

VLR-2/16/88 NRHP-11/10/88

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Needhamother names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number off VA 45 N/A not for publicationcity, town Farmville ☒ vicinitystate Virginia code VA county Cumberland code 049 sip code 23901

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

- ☒
- private
- 
- ☐
- public-local
- 
- ☐
- public-State
- 
- ☐
- public-Federal

## Category of Property

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

## Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

H. Bryan Mitchell

Signature of certifying official

9/15/88

Date

H. Bryan Mitchell, Director, VA Division of Historic Landmarks

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other. (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC-Single family

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC-Single family

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC-Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

## ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

Needham is a colonial I-house of frame construction with beaded clapboard siding that still retains much of its original fabric. Located north of Farmville, the house faces north and occupies a site that slopes to the south. A rear ell was added and minor alterations made in 1929. The stair located in the central hall is of particular interest for its unusual detailing and the house retains all four of its original mantels.

## ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Constructed in the early nineteenth century, Needham is located on the east side of Route 45 north of Farmville in Cumberland County. It occupies a slightly elevated site modest in size. The property does not possess any historic outbuildings though it is likely that a dairy and an office were once located to the southwest of the house. The site does reflect vestiges of historic plantings such as boxwoods.

The central hall, two-story, frame, single-pile structure has beaded clapboard sheathing, the rear portions of which are covered with asbestos siding which is in the process of being removed. A two-story rear ell with one-story ell and shed porch additions dates from 1929. The asphalt-covered gable roof has a box cornice with bed and crown moulding and tapered rake. The two exterior end chimneys are laid in Flemish bond with random glazing and stepped shoulders. The west chimney has been repointed and rebuilt above the first floor ceiling level. The brick foundation is also laid in Flemish bond.

The front (north) facade has three bays with central double-paneled doors with a five light transom. A twentieth century porch with square columns and a simple gable roof rests on brick piers. With the exception of the center second floor nine-over-nine sash, windows on this elevation are twelve-over-twelve that likely date from 1929.

The west end elevation has no windows, whereas the east elevation has a door to the right of the chimney and first and second floor nine-over-nine windows to the left. Connected to the south corner of this end is the shed-roofed porch of the rear ell. Tucked between the chimney and

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

GOVERNMENT

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1802-36

Significant Dates

1802

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Creed Taylor

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historical significance of Needham embraces three themes: education, government/law, and residential architecture. Needham was the home of educator, jurist, and politician Creed Taylor (1766-1836). He established in Richmond Virginia's second law school (1810-1811), and its third at his Cumberland County home, Needham (1821-ca. 1830). Among his students in Richmond or at Needham were at least one future president (John Tyler, Jr.), a secretary of state (Abel Parker Upshur), a senator (William Cabell Rives), three congressmen (Joseph William Chinn, John Minor Botts, and John Hall Fulton), a state supreme court justice (William Yates Gholson), a Confederate general and governor (Sterling Price), and six members of the House of Delegates (Peter Guerrant, Addison Hall, John D. Leland, William Henry Roy, William Selden, and William H. Terrill). Taylor himself served in the House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia, and closed his political career as Speaker of the Senate during the 1804-1805 session. He sponsored the entry into politics of John Randolph of Roanoke as an opponent of Patrick Henry in 1799 and helped secure the election of Thomas Jefferson as president in 1800. From 1806 to 1831 Taylor served as a judge on the Superior Court of Chancery; in 1829 he published his rules for the court. When he died in 1836 he was buried at Needham, which stands today as a representative example of early nineteenth-century rural domestic architecture, as forthright as the man who built it.

### JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Needham is eligible for registration as a historic landmark under Criteria A, B, and C. The house is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the development of legal education in Virginia; in addition, some of the former students there influenced national politics and historical events. Under Criterion B the house is eligible because of its associations with its builder, Creed Taylor, who was a jurist and legal educator. The property was the location of the first proprietary

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

VA Division of Historic Landmarks  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approx. one

UTM References

A 17 731700 4133630  
Zone Easting Northing

C         

B           
Zone Easting Northing

D         

☐ See continuation sheet

## Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the S side of an unimproved road approx. 200' E of VA 45 which is approx. 7600' NE of intersection of VA 45 with US 460; thence extending approx. 200' E along S side of unimproved road, thence approx. 250' S following said side of said road; thence approx. 250' W; thence approx. 250' N to point of origin.

☐ See continuation sheet

## Boundary Justification

The bounds have been drawn to include the one contributing building on approximately one acre of land.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julie Vosmik and John Salmon - - Architectural Historian, Historian  
organization VA Division of Historic Landmarks date 1988  
street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3143  
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brick porch foundation is a covered frame exterior entrance to the one-room cellar.

The original rear facade has twelve-over-twelve windows on the first floor and nine-over-nine on the second floor. The gabled rear ell projects from the south rear elevation. A single-story shed-roofed addition is attached to the southeast corner of the ell. A mixture of window configurations are found in the ell with nine-over-nine predominating.

The interior is largely intact, with a stair ascending towards the front in the central hall. The stair has a plain, pegged newel post, heavily moulded hand rail, no balusters and a closed, heavily moulded stringer. There are two doors beneath the stair, one leading to the cellar and a smaller door on the side that appears to have been added. The hall has a simple band of picture moulding and wide pine flooring. The door that originally would have been located at the south end of this hall was removed when the rear ell was added. Doors with six raised panels lead to the rooms on either side of the hall. Several doors throughout the building retain their original brass hardware.

Both rooms are detailed with a simple dado and original mantels which exhibit the typical eighteenth century Southside characteristics of fluted pilasters with panels above the fireplace opening and a high moulded cornice shelf.

Repairs have been made to portions of the original flooring and dado in the west room, which is more simply detailed with a chair rail than the east which has wainscoting. The southeast corner of the west room has been enclosed to accommodate a bathroom that is entered from the hall.

The northeast room retains some of its original architrave trim, as well as plain broad trim from the 1930s, simple moulded chair rail and plain double board wainscot. The narrow-width flooring dates from the 1930s.

The second floor hall has wide flooring and architrave trim and a chair rail. The stair rail has octagonally milled horizontal rails, a square newel with a curvilinear transition to the rails. Both upstairs rooms retain their mantels, which are simpler than those found on the first floor, as well as their chair rails.

The rear ell contains a kitchen and bedroom on the first floor and additional bedrooms on the second floor.

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law school in Virginia (1821-ca.1830); it probably was built in 1802. The house is eligible under Criterion C because it is an example of a country residence constructed for a man who was primarily a judge and only secondarily a farmer. It is typical of a rural vernacular residence in the Federal style. The interior is especially well preserved, retaining most of the structure's original woodwork, brasses, pine flooring and stair. The woodwork of the interior is Needham's most outstanding feature. The mantels, panelled doors and chair rails in the early section of the structure are excellent representations of the Federal style as seen in a rural context.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Creed Taylor was born in Cumberland County in 1766, the younger son of Samuel Taylor and Sophia Childers. In 1781 he may have served as a private in Captain Charles Allen's company of Cumberland County militia.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor did not receive a formal education; as a young man he read law in the office of George Carrington, Jr., who was clerk of the Cumberland County Court from 1777 until his death in 1784. Taylor served as deputy clerk under Miller Woodson, Carrington's successor, and was appointed county coroner on 4 April 1789.<sup>2</sup> In 1791 Taylor was admitted to the bar in Prince Edward County.<sup>3</sup> He married Sarah Woodson, daughter of Miller Woodson, about 1797.<sup>4</sup>

Creed Taylor began his political career in 1788 when he was elected to the House of Delegates; he attended its session of 23-30 June and 20 October-19 December 1788. He did not hold elective office again for a decade. In 1798 he was elected to the Senate of Virginia, where he represented Amelia, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Nottoway, and Powhatan counties. He was reelected to the next six sessions and during the last one, which ended on 1 February 1805, Taylor served as Speaker of the Senate.<sup>5</sup>

Although Taylor's public political career was brief, on two occasions he played an influential role from behind the scenes. The first instance occurred at Charlotte County courthouse in 1799 when young John Randolph of Roanoke, whom Taylor had supported when Randolph decided to enter politics, bested Patrick Henry in a political debate and subsequently won election to Congress. With the victory of Taylor's protege, "the torch of eloquence passed from the preeminent orator of one generation to a worthy successor in the next."<sup>6</sup>

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During the debate Taylor lobbied for Randolph and was heard to tell onlookers that Henry was senile."<sup>7</sup> Randolph began his political life as an ardent Jeffersonian but soon disagreed with both his mentor and Jefferson over the president's policies; by 1817 he counted Taylor among his "bitterest opponents."<sup>8</sup>

The second opportunity for Taylor to influence the course of national politics occurred in 1800, when he was chosen as an elector in the presidential contest. He became a leader among Virginia's Republicans, organized his fellow electors for Thomas Jefferson, and helped achieve the "revolution of 1800" by securing the election of Jefferson as president.<sup>9</sup>

Taylor himself held no further elective offices. He did, however, later serve "on the boundary commissions to settle Virginia's lines with Tennessee and with Kentucky. He was a trustee for the establishment of the town of Farmville and was involved in plans for a canal [Junction Canal Company] to connect the Appomattox and Roanoke rivers. He was also a commissioner to select a site for the University of Virginia and was a member of the board of visitors of the Penitentiary."<sup>10</sup>

It was as a jurist and educator, however, that Creed Taylor made his most lasting mark in Virginia. On 2 November 1805 he was appointed to the General Court; on 14 June 1806 he was named to succeed George Wythe as judge of the Superior Court of Chancery for the Richmond district.<sup>11</sup> He moved from Cumberland County to Richmond and by 1809 had rented a house from Charles Copeland.<sup>12</sup> Soon after he moved to the city Taylor engaged the artist Saint-Memin to draw portrait profiles of him and his wife.<sup>13</sup>

In 1810 several attorneys, newly admitted to the bar but inexperienced in practice, formed an association for the mutual improvement of their talents. They asked Creed Taylor to supervise them for the "purpose of gaining instruction in the practical part of the law."<sup>14</sup> To Taylor the practical side instruction of the law was the court; his students, therefore, honed their skills in a moot court over which he presided. Among Taylor's students were future president John Tyler, secretary of the state Abel Parker Upshur, senator William Cabell Rives, and member of the House of Delegates William Selden.<sup>15</sup> Taylor's first school appears to have lasted only until 1811.<sup>16</sup> Three years later Lynchburg was added to Taylor's Richmond chancery district and he moved back to Cumberland County.

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Taylor returned to his home called Needham, on property he acquired in 1791.<sup>17</sup> He insured the house, office, and kitchen with the Mutual Assurance Society for \$2,900 on 23 August 1802.<sup>18</sup> All the buildings were made of wood and covered with wooden shingles. The house (the only structure still standing) measured forty-six by twenty feet, the kitchen sixteen by fourteen feet, and the office stood forty feet in front of the kitchen, in the southwest corner of the yard. On 10 January 1806, probably about the time he heard he would be appointed chancellor and have to move to Richmond, Taylor had the property revalued to \$3,000.<sup>19</sup> He again revalued the property on 12 August 1815, a year after his return home, from \$3,000 to \$2,900.<sup>20</sup>

Although Needham was located conveniently about halfway between Richmond and Lynchburg, Taylor ran afoul of an act passed by the General Assembly in 1802 that required judges on the Superior Court of Chancery to reside where the court was held. Taylor had at first complied with the law, moving to Richmond upon his appointment to the bench in 1806. After the General Assembly began to discuss his situation in 1818, Taylor argued that obviously he could not live in two places simultaneously. He said the legislature had acknowledged the fact during its 1813-1814 session when it added Lynchburg to the Richmond district. The General Assembly at that time, wrote Taylor, had considered "writing into the law that the chancellor for the Richmond and Lynchburg districts could live at Needham but concluded that this provision was unnecessary."<sup>21</sup> Taylor won his argument and continued to reside at Needham.

Despite the court's claim on his time, Taylor retained his interest in legal education. Himself a product of the old system that required a young man to read law in the office of an experienced attorney, Taylor also had seen the benefits derived from practice before a moot court. Taylor did not invent the moot court or introduce it to Virginia; George Wythe, creator of Virginia's first law school at the College of William and Mary in 1779, had used the moot court as an adjunct to his lectures.<sup>22</sup> Taylor, however, decided to make the moot court his principal teaching tool, supplemented by reading and discussions instead of lectures. In 1821 he established a law school at Needham—the first proprietary law school in Virginia.

Taylor advertised in newspapers for students and charged them \$50 each per session. In keeping with his personal values, he imposed no religious or political qualifications for acceptance. He allowed his students to use his office as a place to study and to keep their books. The pupils boarded at neighboring farms; they were required to assemble at Needham only on days when the moot court was in session.<sup>23</sup> The court



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met either in Taylor's<sup>24</sup> office or in an upstairs room to the right of the stairs in the house.

As Taylor designed his moot court, it functioned as a county monthly court, county quarterly court, county superior court, general court, superior court of chancery, and supreme court of appeals. His students thus were able to practice before every court in Virginia, with Chancellor Taylor as presiding judge, without leaving Needham. Minutes were kept of each court meeting and the decisions rendered were treated as precedents in future cases. In 1822 Taylor published the minutes in the first (and only) volume in a projected four-volume series entitled Journal of the Law-School, and of the Moot-Court Attached to It, at Needham, in Virginia (Richmond: Printed by J. and G. Cochran, 1822).

Taylor's students at Needham, unlike those in Richmond, generally were unread in the law. Once they passed an examination on certain readings, however, they were admitted to practice in the moot court, where they filed briefs, pled their cases, and contested with each other under the gaze of Chancellor Taylor. The judge apparently demanded much but was not above allowing a student to defend Tristram Shandy in a suit.<sup>25</sup>

Although there is no complete list of Taylor's students, those whose names are known came to the school primarily from central Virginia and one, James Turner Morehead, from Rockingham County, North Carolina. Among Taylor's students at different times were at least one future Ohio supreme court justice, William Yates Gholson; three congressman, Joseph William Chinn, John Minor Botts, and John Hall Fulton; a Confederate general and Missouri governor, Sterling Price; and five members of the House of Delegates, Peter Guerrant,<sup>26</sup> John D. Leland, William Henry Roy, William H. Terrill, and Addison Hall.

Apparently the boarding out of students proved unsuitable. Soon several small buildings, probably about the size of Taylor's office, were constructed at Needham to house the pupils. They were torn down by the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup>

The law school at Needham lasted only a few years, perhaps until as late as 1840 if others in Taylor's family tried to continue its operation past its founder's death in 1836.<sup>28</sup> Alternatively, it may have ceased operations as early as 1830, due to competition from the law department established at the University of Virginia in 1826.<sup>29</sup> Most likely it did not outlive Taylor himself, because no law books were listed in the inventory of his estate.<sup>30</sup>

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In addition to operating his law school and serving as a judge, Taylor found time to codify the rules of his court. In 1829 he published The Manual of the Superior Courts of Chancery at Richmond and Lynchburg: Being a Collection of the Rules of Said Courts; Together with Instructions for the Commissioners Thereof in Chancery (Richmond: S. Sheperd, 1829).

As Taylor grew older, his physical infirmities caused his natural brusqueness to give way to irritability.

During his last visit to Lynchburg, on adjourning his court for the day, he appointed the hour of twelve on the following day, as the time for again assembling. Becoming restless though, before the hour of eleven, he caused the courthouse bell to be rung long and loudly. In great haste the lawyers came pouring in from all directions to meet his ireful glance. He first accosted the late Peachy Gilmer, reproaching him in an angry voice for being so dilatory, whereupon Mr. Gilmer remarking to him that it yet wanted three quarters of an hour to the appointed time, the Chancellor losing all command of himself, exclaimed in a passionate voice, "Gentlemen, I will have you in future to know that, when I take my seat on the bench, it is 12 O'clock."<sup>31</sup>

In 1833 Taylor was stricken with paralysis. He died on 17 January 1836. His obituary described him as a man who "with little aid from early education, with none from wealth or patronage, . . . filled with ability several<sup>32</sup> of the most important posts in the service of his native State." In his will Taylor left his estate to the survivors among the five children he and his wife had adopted.<sup>33</sup> He was buried in an unmarked grave in the family cemetery at Needham.

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Endnotes

1. Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia (Farmville: The Farmville Herald, 1935), 220.
2. Records of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Commission Book No. 1, 1786-1798, p. 28, in Archives Branch, Virginia State Library and Archives (VSL&A), Richmond, Va.
3. W. Hamilton Bryson, Legal Education in Virginia, 1779-1979: A Biographical Approach (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), 589.
4. Fillmore Norfleet, Saint-Memin in Virginia: Portraits and Biographies (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942), 212.
5. Cynthia Miller Leonard, comp., The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: A Bicentennial Register of Members (Richmond: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978).
6. Daniel P. Jordan, Political Leadership in Jefferson's Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 158.
7. Bryson, Legal Education, 589.
8. Letter, 18 March 1817, John Randolph of Roanoke, Prince Edward Courthouse, to Edward Cunningham, Richmond, Mss1 R1554 a 19, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.
9. Allan Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1937), 18:320.
10. Bryson, Legal Education, 593.
11. DAB, 18:320.
12. Norfleet, Saint-Memin, 211.
13. Ibid., 85, 211-212.
14. Claude H. Hall, Abel Parker Upshur, Conservative Virginian, 1790-1844 (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963), 15.

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15. Ibid., 15; Bryson, Legal Education, 762.
16. Bryson, Legal Education, 762.
17. Cumberland County, Deed Book 7, 220-222; deed dated 5 November 1791 and recorded 28 January 1793.
18. Mutual Assurance Society Declarations, reel 2, volume 16, policy 776; in archives of Division of Historic Landmarks.
19. Mutual Assurance Society Declarations, reel 4, volume 38, policy 785; in archives of Division of Historic Landmarks.
20. Mutual Assurance Society Declarations, reel 4, volume 42, policy 1538; in archives of Division of Historic Landmarks.
21. Bryson, Legal Education, 591.
22. Bryson, Legal Education, 31.
23. Creed Taylor, Journal of the Law-School, and of the Moot-Court Attached to It, at Needham, in Virginia (Richmond: Printed by J. and G. Cochran, 1822), ix, 9.
24. The Farmville Herald, 19 February 1982 (supplement), 1; and conversation with Mrs. Varner, 21 August 1987. Both these sources claim the court met in the house, although the office seems to have been the more logical place for it.
25. Virginia Law Review (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1930), 16:818. Tristram Shandy was listed among Taylor's effects after his death (Cumberland County, Will Book 9, 1832-1837, p. 301, inventory and appraisal recorded 25 April 1836, reel 20, in Archives Branch, VSL&A).
26. Bryson, Legal Education, 763; Leonard, The General Assembly of Virginia.
27. Today and Yesterday, 222.
28. Ibid.
29. Bryson, Legal Education, 31.

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30. Cumberland County, Will Book 9, 1832-1837, pp. 296-306, on microfilm in Archives Branch, VSL&A.

31. Bryson, Legal Education, 593-594.

32. Ibid., 594.

33. Cumberland County, Will Book 9, 1832-1837, pp. 269-271, proved February court 1836, reel 20, in Archives Branch, VSL&A.

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- Varner, Mrs. Reginald T. Conversation held on 21 August 1987.

Secondary Sources

- Bryson, W. Hamilton. Legal Education in Virginia, 1779-1979: A Biographical Approach. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982.
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- Jordan, Daniel P. Political Leadership in Jefferson's Virginia. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

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Leonard, Cynthia Miller, comp. The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: A Bicentennial Register of Members. Richmond: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978.

Norfleet, Fillmore. Saint-Memin in Virginia: Portraits and Biographies. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942.

The Farmville Herald, 19 February 1982 (supplement).

Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia. Farmville: The Farmville Herald, 1935.

Virginia Law Review 16 (1930): 815-818.



UTM References: 17/731700/4133630

