PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) ___163-5014_________

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

To acknowledge the unique style and character of this building and its contribution to the architectural traditions of Amherst County and the Town of Amherst.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits?  Yes ___X___ No _____

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program?  Yes _____ No ___X___

1. General Property Information

Property name: ___Dameron Cottage/The Cottage____________________________

Property address: ____462 S. Main Street________________________________________

City or Town: _Amherst__________________________

Zip code: ____24521_______________

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: ___Amherst____________

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building _X___  Site _____  Structure _____  Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: _____1.603 acres____________________________

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village __X___ Hamlet _____ Rural_____

Briefly describe the property’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

Dameron Cottage is located about a mile south of the Amherst County Courthouse on South Main Street (U.S. Rte. Business 29). The house sits on the western side and near the road. The north side is visible from the road. There is a triple rail wood fence and a collection of boxwood and mature shrubs that visibly separate the property from the road. The house sits on the highest point of the property that slopes to the west toward an intermittent creek. The rear of the property is forested, and throughout the yard are mature hardwoods and pines. To the rear, on the west side of the house is a mature magnolia that was cultivated from a seed by Lois Dameron (1937-2021), who occupied the house with her family from 1953 until the
1980s. Near to the house are mature foundation plantings of boxwoods and shrubs on the front end of the building on the east and north sides.¹

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): __Rustic Revival_______________________________

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: _________________________________________________________

If the builder is known, please list here: Archey Bibby, William C. Bibby, George L. Dameron, Joyner T. Dameron, Sr.

Date of construction (can be approximate): _c. 1890, 1913, 1939, 1969________________________________________

Narrative Description:
In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

Dameron Cottage is a one and half-story, I-shaped house with details reflecting the Rustic Revival style. The house has a random stone foundation beneath the earliest sections with a cellar under the central section The earliest section dates from c. 1890. The c.1969 basement is concrete block. The exposed areas of the foundation were parged when the rear addition was completed. The house was also sided at the same time to create a uniform appearance. Only the north porch was not sided and the logs remain exposed. The main roof has multiple gables and is sheathed with tin on the older section and standing-seam metal on the newer. There are three porches. The east porch on the main elevation has a shallow shed roof sheathed in standing-seam metal. This three bay porch has a poured concrete floor with squared posts with decorative bases supporting the roof. The south porch is of identical construction with a shallow sloped shed roof. The covered area with a poured concrete slab floor was screened by the current owner in 2021. The north porch has a typical shed roof and is sheathed in tin, like the older section of the main roof. The porch has a parged concrete block foundation with a poured concrete floor; it has three bays with simple square posts supporting the roof. There are three chimneys. The earliest one is an interior chimney and it has a parged brick stack. The exterior flue on the southern side of the earliest section is rock with a brick stack. The bricks vary in age and have been repaired several times. The south side of the rear addition has an exterior brick chimney. The typical windows are 6/6 double-hung sashes of several sizes. There are two small square windows on the south elevation. The lower one is a four-light casement, and the upper is a 1/1 fixed sash. The basement window on the north has a 1/1 fixed sash. All the exterior doors date from the last alteration phase. These single-leaf doors are solid six panel doors on the main elevation and the north basement door. The south and north porches have single-leaf, nine-light doors. The house began as a single pen log cabin with an exterior chimney. This section may date c.1890 and was improved and expanded in 1913. Further improvements and additions date to the 1930s and continued in the same style, which may have obscured the evidence of earlier work. The last phase of

¹ Lois Dameron was the wife of Joyner T. Dameron, Jr. who were the last members of the Dameron family to occupy the house. The family owned the property from 1912-2021.
alteration took place between 1953 and 1969. Each phase of work is associated with a different family member.

The original building, a single pen log cabin, was built c. 1890 by Archev (1840-bef. 1912) and William C. (1858-bef. 1945) Bibby, African American brothers, who purchased the property in 1886. In 1912, William and the estate of Archev sold the property to George L. Dameron (1884-1923). He improved the building according to his brother, Joyner T. Dameron, Sr. (1886-1956), and added a story and a half addition onto the original log building. It is unknown whether or not he razed the earlier building and reused the materials or built onto the original.2

In 1928, Joyner T. Dameron, Sr., acquired the property from family holdings and enlarged the house to a T-shape. He was a carpenter, also, and continued the construction in the same style begun by George. Joyner’s work was carried out in the 1930s. His work included, according to his own account, a one and half-story addition, electrification, and the front porch. The original porch, as seen in historic photographs, had a shed roof with a steeper slope and log support posts; this area was likely changed in the last alteration phase. Joyner did not occupy the house but rented it. In 1949, the cedar shakes of the roof caught fire and they replaced the roof with a tin roof.3

The last major phase of expansion and alterations occurred around 1969. Joyner T. Dameron, Jr. (1934-2015) and his family moved into the house in 1956, and he further modernized the house. He redid the original porch, added an open covered porch to the south side of the house, a north porch, added a rear frame addition of a story and a half with a basement to the rear of the house, cedar sided the house, and dry-walled the living room.4

The interior of the house retains much of its Rustic Revival characteristics. There are wooden floors throughout much of the house with medium and narrow gauge flooring. The ceiling beams are round logs and are exposed throughout the main floor. The stair hall and dining room have exposed log walls. Expansion of the house can be observed in this stair hall as the north wall exhibits the iron straps used to attach the rear log section onto the earliest section. There is evidence of the inner log walls being woven into the exterior walls and into an interior wall in the stair hall and living room. The interior door throughout the earliest section are batten doors with simple cast iron hardware and hinges. The open dog-leg stair to the half-story is steep and simple in decoration. The newel posts are square posts without decoration, and the balusters are simple and rectangular in shape. Most of the half-story has exposed log knee walls with shiplap on some of the interior walls. The walls are plastered from the knee walls and include the ceiling in the earliest half-story section. The hearth in the living room is made of slate; the wooden mantelpiece is not original to the house and was added by Joyner, Sr. It is a late nineteenth century design with turned spindles on plinths. The legs behind the spindles have reeded panels, and the header has a raised panel.

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2 Amherst County Deed Bk RR, p. 403; Amherst County Deed Bk 68, p. 283; Amherst County Heritage Bk, Vol II, p. 132-133; and U. S. Federal Census 1920, accessed February 1, 2022, ancestry. com.
3 Alteration dates determined by the Amherst County Land Tax Books, Amherst County Courthouse. Amherst County Deed Bk 97, p. 546; Amherst County Heritage Bk, Vol II, p. 132-133; U. S. Federal Census 1920, accessed February 1, 2022, ancestry. com; and Amherst County Fire Dept. Archives, October 1949.
4 Alteration dates determined by the Amherst County Land Tax Books, Amherst County Courthouse and oral tradition from the Dameron family. Amherst County Heritage Bk, Vol II, p. 132-133.
Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are two secondary resources on the property: two storage sheds. These sheds are located to the northwest of the house, and both are frame construction. The smaller and oldest shed measures approximately 10 x 6 feet. It sits on piers of various materials including: concrete block and brick. It has vertical board siding and a gable roof sheathed in tarpaper. There is a single-leaf, five vertical panel door on the south gable side, and on the remaining sides, there is a single six light sliding window. It is in fair condition, and the date of construction is unknown. The larger and newer shed, located to the south of the older shed, measures approximately 12 x 28 feet and sits on concrete block piers. It has vertical board siding and a standing-seam metal roof. The main elevation faces east and has a wooden ramp and metal garage door. There is a solid, single-leaf door on the north side of the building. This ready-made shed was placed on the property in 2021.

4. Property’s History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Dameron Cottage is one of at least six known examples of Rustic Revival architecture in Amherst County. Four of the six are commercial buildings; three were stores all built along the Buffalo Springs Turnpike. The fourth building was the headquarters for a brick manufacturing company once known as Old Virginia Brick. Hanshill (005-5329) and Dameron Cottage (current owners call it “The Cottage”) were both built as houses, but Hanshill was intended as a retreat and was built in a secluded and forested area. The Cottage was constructed beside a road, near the village of Amherst, and was intended by the Dameron family as permanent residence or rental property.5

Before 1970, the house had exposed logs on the exterior and interior. The exposed exterior log walls were similar in appearance to the custodian’s cabin at Douthat State Park in Virginia, Plate I E-3 in Albert H. Good’s book, Park and Recreation Structures. The exterior was covered with stained wood weatherboards. According to the owners, the Dameron’s put the siding up with a conscious effort of preservation, and it could be easily removed. The exposed logs on the north side porch remained.6

The interior retains much of its Rustic Revival characteristics. Throughout the earliest sections of the house are exposed log ceiling beams. The stair hall and dining room retain their exposed log walls. The knee walls of the half-story are exposed log along the exterior, and the interior knee walls are shiplap. The interior doors are batten with simple iron

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hardware and hinges. The stair has a simple newel post at the top, and the railing surrounding the stair at the half-story has simple rectangular cut balusters.7

The original log section was constructed around 1890 by two African American brothers, Archey (1840-bef. 1912) and William Cullen (1858-bef. 1945) Bibby. These men purchased a cleared piece of land next to the Waugh’s Ferry Road leaving the Town of Amherst. The 1886 deed had a covenant that stated “at no time shall there be established, erected, or carried on the said lot any grocery, bar room, or house for the sale of ardent spirits or any public house whatsoever.” The family of Judge Samuel Hugh Henry (1824-1884) sold the lot to the Bibby brothers and may have suspected their reason for purchase, or the covenant was honoring their late father who was an ardent supporter of temperance. It is unknown how the original single pen log cabin was used.8

In 1912, William and the heirs of Archey sold the property to George L. Dameron (1884-1923). Dameron expanded the original cabin. From clues in the house, it was expanded to two rooms on the main floor and two rooms in the half-story. The house also had a cedar shake gable roof. The logs on the exterior were exposed. George may have bought this small property because it adjoined the Dameron family farm on the west. George’s use of the Rustic Revival may have been influenced by properties built for some of the national parks. His enlargement of the house occurred very early in the period that the style was used. This type of construction may have been very inexpensive, and he had access to available local timber. He was employed in construction for a firm in Washington, D.C., and in 1923, he was killed when struck by a car. It is unknown if the house was in use for a time after his death.9

In 1928, Joyner T. Dameron, Sr. (1886-1956) purchased the house from the family estate. He was also employed as a carpenter. It is possible this was a rental property for him since he lived in Lynchburg. In 1939, Joyner added the rear dining room and half-story room above it. Joyner described George’s addition and also stated that he, Joyner, added a front porch and electrified the house. From observation, Joyner also divided and reworked George’s addition, redid the stair, added indoor plumbing, and created a cellar.10

After 1939, the house seemed to be rental property, and the only known occupant in the house was Hope Tunstall (1920-1997). He and his wife lived in the house soon after their marriage. They married in 1945, after he returned from the war. The family had an oral history about a fire occurring in the house in the 1940s. Documentation from the Amherst Fire Department described a fire on October 4, 1949 that was caused by a spark from the chimney and caught the wooden shingles on fire. It was quickly dowsed. Evidence of this fire can still be seen on the floor in the rear room. Joyner replaced the shake roof with a tin roof. Again the house was rented until after 1956 when Joyner Dameron, Jr. (1934-2015) and his young family moved into the house.11

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7 The living room was dry-walled c. 1970.
8 Amherst County Land Tax Records 1885-1892, Reels 791, 814, 831, 847, 862, 882, 903, and 926, Library of Virginia; Amherst County Deed Book RR, p. 403; Amherst County Deed Book DD, p. 368; Amherst County Deed Book EE, p. 129; Amherst County Deed Book PP, p.169; and “Judge Henry,” Alexandria Gazette, April 24, 1875, 2, accessed April 10, 2022, newspapers.com.
10 Amherst County Deed Book 97, p.546; Amherst County Land Tax Records 1927-1953, various books, Amherst County Courthouse; and Amherst County Heritage Book : Volume II, 132-133.
11 Fire Calls 1949, Amherst Fire Department Archives; Virginia Marriage Records Database, ancestry.com; BIRLS database, ancestry.com; and Amherst County Heritage Book : Volume II, 132-133.
In 1969, Joyner, Jr. added a basement and one and a half-story addition to the rear or west end of the house. He parged the foundation and rear addition and sided the house all to make it appear uniform with the new addition. He redid the porch and created a porch onto the south side of the house. Joyner and wife, Lois raised their children in the house. In the 1980s, the family moved to the old family house on the Dameron farm which adjoins the house. They maintained the house as rental property. Lois’s health began to fail, and the family decided to sell the cabin. Lois interviewed potential buyers because she wanted to see the house preserved. It was sold in 2021 to Robert and Elizabeth Villwock. The Villwocks consider themselves the caretakers for the house and are careful about all repairs and alterations to the house. They wish to maintain the integrity as much as possible. They also prefer to call it simply, The Cottage, to recognize all contributions by various people to ways the house has grown and changed over time. They are seeking the nomination to recognize the uniqueness of their historic property.12

Bibliography

*Amherst County Deed Books.* Various Dates. Amherst County Courthouse.

*Amherst County Land Tax Records 1885-1926.* Library of Virginia, various microfilm reels.

*Amherst County Land Tax Records 1927-1984.* Amherst County Courthouse.

*Amherst County Will Books.* Various Dates. Amherst County Courthouse.

*Amherst County Heritage Book: Volume II.* Amherst, VA.: Amherst County Heritage Book Committee. 2004. 132-133.

Dameron, Lois T. Various Conversations with Robert E. Villwock, Sr.

*Fire Calls 1949.* Amherst Fire Department Archives.


Olinger, Mary Frances and Leona Wilkins, ed. *Amherst, Virginia: From Amherst Courthouse to Town of Amherst: A Pictorial History.* Amherst, VA.: Amherst County Museum And Historical Society, Central Virginia Printing. 2010. 13.


5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: __X___  Public\Local _____  Public\State _____  Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Robert E. Villwock, Sr. and Elizabeth Villwock
organization: N/A
street & number: 462 S. Main St.
city or town: Amherst  state: VA  zip code: 24521
e-mail: lanna82sc@yahoo.com  telephone: 434-326-3850

Legal Owner’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: ____________________________________________
Daytime Telephone: ____________________

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Sandra F. Esposito
organization: N/A
street & number: 140 Cradon Hill Ln
city or town: Amherst  state: VA  zip code: 24521
e-mail: sandiesposito@icloud.com  telephone: 540-529-0205

6. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager

name/title: Sara E. McGuffin-Town Manager
locality: Town of Amherst
street & number: P O Box 280
city or town: Amherst  state: VA  zip code: 24521
telephone: 434-946-7885
Dameron Cottage
163-5014
Amherst, VA

Sketch Map

A. Main House
B. Small Outbuilding
C. Large Outbuilding
D. Magnolia

South Main St