

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Vawter Hall and Old President's House (Additional Documentation)

Other names/site number: Lula Johnson Hall; Storum Hall; DHR No. 020-5247

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: Southwest corner of College Avenue and Hayden Street

City or town: Ettrick State: VA County: Chesterfield

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

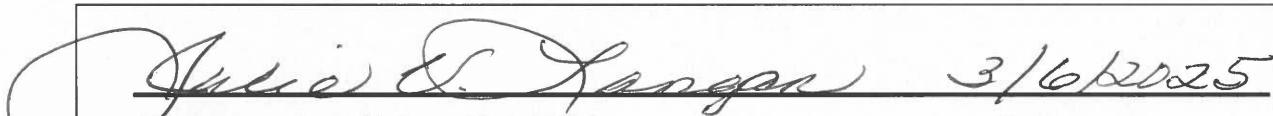
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

	3/6/2025
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>	

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

Vawter Hall and Old President's House _____
Name of Property

Chesterfield County, VA
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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Name of Property
Chesterfield County, VA
County and State
80004180
NR Reference Number

Introduction

Vawter Hall and the Old President's House were listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance in 1980. The areas of significance for the buildings were Education and Social/Humanitarian (now Social History). The broadly defined Period of Significance was 1800-1899; this period may have been selected because the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (today's Virginia State University [VSU]) was founded in 1882. The significant dates listed in Section 8 of the 1980 nomination are 1908, when Vawter Hall was completed, and 1907, when construction began on the Old President's House (its completion came after Vawter Hall's). The broadly defined period of 1800-1899 is assumed to apply to VSU itself, while the dates of construction for the Old President's House and Vawter Hall were chosen to highlight each building's specific completion and placement in service for the school's faculty, staff, and students.

This additional documentation adds Ethnic Heritage: African American as an area of significance and clarifies the period of significance for Vawter Hall (now Lula Johnson Hall) and the Old President's House (now Storum Hall) to begin in 1907 with the construction of the earliest extant resource, the Old President's House, and end in 1975 to correspond to the academic buildings' continued use through the 50-year cutoff point.

Additionally, a recent name change to both resources is also included in this documentation. The nomination's cover sheet has been updated to reflect the changes from Vawter Hall to Lula Johnson Hall and the Old President's House to Storum Hall.

A current location map with latitude/longitude coordinates and a sketch map for the property are also attached hereto, along with a current map of the VSU campus. The property's nominated boundary *has not changed* as a result of this additional documentation, though a more accurate acreage for the listed property is provided in Section 10.

The existing boundary contains three resources: the contributing Vawter Hall (Lula Johnson Hall) and Old President's House (Storum Hall) and a non-contributing, non-historic brick utility structure that was constructed between the two buildings after the 1980 nomination. An updated resource count is provided in Section 5, while a brief architectural description of the new resource is provided in Section 7.

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5. Classification

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

7. Description

Narrative Description

Since Vawter Hall and the Old President's House were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, one non-contributing structure has been built within the nominated boundary, situated between the two contributing buildings. The rectangular brick structure is a walled utility enclosure constructed of running bond brick with decorative piers capped by concrete. Sets of double wood doors pierce the north and east walls.

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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.)

- 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.
- 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.

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATIONSOCIAL HISTORYETHNIC HERITAGE – African American**Period of Significance**1907-1975**Significant Dates**N/A**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A**Cultural Affiliation**N/A**Architect/Builder**Unknown

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage – African American

Virginia State University is the nation's first state supported Historically Black College or University to offer both a college program and a normal program. It was founded on March 6, 1882, when the state legislature passed a bill to charter what was originally known as the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute.¹ Through the leadership of dedicated administrators and faculty, the school endured the post-Reconstruction Era backlash against higher education for Black students, as evidenced by its changing curriculum and repeated name changes, to become a leading educational institution.² In 1902, the Virginia General Assembly revised the school's charter act to curtail the collegiate program and to change the name to Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. In 1920, the federal land-grant program for Black students was moved from a private school, Hampton Institute, where it had been since 1872, to Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. In 1923, the college program was restored and, reflective of its re-expanded curriculum, the school's name changed in 1930 to Virginia State College for Negroes. After World War II, the name was shortened to Virginia State College. In 1979, upon examination of its course offerings and operating standards, the college became Virginia State University (VSU). The first top administrator to bear the title of President, John Mercer Langston, was also the first Black congressman elected to the United States Congress from Virginia. He was the great uncle of the famed writer Langston Hughes. From 1888 to 1968, four presidents – James H. Johnston, John M. Gandy, Luther H. Foster, and Robert P. Daniel – each serving an average of twenty years, helped the school to overcome adversity and move forward.³

Buildings Renamed in 2021

More than 20 years ago, the Old President's House was renamed Storum Hall in honor of James Storum, the school's first principal. The building now houses the Office of Institutional Advancement. In August 2021, VSU explained in a press release that Vawter Hall was renamed **Lula Johnson Hall** in honor of Virginia State alumna Lula Johnson, who was the first Black woman to graduate from the school back when it was known as Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute – and the first to graduate from any public college in Virginia. She went on to teach school in Southampton County. Today, Lula Johnson Hall houses the Department of Languages and Literature, and it remains the oldest extant building on campus. Additionally, three other buildings were renamed at this time. Eggleston Hall became **Lucretia Campbell Hall** to honor alumna Lucretia Campbell, who became the first Black woman faculty member at the University. Trinkle Hall was renamed **Johnnella Jackson Hall** for musician and civil rights activist Johnnella Frazer Jackson, who wrote the music for VAU's Alma Mater. The former Byrd Hall is now **Otelia Howard Hall** in recognition of Petersburg native Otelia Roberta Shields Howard, who

¹ "About Us." *Virginia State University*. <https://www.vsu.edu/about/>

² "History of VSU." *Virginia State University*. <https://www.vsu.edu/about/history/>

³ Virginia State University Special Collections and Archives, "Historical Profile," no date, <https://libguides.vsu.edu/specialcollections>.

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served VSU for more than two decades as a professor, student advisor, and a charter member of two organizations on campus. The decision to rename the buildings was to ensure that the campus environment reflects the institution and is a source of pride for the students, faculty, alum and staff who live and work inside those buildings. The selection of the new names was arrived at through historical research while taking into account Virginia State University's current mission, history, values, and beliefs in equality. "As an Historically Black University, VSU has always set the tone of celebrating those who came before us to create the legacy that we have today," said VSU President, Makola M. Abdullah when announcing the buildings' name changes. "Unveiling names that celebrate and honor amazing black women, especially those who have contributed to our VSU history in such an impactful way, shows that we proudly make space for and celebrate those up-and-coming trailblazers who have in the past, and will in the future, make Virginia State University their home."⁴ Through the National Park Service's Historically Black Colleges and Universities Grant Program, VSU received three grants from 2018-2021 to pay for repairs and improvements to Vawter Hall and the Old President's House.

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⁴ "Virginia State University Honors Black Women in Campus Buildings Renaming," Virginia State University, press release, August 5, 2021, <https://www.vsu.edu/news/2021/campus-building-renaming.php>; Bill Atkinson, "Along with a new name, VSU's Lula Johnson Hall is getting a federal grant for a new look," *The Progress Index*, August 13, 2021, <https://www.progress-index.com/story/news/2021/08/13/park-service-gives-virginia-state-university-500-k-restoration-grant/8121130002/>.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

“About Us.” *Virginia State University*. <https://www.vsu.edu/about/>

Atkinson, Bill. “Along with a new name, VSU’s Lula Johnson Hall is getting a federal grant for a new look,” *The Progress Index*, August 13, 2021, <https://www.progress-index.com/story/news/2021/08/13/park-service-gives-virginia-state-university-500-k-restoration-grant/812113002/>.

“History of VSU.” *Virginia State University*. <https://www.vsu.edu/about/history/>

“Virginia State University Honors Black Women in Campus Buildings Renaming,” Virginia State University, press release, August 5, 2021, <https://www.vsu.edu/news/2021/campus-building-renaming.php>

Virginia State University Special Collections and Archives, “Historical Profile,” no date, <https://libguides.vsu.edu/specialcollections>.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 37.234820 Longitude: -77.417860

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Additional Documentation

Photo Log

Name of Property: Vawter Hall and Old President's House

City or Vicinity: Ettrick

County: Chesterfield

State: VA

Photographer: Joanna McKnight

Date Photographed: March 4, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 5. Vawter Hall (Lula Johnson Hall), southeast oblique, view northwest from College Avenue

2 of 5. Old President's House (Storum Hall), northeast oblique, view southwest from College Avenue

3 of 5. Old President's House (Storum Hall), north elevation, and utility structure, view southwest from College Avenue sidewalk

4 of 5. Overview of property, view west from College Avenue

5 of 5. Utility structure, east elevation, view southwest







