| | NATIONAL LICTORIC LANDVARY | THEME: ARCHITECTURE | | | |
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| | NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK Form 10-300 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (Rev. 6-72) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE | STATE: | | | |
| | (Rev. 6-72) NATIONAL FARK SERVICE | Virginia | | | |
| | NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES | Independent City | | | |
| (NAT | TONAL TT TOTAL INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM | FOR NPS USE ONLY | | | |
| | LANDHALL I | ENTRY DATE | | | |
| | (Type all entries - complete applicable sections) | | | | |
| | 1. NAME | | | | |
| | James Semple House | | | | |
| | AND/OR HISTORIC: | | | | |
| | James Semple House | | | | |
| | 2. LOCATION | | | | |
| | STREET AND NUMBER: | | | | |
| | Francis Street: South side, between Blai | ir and Waller Streets | | | |
| | Williamsburg | 001 | | | |
| | STATE CODE COUN | | | | |
| | Virginia 51 Ir | ndependent City 830 | | | |
| | 3. CLASSIFICATION | • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • | | | |
| S | CATEGORY QWNERSHIP (Check One) | STATUS ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC | | | |
| Z | 🔲 District 🕱 Building 🔲 Public Public Acquisition: | Cccupied Yes: | | | |
| 0 | 🗋 Site 📋 Structure 🔀 Private 🗌 In Process | Unoccupied Restricted | | | |
| _ | 🗌 Object 🔲 Both 🔄 Being Consid | | | | |
| | | in progress 🕺 No | | | |
| ပ | PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | | |
| | Agricultural Government Park | Transportation Comments | | | |
| R | Commercial Industrial Private Residence Educational Military Religious | Other (Specify) | | | |
| - | Entertainment Museum Scientific | | | | |
| S | 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY | | | | |
| 2 | OWNER'S NAME: | | | | |
| | Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. Carlisle H. H | lumelsine, President. | | | |
| ш | STREET AND NUMBER: | | | | |
| ш | CITY OR TOWN: | | | | |
| S | Williamsburg 23185 | Virginia 51 | | | |
| | 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION | | | | |
| | COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: | Unty Verainia | | | |
| | Clerk of the Circuit Court, James City Cou | | | | |
| | STREET AND NUMBER: | OPT Y | | | |
| | Court Street (2 blocks south of Duke of G | GTATE CODE | | | |
| | Williamsburg | Virginia 51 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS | | | | |
| | TITLE OF SURVEY: | | | | |
| | Historic American Buildings Survey Date of SURVEY: 1938 Date of SURVEY: 1938 | State County Local | | | |
| | DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: | | | | |
| | Library of Congress | State County Local Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z | | | |
| | Library of Congress | | | | |
| | Capitol Hill | TATE: CODE | | | |
| | CITY OR TOWN: Washington | | | | |
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| 7. | DESCRIPTION | · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · | | | | | |
|----|-------------|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|-------|-----------------|
| | | | | | (Check One) | | |
| | CONDITION | 🔀 Excellent | Good 🗌 | 📋 Fair | 🔲 Deteriarated | Ruins | Unexposed |
| | CONDITION | | (Check O | ne) | | (Che | ck One) |
| | | 🕅 🕅 Alter | red | Unaltered | | Moved | 🔀 Original Site |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James Semple House is a frame house with clapboarding, having a two-storey rectangular center section with pedimented gable roof, gableend to the front, and two interior end-chimneys. The entrance is a Roman Doric porch, with dentil pediment and eaves, and a remarkable guilloche on its architrave, a feature probably suggested by <u>The Builder's</u> Companion of William Pain, published in London in 1765.

Flanking the center are one storey wings with gable roofs to the side. They too are frame, with clapboarding, containing the dining room to the east, and a large drawing room to the west. In the center section, originally, was a large salon with a fireplace at the west side. In the nineteenth century, a partition was set up to subdivide the room, forming a narrow east-west hall between the wings.

The two small bedrooms in the upper level of the center section are reached by a narrow, steep, and winding staircase, contained in the East wing of the house, concealed behind the chimney in a manner similar to that used in the drawings for the first Monticello. Indeed, authorship of the design of the Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was constructed c. 1770-1780. Jefferson's first drawing for Monticello (1768), according to Waterman, "paralells the design of the Randolph-Semple House to such a degree that there can be no doubt that they are by the same author."

The Semple House lies at the far eastern end of Williamsburg, in fact, east of the Capitol which is the eastern terminus of the Duke of Gloucester Street east-west axis. The house was acquired and restored by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 1932, after it had passed through the hands of several owners in the nineteenth century. It had been changed little, but had fallen by 1932 into some state of disrepair. The east chimney was rebuilt, as were the front porch steps. On the porch, square piers were removed and replaced with columns. The guilloche on the architrave was restored after traces of the original. A wing attached to the south of the center block, added 1806-1823, was also removed. The nineteenth century hall partition remains in place.

The Semple House, fortunately, is another of those in Williamsburg whose eighteenth century boundaries may still be followed on surviving deed records and maps. This then is the basis for the most reasonable boundary for this Landmark now.

Interestingly, a portion of Williamsburg was laid out according to a system of 5-pole measurements, the age-old measure deriving from medieval agricultural methods. A pole being approximately 5 1/2 yards, a 5-pole lot then would be about 82 1/2 feet. The maps show that the eighteenth century property lines of the James Semple House begin at a point on Francis Street 247.5 feet (15 poles) west of Waller Street, continuing east-west for 165 feet (10 poles). This is two lots, and they were never numbered. The lot

| PERIOD (Check One or More as | 16th Century | 🔀 18th Century | 20th Century |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | | |
| 📋 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century | |
| SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab | le and Known) 1770-1 | 1780 | |
| AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch | eck One or More as Appropri | ate) | |
| Abar iginal | 🔲 Educati on | Political | 📋 Urban Planning |
| Prehistoric | Engineering | Religion/Phi- | Other (Specify) |
| 📋 Historic | Industry | losophy | |
| Agriculture | Invention | Science | |
| 🔀 Architecture | Landscape | Sculpture | |
| 🗋 Art | Architecture | Social/Human- | |
| | Literature | itarian | |
| Cammunicatians | Military | Theoter | |
| Conservation | Music | Transportation | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James Semple House is an excellent example of Palladio's "Roman Country House" adapted for use as a frame townhouse. It is a distinguished and early example of the classicism which began to change the American architectural scene towards the end of the 18th century. Its beauty derives largely from its perfect proportions, enhanced by delicate classical detailing. Although there is disagreement among architectural experts, the authorship of the design of the James Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was built c. 1770-1780. Its design has a remarkable affinity to those done by Jefferson for his first Monticello in 1768.

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|] | | | Dur | g 19 | 960) | • | | | | | | | | |
| Thomas T. Waterman, The Dwellings of Colonial America (Chapel Hill 1050) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thomas T. Waterman, The Mansions of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1930). Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952). | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Ric | hard Pr | att, | A Tre | easu | iry (| of E | arly | Am | erican | Homes (| New Yo | ork, 1 | 949). | |
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| Form 10-300a (July 1969) | UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE | STATE Virginia | | |
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| | INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM | Independent City For NPS USE ONLY | | |
| (NATIONAL HISTOP | | | | |
| LANDMARKE) | (Continuation Sheet) | ENTRY NUMBER | DATE | |
| (Number all entries) | 7. Description second page | | | |

line runs back from the east-west line 264 feet, exactly 16 poles.

Colonial Williamsburg has constructed a number of small buildings on these four lots. None of them are original therefore. A small kitchen building a few feet to the east of the James Semple House is the only other original building on the site.

The house is still owned by the Colonial Williamsburg corporation and is used as a residence for one of its executive employees. It is well maintained, but not open to the public. The boundary line set by Colonial Williamsburg around the property is co-extensive with the historical justification just delivered.

