OME NO. 1024-0018 EXP. 12/31/84

**National Park Service** 

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

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Type all entries	—complete app	icable se	ctions					
1. Nam	e							
historic	Robert Sitli	ngton Ho	ouse					
and/or common	Old Stone Ho	ıse (Pı	referred	)				
2. Loca	ation							
street & number	Route 664	4				N/	∕ <u>A</u> not for publ	ication
city, town	Millboro	Springs	<u> </u>	icinity of	Congressional distr	ist		
state	Virginia	code	51	county	Bath		code	017
3. Clas	sificatio	n						
Category  — district —X building(s) — structure — site — object	Ownership public both Public Acquisi in process being consi		Accessib	cupied in progress lle	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainmen government industrial military	nt	museun park X private religiou scientifi transpo	residence s ic
4. Own	er of Pr	oper	tv					
		- K	<u>- y</u>					
name F	Robert C. Hill	ton						
street & number	218 Deer	Park Dr	ive					
city, town	Nashville	<u> </u>	<u>N/A</u> v	icinity of	sta	ate	Tennessee	37205
5. Loca	ation of	Lega	I Des	cripti	on			
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Bat	th County	Courthou	se			
street & number	N/A							
city, town		War	m Spring	;s	sta	ate	Virginia	
6. Repr	esentat	ion i	n Exi	sting	Surveys			
A1A1	nia Historic ssion Survey	Landmar	ks .	has this pro	operty been determine	ed eli	gible? y	es <u>X</u> no
date 1979					federal _X_	_ state	e county	local
depositòry for su	rvey records		a Histor vernor St		rks Commission			
city, town		Richmon	ıd		st	ate	Virginia	23219

#### Description Condition Check one Check one \_ excellent deteriorated unaitered X original site \_ good ruins \_X\_ altered \_ moved X\_ fair unexposed

# Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance.

# SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Robert Sitlington House is a late-eighteenth-century stone house located at the termination of Virginia Secondary Route 664, approximately one third of a mile from its intersection with State Route 42, in the Cowpasture River Valley of southeastern Bath County, Virginia. It is a two-story stone dwelling situated upon a hill overlooking a bend in the Cowpasture River. Cleared farmland stretches from the house to the Cowpasture River. Several mature trees surround the house and huge boxwood at the front (east) screen the house from the road. Consisting mostly of river bottomland, the 125-acre farm is almost completely surrounded by the Allegheny Mountains.

# ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The building is a two-story stone dwelling situated upon a half basement. Believed to have been built in the 1790s, it is a simple rectangular structure with a three-bay facade (east) sheltered by a double-story frame gallery. Added in the late nineteenth century, the gallery features chamfered wood posts and a simple balustrade. The house is constructed of coursed fieldstone and mortar consisting of local clay and animal hair. According to local residents, the stone is not native to the area, but is more typical of stone found in the Shenandoah Valley to the east. The stone could possibly have been transported over the Allegheny Mountains to the house site at considerable expense and trouble. Understandably, this inconvenience explains the scarcity of stone dwellings in Bath County. The Robert Sitlington House is believed to be the oldest known stone house in the county, and it is one of the few examples of stone architecture of any period in the area.

Not only is the stone construction of the house atypical of late-eighteenth-century architecture in Bath County, but the original three-room plan with its central passage and corner fireplaces is more reminiscent of similar farmhouses of the period in the well-settled Shenandoah Valley to the east. The architectural elements and general character of the Robert Sitlington House seem to have been derived from the Germanic-influenced architectural traditions of the Shenandoah Valley. The Allegheny Mountains served as an effective cultural barrier to the spread of such architectural traditions to Bath County.

The house is balanced by an interior end brick chimney at each gable end. The corbelcapped brick chimneys date from the Victorian era and probably replaced the original stone chimneys. A single-story stone ell was built to the rear (west) probably during the early nineteenth century. It served as a service wing with a cooking fireplace in the basement. The interior end stone chimney of the rear ell is original. Fenestration throughout the house consists of late-nineteenth-century 2/2 hung-sash windows which replaced the original 6/6 hung-sash windows. Each window is framed in plain trim. One rear window has a crude stone jack arch above it. A single-story frame porch with a shed roof extends along the south and west sides of the rear ell. Both the porch and the standing seam metal roofing were added in the late nineteenth century.

The central front (east) entrance leads into a central passage which extends the width of the house. A smaller hall, parallel to the front facade, extends to the south and leads to an enclosed dog-leg stair with winders situated in the southeast corner of the building. The stair runs from the basement to the attic. A large room, featuring a fireplace with a segmental stone arch, is located south of the central passage. It served as the main room in the house. Two small equal-sized rooms, each with a corner stone fireplace, are located

# 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C  archeology-prehistoric agriculture X_ architecture art commerce communications		g landscape architectu law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1790s	Builder/Architect	N/A	

# Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robert Sitlington House is one of the oldest surviving structures in Bath County, Virginia. Believed to have been erected in the 1790s, the house is supposedly the oldest ston dwelling in an area which has few examples of stone architecture. The building material and original floor plan are more representative of the Germanic-influenced eighteenth-century houses of the Shenandoah Valley. Separated from Bath County by a range of the Allegheny Mountains, the Shenandoah Valley was settled earlier in the eighteenth century than Bath County. The mountains served as a real physical and cultural barrier between the established settlements in the east and the frontier settlement of Bath County. The Robert Sitlington House represents a transmontane architectural expression of the more sophisticated farmhouses in the Shenandoah Valley. Its builder, Robert Sitlington, was a prominent and wealthy citizen of Bath County who directed his influence to help organize the county in 1790. In a conscious effort to imitate the architecture of the well-established settlements to the east, Robert Sitlington attempted to transport the more refined architectural traditions of the east to his mountainous home on the Cowpasture River.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Because of its unusual stone construction and its association with an early prominent county family, The Robert Sitlington House, commonly referred to as the "old stone house", is regarded as a landmark in the Cowpasture River Valley of Bath County, Virginia.

Robert Sitlington (1749-1833), a native of Bath County, was a prominent gentleman farmer whose father, John Sitlington, had emigrated from Ireland to nearby Wallawhatoola on the Cowpasture River in 1774. Robert Sitlington acquired a 385-acre tract of rich bottomland on the Cowpasture River in 1791. Probably soon thereafter, he built the present stone house on top of a hill overlooking the river. The house was more than likely built before 1797, the year in which his father died. In his will, John Sitlington leaves only one slave and no land to his only son, while directing that his home plantation be given to his daughter. Perhaps because his son, Robert, already owned a house and property by 1797, he did not feel the need to further provide for his son's inheritance.

Robert Sitlington served in the Virginia Militia during the American Revolution, participating in the Battle of Guilford Court House in 1780. He applied for a pension as a Revolutionary War veteran as late as 1833. Serving as a justice of Bath County, Robert Sitlington became a prominent citizen of the county. At the time of his death in 1833, he owned at least two plantations and several slaves. 5.

Thomas Sitlington (1792-1881) inherited his father's home plantation in 1833. He served in the Virginia legislature as a delegate from Bath County and became a well known public figure in the area. At his death in 1881, his entire estate was sold out of the Sitlington Family ownership.

The "old stone house" was acquired by Robert V. Porter in 1923.6 He removed the original interior woodwork and remodeled the house according to the fashionable taste of the 1920s.

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**United States Department of the Interior**National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Robert Sitlington House, Bath County Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7, 8, 10

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# Page 1, 1, 1

# 7. DESCRIPTION

north of the central passage. A door in the northwest corner room leads to the rear ell room which has a small stone fireplace located at its west wall. The entire interior woodwork was replaced in the 1920s and the first-floor plan was somewhat altered with the addition of the front stair hall.Basically, the original floor plan was retained. The original mantels were removed and window and door trimwere replaced with dark-stained wood trim with simple bull's-eye cornerblocks. Sliding five-panel doors were added leading into the main room from the hall. Altogether, the interior is representative of the popular bungalow of the 1920s. The second-floor plan basically follows the first-floor plan. Hewn rafters are seen in the attic secured at the apex by locust pegs. Hewn collar beams are mortised into the rafters. The basement has whitewashed stone walls with a hewn summerbeam extending between the gable ends of the house.

The Robert Sitlington House remains in a good state of preservation. It has survived without major exterior alterations and additions. Although not original, the interior woodwork dating from the 1920s is a good example of the architectural taste of that period. The house is presently vacant. Current restoration plans include the preservation of both the exterior and interior of the house with few modifications.

# 8. SIGNIFICANCE

### Footnotes

James Robert Sitlington Sterrett, "The Sitlington History," 1902-1912, Amherst, Mass. (copy in possession of Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission)

<sup>2</sup> Bath County <u>Deed Books</u> - Deed Book I, p.38.

Bath County Will Books - Will Book I, p.95.

Sterrett, "The Sitlington History."

5 Bath County Will Books - Will Book 4, p.186.

Bath County <u>Deed Books</u> - Deed Book 33, p.367.

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

# Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the Robert Sitlington House have been drawn to provide a sufficient amount of open space to protect the rural setting of the original homestead. The boundaries coincide with the modern 125-acre tract on which the house is situated. Furthermore, the boundaries along the Cowpasture River are those of the original eighteenth-century tract.

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10. Ged	ograp	hical Data	a .		
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name/title		a Historic Landm			
organization	Virginia	Historic Land	narks Commissio	n date	November 1982
street & number	221 Gove	ernor Street		telephon	ne (804) 786-3143
city or town	Richmon	1		state ·	.Virginia 23219
12. Sta	te His	storic Pre	servatio	offi	icer Certification
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