

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0676896

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 26 1979

DATE ENTERED

MAY 24 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Stone House
(Zachariah Johnston House)

VLR Listed: 5/16/1978

NRHP Listed: 5/24/1979

AND/OR COMMON

Stone House (Preferred)

2 LOCATION

300' W of Lexington City limits; .2 miles S of State Route 687;
STREET & NUMBER (Ross Road); .3 miles SW of intersection of Woods Creek and Ross Road.

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

X VICINITY OF

Sixth (M. Caldwell Butler)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Rockbridge

CODE

163

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Matthew W. Paxton, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

Ross Road

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

VICINITY OF

STATE
Virginia 24450

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rockbridge County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE
Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1957, 1965

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE
D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
☒ EXCELLENT	☐ DETERIORATED	☒ UNALTERED	☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ GOOD	☐ RUINS	☐ ALTERED	☐ MOVED DATE _____
☐ FAIR	☐ UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on a small rise amid the rolling hills of Rockbridge County, the Stone House is a two-and-one-half-story, gable-roof dwelling built in 1797 for Zachariah Johnston. The central-hall-plan structure is built of irregularly coursed, quarried limestone with wooden detailing throughout.

The main (east) facade consists of five bays and contains a rough-hewn, four-columned portico with pediment. The portico shelters a simply framed, transom-lit doorway--the main entry to the house. The surrounding fenestration consists of 9/6 hung sash contained within simple architrave window frames, capped by plain stone jack arches. Sophistication in detail is provided by a wood modillion cornice found on the east and west facades. The corners of both facades are framed by stone quoins.

The rear (west) facade is similar to the front facade, with the exception of the central bay. The bay contains an asymmetrically placed second-floor window and first-floor rear entrance, both capped by jack arches.

The north facade contains twin exterior end chimneys. A full attic window is positioned between the chimneys. A portico-covered side entry is located on the north-west corner of the facade.

The two-bay south facade contains a stone interior end chimney, original to the house. A noteworthy feature below the chimney is a stone on the attic story carved with the date "1797"; the name of the first owner, Zachariah Johnston; and the name of the builder, John Spear. An enclosed passageway, of modern construction, leads to a one-story stone kitchen, original to the house.

The interior contains a double-pile, central-hall plan still retained throughout the house. The hall includes an open-string stair with a simply molded newel and plain balusters. Projecting from the hall are the main rooms, which preserve their simply finished woodwork and original fireplaces. The mantels display their original fluting and carved punch-work ornamentation.

The kitchen has been converted into the family dining room and retains its massive hearth and exterior wood trim.

RCC

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries have been drawn to include the house and a major portion of the approach to it. The property is bounded on the east by Woods Creek, on the west by a line roughly paralleling the creek and on the north and south by lines running from the west line to the creek -- all encompassing the aforementioned features.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
☐ 1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
☒ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☒ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1797

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the outskirts of Lexington in Rockbridge County, the Zachariah Johnston House is a handsome and well-preserved example of early stone architecture in the Shenandoah Valley. Built for politically successful Zachariah Johnston in 1797, the house reflects the prosperity of its first owner and talents of its builder, John Spear.

The land on which the house stands was once part of the Benjamin Borden tract of 1739 which consisted of 92,100 acres, "on the north-southeast branches of the James River between the Blue Ridge and the North Mountain". It was later acquired by Joseph Lapsley, Sr., in 1742 and sold by his heirs to Zachariah Johnston in 1795.

Born in Augusta County in 1742, Johnston was the son of William Johnston, a pioneer settler of the Valley. He was raised in the Presbyterian religion by his Scotch-Irish parents, who had left Northern Ireland seeking religious freedom. Johnston's vocation was farming, but he served as an officer in the Revolution and was a member of the Virginia convention to ratify the Federal Constitution. A presidential elector in 1789, Johnston cast his vote for General Washington.

Johnston served as a member of the House of Delegates, representing Augusta County for fourteen years and Rockbridge County for one term. His finest hour as a legislator came in 1785, when as chairman of the standing committee on religion, he spoke strongly for the bill to establish freedom of religion. The bill was passed on December 17, 1785. Johnston moved to Rockbridge County in 1790 and died there in 1800.

Architecturally, the house is notable as an example of formal house design rendered in the traditional stone construction. Although little is known of the builder, John Spear, the finely crafted walls are evidence of his skill as a master mason. The Johnston family homestead in Augusta County was built of stone in the 1730's, and it was to this material that Johnston turned when he had his new home erected in Rockbridge County. The pride of the new owner and builder may be surmised from the signed stone found on the south facade, bearing their names and the date of completion, 1797. This practice is rare in Valley stone houses. Noteworthy features of the interior are the simple wainscoting found throughout the house and the carved punch-work ornamentation executed on the mantels.

The Stone House has remained in the Johnston family and is presently owned by descendant Matthew W. Paxton, Jr.

VDS/RCC

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lyle, Royster, Jr. and Pamela Hemenway Simpson. Architecture of Historic Lexington.
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977.
Paxton, Matthew W. "Zachariah Johnston of Augusta and Rockbridge and His Time." Rock-
bridge Historical Society, Vol. 5, Lexington, Va, 1961.
Rockbridge County Deed Books B, C, Z.
Land Tax Books 1782-1850; 1876.
Will Books 1, 2. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 10 acres

E 1 7 6 3 5 5 7 0 4 1 8 1 7 4 0

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,7 6,3,5 6,4,0 4,1,8,1 9,9,0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 1,7 6,3,5 7,9,0 4,1,8,1 8,6,0

B 1,7 6,3,5 7,8,0 4,1,8,1 9,7,0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 1,7 6,3,5 7,0,0 4,1,8,1 6,7,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The acreage comprising the Stone House nomination is bounded by a line beginning at a point approximately 300' S of State Route 687; thence extending E approximately 500' to Woods Creek; then following the natural boundary of Woods Creek S for a distance of about 1100'; thence turning NW approximately 500' and continuing N for 1000' to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

April 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE MAY 16 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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Zachariah Johnston House, Rockbridge County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6, 9 PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1967, 1968, 1978 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Waddell, Joseph A. Annals of Augusta County, Virginia 1726-1871. Bridgewater, Va. 1958.
Wilson, Howard McKnight. The Tinkling Spring, Headwater of Freedom. Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1954.

USGS 7.5 Quadrangle (Scale: 1:24,000)
Lexington, Virginia 1967

Stone House, Rockbridge County, Virginia

UTM References:

E	A 17/635640/4181990	A	17/635780/4181970
B	17/635790/4181860	B	17/635700/4181670
D	17/635570/4181740		

U/M - Clockwise

