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NRHP 3/16/16

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

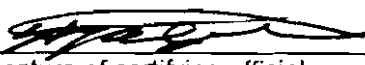
historic name Nance-Major House and Store  
other names/site number VDHR File # 018-0078

#### 2. Location

street & number 10811 Courthouse Road Not for publication N/A  
city or town Charles City vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county Charles City County code 036 zip code 23230

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date 6/26/16  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

NPS Form 10-900

(Rev. 10-90)

**U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

OMB No. 1024-4018

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, VA**

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, VA

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>buildings</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>sites</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>structures</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>objects</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Total</u>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Single dwelling; residence</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub: <u>Department store; general store</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; smokehouse</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	Sub: <u>Storage; granary</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	Sub: <u>Animal facility; chicken coop</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; garage</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; storage shed</u>

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Single dwelling; residence</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub: <u>Department store; vacant</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; storage</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	Sub: <u>Storage; barn</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	Sub: <u>Animal facility; storage</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; garage</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Secondary structure; storage shed</u>

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

- MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY: Greek Revival (dwelling)
- OTHER: Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular (store)

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

- Foundation BRICK/CONCRETE
- Roof METAL: Tin
- Walls WOOD
- Other Porches: wood
- Chimneys: brick

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions) Social History, Commerce; Architecture

**Period of Significance** 1869-1956

**Significant Dates** 1869- The Nance-Major House is built by Benjamin Albert Nance  
1872- The Nance-Major Store is built by Julia Nance-Major and Edward Major

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** Benjamin Albert Nance; Edward and Julia Nance-Major

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, VA

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Library of Virginia; Charles City County Courthouse

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 7.657 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	316465	4135019	C	18	316343	4134780
B	18	316506	4135004	D	18	316145	4134729
				E	18	316104	4134754

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Nancy W. Kraus

Organization: First & Main, LLC

date March 28, 2006

street & number: 6224 New Harvard Lane

telephone (804) 304-6053

city or town Glen Allen

state VA zip code 23059

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Jim Daniels

street & number 11900 Chester Village Drive telephone (804)748-2240

city or town Chester, VA zip code 23831

=====  
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

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**Summary Description**

The Nance-Major House and Store complex is located on an elliptical-shaped lot defined by Route 5 to the north and Route 664, also called Courthouse Road, to the south. The house and store face south across Courthouse Road toward the circa 1750 Charles City Courthouse. Both the house and store are situated on a parcel of land long associated with the Charles City Courthouse and the Courthouse Tract, among the earliest politically significant sites in the history of the Commonwealth. The store may be constructed on the site of a tavern that operated near the courthouse before the Revolutionary War.

The circa 1872 Nance-Major Store is a three-bay, gable-front frame building, supported by a brick pier foundation. The store is two stories high. A one-story, shed-roofed wing extends the full length of the east elevation. The post-and-beam frame is sheathed with painted weatherboard on the south and east elevations. The north and west walls are covered with vertical board siding. The weatherboard at the first story of the facade is parged with cream-colored stucco. The most prominent feature of the facade is the full-width, hip-roofed porch. The main block displays a moderately steep gable roof, which is covered with standing-seam metal. One interior brick chimney extends above the ridgeline. There is an exterior brick chimney on the north wall. The porch is supported by substantial square, chamfered columns. The framing and tongue-and-groove-style wood ceiling of the porch roof are exposed.

The Nance-Major House is L-shaped, composed of two principal rectangular blocks. The original block, circa 1869, is a two-and-one-half story, post-and-beam-frame dwelling covered with painted horizontal weatherboard. The main block exhibits a steeply-pitched, front-gabled roof. Attached to the northeast corner of the original block is a late nineteenth-century, two-story, single-pile balloon-frame wing, also with gable roof. The facade is dominated by a two-story, three-bay, full-width porch. A one-story, one-bay wide porch with hipped roof, covered with standing seam metal, shelters a secondary entrance on the facade of the east wing. Four early-to-late-twentieth-century additions are attached at the north elevation.

Four additional historic buildings are situated to the north and east, behind the house and store. The contributing buildings include a smokehouse, a grain barn, a tool shed, and a garage. One non-contributing metal storage building is also located on the parcel. The Nance-Major House and Store complex retains a high degree of historic fabric and architectural integrity.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 2

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**Site Description**

The Nance-Major House and Store complex occupies a 7.7 acre lot defined by Route 5 to the north, Route 644, also called Courthouse Road, to the south, Route 155 to the east, and Route 643 to the west. The site is level and grassy, dotted with a variety of mature trees that tower above the buildings. The lush vegetation contributes to the pastoral character of the complex which appears untouched by modern development. From the porch of the store, the view across the road to the courthouse is unobstructed, but the privacy of the house is protected by a dense stand of enormous boxwoods. The boxwoods are laid out in a "U"-shaped configuration around the front of the house, creating a peaceful and private front yard.

The Nance-Major property faces the Charles City County Courthouse complex. In addition to several modern municipal buildings, the county-owned acreage preserves a circa 1750 brick courthouse, a circa 1901 clerk's office, and a monument erected in 1900 to commemorate the Confederate soldiers of Charles City County. The historic buildings on the county-owned property and the historic buildings on the Nance-Major property were once part of the Courthouse Tract. This historic tract, the political and geographic center of Charles City County in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was one of the most important rural crossroads in colonial Virginia.

**Architectural Description**

**Nance-Major House**

The Nance-Major House is L-shaped, composed of two principal rectangular blocks. The original block, circa 1869, is a two-and-one-half story, post-and-beam-frame dwelling. The main block is approximately twenty-five feet by forty feet in plan. It is covered with a steeply-pitched front-gabled roof. Attached to the northeast corner of the original block is a late-nineteenth-century, two-story, single-pile balloon-frame wing. The wing is approximately fifteen feet by twenty feet in plan. The east wing also exhibits a steeply-pitched gable roof. The exterior building fabric conveys a pleasantly unified appearance: white painted weatherboard; standing-seam metal roofing; six-over-six-light, double-hung wood windows; and operable, louvered wood shutters. The facade is dominated by a two-story, three-bay, full-width porch. Porch details include four evenly spaced square columns at each level; railing with rectangular pickets and molded cap; and a low-pitched, hipped roof with standing seam metal sheathing. Decorative scroll-sawn trim adorns the porch and side eaves and the front gable. The front entrance has a four-panel, wood door; narrow flanking sidelights, each with a recessed wood panel at the bottom and four lights above; and a two-light transom. There is a secondary entrance on the façade of the east wing. The entrance is sheltered by a one-story, one-bay wide porch. The porch has a hipped roof that is covered with standing-seam metal.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 3

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The north elevation has three interconnected additions at ground level. Early in the twentieth-century, the space between the dwelling and the one-story detached kitchen to the west was filled in with a small addition to form a block at the northwest rear corner of the house. A rectangular-shaped, shed-roofed screened porch extends across the balance of the north elevation. The gable roof of the rear L of the main body of the house has been slightly extended to shelter a small, second-story bathroom addition, approximately six feet square.

On the interior, the dwelling features a side-hall plan. The main block of the original dwelling has a relatively narrow stair hall and two well proportioned formal rooms, a parlor and a dining room. The passage into the parlor is in front of the stair, just inside and to the left of the primary entrance. Access to the dining room was originally possible only through a door at the back of the stair hall. Today it is possible to pass between the formal rooms through a broad cased opening that was cut into the partition wall between the formal rooms in the middle of the twentieth-century. The dining room features handsomely crafted heart-pine wainscoting with recessed wood panels and a molded chair rail. Both the living and dining rooms have plain two-part crown molding. There is a fireplace in each formal room. The wood mantels have fluted pilasters adorned with carved sunburst motifs, beaded bases and capitals, and two-inch thick shelves. The mantelpiece in the dining room has a tall, mirrored over-mantel that matches the design of the lower mantel. Both mantels were constructed in the middle of the twentieth century. Doors at the first and second floors are four-paneled, with broad, shouldered surrounds. Most of the doors throughout the dwelling retain functional iron rim-locks and brown porcelain knobs.

A spacious bedroom is located in the east wing on the first floor. The bedroom has a plain, Federal-style mantel of heart pine with natural finish. A kitchen, rear stair, and bathroom are located behind the dining room within the complex of twentieth-century additions. From the front entrance hall, the turned stair ascends to the second and third floors. There is a landing at the second floor that extends from the front to the back of the dwelling, separating a pair of large bedrooms. A single third-floor bedroom has been carved from former attic space; the ceiling follows the roofline. Doors on the third story are constructed of beaded boards. Interior finishes include plaster walls and ceilings, random-width heart-pine flooring, beaded base molding, and shouldered door and window surrounds.

**Nance-Major Store**

The circa 1872 Nance-Major Store is a two-story, gable-front frame building, supported by a brick pier foundation. The store is rectangular, with a one-story, shed-roofed wing that extends the length of the east elevation. The post-and-beam frame is sheathed with painted weatherboard on the



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

south and east elevations. The weatherboard at the first story of the facade is stuccoed. The main block

Section 7 Page 4

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displays a moderately steep gable roof covered with standing seam metal. One interior brick chimney extends above the ridgeline. A one-story porch with hipped roof spans the width of the facade. The porch is supported by substantial square, chamfered columns. The framing and tongue-and-groove-style wood ceiling of the porch roof are exposed. The store's central bay features a slightly recessed, double-leaf, door built of vertical boards. The doors are attached on the inside by iron strap-hinges. A cast-iron handle with thumb-latch is on the left leaf of the door. The central bay is flanked by two large bays, each filled with a pair of one-over-one-light, double-hung wood windows.

The north and west elevation walls exhibit vertical wood siding. An exterior brick chimney is located slightly off-center on the west elevation. The shed roof of the lean-to wing along the east wall is sheathed with standing-seam metal. The balance of the fenestration consists of six-over-six, double-hung wood windows. There are two styles of wood shutters on the store. Four of the ten painted shutters are constructed of boards cut on the diagonal. The remaining six shutters are composed of vertical boards, held together on the back with batten boards.

Inside the front entrance, the interior space and appointments are well preserved. The ceilings, more than ten feet in height, are supported by heavy timbers and T-shaped chamfered columns. Ceilings are covered with beaded boards with clear finish. Floors are constructed of eight-and-ten-inch-wide yellow pine planks. The walls are finished with brightly painted tongue-and-groove wood paneling. The walls are lined with open-back wooden shelves. Most of the shelves are covered with merchandise that was for sale in 1963 when the store closed. Although the stovepipe is detached, a cast-iron, pot-bellied stove still sits near the middle of the first floor space. An office, approximately twelve feet square, is located in the northwest corner of the store. The office once served as the post office.

A sliding, board-and-batten door is suspended on an iron railing along the east wall. On the other side of the opening is the long, narrow wing that was used for storage. The wing is characterized by low, sloped ceilings. The walls and ceilings are covered with rough-finished vertical boards. A single board-and-batten egress door is located at each end of the wing. The door at the north end is sheltered by a shed-roofed porch, sheathed with copper.

Exterior wooden steps positioned along the west wall of the store access a two-room apartment above the store. The apartment has two large, nearly square rooms and a long, narrow storage space that extends along the east wall. One of the large rooms has a sanded plaster finish. A fireplace with a simple wood mantel is located on the north wall of the apartment.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia

Section 7 Page 5

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### Five Secondary Buildings

Five secondary buildings are situated to the north and east of the house and store. These buildings, accessed by a curved gravel driveway off Route 664, form a semi-circle to the rear of the main buildings.

(1) The **smokehouse**, circa 1869, is one story, approximately 14 feet by 18 feet in plan. The building has a steeply pitched gable roof covered with cedar shakes and a post and beam frame sheathed with painted weatherboard siding. The smokehouse has on the south elevation a single-leaf door constructed of vertical boards. **Contributing**

(2) The one-and-one-half-story **grain barn**, circa 1869, features heavy timber framing, vertical board siding, and a moderately-pitched gable roof with deep overhanging eaves and standing seam metal covering. The north end of the barn is much deteriorated with rot and termite damage. The original foundation has been partially replaced by concrete blocks. An open-bay run-in for horses, constructed in 2006, is located at the north end of the barn. **Contributing**

(3) A one-story, five-bay **tool shed** constructed early in the twentieth-century is distinguished by a rear-sloping shed roof with exposed rafter ends and standing seam metal sheathing. The frame building is covered with vertical board siding. The building retains its original wood, six-light casement windows and four-panel, wood doors. **Contributing**

(4) The one-and-one-half story **garage**, which dates to the middle of the twentieth-century, is constructed of concrete block at the first story and wood frame and weatherboard at the upper story. The gable roof is steeply pitched in the front, with a full dormer across the back. There are three pedimented dormer windows on the façade. The garage bays are open on the facade, sheltered by a deep over-hanging eaves supported by square wood columns. The garage has four, six-light wood casement windows on the north elevation and six-over-six double-hung wood windows at the second story. **Contributing**

(5) A one-story, flat-roofed metal **Butler building** was erected late in the twentieth-century. The west half of the storage building has one large open bay; the east half is enclosed. It is covered with vertical, interlocking metal panels. **Non-contributing**

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 6

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**8. Statement of Significance**

The Nance-Major Store operated across a narrow road from the Charles City Courthouse for one hundred years, from 1874 until 1963. Country stores in general and the Nance-Major Store in particular played a vital role in the ordinary life of the local population. The general store provided dry goods, sundries, agricultural supplies, and tools that were necessary to support the local agricultural economy. Because of its close proximity to the Charles City Courthouse, the Nance-Major Store served an expanded and more significant commercial role in the life of the county than any other county store. Removed from commercial amenities typically found in cities, the rural populace depended upon the store to serve a multiplicity of functions. Birth and death certificates were issued, and caskets were sold. The store provided informal banking services by providing cash on credit, by cashing checks, and by issuing money orders. The store also functioned as an early welfare agency by providing food and sundries on credit to indigent residents, charges that were later reimbursed by the county. Before private telephones became widely available, a public telephone was located in the store. The store also served as the county post office for nearly half a century.

County residents remember the store as the most well-known and prosperous general store in the county. The high profile and prosperity enjoyed by the Nance-Major Store was also correlated to its diversified business operations. During various periods, the Major family operated a blacksmith shop, a livery, a gas station, an automotive and tire repair shop, and an ice delivery service. They also operated a hearse. Their coffin sales shop was inside a cinder block garage, located across the road from the store. The Nance-Major Store and its subsidiary business operations supported the economy of the county in providing employment opportunities for local citizens. The Nance-Major Store was not only a retail store but also a wholesale supplier to other area stores.

The store's geographic proximity to the courthouse assured both public visibility and a steady stream of customers who frequented the store before and after attending to their affairs at the courthouse. The Nance-Major Store may be constructed on the site of a tavern that operated on the Courthouse Tract before the American Revolution. Like the tavern that preceded it, the store served for more than a century as a gathering place where members of the local population, composed principally of farmers, could conduct business, learn of current political events, and socialize. Into the early part of the twentieth century, auctions, county fairs, and public executions were viewed from the front porch of the store.

The gable-fronted Nance-Major House embodies Greek Revival-style design elements that are unusual in Charles City County. Although enlarged over time, the house retains much of its original exterior architectural fabric. Most of the historic interior fabric also survives. The Nance-

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Major Store is a well-maintained example of a late-nineteenth-century general store. The store is representative of an increasingly rare type of store that was once fairly common in rural areas of the Section 8 Page 7

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state. The interior fabric is well-preserved from the time of construction and conveys an authentic ambience of a country store. The house and store represent mid-to-late-nineteenth-century framing techniques. In addition to the house and store, the complex also includes four additional contributing resources: a smokehouse, a grain barn, a tool shed and a garage. These utilitarian buildings complement the rural nature of the property. One non-contributing, late-twentieth-century storage shed is also located on the property. There are no other known structures, buildings, or sites on the parcel.

**Justification of Criteria**

The Nance-Major House and Store complex possesses local significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce because the store served an important role in the agricultural economy of Charles City County for one hundred years. Because of its long historical association with the Courthouse Tract and with the political and social activities conducted in proximity to the courthouse, the house and store also possess local significance under Criterion A in the area of social history.

Each of the contributing buildings that comprise the Nance-Major complex is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for quality of materials, design, craftsmanship, setting, location, and association. Both the house and store retain exceptional integrity of form and material. The complex offers potential for study and interpretation in a region whose history is intertwined with the earliest history of Charles City County. The period of significance extends between 1869 when the dwelling was constructed and 1956, the fifty-year cut-off, as the store remained open until 1963.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 8

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### **Historical Background**

The Nance-Major House and Store were constructed between circa 1869 and circa 1872 on 321 acres of land historically known the Courthouse Tract. The Charles City Courthouse and a tavern were the most important buildings situated on the tract from before the time of the Revolution. The first owner of the tavern was Samuel Harwood, who served as the county sheriff and justice of the peace in the 1720s. His son Samuel inherited the tavern and the Courthouse Tract circa 1776.<sup>1</sup> Over the next hundred years, the Courthouse Tract, encompassing the courthouse, the tavern and approximately twenty other buildings,<sup>2</sup> were sold intact to a series of prominent county residents. Former owners were William Randolph and William Lightfoot (1791-1793);<sup>3</sup> John Tyler, Sr. and heirs (1793-1814);<sup>4</sup> William Douglas (1814-1821);<sup>5</sup> Robert W. Christian and heirs (1821-1863);<sup>6</sup> and Benjamin Albert Nance (1863-1872).<sup>7</sup>

When Benjamin Nance purchased the Courthouse Tract in 1863, the tavern was a popular gathering place for the local citizens and a refuge for travelers who came to conduct business at the courthouse. From before the time of the Revolution, the tavern had been known for providing drinks, meals, comfortable beds, and even good chocolate.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear when or under what circumstances the courthouse lot was separated from the larger, privately-owned tract. The first surviving recorded survey that shows the courthouse lot separated from the original Courthouse Tract is dated August, 1868. At that time, the county-owned lot included the courthouse, the jail, and an office building. The lot is described as "two acres of land belonging to Charles City County. Laid off under the direction of commissioners appointed by the county court. Drawn 3-chains to an inch, and recorded in Surveyor's Book." It is signed by John Lamb. The balance of the Courthouse Tract is identified on the survey as the property of Benjamin A. Nance.<sup>9</sup>

Except for the courthouse and the clerk's office, all of the buildings on the Courthouse Tract were burned to the ground on December 13, 1864: "The Federals then set fire to all the buildings surrounding the Court House, sparing only it."<sup>10</sup> Approximately five years after the tavern was burned, Benjamin Albert Nance constructed a dwelling on the property that would eventually be known as the Nance-Major House. Just three years later in 1872, Benjamin Nance conveyed the Courthouse Tract and the dwelling to his daughter Julia Nance Major and her husband Edward Major.

Edward Major was responsible for the construction of the Nance-Major Store circa 1872, probably on the site of the earlier tavern. Although no maps or surveys have been discovered that delineate the exact site of the tavern, several historic sketches and photographs do suggest that the current store is situated on or near the site of the tavern. The best evidence is conveyed by an artistic rendering in the diary of Robert Knox Sneden.<sup>11</sup> Created in 1862, the highly detailed drawing depicts the architectural detail, scale, and geographic location of twenty buildings on the

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Courthouse Tract. The tavern is situated across from the courthouse in nearly the same location that the store

Section 8 Page 9

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occupies today. Several Civil War-era photographs of the courthouse appear to have been taken from the front porch of the tavern.<sup>12</sup> The same perspective of the courthouse can be viewed today from the front porch of the store.

The Nance-Major Store operated across from the courthouse for one hundred years, from 1874 until 1963. The first ledger book recording sales and receipts for groceries and merchandise is dated February 27, 1874. On April 15, 1875, the Minutes of the Charles City Court record that the proprietors applied for a license to sell alcoholic beverages:

Edward Major and John F. Nance trading under the firm of Major and Nance for permission to sell by retail wine, ardent spirits, malt liquors, cider, or any mixture of any of these at their respective Store location in this County, Order that it be certified that the said places of licensure are convenient and desirable, and that the applicants of good character.<sup>13</sup>

Just over a year later, on May 18, 1876, the minutes show that:

A License is this day granted to Edward Major and John F. Nance on this application to sell by retail wine, ardent spirits, malt liquors, or any mixture of them at their Store house at the CH and to keep an ordinary at the same place for the period beginning on the first day of May 1876 and expiring on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April 1877. The Court being fully satisfied that the applicants are persons of sobriety and good character and the place of business is convenient and suitable, and the tax required by law has been paid to its proper office.<sup>14</sup>

The minutes of May 22, 1877, record that the store was trading under the name of Edward Major & Company:

A License is this day granted to Edward Major and John F. Nance merchants and partners under the firm of Edward Major & Co to keep an ordinary at Charles City County for the period beginning on this day of [blank space] 1877 and expiring on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April 1878 the Court being fully satisfied that the applicants are persons of sobriety and good character and that the place where the said ordinary is to be kept is convenient and suitable and that they are provided with the necessary accommodations for [illegible words] or house, as provided in the 74<sup>th</sup> section of the act imposing taxes & approved March 27<sup>th</sup> 1876 and that the tax required by law has been paid to the proper officers. And thereupon the said Edward Major and JF Nance together with George Walker this surety entered into [blotted out words] a bond in the penalty of five hundred dollars conditioned according to law.<sup>15</sup>

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

The following year Major and Nance are listed among various store owners who failed to pay their taxes. Payment was ordered by the court for the renewal of their store license.<sup>16</sup> It may be assumed that the required licenses were renewed annually by the court because county residents confirm that Section 8 Page 10

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the store was in continuous operation between 1874 and 1963. In 1916, Walter Major prepared a hand-written note, addressed to the Honorable D. G. Tyler of the Circuit Court in Charles City: "I hereby make application for a license to sell soft drinks at my place of business in this county."<sup>17</sup>

Thirty-two original ledger books, dating from 1874 through 1938, are stored today in the former post office room. The books vary in size and thickness; they are mostly clothbound with heavy cardboard covers. Some of the covers have brightly-colored, marbled finish. Although most of the books are moldy and moisture-damaged, all but two are wholly intact. Most are legible, with entries neatly recorded in black India ink. The first entry in the oldest book is dated February 27, 1874. Although sales and receipts fill nearly all the pages of the ledger book from 1874, the official opening of the store seems to be acknowledged in the 1875 account book, the year the store was granted a liquor license. The inside page is inscribed "Edward Major Company, Charles City Courthouse, Virginia". Congratulatory signatures of customers are written on the initial pages of the book.

Edward Major acquired the house and surrounding acreage after he married Julia Nance, the daughter of Benjamin Nance. Although the general store was named after Edward Major, most of the ledger books from the 1870s and early 1880s show that John Nance, Julia's brother, and Edward Major were partners. Both signed their names on the inside covers of the ledger books. It has not been determined when Edward Major and John Nance discontinued their partnership, but the majority of the books from the 1880s are identified as the property of Edward Major. In 1891, payments on accounts in the ledger book are identified as "paid to the E. Major estate." After Edward Major died, his son Walter Major inherited the store. Walter N. Major's name appears inside most of the ledger books that survive from the first half of the twentieth-century.

Surprisingly, only a few of the books dated between 1911 and 1924 are alphabetically indexed. In some of the earlier books, customer names are listed on the inside cover, followed by a reference page number. But most of the books are randomly organized, suggesting that customer accounts were located by simply turning through multiple pages. In the majority of books, customers are listed by name in large script across the top of the page, followed by a list of dates, purchases, and payments. Generally, the customers made their purchases and then made partial or full payments in cash. Most payments are recorded "by cash" or "by warrant". Occasionally, payments were made by exchange of goods, indicated, for example, "by 18 bushels wheat" or "by 71 pounds beef" or "by rations."<sup>18</sup> In a few of the books, the running balances are simply crossed out to show that the balance was satisfied. Occasionally, there are entries that show that accounts were paid in labor. A sample entry of this type from 1891, records a customer balance satisfied in full with the notation "paid by 2 days work."

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

The following individual ledger books preserve a record of the store's century-long operation: 1874; 1874-1875; 1874-1878; 1875; 1876; 1878 (partial book); 1878-1881; 1880-1882; 1882; 1883-1886; 1886-1888; 1887 (partial book); 1896-1889; 1889 (2); 1891; 1893-1908; 1896 (2); 1897; 1903; 1903- Section 8 Page 11

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1911; 1905-1908; 1908; 1911; 1911-1920; 1913; 1916; 1919-1922; 1920-1924; 1929; 1931; 1938. Accounts that were not paid in full by the last page of the ledger book were transfer to the next book with a typical notation "carried new book", followed by a page number.

Throughout the time of operation, it is clear that the Majors required customers to endorse a written promise that they would pay their delinquent accounts. In the nineteenth-century ledger books, hand-written promissory notes, often on scraps of paper, are loosely inserted between pages of nearly all of the books. After the turn of the twentieth-century, formal, commercially printed promissory notes were used. A typical note dated March 10, 1920 states the terms:

Twelve months after date we promise to pay W.N. Major or order, without offset, One hundred and fourteen 95/100 dollars, negotiable and payable at Charles City, Virginia. Value received. The drawer and endorser of this note hereby waive the benefit of their homestead exemption as to this debt.

Forcing farmers to waive the right of homestead exemption seems harsh by today's standards. There is, according to county residents, some lingering bitterness toward store owners who took land away from customers who did not pay their debts.

Other extant documents that record the operational practices of the store include hand-written requests for the delivery of groceries and supplies. A typical personal note, evidently accompanied by money, from Martha Harris dated June 1, 1889, reads: "Mr...Sir, please take pay out what I owe you. You remember sending some medicine. I don't know what els for the balance left. Please send me 1 bar soap white and ...5 cents worth soda. Balance in cherries." Another from July 4, 1889, from Marry F. Christian records: "Mr. Major Please send me 50 cents worth of flour and half pound of coffee pound half of shugar a quart of vinegar and the balance in meat." The notes reveal a significant level of personal familiarity and trust between the customer and the proprietor.

A small booklet dated 1895 lists supplies that John T. Nance purchased for the store. His personal shopping list is especially revealing for the wide array of stock represented: flour; spool cotton; sugar; stifning; vinegar; bar soap; tea; spice; cloves; nutmegs; leather; 6 yards cotton; cheese; baking soda; 2 boxes M; 1 gallon oil; nuts; candy; raisons; paper of needles; and cocoanuts.

The Nance-Major Store and its subsidiary business operations supported the economy of the county in providing employment opportunities. Loose records in the ledger books show that the ice



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

delivery service alone employed on average seven men each day in July, 1903. Delivery men were paid 38 cents for a half day and between 76 and 85 cents for a whole day of labor.

Section 8 Page 12

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The operations of the blacksmith shop were kept separate from those of the general store. There is one separate ledger book, with entries dated between 1875 and 1905 which itemize the activities of the blacksmith shop. Typical entries include repairs to buggies such as "fixing buck and stretcher", tire repair and installation, and the shoeing of horses and mules.

Stock items for the Nance-Major Store were mostly purchased from wholesale suppliers in Richmond. Invoices survive from numerous suppliers. The Christian & Winfree Company, 113 S. Fourteenth Street, were wholesale dealers in tobacco, cigars, cakes, crackers, fancy groceries, and candy. Monthly statements are intact from the 1870s, issued by The Richmond Steam Bakery and Candy Manufactory at 11 and 13 South Twelfth Street. Fresh and salted meats were purchased regularly from J.W. Brauer in Stalls 5 and 7, Old Market. Clothing was purchased for re-sale from the J.L. Taylor & Company at the corner of Broadway and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. A wholesale price list dated June 8, 1925, shows that farming supplies for local farmers were procured from the F.H. Boehling Company at 109-111 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The "Grass and Field Seeds and Feeds" included cow peas; soja beans; clovers; grass; seed potatoes; millet; sorghum; poultry, horse, and dairy feeds; calf meal; rock and dairy salt; hay; and tankage for hogs. Fifty-five pages listing wholesale suppliers, purchases, costs, and freight charges are recorded in the 1919 ledger book.<sup>19</sup> Fresh produce was often purchased from area farmers. One surviving booklet shows a running list of purchases of tobacco and melons, both popular sales items in the ledger books. An inventory list signed by W.N. Major in 1919 itemizes tobacco on hand: chewing, 41 pounds; smoking, 32 pounds; cigarettes, 16 hundred; cigars, 423.

The Nance-Major Store was not only a retail store but also a wholesale supplier to other area stores. One invoice from 1918 shows that W.N. Major sold 21 of fresh meat, 1 box Piedmonts, 1 box Prince Albert, a box chocolate, and 25 pounds of stick candy to the W.H. Bourne Store. A 10 cent freight charge was added to the invoice. The same invoice shows that 54 pounds of fresh meat were sold to the E. Major Store.

The Nance-Major Store was clearly envisioned by the original owners, perhaps under the guidance of Benjamin Nance who had owned the earlier tavern, as a place for men to gather and drink. The most common sales entry in the ledger books from the 1870s was for whiskey. One drink, sometimes listed in the ledger books as "a gill of whiskey", cost 10 cents in 1878. A gill is an English measurement, equivalent to 4.5 ounces. Store sales averaged between two and three dollars each

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

day between 1877 and 1878. The most commonly sold items in the ledger book that spans 1891-1895 are nails, shoes, eggs, coffee, tobacco, whiskey, molasses, soap, meat, flour, crackers, salt, sugar, cloth and spool cotton, vinegar and baking powder. There are less frequent but regular entries for shirts, socks and stockings, rope, mustard, water buckets, lampwick, calico, rice, tea, axel grease, and oil. There are occasional entries for corsets, lemons, lamp chimneys, vials of peragoric

Section 8 Page 13

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and vermafer, boots, and castor oil. Most individual items sold for 5, 10, 20, 45, or 50 cents. Average daily receipts between 1891 and 1895 ranged between three and five dollars. Between 1903 and 1911, sales ranged from a low of \$340 for the month of January to a high of \$2523 for the month of September. Receipts in 1938 averaged more than \$1000 monthly.

Ledger entries shed light on the significant commercial impact of the Nance-Major Store on the economy of the Charles City County. The store not only sold goods but also provided other services. Ledger entries include charges for hauling, for the payment of taxes and clerk tickets on the behalf of customers, for transport by buggy, and for cash loans. There are numerous listings that show some customers paid their account balances in hours of labor.

Charles City Courthouse maintained a running account in the store beginning in 1878. In addition to ledger entries for merchandise and rations for the court, there are sub-listings under the courthouse account with names of various county residents. The county paid the store for supplying food and necessities to needy residents. Typical items listed on the courthouse account in 1878 included shoes, tobacco, plums, eggs, crackers, bacon and herrings. A sample entry for a county-subsidized account from 1882 lists: bacon, 15 cents; flour, 25 cents; sugar, 10 cents; cologne, 5 cents; and tobacco, 5 cents

The practical importance of the general stores to the citizens of the county cannot be overestimated. According to Judith Ledbetter, Director of the Charles City County Center for Local History, the general stores were the only commercial entities in the county.<sup>20</sup> Traveling to frequent stores and businesses in more developed urban areas was time-consuming and expensive. The farmers and their families depended on the convenience of the stores to satisfy most all of their day-to-day needs. Even today, driving across the wide and undeveloped expanses of rural land, there is a noticeable absence of development in Charles City County. There are no department stores or large-scale grocery stores, and there is only one bank. A drive of thirty to forty minutes is typically required to reach commercial amenities. It is easy to see even today how important the general stores were and are in the life of the community. At the time of the first Federal census in 1790, the population of the county was 5,588. Today it is just 6,926.<sup>21</sup>

Because of its proximity to the courthouse, the Nance-Major Store was the most well-known and

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

prosperous store in the county during its years of operation.<sup>22</sup> When local citizens came to the courthouse to settle their affairs, they would stop at the Nance-Major Store for food and drink. The store was the place where farmers came to purchase seeds and tools, to transact business, to play cards, and to gamble. In the absence of formal banks, the store served as a "people's bank" by cashing checks and issuing money orders. Loose papers located among court records confirm that some of the general stores functioned as early welfare agents of the county government.<sup>23</sup> The stores provided food and other necessities on credit to indigent residents. The stores were then

Section 8 Page 14

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reimbursed by the county for these provisions. The area stores were often responsible for issuing birth and death certificates and for selling caskets. Before telephone services were widely available in private homes, most of the stores maintained a telephone for public use.

There is recorded documentation that confirms that the Nance-Major Store served all of these functions. A very early oak telephone with an external bell and hand crank is preserved on a shelf in the store today. Although there is no firm evidence to show that the store served as a polling place, several loose, blank Democratic Ticket ballots survive from the May 28, 1891, election. Blank copies of birth certificates, dated 191\_\_\_\_, from the Bureau of Vital Statistics are preserved between the pages of some of the ledger books. A retired doctor who practiced general medicine in Charles City in the 1940s remembers being summoned to the store to sign death certificates.<sup>24</sup> The store provided banking services to the community. A copy of the official Register Book of Money Order Post Offices published in 1901 by the Post Money Order System of the United States lists the Charles City Post Office, at that time located in the Nance-Major Store, as an authorized agent for money orders.<sup>25</sup> Ledger books show regular and frequent entries for "cash" listed with grocery and merchandise purchases that were satisfied by payments on account. A hand-written note dated November 13, 1912, requests:

Mr. W.N. Major

Dear Sir:

Can you please send me \$10.00 in cash and I will pay you back soon.

Truly yours, L.M. Clark

The front porch of the Nance-Major Store served as a theater for public assemblies that took place outside of the courthouse. Citizens would buy food and drink at the store and sit outside on the long wooden benches on the porch to view community events. Public auctions were held regularly at the courthouse throughout the period of operation of the store.<sup>26</sup> Until 1906, public hangings were carried out in front of the Courthouse, directly across the road from the Nance-Major Store. The public gallows and a large tree called "the lynching tree", located on the hillside below the clerk's office, would have been visible from the store.<sup>27</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia

The shelves of the store are still stocked today with merchandise that was available for sale in the mid-twentieth-century. The items represent an astonishingly wide assortment of goods and supplies typically carried by country stores. A sampling includes small wood bins with nails and screws; India inks and pens; mason jars and canning lids; road maps; gun shells; seeds; paint and glazing putty; a variety of over-the-counter medicines like iodine, tonic pills, laxatives, and emulsions; auto parts and motor oil; lawn mowers parts and belts; plumbing supplies; cigars, cigarettes and roll papers; corn syrup and stone ground flour; and toiletries such as face powder, wave set, perfumes, talcum, and

Section 8 Page 15

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crèams. Although there are no canned goods left on the shelves, the price-labels are still attached along the bottom edge of the shelf.

An oral history of the Nance-Major Store was communicated during an interview with Charles Haupt, a life-long resident of Charles City County and proprietor of the G.C. Haupt & Son Store.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Haupt has not only a general knowledge about stores that operated in the county through the years but also an intimate knowledge of the Nance-Major Store. His mother was a Major, and she was born in the Nance-Major House. According to Mr. Haupt, the Nance-Major Store was the “best store in the county”. He emphasized that the Nance-Major Store had a county-wide reputation for their supply of high-quality fresh meats.

The store’s geographic proximity to the courthouse assured both public visibility and a steady stream of customers who frequented the store before and after attending to their affairs at the courthouse. Vernon McCrae, who grew up in Charles City, remembers stopping at the Nance-Major Store to eat watermelon. He recalls that when he was a little boy, the store was a popular place for family refreshment.<sup>29</sup> An advertisement that was published in the 1926 edition of *The Charles Citian*, the yearbook for Charles City High School, suggests that Walter Major capitalized on the store’s proximity to the courthouse. The advertisement reads “W.N. Major, The Convenient Store for your Patronage when at the Fair, School, or the Court, Deal With Us.”

The high profile and prosperity enjoyed by the Nance-Major Store in Charles City County was also correlated to the diversity of business operations. During various periods, the Majors operated a blacksmith shop, a livery, a gas station, an automotive repair shop, and an ice delivery service. They also operated the county’s only commercial ice house and hearse. Their coffin sales shop was inside a cinder block garage, located across the road near the courthouse. In the 1940s, the store apparently acted as an agent for the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Highways by obtaining signed Safety Rules regulated by the chief engineer. Twenty-nine itemized rules cover a variety of safety procedures including the use of power tools and equipment; transportation of machinery and gasoline; use and storage of guns and explosives; smoking in shops, sheds, or

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

storage yards; excavation of soil and sand pits; riding seated in trucks; and other rules.<sup>30</sup>

Mr. Haupt also remembers that the ownership of the Nance-Major Store passed out of the family only once, for a period of approximately two years. After the death of the first Walter N. Major, the store was operated first by his wife Velma and then by their son Walter. He operated the store for only a brief time before he sold the business, but neither the land nor the building, circa 1952, to Ludwig Johnson. Mr. Johnson sold the store back to Walter just two years later and moved out west. When John Major, Walter Major's cousin, was defeated in his re-election to the General Assembly in 1954, he took over the operation of the store until it was closed around 1963.

Section 8 Page 16

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The Haupt family has operated a general merchandise store in Charles City since circa 1796. The first Haupt family store was the New Hope Store, located diagonally across Route 5 from the circa 1893 G.C. Haupt & Son Store. Mr. Haupt and his wife still operate the circa 1893 store today. The lively store, which carries a wide variety of merchandise, is located on Route 5 approximately one mile east of the former Nance-Major Store.

Another oral history of the Nance-Major Store was conveyed by Beverly Mauck, the husband of Louise Meriwether Major Mauck, whose grandfather Walter N. Major was the last operational owner of the store.<sup>31</sup> According to Mr. Mauck, the store was operated by Edward Major (and John Nance) between 1872 and 1910; then by Edward Major's son Walter from "the teens" to 1948; then by Walter's wife Velma "for a while." The letterhead of an invoice dated December 28, 1916, is printed: "In Account with Mrs. J.A. Major. Dealer in Dry Goods, Shoes, Groceries, Notions. General Merchandise and Country Produce." On this sample, "Mrs. J.A." has been crossed out, and the letters "W. N." have been penciled in. The tear-off style book of invoices may have been borrowed by W.N. Nance from the store that had belonged to his cousin John Major.

Mr. Mauck also remembers that John Major, the last person to operate the store before it closed, lived in the apartment above the store. Mr. Mauck recalls that in addition to the prosperous store, Walter Major operated a livery, an ice house, and a funeral business on the property. The Maucks possess the old Regulator clock that hung in the store for decades and the license plate from the hearse that was owned and operated from the store by the Major family. Mr. Mauck remembers that the store had a contract between circa 1915 and 1948 with the Charles City Courthouse to supply mid-day meals on court days. In 1963, when the store was finally closed, most of the contents of the store, the tools and the equipment were auctioned from the front porch.

The last of the Major family to own the house and store complex were Ann Weaver Major and Edward Major who acquired the property in 1987. They lived in the house for nearly two decades, but the store was used only for storage. Edward Major was born in the first floor bedroom in 1920;

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

he died in the same room in 2000. In 2005, Ann Major sold the house and store complex to Jim Daniels who plans to transform the house into a bed-and-breakfast inn and the store into a restaurant.

Today there are four general stores that operate in Charles City County: G.C. Haupt & Son Store; Adkins Store; Sandy Point Store; and the Colonial Mart. There are no records that provide a comprehensive enumeration of the general stores in Charles City County during the years that the Nance-Major Store was in operation. Advertisements that appeared in the high school yearbooks between 1926 and 1930 convey a good understanding of the items that were offered for sale in the county's stores. The Earnest E. Orange Store in Holdcroft, just a few miles from the Nance-Major Store, was listed as a dealer in general merchandise, fresh meats, farm produce, gas and oils.<sup>32</sup> The H.C. Bourne Store in Roxbury, Virginia, advertised general merchandise, country produce, and

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a Section 8 Page 17

complete line of automobile supplies.<sup>33</sup> The New Hope Store, just one mile from the courthouse, was operated by Edward Major: "We keep a fresh supply of groceries and provisions, drugs, general merchandise, gasoline, oil, and tires."<sup>34</sup> The Fred S. Bock Store, also in Roxbury, advertised general merchandise, groceries, hay, grain, gasoline, Ford accessories, axes, hoes, rakes, paint, and hardware.<sup>35</sup>

Except for the ledger books, no other written history of the Nance-Major House and Store has been discovered. Though the general stores have long played an important role in the practical life of the county residents, few of the stores have been the subject of recorded historical record. County records from before the Civil War were pillaged and taken by Union soldiers as souvenirs in 1864. And when the old jail was torn down in 1971, additional records and documents that had been stored by the clerks of the court in the attic of the jail were also destroyed.<sup>36</sup>

Only two published photographs of the store are known to exist. Both photographs appear to be cut from newspapers, but their source and date have not been identified. They were conveyed to the current owner by Ann Major. One of the photographs shows the interior of the store with neat rows of canned goods and displays of fresh produce. A regulator clock hangs on one of the support posts, and a scale and the pot-bellied stove are prominent. The dress and hair styling of three men who are believed to have been customers suggest a circa 1940 date. The other photograph, an exterior view, shows the gas pump and an automobile from the same period. Half of a painted metal sign, recently uncovered in the attic of the store, has the following legible information: "Major, Service Station, Tires." The sign is most likely from circa 1930 when a gas pump was installed at the store by the first Walter Nance Major.<sup>37</sup>

The Nance-Major Store is still remembered by residents as one of the early post offices in the county. The first post office was established in 1803, and it is believed to have been located in the

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

courthouse.<sup>38</sup> Due to space limitations, it was moved from the courthouse in the late-nineteenth-century into the Nance House, approximately 100 yards east of the courthouse. According to Charles Haupt, the post office was operated by two of the Nance sisters until they grew old. The post office was then moved into the Nance-Major Store. Velma Major, the wife of Walter N. Major who operated the store from circa 1915 to 1948, served as post mistress for the courthouse area. The post office was located in a small office in the southwest corner of the Nance-Major Store. Mail was deposited into wrought iron cages attached to the west wall of the office. When Ann Major sold the property to Jim Daniels, members of the Major family removed the iron post boxes. A row of holes where bolts secured the boxes to the wall are still visible today. The Nance House was torn down circa 1976 to create space for the county community center.

Sometime in the mid-fifties, the Majors lost the post office contract, and the post office was moved from the store. The post office was located for brief periods in several different buildings before the current stand-alone post office building was constructed circa 1961.

Section 8 Page 18

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Charles City County is sprinkled with historic country stores; some continue to operate today.<sup>39</sup> Country stores in general and the Nance-Major Store in particular played a vital role in the ordinary life of the local population. The stores carried most everything necessary to support day-to-day life. Because of its proximity to the courthouse, the Nance-Major Store is recognized as one of the most important stores in the county.<sup>40</sup>

Both the Nance and the Major families have a long and distinguished presence in Charles City County. William Nance, the first Nance in Virginia, held patents for land in James City in 1692.<sup>41</sup> Multiple land patents awarded the members of the Nance family up to the Revolution are recorded in deed books for Prince George, Brunswick, and Lunenburg County.<sup>42</sup> All three counties were formed from Charles City County: Prince George in 1703; Brunswick in 1732; and Lunenburg in 1746. A Nance family cemetery is believed to have been located near the intersection of Courthouse Road and Route 5. Members of the Nance family have served prominent roles in the government of Charles City County for more than a century: Benjamin Nance served on the Board of Supervisors from 1879-1885 and John F. Nance from 1919-1928. Walter N. Nance was a commonwealth attorney from 1923-1928.<sup>43</sup>

The presence of the Major family in Charles City is also interwoven with the history of the county. Major Lt. Colonel Edward Major, who was awarded a patent for 450 acres on the Nansemond River in the County of New Norfolk in 1645, represented upper Norfolk in the Virginia House of Burgesses.<sup>44</sup> One of his grandsons, John Major, served under the command of Benjamin Harrison, Jr. in the Revolutionary War. John E. Major, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt, enlisted in 1861 in Co. K, 53<sup>rd</sup> VA Infantry, Armstead's Brigade, Pickett's Division. He was wounded at Suffolk in 1863 and at Drewry's Bluff in 1864.<sup>45</sup> It was Edward Glarsten Major, a fifth-generation descendent of Major Lt. Edward Major, who married Julia Ann Nance and built the store in 1872.<sup>46</sup> The Major family is associated with

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

several other historic homes in Charles City County: *Valentines*; *Oak Hill*, and *Burlington* which is located on Route 5 approximately two miles south of the Charles City Courthouse. *Burlington* was the home of Edward Glarster Major (1807-1849) who married Mary Ann Eppes (1818-1859) in 1837. Their son was Edward (1847-1891) is responsible for the construction of the Nance-Major Store.<sup>47</sup>



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia

Section 9 Page 21

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## 9. Bibliography

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section 10 Page 22

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel encompass 7.657 acres fronting along Route 664, Courthouse Road, in Charles City County, Virginia. The boundaries are depicted on the U.S.G.S. Charles City Quad map and on the enclosed Plat of Survey. The property is identified by the Charles City County tax assessor as Tax Parcel 40-17. The property is bounded by Route 664 on the south, by Route 5 on the north, by Route 155 to the east, and by Route 643 to the west.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated property have been drawn according to the legally recorded boundary lines to encompass 7.657 acres of land associated with the dwelling and general store known as the Nance-Major House and Store. The boundaries were drawn to encompass the dwelling, the store, and four additional contributing buildings including a smokehouse, a grain barn, a tool shed, and a garage. One non-contributing storage building is also located on the land parcel. There are no other known structures, buildings, or sites on the parcel.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia**

Section Photographic Documentation Page 23

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: Nance-Major House and Store, DHR File no. 018-0078  
Location: Charles City County, Virginia  
Photographer: Nancy Kraus  
Date: March 10, 2006  
Negative Numbers: 22786; 22790 on file at the VA Dept. of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Photo # 1 of 28: Barn, west elevation; Negative no. 22786:2.  
Photo # 2 of 28: Butler building, southeast view. Negative no. 22786:3.  
Photo # 3 of 28: Tool shed, southeast oblique view. Negative no. 22786:4.  
Photo # 4 of 28: Smokehouse, southwest oblique view. Negative no. 22786:5.  
Photo # 5 of 28: Garage, southwest oblique view. Negative no. 22786:6.  
Photo # 6 of 28: Nance-Major Store, northwest oblique view. Negative no. 22786:7.  
Photo # 7 of 28: Nance-Major Store, primary south facade. Negative no. 22786:8.  
Photo # 8 of 28: Nance-Major House & Store, southeast oblique view. Negative no. 22786:9.  
Photo #9 of 28: Nance-Major Store, southeast oblique view. Negative no. 22786:10.  
Photo # 10 of 28: Garage, east elevation. Negative no. 22786:11.  
Photo #11 of 28: Nance-Major House, east elevation. Negative no. 22786:12.  
Photo #12 of 28: Garage, south elevation. Negative no. 22786:13.  
Photo #13 of 28: Nance-Major House, southeast oblique view. Negative no. 22786:14.  
Photo #14 of 28: Nance-Major House, primary south facade. Negative no. 22786:15.  
Photo #15 of 28: Nance-Major House, west elevation. Negative no. 22786:16.  
Photo #16 of 28: Nance-Major House, northwest oblique view Negative no. 22786:17.  
Photo #17 of 28: Nance-Major House, north elevation. Negative no. 22786:18.  
Photo #18 of 28: Nance-Major Store, window and shutter detail. Negative no. 22786:19.  
Photo #19 of 28: Nance-Major Store, porch detail. Negative no. 22786:20.  
Photo #20 of 28: Nance-Major Store, primary south entrance. Negative no. 22786:21.  
Photo #21 of 28: Nance-Major House, entrance hall and stair. Negative no. 22790:1.  
Photo #22 of 28: Nance-Major House, parlor. Negative no. 22790:2.  
Photo #23 of 28: Nance-Major House, dining room. Negative no. 22790:3.  
Photo #24 of 28: Nance-Major House, mantel in bedroom. Negative no. 22790:4.  
Photo #25 of 28: Nance-Major House, typical door and wainscot profiles. Negative no. 22790:5.  
Photo #26 of 28: Nance-Major Store, interior view. Negative no. 22790:7.  
Photo #27 of 28: Nance-Major Store, interior view. Negative no. 22790:8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia

Photo #28 of 28: Nance-Major Store, interior view. Negative no. 22790:9.

Section 8 Page 19

Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Tyler, D. Gardiner. A History and Pictorial Review of Charles City County, Virginia. Expert Graphics, 1990, 22-25.

<sup>2</sup> Various accounts describing the tavern and its amenities are on file at the Charles City Center for History. Two of the more memorable accounts are published in Benson Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, published in 1860, 237-238. Another is from Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786: Travel Diary of Robert Hunter, Jr., A Young Merchant of London, published in 1943.

<sup>3</sup> Charles City County Deed book #4, December 15, 1791, 71.

<sup>4</sup> Charles City County Deed book #4, May 18, 1793, 129; Will book #2, 234.

<sup>5</sup> Charles City County Deed book #5, October 20, 1814, 542.

<sup>6</sup> Charles City County Deed book #6, May 26, 1821, 474; #11, October 21, 1856, 17, 587-588; #11, December 29, 1856, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Charles City County Deed book #11, April 20, 1863, 466.

<sup>8</sup> Various accounts describing the tavern and its amenities are on file at the Charles City Center for History. Two of the more memorable accounts are published in Benson Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, published in 1860, 237-238. Another is from Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786: Travel Diary of Robert Hunter, Jr., A Young Merchant of London, published in 1943.

<sup>9</sup> Copy of an original document from the files at the Charles City County History Center.

<sup>10</sup> Copland, Mary Ruffin, editor. Confederate History of Charles City County, Virginia. Richmond, VA: Harrison-Harwood Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> Sneden, Robert Knox. Images from the Storm. New York: The Free Press, 2001, Vol. 3, 113.

<sup>12</sup> A sampling of representative photographs may be viewed at the Library of Congress website: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>

<sup>13</sup> Minutes, Charles City County Board of Supervisors, Vol. 6, April 15, 1875, 184.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, Charles City County Board of Supervisors, Vol. 6, May 18, 1876, 265.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes, Charles City County Board of Supervisors, Vol. 6, May 22, 1877, 345-346.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes, Charles City County Board of Supervisors, Vol. 6, April 19, 1878, 405.

<sup>17</sup> The note was found among the loose papers inside the pages of the surviving ledger books.

<sup>18</sup> Entries from Ledger Book spanning 1891-1903, 51, 52, 99, 251.

<sup>19</sup> Ledger book, 1919, 75-130.

<sup>20</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. From interviews on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Data from the official website for Charles City, Virginia, [www.charlescity.org](http://www.charlescity.org).

<sup>22</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. I gratefully acknowledge the breadth of understanding and the time shared with me by Judy by telephone and by personal interview on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. From interviews on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Farrar Howard practiced general medicine in Charles City and New Kent Counties for nearly four decades.

<sup>25</sup> An original copy of the Register of Money Order Post Offices is located among the ledger books.

<sup>26</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. From interviews on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Bowman, Richard. Mr. Bowman was the first African-American elected chairman of the Board of Supervisors. From an interview on April 10, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Haupt, Charles. Interview on April 7, 2006, at G.C. Haupt & Son Store in Charles City, Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Nance-Major House and Store  
Charles City County, Virginia

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Section 8 page 20

Endnotes (continued)

<sup>29</sup> Daniels, Jim. Oral history concerning Charles City Courthouse and the Nance-Major Store from various county residents over a period of several years and relayed in conversation between January and April, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> From documents located among the ledger books in the store.

<sup>31</sup> Mauck, Beverly. Interviewed at Bell Air in Charles City County on April 7, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Citian. Charles City County High School Yearbook, 1926, 81.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Citian. Charles City County High School Yearbook, 1926, 87.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Citian. Charles City County High School Yearbook, 1926, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Citian. Charles City County High School Yearbook, 1926, 86.

<sup>36</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. From interviews on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Daniels, Jim. Oral history concerning Charles City Courthouse and the Nance-Major Store from various county residents over a period of several years and relayed in conversation between January and April, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> This information, confirmed by Judy Ledbetter, appears on one of the historic road markers at the courthouse.

<sup>39</sup> Data from the official website for Charles City, Virginia, [www.charlescity.org](http://www.charlescity.org).

<sup>40</sup> Ledbetter, Judy. I gratefully acknowledge the breadth of understanding and the time shared with me by Judy by telephone and by personal interview on March 28, 2006, and April 7, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Stewart, Robert Armistead. *The Researcher: A Magazine of History and Genealogical Exchange*. Vol I, No. 4, July, 1927, 257.

<sup>42</sup> Stewart, Robert Armistead. *The Researcher: A Magazine of History and Genealogical Exchange*. Vol I, No. 4, July, 1927, 257.

<sup>43</sup> Tyler, D. Gardiner. A History and Pictorial Review of Charles City County, Virginia. Expert Graphics, 1990, 18-19.

<sup>44</sup> Cabell, James Branch. The Majors and Their Marriages. Richmond, VA: The W. C. Hill Printing Co., 1915, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Tyler, Sherry Brown, compiler. 80%Heaven Bound: Deaths and Burials in Charles City County, Virginia. Cardwell Printing and Advertising, 2000, 302.

<sup>46</sup> A detailed history of Major family in Virginia which accounts for their migration to Charles City may be found in The Majors and Their Marriages by James Branch Cabell.

<sup>47</sup> Major family genealogical papers on file at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.



DHR # 018-0078

Nance-Major  
House and  
Store  
Charles City  
County, VA  
Charles City  
Quad

UTM  
Zone 18

- A 316465 E  
4135019 N
- B 316506 E  
4135004 N
- C 316343 E  
4134780 N
- D 316145 E  
4134729 N
- E 316104 E  
4134754 N

