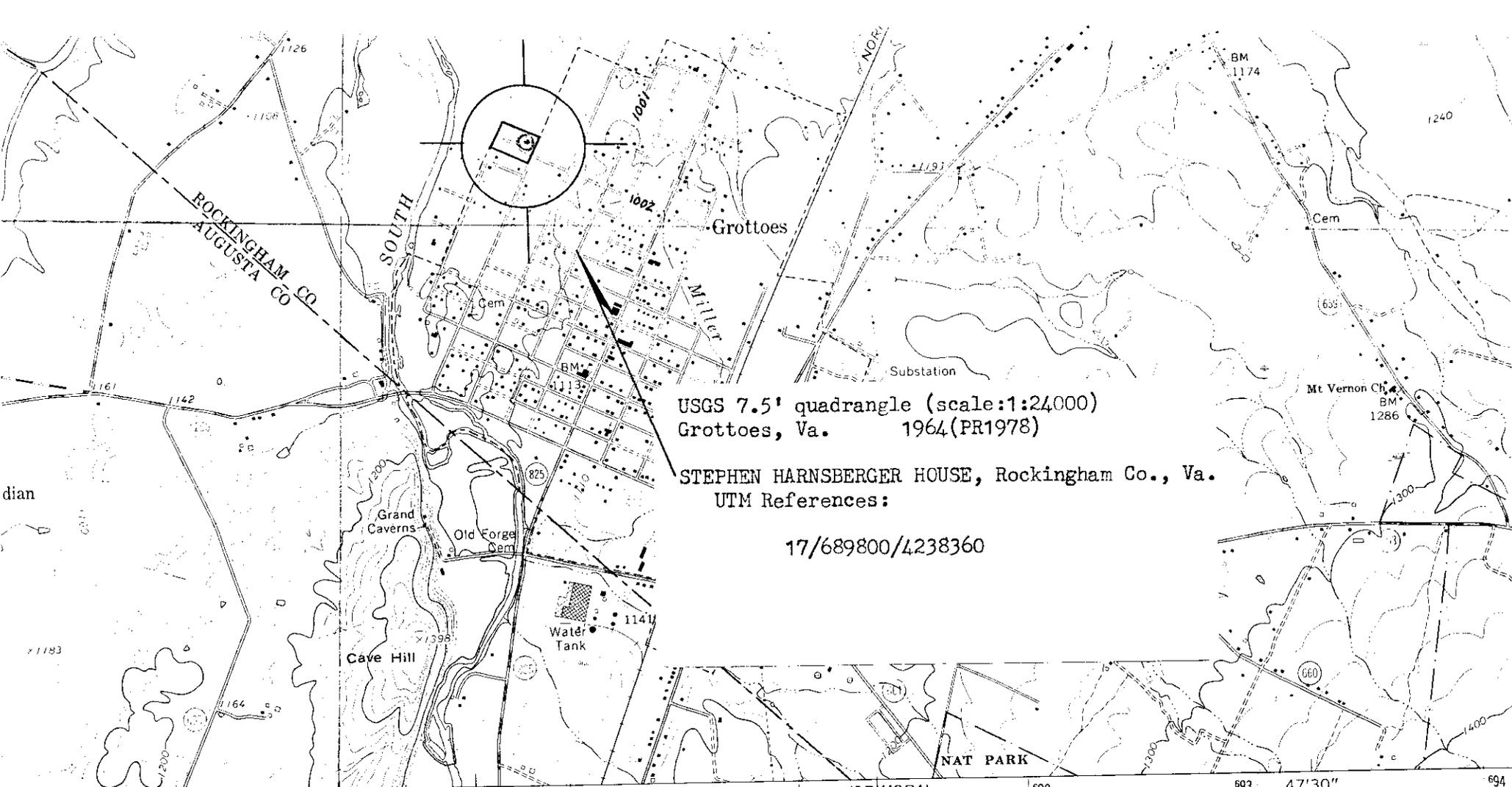
Boundary Justification:

The nominated property consists of six acres, only a fraction of the 859-acre farm owned by Stephen Harnsberger when the house was built in 1856. It includes the house and barn and can be identified in the Grottoes Deed Book as Parcel 1, consisting of Lots 1-40, in Block 201 of the incorporated town of Grottoes. It is one of two adjacent parcels purchased in 1978 by Dr. and Mrs. Carl D. Swanson, the present owners of the Harnsberger House.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wayland, John W. Virginia Valley Records. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1965.

Gilmer Map, 1864, Rockingham County. (Virginia Historical Society Collection)



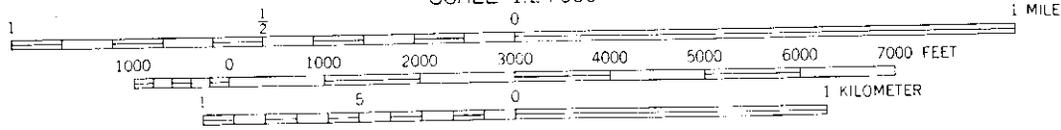
USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)
 Grottoes, Va. 1964(PR1978)

STEPHEN HARNSBERGER HOUSE, Rockingham Co., Va.
 UTM References:

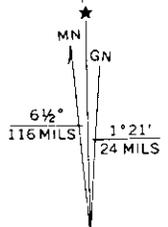
17/689800/4238360

688 1 900 000 FEET 689 50' 690 (CRIMORA) 5260 III NE 691 692 693 47'30" 694

SCALE 1:24,000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
 DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

VI RC
 QUADRANGLE L

ological Survey
 rial
 um
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 cks,
 field lines where
 rmation is unchecked
 with Commonwealth
 1977 and other
 Map edited 1978