

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Fluvanna	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 69-11.4.5.0062	DATE 11/12/69

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Brema Recess, and Lower Brema (Brema Historic District)

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Brema, Brema Recess, and Lower Brema

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: .3 miles North of James River 2.4 miles West of Route 15,  
.9 miles North of intersection of Route 15 and Route 656.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Brema Bluff

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_ CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Mrs. Francis C. Orf (Brema Recess)  
Joseph Forney Johnston (Brema) Mrs. Gary H. Cocke (Lower Brema)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Brema Bluff

CITY OR TOWN: Fluvanna County STATE: Virginia CODE: 01

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Fluvanna County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Palmyra 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: District of Columbia CODE: 08

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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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

Bremo Plantation contains nearly a dozen structures of architectural interest and significance. Chief among these is the principal residence, Upper Bremo, a five-section brick structure in the Palladian style popularized in the area by Thomas Jefferson. The central block of the house is two stories on the entrance facade and one story on an English basement on the river front. The house was originally covered by a flat roof of ridge and valley construction used so frequently by Mr. Jefferson. As this type of roof leaked badly, it was replaced with the present hipped roof by General John Hartwell Cocke not many years after the house was completed. Upper Bremo contains many other architectural features so often associated with Jefferson's work, especially with the use of the Tuscan order in the portico, loggia, and side porches, the Chinese lattice railings on the esplanades, and the changes of ground level from one side of the complex to the other. The interior of Bremo also exhibits many Jeffersonian features such as the very high ceilings in the principal rooms, bed alcoves, narrow staircases, upstairs rooms with low ceilings, and a generous use of full entablatures and pedimented doorways in the principal rooms. The oak graining found on the woodwork of all the principal rooms except the parlor is thought to be the original finish.

Upper Bremo has been preserved with remarkably few changes and is currently undergoing a long-term renovation. Even the original benches in the schoolroom in one of the end pavilions remain. The outbuildings just to the east of the east end pavilion also survive in a good state of repair.

Other structures located on the Upper Bremo tract include the massive and unusual stone barn with its Tuscan portico, brick dressings, and central cupola. Adjacent to the barn is the stone and brick milk house with its high hipped roof and central pediment, and the large stable which also features the stone and brick construction of the buildings associated with General Cocke.

Southeast of the house at the foot of the bluff is the Temperance monument, a stone Greek Doric pavilion di-style in antis. Although the monument has been moved from its original location on the James River and Kanawha Canal, the setting has been carefully reproduced; the monument now overlooks a long basin near the opposite end of which is the large pitcher-shaped iron urn through which poured water from the spring.

Other buildings connected with Upper Bremo are the two rare pise slave quarters constructed under the supervision of General Cocke and the board and batten slave chapel.

Two other groups of buildings, Bremo Recess and Lower Bremo make up the remainder of the Bremo Historic District. Bremo Recess, originally constructed in ca. 1803-1809 was enlarged and redesigned ca. 1844 in the Jacobean style about the same time that Lower Bremo was being built. Bremo Recess, according to General Cocke was "copied from . . . The well remembered old six chimney house in Williamsburg, once the property of the Custis family and Bacon's Castle in Surry." Bremo Recess is curviform in plan

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input checked="" 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

General John Hartwell Cocke (1780-1866), noted planter, soldier and reformer, was a man of great importance in ante-bellum Virginia. A graduate of the College of William and Mary (1794-99), Cocke spent his life in the various reform movements of the first half of the 19th century. During the War of 1812 he entered the army as a captain and within 18 months had emerged as a brigadier general. After the war he settled into his routine of managing his extensive land holdings in Fluvanna County and in furthering his reform goals. He advanced many revolutionary agricultural ideas and vigorously attacked the practice of making tobacco the main crop of Virginia. He was equally outspoken on the subject of slavery and served as senior vice-president of the American Colonization Society from its creation in 1819 until his death. He was a leading temperance leader of the period, serving as president of the American Temperance Union in 1836. A strong believer in public education, Cocke not only supported Mr. Jefferson in the formation of the University of Virginia but was also a member of the Board of Visitors for 33 years from 1819 until 1852. It has been stated that Cocke "without being either a prig or a Puritan, . . . was a zealous reformer; yet even those who impugned his principles admired his sincerity, catholic benevolence, and alertness to civic responsibility. The causes which he supported indicate him to have been one of the most remarkable Virginians of his generation in power of foresight, a pioneer of modern social reform."

General Cocke first moved from his home in Surry County to his property in Fluvanna County about 1803. He named his property in Fluvanna in honor of the old Cocke family home in Henrico County. While Upper Bremono, the main residence, was being built, General Cocke and his family made their home at Bremono Recess, a small frame house which Cocke substantially rebuilt in its present Jacobean form circa 1844.

About the same time General Cocke enlarged Bremono Recess, he also substantially rebuilt another small house on the property, Lower Bremono, adding to it Jacobean embellishments similar to those on Bremono Recess. Lower Bremono was rebuilt for General Cocke's son Cary, but Cocke made it his own residence for the last 12 years of his life. In 1918-1919 the interior of the house was completely remodeled.

For the design of Upper Bremono, Cocke sought the advice of both friends and professionals, among whom were Thomas Jefferson and a Richmond architect named Conneley. While the resulting mansion contains many of the architectural forms and devices found in Mr. Jefferson's work, the final architect

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Kimball, Fiske, "The Building of Breomo," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, vol. 57, no. 1 (January 1949), p. 13.  
 Waterman, Thomas T., The Mansions of Virginia (New York, 1945), p. 45.  
 Gaines, William H., Jr., "A Home Dedicated to Service," Virginia Cavalcade, vol. VI, no. 2 (Autumn 1956), pp. 20-29.  
 Bodine, A. Aubrey, The Face of Virginia (Baltimore, 1967), p. 140.  
 Deed Book 25, Fluvanna County Court House, pp. 181-182.  
 Deed Book 69, Fluvanna County Court House, p. 180.  
 Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in America (London, 1944), 17-18.  
 Dictionary of American Biograph, vol. 4. (continued)

**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° 45' 00"	78° 20' 46"		0' 0' 0"	0' 0' 0"	
NE	37° 45' 00"	78° 17' 32"				
SE	37° 42' 37"	78° 17' 32"				
SW	37° 42' 37"	78° 20' 46"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1,500 acres**

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:  
**W. B. Morton III, Architect**

ORGANIZATION: **Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation,  
 History Division, HHS, National Park Service**      DATE: **Aug. 21, 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**801 - 19th Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **D.C.**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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	Fluvanna
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1) Bremo Recess, and Lower Bremo (Brema Historic Dist.)

With curvilinear end gables, and diagonally set chimney stacks. The central section of the front elevation has an enclosed entrance porch with three pointed arch bays. Above, in the decorated gable is an enclosed room. The interior of Brema Recess, perhaps remaining from the first early-19th century house is neo-classical in style. The principal feature is a triple arched "screen" dividing the wide central hall. The two side arches have solid, paneled doors, the center arch has a removeable panel that can be taken down in the summer. All three arches have semi-circular glazed transoms and painted to resemble marble.

Brema Recess has several notable outbuildings including a brick and stone guest house with a steep gable roof and parapet gable ends, also a long low stone stable, barn, carriage house with three two-story pavilions.

Lower Brema built ca. 1844 also in the Jacobsean style is a long two-story house of brick and stone with a H-shaped plan. It is believed that it is an enlargement of a much smaller "hunting lodge" erected in the mid-18th century. In 1918-1919, the interior of Lower Brema was completely remodeled and the central section of the house, originally two levels, was made into one large space with a stair and balcony along two sides. Lower Brema also retains a massive stone and timber barn erected ca. 1840.

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Virginia	
COUNTY Fluvanna	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance (1) Breomo Historic District

was actually John Neilson, a master carpenter who has worked for Mr. Jefferson at Monticello. It was Neilson who interpreted all of the ideas and sketches received or drawn by Cocke and who gave the house its final appearance. Completed in 1820, Upper Breomo has been described by Fiske Kimball as the most nearly perfect "of all the houses in the Jeffersonian tradition."

Breomo Historic District

Breomo Historic District, Fluvanna County, Virginia consists of three plantation house groupings and their outbuildings and dependencies all built on Breomo Plantation by General John Hartwell Cocke (1780-1866) between 1803 and 1845. The first to be constructed was Breomo Recess (1803-1809); the second and most important of the three, Upper Breomo, was completed in 1820; the last was Lower Breomo built ca. 1844 at the same time Breomo Recess was extensively remodeled.

Upper Breomo is designed in the Palladian Roman Revival style made popular by Thomas Jefferson. The man who designed Upper Breomo was John Nielson a master carpenter who had worked at Monticello. Upper Breomo has been described by Fiske Kimball as the most nearly perfect of all the houses in the Jeffersonian tradition. Also at Upper Breomo is the large stone barn which is undoubtedly the finest Neo-Classical barn in the United States.

Breomo Recess and Lower Breomo achieved their present exterior form ca. 1844 and on both rare examples of Jacobean Revival architecture.

The entire group of houses and farm buildings at Breomo taken together form one of the most remarkable collections of early-19th century structures in the country. Not only do they possess outstanding architectural interest but having always remained in the possession of the family that built them they present an undisturbed and remarkably well preserved social document of early-19th century America.

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*(Continuation Sheet)*

STATE	
Virginia	
COUNTY	
Fluvanna	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

*(Number all entries)*

Boundary Description

Bremo Historic District

Beginning at the James River on the west side of the John H. Cocke Memorial Bridge, thence north along U.S. Route 15 approximately .8 of a mile to the northern boundary of the Bremo Recess property, as recorded; thence west by northwest in a straight line, following the northern boundary of the Bremo Recess property, as recorded, to the east bank of Bremo Creek (East Fork) at a point approximately .65 of a mile north of the mouth of the creek; thence south along Bremo Creek (East Fork) to its mouth at the James River; thence east along the north bank of the James to the point of beginning, at the John H. Cocke Memorial Bridge.