

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Lott Cary Birth Site (preferred)

AND/OR COMMON

Lott Cary House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Route 602

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

First (Paul S. Tribble, Jr.)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Charles City

CODE

036

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. James L. Jones

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1, Box 212

CITY, TOWN

Providence Forge

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23140

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Charles City Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

STATE

Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE

1979, 1980

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lott Cary house, Charles City County, has evolved to its present form through a considerable amount of remodeling. Little original fabric remains, although its late 18th-century construction date is evidenced by its plan type and the east elevation chimney.

The original section of the Lott Cary house is a 1½-story structure which has been enlarged by one-story additions at the north and east elevations. The facade has three bays with the entrance in the outer bay. None of the openings preserves any early fabric. With the exception of the upper gable of the west elevation and the exposed east gable, the exterior of the original portion and all of the east addition have been sheathed with asbestos shingles. The simple box cornice probably follows the form of the original. The north addition is covered by tar paper. Located at the east elevation, the exterior end chimney is an important detail, as the handsome corbeled chimney cap, tiled weatherings, rectangular stack and Flemish bond are late 18th-century vernacular features.

In plan the Lott Cary house began as a hall-parlor structure, one of the basic plan types of 18th-century Tidewater vernacular structures. The interior spatial organization has been altered considerably from the original. The simple, worn architrave around the opening between the hall and parlor appears to be original, probably the only piece of interior trim that can make that claim.

The structure is sited in a field in the midst of a farm. Small, 20th-century animal pens are the only dependencies associated with the house.

MEH

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The four acres which are contained within the bounds of the Lott Cary Birth Site nomination include the house and dependencies.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES late 18th century BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For more than a century and a half the black community of Charles City County has recognized this typical late 18th-century vernacular dwelling as the birthplace of Lott Cary, the first black American missionary to Africa and one of the founding fathers of Liberia. At the time of Cary's birth in 1780 the house served as the plantation residence of Cary's master John Bowry. That fact suggests that Cary more likely was born in slave quarters adjoining the house rather than in the Bowry residence itself. However, no document exists to support such an inference and no structure resembling late 18th-century slave quarters remains on the property. What does survive is a strong local oral tradition that continues to identify the house as Cary's birthplace. As the only visible remnant of the plantation on which Cary was born and lived, the house and its simple rural setting have become the major focal point of local sentiment toward Cary and his remarkable achievements. Equally significant is the site's representation of the important contribution of black Virginians to the Commonwealth in the early national period.

Born a slave in Charles City County during the American Revolution, Lott Cary apparently lived on John Bowry's plantation until 1804 when his master hired him out to the merchant-owner of a Shockoe Valley tobacco warehouse in Richmond. Cary's removal to Richmond was auspicious, for slavery in this urban context offered him a much wider field for personal and economic initiative than he had known in the Virginia countryside. Under the leadership of Baptist preacher John Courtney, Cary publically declared himself a Christian in 1807, was baptized, and became a member of the white First Baptist Church of Richmond. Soon after his conversion, Cary taught himself to read and write by memorizing verses of the New Testament. Promotion to supervisor of tobacco hands in the warehouse accompanied his spiritual awakening. For his speed and accuracy in dispatching hogsheads of tobacco from Richmond, Cary was awarded frequent bonuses as well as the privilege of selling waste tobacco for his own profit. Accumulating \$850, Cary used this savings to purchase freedom for himself and for his children in 1813. (His wife had died some time before). That same year, after long and diligent study, Cary finally qualified for the Baptist ministry.

As an ordained Baptist minister, Cary became interested in the missionary efforts both of the African Missionary Society, which he and a colleague named Collin Teague helped form in Richmond in 1815, and of the American Colonization Society, which succeeded in planting a small colony of free blacks on the west coast of Africa in 1819. With support from the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, Cary, Teague and a small band of Virginia free blacks sailed from Norfolk for the Liberian coast in 1821. Prior to his departure Cary had purchased a "small place" in eastern Henrico County and enjoyed an income of \$700 a year. When asked why he would leave a community in which he was respected and led a comfortable life, he replied: "I am an African, and in this country, however meritorious my conduct, and respectable my character, I cannot receive the credit due to either. I wish to go to a country where I shall be estimated by my merits, not by my complexion; and I feel bound to labor for my suffering race."

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bowman, Richard. Chairman of Charles City County Board of Supervisors. Traced source of oral tradition identifying the house as Lott Cary's birthplace in interview, Fall 1979. Charles City County Deed Books 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17.  
Ended Chancery Cases File 12, Roane v. Gatewood, 1886.  
Land Tax Books 1796-1860.  
Personal Property Tax Books 1782-1820.  
Will Book 3. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Providence Forge, Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,8 31,57,3,0 4,13,93,2,0

B                  

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point on E side of State Route 602, 2200' E of Courthouse Creek, about 1 mi. SW of Adkins Store; thence extending 450' SSE; thence extending 450' SSW to said side of said route; thence extending 450' NNW along said side of route; 450' NE to place of origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

April 1980

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

221 Governor Street

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Richmond

Virginia 23219

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

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 20 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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

Lott Cary Birth Site, Charles City County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 8 & 9 PAGE 1

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

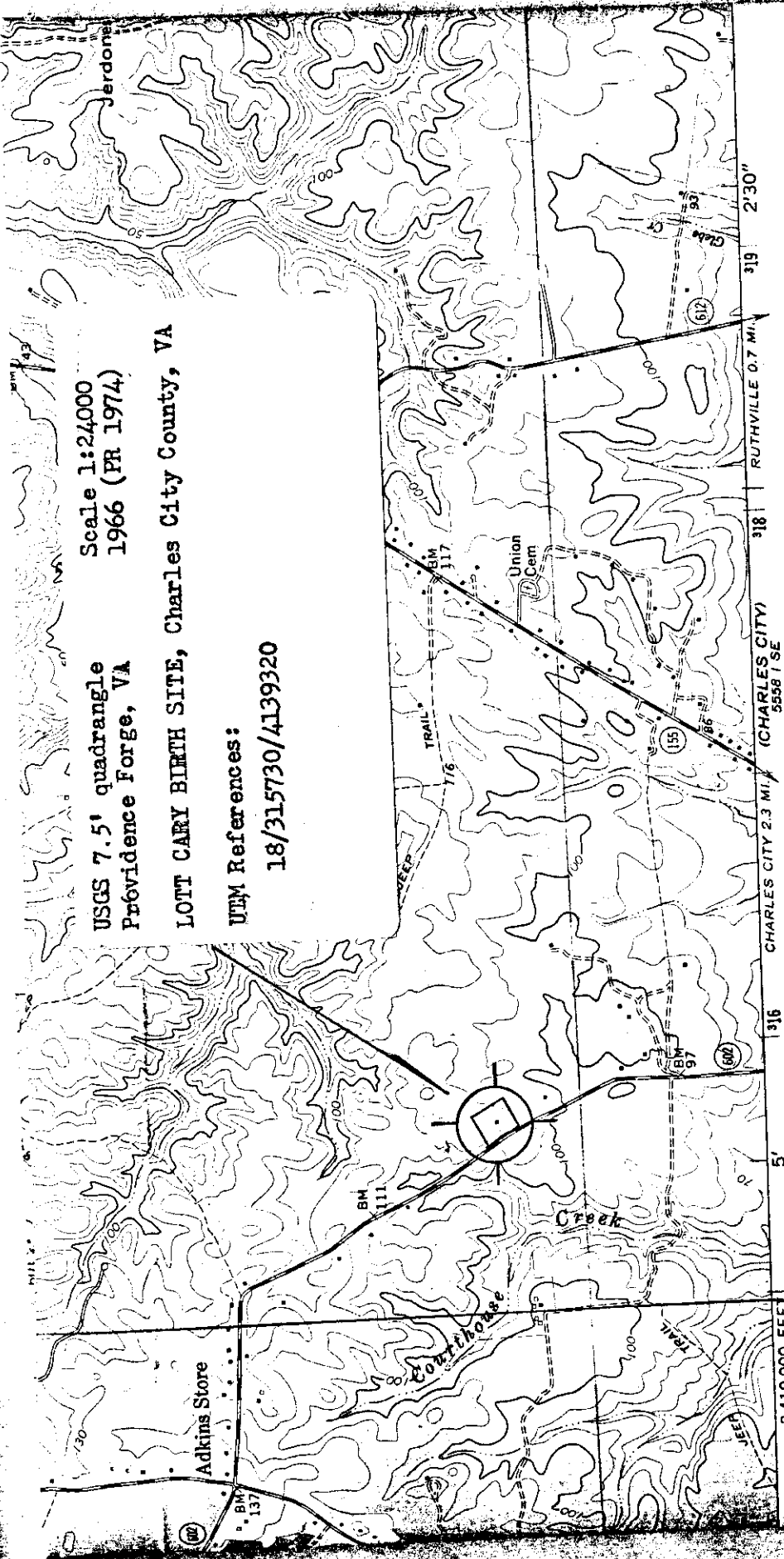
Cary began his missionary work by founding the Providence Baptist Church of Monrovia upon his arrival. He also brought the Christian message to Africa by establishing native schools in the interior. Throughout his ministry Cary worked equally hard to make the struggling colony of Liberia a going concern. In 1822 he bravely defended the exposed settlement on Cape Montserado against an attack by 1500 native tribesmen who were threatening to exterminate the colony. The self-educated minister also served as the colony's principal physician, there being no other medical assistance available. Cary for a time lost confidence in the management of the American Colonization Society, and vigorously opposed its policy of withholding rations from colonists who challenged its authority. However, he later willingly served as the Society's vice agent and acting governor in Monrovia, and there is little question he was instrumental in preserving the small colony intact through the difficult years of early settlement. Lott Cary died tragically in a gunpowder explosion in 1829, unaware that he had succeeded the late Jehudi Ashmun as governor of the the colony. Like his birth site in Charles City County, the town of Careysburg on the outskirts of Monrovia recalls his lasting mark both on Liberia and on the Baptist Church in Africa.

The Lott Cary Birth Site is located approximately 5 miles west of the Charles City County courthouse. From the Confederation period to the Jacksonian era, the house and the land on which it stands belonged to John Bowry. A modest home for a planter holding 600 acres and as many as a dozen slaves, the house appears in the 1820 tax books valued at \$100. On Bowry's death the building and a parcel of 64 $\frac{1}{4}$  acres descended to his daughter Ann. During the next two decades it served first as the residence of Edmund Waddill and then as the country seat of John Bowry's son, Henry Bowry. When Henry died the house along with 371 acres passed into the hands of a Chesterfield County family named Clay. A plat of the site, produced as evidence in a boundary dispute before the Chancery Court in 1886, clearly indicates the small dwelling house erected by John Bowry more than a hundred years before. This simple, unembellished structure probably served as an overseer's house from the 1870s until the family of the present owner acquired it in 1902.

MTP/RAC

### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Gurley, Ralph Randolph. Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Washington, 1835.  
Henrico County Deed Book 15 (1817).  
Personal Property Tax Books 1813-1821.  
Loth, Calder. "Notes on the Evolution of Brickwork From the Seventeenth Century to the Late Nineteenth Century." APT Bulletin. No. 2, 6 (1974): 82-120.  
Russell, John H.. The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1865. Baltimore, 1913.  
Taylor, James Barnett. Biography of Elder Lott Cary, Late Missionary to Africa. Baltimore, 1837.  
White, Blanche Sydnor, compiler. First Baptist Church, Richmond, 1780-1955. Richmond, 1955.



QUADRA

Scale 1:24000  
1966 (PR 1974)

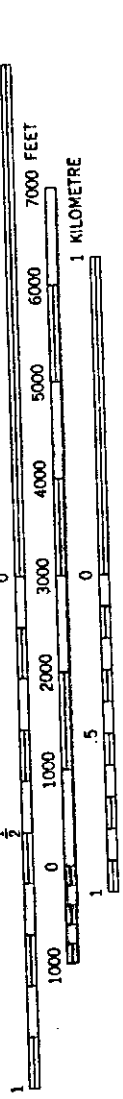
USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Prvidence Forge, VA

LOTT CARY BIRTH SITE, Charles City County, VA

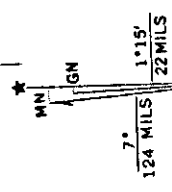
UTM References:

18/315730/4139320

SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST