

STATE:  
Virginia

COUNTY:  
Accomack

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

VLR-12/2/69, NRHP-2/26/70  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Kerr Place

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Ker's Place

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: NE corner of Crockett Avenue and Market Street.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Onancock

STATE Virginia	CODE 45	COUNTY: Accomack	CODE 001
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**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"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input 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	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Eastern Shore Historical Society, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Kerr Place

CITY OR TOWN:  
Onancock

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
45

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Accomack County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Accomack

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
45

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1940  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D. C.

CODE:  
08

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7. 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

Kerr Place is a two-story Federal mansion with a central projecting pedimented pavilion on both the front and rear elevations. The brickwork is even colored Flemish bond above the molded water table and English bond below. Rubbed brick splayed arches appear over all the windows, and a rubbed brick frame encircles the round window in each pediment. At the base of the gable roof and around the pediments is a Federal-style bracketed cornice. There was, at one time, a glassed-in cupola at the junction of the cross gable, but it burned in the early-twentieth century and was not replaced. On the eastern end of the building is a two-story wing which originally was a one-and-a-half story kitchen connected to the house by a hyphen.

The first floor plan of Kerr Place includes a central entrance hall behind which is a reception room. Flanking these two rooms is a drawing room on the west and a dining room on the east. The staircase is located in the entrance hall. The interior trim in the principal rooms is probably the most elaborate and formal found in any house on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Especially notable is that of the drawing room which includes fine examples of Wellford molded and applied decoration in both the cornice and mantel. According to Ralph Whitelaw, there is a tradition that the drawing room walls were covered with French block-print paper, "Telemaque dans l'Ile de Calypso," by Joseph Dufour. Apparently most of the doors in the house were painted to imitate wood grain and inlay, as one undisturbed example survives on the second floor. Except for some new partitions in two of the bedrooms, the interior of Kerr Place survives essentially as built.

With the development of the town of Onancock, Kerr Place is no longer a country house; however, a sympathetic setting has been retained with broad yards on both the front and rear, complimented by large shade trees.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**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 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**

In 1793 John Shepherd Ker acquired 364 acres of land, inherited by his wife, the daughter of George Corbin, in the vicinity of the present town of Onancock. It generally is assumed that Ker did not begin construction of his house until 1799 "when he established the reversion interest in the land in his name" and probably was completed by the time of his death in 1806. Although the house is now called Kerr Place, the family signed their name Ker, and the house was referred to as Ker's Place in John Ker's will of 1806.

In 1875 the house and seven acres were sold to George W. Powell, a member of Powell Brothers, merchants and maritime agents. It was Powell who added a glassed-in cupola on the roof so that he could watch his ships sailing in and out of Onancock Creek. Following Powell's death, the house passed through several owners until 1960 when the house and two acres of land were acquired by, and made the headquarters of, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Historical Society.

Kerr Place survives as probably the finest and most elaborate Federal mansion on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The architectural kinship between it and several other Federal houses in the area, such as Brownsville and Wharton Place, indicate a common architect-builder who unfortunately has not been identified. It is appropriate that one of the Shore's major architectural landmarks should become the headquarters of a society dedicated to the study and preservation of the Eastern Shore's historical heritage.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Rothery, Agnes, Houses Virginians Have Loved. New York: Bonanza Books, 1954.  
 Whitelaw, Ralph T., Virginia's Eastern Shore. Vol. II. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968.

**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	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		37° 42' 46"	75° 44' 50"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
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: October 22, 1969

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 Dr. P. Alexander by John

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

Date December 2, 1969

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Virginia	
COUNTY Accomack	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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(Number all entries)

6. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
1958 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C. Code: 08

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #273-3  
1968 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building  
Richmond, Virginia Code: 45

