

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

CAMDEN

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Camden

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: SE bank of Rappahannock River
.5 mile north of intersection of Route 686 and Route 17

Not for publication:

City/Town: Port Royal vicinity

Vicinity:

State: Virginia County: Caroline Code: 033 Zip Code:

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: x

Public-Local:

Public-State:

Public-Federal:

Object:

Category of Property

Building(s): x

District:

Site:

Structure:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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**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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
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
- \_\_\_ Determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic:	Domestic	Sub:	single dwelling
Current:	Domestic	Sub:	single dwelling

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century: Italian Villa

**MATERIALS:**

Foundation:	Stone (granite)
Walls:	Wood
Roof:	
Other:	

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Built in pure Italian Villa style, Camden is a massive two-story frame structure covered with flush siding of cypress which was originally sanded to resemble stone. The base of the now truncated tower projects from the center of the land front. Around the first floor of this tower base is a semi-circular porch which is similar in detail to the wide verandah across the entire first floor of the river front. On the west side of the house is a semi-circular projecting conservatory, the interior of which has recently been converted into an informal parlor. The roofs of both the conservatory and the verandah have lost their original balustrades. A two-story service wing projects from the east side of the house. All of the openings are enriched by a variety of decorative enframements, and are topped by either segmental or semi-circular arches. The house is covered by a cross-gable roof, the deep eaves of which are supported by an unusually rich bracketed cornice. A gable similar in appearance to that on the river front now covers the base of the destroyed upper portion of the tower.

The rich interior has changed little from the earliest days of occupation. The principal first floor rooms include the broad hall, library, dining room, downstairs bedroom, and parlor. The parlor in the most elaborate and best preserved room in the house, retaining its original suite of Victorian Rococo furniture, silk brocade curtains, rosewood piano, bronze chandelier, and floral carpet of 1859. Also remaining in the house are such period items as the original speaking tubes and the still operating floral china basins in each bedroom.

In the extensive basement with its massive granite walls there survive two raised panel doors of eighteenth-century style, which were apparently retained from the early house. No other colonial fabric appears to remain, however.

Camden is dramatically located on a high bank of the Rappahannock River and is approached by a long avenue across the broad flat bottom-land.



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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**Statement of Significance

Camden was built between 1857 and 1859 for William C. Pratt on the site of a previous frame residence on the bank of the Rappahannock River near Port Royal, Virginia. The architect for Camden was the English-born Nathan G. Starkwether, who also practiced in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. Camden is one of the finest and most fully developed examples of the Italian Villa style which so captured the romantic spirit of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America. The house is marked by broadly projecting eaves supported by a strongly scaled bracketed cornice, and also by wide semi-circular verandahs front and rear and a semi-circular conservatory. The top level of the tower was shot off by a gunboat in the Civil War and was not replaced. Camden is of particular interest because the architect's original drawings survive in the house, and also because the house retains much of the original furniture, draperies, carpeting, and light fixtures. Maintained in an excellent state of preservation, Camden is not open to the public.

History

The present Camden is built on the site of the Pratt family's colonial house which dated from circa 1760. The earlier house was two-story frame structure on a brick foundation. This frame house was inherited by William Carter Pratt who had it demolished circa 1850 so that he might build the existing house. For the design of his new house Pratt engaged the services of a noted and able Baltimore architect, Nathan G. Starkwether. Construction of the house was begun in 1857 and completed in 1859. As stated by Richard Howland, "The new Camden was one of the greatest houses in Virginia at the time, and the most modern. Starkwether designed it in the Italian Villa style, then the most fashionable choice of the cultivated eastern taste. He installed central heating that was equipped also to circulate cool air in the summer, gas lights (and a private gas works), and running water in every bedroom. There were inside toilets, a shower bath as well as tubs, and a profusion of closets and built-in cupboards."

Starkwether's creation for William Carter Pratt stands as one of the most complete and best preserved Italianate county houses in America. With the exception of the elaborate upper story of the tower (destroyed by action from a Union gunboat in 1863), Camden appears today almost exactly as it does in Starkwether's beautiful renderings, which are framed and preserved at the house.

In addition, the Camden tract is archeologically significant for it contains the site of a single house, probably occupied by one Indian family of the late-seventeenth century. This site, which measures only thirty feet by forty feet, has yielded a number of artifacts including pottery, pieces of tobacco pipes, iron tools, and two silver medals inscribed "The King of Machotick" and "The King of Patomeck," respectively. Many of the artifacts reflect the influence of the white man upon the Indian culture, while the silver medals were probably gifts of the English settlers to lesser tributary Indians, or they may have served as passes for the chiefs or their messengers entering the settled parts of the colony.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Blackford, Memories of Life in and out of the Army of Virginia, Vol. II, pp. 133-135.

Caroline County Historical Guide Book, compiled by the Caroline County Jamestown Festival Observance Committee.

MacCord, Howard A., Sr., "A Virginia Indian Family in 1680," Virginia Cavalcade (Summer 1967), Vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 39-42.

O'Neal, William B., Architecture in Virginia. Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Museum, 1968.

Wingfield, Marshall, A History of Caroline County, Virginia. Richmond, Virginia: 1924.

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: #08 1957  
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #16-4, 1968  
 Other State Agency  
 Federal Agency  
 Local Government  
 University  
 Other (Specify Repository):

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 1500 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A.	18	313320	4226560
B.	18	313260	4223420
C.	18	309100	4223520
D.	18	309170	4226650

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary follows the southern bank of the Rappahannock River to mouth of a small creek. Following the creek to its intersection with Route 17. Then following Route 17 to intersection with Route 686 and continuing in a northwesterly line with Route 17 approximately .25 miles, turning south to a fence line. Then following the fence in northwesterly direction to the Rappahannock River and the point of beginning.

## Boundary Justification:



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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
(based on National Register of Historic Places nomination form)

Address: Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building  
Richmond, Virginia

Telephone:

Date: July 29, 1969

Placed on current nomination form: Patty Henry  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
1849 C St., N.W. (2280)  
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM  
July 14, 2009