

VLR 12/3/3
NRHP 3/8/4

**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 Conway House

other names/site number Conway, Moncure Daniel, House, VDHR #089-0067-0031

2. Location

street & number 305 King Street not for publication N/A

city or town Falmouth vicinity _____

state Virginia code VA county Stafford code 179 Zip 22405

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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered ~~significant~~ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/23/04
Signature of certifying official Date

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.
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register
_____ removed from the National Register
_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper
Date of Action _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof STONE: Slate
walls BRICK
other

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

8. Statement of Significance

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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1807

Significant Dates 1807

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder UNKNOWN

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5636

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

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18/284260/4244125 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

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: Norman L. and Lenetta F. Schools

Organization: _____ date March 10, 2003

street & number: 305 King Street telephone (540) 368-0464

city or town Falmouth state VA zip code 22405

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 Normal L. Schools and Lenetta F. Schools

street & number 305 King Street telephone (540) 368-0464

city or town Falmouth state VA zip code _____

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.

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Section 7 Page 1

**Conway House
Stafford County, Virginia**

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Conway House at 305 King Street in the Falmouth Historic District, Stafford County, Virginia, is a Federal-style residence built in 1807. It is located in the extreme southwest corner of its 2.5-acre rectangular tract of land near the banks of the Rappahannock River. Made of brick, the large, two-story, five-bay residence with its full basement, side-gable slate roof, brick interior-end chimneys, and intricate details reflects the prosperity of its original merchant owner and the port of Falmouth during the early nineteenth century. The interior of the house is laid out in a modified central-hall plan with an L-shaped form created by its unusual flounder-form east end. Although it has changed ownership many times, the Conway House has not undergone any drastic alterations to either its exterior or its interior. It remains in excellent condition today with much of its original fabric and Federal-style details intact.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Conway House is located only 18 feet from its southern property line and 14.4 feet from its western property line in one corner of a 2.5636-acre tract of land. King Street lies to the south and provides the front boundary of the property. Approximately two thirds of the distance to the rear of the property are terraces and a slope rising to the heights of the surrounding area. There is a driveway to the east of the residence that ends with a circle that adjoins a parking area behind the house. A stone wall begins at the southwest corner of the property and runs along King Street approximately 158 feet. From here a wooden fence continues to the southeast corner of the property. The wooden fence makes a right angle turn and continues along Rowser Road to the point where the terraces begin. The rear property line is bounded by Carter Street and enclosed with a wooden fence.

South Elevation

The south elevation of the Conway House is the facade of the residence, facing King Street and the Rappahannock River. It is a symmetrical, two-story, brick facade of five bays over a full basement. It has a centrally located double-door entrance with limestone steps leading from the ground up to this main entrance, a slate roof, and brick interior-end chimneys. Across the front extends a corbeled brick cornice, and on the facade, the bricks are laid in decorative Flemish bond.

There are six small windows on the basement level of the south elevation. They flank the stairway leading to the front door, three on each side, and follow the strict symmetry of the facade. The windows each consist of two lights placed horizontally under infilled brick arches. These fenestrations are replacements. On the ground level surrounding the steps and fanning outwards from the facade of the house is a small brick courtyard laid in a herringbone pattern. There are six centrally located limestone steps that lead to a wider stoop area for access to the front door. The bottom step is longer, ending in decorative curved volutes. A wrought-iron boot scraper flanked each end of the bottom step, however only one is remaining on the left side of the step. On each front corner of the stoop is a small cast-iron urn.

The first floor of the house on the south elevation has four double-hung sash windows placed in pairs flanking the centrally located doorway. These windows have large nine-over-nine lights, thin muntins, brick jack arches,

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wooden sills, and wooden shutters. Attached to the brick facade are the iron shutter dogs. The front doorway has a limestone sill, wooden five-paneled double doors, and a semicircular fanlight topped by a brick arch. The arch reveal is decorated with raised panels. The current double doors are not original to the house; they were replaced after the Civil War.¹

There are five double-hung sash windows on the second story identical to those on the first with the exception of six-over-nine lights. These second-story bays match the vertical placement of the bays on the first story.

Flanked by parapet gable ends, the roof is slate and features snow guards located near the eaves. There are copper gutters attached to the eaves that run into down spouts located at each corner of the facade and each corner of the rear elevation. A pair of tall interior-end chimneys with corbelled caps are located on the west side of the house. A single interior-end chimney on the east side has a shorter, simpler stack.

East Elevation

The east elevation of the house has an unusual appearance. Laid in three-course American bond with an interior-end chimney extending above the slope of the roof, this elevation is separated into two distinct parts including a flounder-form section that projects from the east wall of the house for twenty-two feet, with an inset to a full gable-roofed main section of the house.

Because of the flounder, there is an eighteen-foot by nineteen-foot space creating a protrusion of the "L" at the rear of the house. The gap is now partially filled with a late one-story wooden porch on a concrete block foundation that extends from the north wall approximately six feet. The top of the porch serves as a deck surrounded by a wooden railing.

The one bay of the elevation is located on the inset wall of the east elevation. There is one bay each on the first, second, and attic stories that line up vertically and are positioned eight inches from the inside edge of the wall. The first-story bay is a doorway located in a small enclosed area of the porch (about six feet by seven feet) clad with weatherboards. The door is wooden. This is a late enclosure containing the mechanical room. The first-story doorway was originally located to the right of the mechanical room, and directly in the brick wall of the east elevation but has been infilled with concrete block and later brickwork. Partial evidence remains of a brick jack arch over this entrance. The second-story bay is a doorway leading to the porch's upper deck. The attic bay is a modest six-over-six double-hung sash window with thin muntins and a brick jack arch.

From this elevation, one can see that the gable roof line is broken over this space. The roofline peaks at the ridge and begins to descend to the north side of the house, but is cut off after a stretch of approximately four feet along the slope. The brickwork along the gable slope of the roof forms a parapet. This brickwork is interrupted by the interior-end chimney and is extended until the gable is cut. The parapet is not continued on the descending slope of the inset wall of the east elevation.

North Elevation

The asymmetrical four-bay elevation is laid mostly in three-course American bond. A section in the middle of this elevation has been repaired and the bricks have been re-laid in an all stretcher bond.² This elevation is separated into two distinct sections echoing the L-shaped form. The nineteen-foot-wide east side of the north

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elevation is recessed about eighteen feet back from the plain of the thirty-one-foot-wide west side. The gable roof is cut out over the east side of the north elevation.

On the ground level, there is a centrally located brick stairway with a brick paved walkway leading away from the house. At the base of these stairs rests two cast-iron urns similar to those on the south elevation. To the west of the stairs is a gable-roofed access to the basement. This brick appendage, which is approximately five feet by six feet and ten inches, is laid in all stretcher bond and covered by an asphalt roof. It has wooden double doors with a wooden surround. An electric lantern is over the center of the door. This same brick appendage is flanked on either side by a small basement window, like those on the south elevation, with the exception that the one on the left side has been infilled with brick and cement blocks. To the extreme east in the recessed portion of the elevation is another access to the basement that has been blocked off with cement blocks.³

The first floor of the north elevation contains a central doorway with two evenly spaced windows to the west, and one window and a porch on the recessed east side. All three windows are nine-over-nine double-hung sashes with large lights, thin muntins and jack arches. On the east side of the recessed north elevation the window is centrally located. Original paneled reveals frame the doorway, with its original matching paneled wooden double doors. There is a brass knocker on the right door. Directly above the jack arch surmounting the doorway is a copper and glass electric lantern. The porch, to the east of the door, is a small open one-story wooden porch with an enclosed weatherboard area west of the window. This porch has two chamfered square posts supporting the upper story. The veranda of the small porch has a simple railing around it, decorated with braces in an "X" pattern.

The second story of the north elevation contains four bays, which line up vertically with their first-story counterparts. The bay above the door has been filled in with brick. The original brick jack arch of this bay remains.

Since the roof of the east end of the north elevation is cut out, a large attic lunette can be seen in alignment with the windows of the first and second stories of the recessed north wall. This lunette is intricately detailed with wooden dentils, and a brick arch surround. In the slope of the roof is a duct for the present HVAC system of the house. At the west edge of the north elevation there is a tall interior-end chimney with a corbelled cap.

West Elevation

The asymmetrical west elevation has four bays, two interior-end chimneys, and is laid in three-course American bond. A third entrance to the basement is located on this elevation at the extreme south end. Similar to the one on the north elevation, it measures five feet by six feet and five inches. The appendage is laid in four-course American bond and capped by a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The wooden double-door entrance is segmental-arched and sits above a wooden sill. This entrance is original to the house and served the office located in the basement.

There are two bays located toward the center of the west elevation on the first floor. These two bays include a window to the south and a doorway to the north. The window has a double-hung sash with large nine-over-nine lights, thin muntins, and a brick jack arch. The doorway has a sandstone sill and original wood-paneled double doors and reveals. This doorway also has a decorative rectangular transom above, and a brick jack arch.

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Currently, this doorway is missing the steps that once led up to it, serving as the entry into the servant hall of the house. On the wall of this elevation are appendages of the original servant bell-pull system.

The fourth bay is located at the attic level directly under the peak of the roof. It is a large lunette, identical to the one on the north elevation; however, this one is missing the wooden dentil detail. Along the roofline is brickwork forming the parapet of the gable. This brickwork is interrupted by two tall interior-end chimneys.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The interior is laid out in an L shaped modified central hall plan. This hall extends the length of the house and together with an additional room and staircase at the northwestern corner of the house form the rear ell of the L-shaped configuration of the house. The plan has not changed, while encompassing the installation of plumbing, electricity, and HVAC system. Much of the interior's original fabric still exists.

Basement

The Conway House has a full brick basement that follows the basic plan for the first and second stories. The central hall extends the length of the house and measures eleven feet and six inches by thirty-seven feet. There are two rooms on each side of the central hall at the front of the house, each measuring seventeen feet and eight inches by twenty feet and six inches. There is an additional room at the rear of the house behind the west room measuring seventeen feet and six inches by fifteen feet and six inches, which, together with the end of the central hall, forms the rear ell. The basement floor is poured concrete. Because the first-floor joists are exposed, wiring and ductwork is apparent throughout.

The room to the east of the basement's central hall has two small south-facing windows with two horizontally placed lights under infilled brick arches. Access is gained to this room through a doorway that has been knocked through the brick wall of the central hall and is not original. This room, used as a storage area today, was used as a storage area in the original plan. The natural brick surface of the interior walls of this room is exposed, showing no evidence that the walls have ever been whitewashed.

The central hall of the basement has two small windows on the south wall. These windows are similar to those in the east and southwest rooms, but are slightly smaller. The central hall now houses the owner's washer and dryer. Formerly, at the rear of the hall there was an interior staircase leading from the basement to the first floor; however, it has been removed. The interior walls of this hall are whitewashed.

The room to the southwest of the central hall has two small south-facing windows with two horizontally placed lights under infilled brick arches. These windows, unlike those of the east room, are set into beveled openings in the brick wall. The west room has two entrances, one through an infilled arched doorway in the west wall of the central hall and one through the separate entrance on the west elevation. Both of these entrances are original to the house. In the west entrance, currently there is a space between the limestone sill at the base and the wooden sill of the outer door where the steps no longer exist. On the west wall of this room there is a beveled brick fireplace with an arched opening and limestone hearth. Above the fireplace, between the ceiling joists, a brick arch supports the hearth of the first floor. On the east wall of this room there is a square of plaster that

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holds old initials. The rest of the plaster on the walls was removed exposing the original whitewash. This room was originally used as an office, and contains the appendage of a servant bell-pull system.

At the rear of the basement in the northwest corner of the house is another room. This room also has two separate entrances, one from the west wall of the central hall and an exterior entrance from the north elevation. The north wall of this room has a wooden staircase leading from the interior limestone sill to the exterior wooden sill outside at the ground level. This entrance is the only one to the basement that is currently in use. Two windows flank it. The window on the north wall west of this entrance is a small window with two lights, set in an infilled brick arch. The window on the north wall and east of this entrance is filled in with cement blocks under an infilled brick arch. The entrance on the west wall of the central hall is a wooden door under an infilled brick arch. The west wall of this room contains a modest brick fireplace with an arched opening. This room is whitewashed and today is used for storage.

First Floor

The first-floor spaces are the most grand of the house. This floor contains a broad central hall running the length of the house with large rooms to the east and west. Most of the fabric on the first floor is original to the house with the exception of the plaster. The central hall measures eleven feet and six inches by thirty-eight feet and contains a staircase leading to a broad landing and the second floor. There are entrances with paneled wooden double doors from the north and south elevations in this hall. Above the door on the south elevation is a large semi-circular fanlight. On the west wall beyond the doorway to the large west room is a paneled elliptical-arched opening leading to a small servant hallway. The walls are plastered and painted. The original wooden flooring of this central hall was replaced in 1997.⁴ Around the perimeter is a wooden baseboard and chair rail. In the central hall there is a thin strip of picture rail molding near the ceiling. A light fixture is attached to the ceiling of this hall. Another electric chandelier is attached to the ceiling of the second floor and lowered through the stairwell.

The east room of the first floor measures twenty-one feet by eighteen feet and is currently used as a living room. The entrance is through a wooden paneled door with paneled reveals. There are three windows in this room with wooden molding surrounds atop inset wooden panels. Two are spaced evenly on the south wall and one is centrally located on the north wall. On the east wall there is a brick fireplace with stone surround and a wooden mantel with fluted columns that stand out from the wall. The walls in this room are also plastered, painted, and contain a chair rail and baseboard. An electric chandelier hangs from the ceiling. This room originally served as the formal receiving room or parlor.

The southwest room also measures twenty-one feet by eighteen feet and contains a wood-paneled door with paneled reveals off the central hall. Similar to the east room, it has plastered walls with a baseboard and chair rail, but also contains a strip of picture rail molding near the ceiling. This molding has a decorative floral swag design, however, replacement molding without decoration is also present. The windows on the south and west walls of the room are like those in the east room with molding and paneling. Two of these windows are located on the south wall. The west wall contains a brick fireplace with stone surround and wooden mantel with fluted columns that stand out from the wall. To the north of the fireplace is the third window. The north wall of this room contains a secondary entrance with wood-paneled door and paneled reveals leading to the servant hallway. This room is used as a formal dining room today.

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North of the dining room a servant hallway, measuring eighteen feet by six feet and six inches, leads from the central hall to an exterior door on the west elevation. This exterior double-door entrance has a decorative rectangular transom above it. This servant hallway provides access to a small room and contains a secondary staircase with landing to the second floor. The small room measures nine feet by sixteen feet and is currently used as a kitchen. The walls are plastered, covered in modern wallpaper, and contain a chair rail and baseboard. The room contains two windows on the north wall. A brick fireplace with wooden mantel is located on the west wall and to the right of this fireplace is an original built-in cupboard. There is currently a countertop and kitchen appliance area in the middle of the room and on the east wall. The flooring in the servant hallway and small room was replaced in 1997.⁵

Second Floor

The second floor continues with the same layout as the basement and the first floor. On the second story, however, there is an additional small room at the front center of the house. All of the windows on the second floor are six-over-nine double-hung sash with large lights and thin muntins set in beveled casings surrounded by wooden molding. All of the flooring of the second story is original.

The central hall is mostly taken up with the staircase and small room at the front of the house but has a wide landing connecting the east and west rooms. The small square room measures eleven feet and six inches, and today is used as a bathroom. A window is centrally located on the south wall. The west wall contains a large modern closet. The entrance to the room lies on the north wall, which has a wooden doorway. The east wall contains the toilet, sink, and bathtub. The walls of the bathroom are plastered and covered with modern wallpaper. In the ceiling are the access doors to the attic and an electric light fixture. This room, referred to as a crib room, would have served as a nursery.

The east room on the second floor measures eighteen feet by twenty-one feet and is used as the master bedroom. This room is laid out exactly like the east room of the first floor, with the two evenly spaced windows on the south wall, the centrally located window on the north wall, and the fireplace with the addition of a shallow closet on the east wall. The fireplace has a plastered surround, a decorative wooden mantel, and a limestone hearth. The west wall contains a wood-paneled door with paneled reveals. The walls are plastered, painted, and have a wooden baseboard, chair rail and picture rail molding. In the center of the ceiling is a light fixture.

The southwest room on the second floor is also laid out similar to its first-floor counterpart, but it does not have a third window on the west wall. It has two windows on the south wall, a wooden threshold and paneled doorway on the north wall, and a wood-paneled doorway with paneled reveals on the east wall. The fireplace on the west wall has a mantel that matches the one in the east room. Next to this fireplace is a shallow closet. The walls are plastered and have baseboard and chair rail around the room. A light fixture is located in the ceiling. This room is used currently as a guest bedroom.

Though the doorway on the southwest room's north side is the back room of the house, connecting to the secondary staircase from the first-floor servant hallway. Due to the incorporation of the secondary staircase this north room has resulted in an L shape and measures sixteen feet and six inches by sixteen feet at its widest part. This room has two windows on its north wall, and a fireplace on its west wall. The fireplace is similar, with

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matching mantel and adjacent cabinet, to the one in the butler's pantry directly below on the first floor. Interestingly, it has a Civil War bayonet inserted between the bricks that has not been removed. The walls are plastered, painted, and contain baseboard and chair rail molding. The ceiling holds a light fixture. This room now serves as an office or library and originally served as another bedroom or nanny's room.

Attic

A double-door entry located in the ceiling of the bathroom accesses the attic, one door of which is a replacement. The attic area is one large room echoing the L shaped layout of the house with massive rafters holding the large slate roof. There are two large lunettes, one on the west wall and one on the north wall where the roof is not continuous. On the east wall where the roof is cut away there is a small six-over-six double-hung sash window with large lights and thin muntins. Its original wide flooring still exists and the space is empty today except for the HVAC system. Original baseboard is present except for the south wall, where it is missing.

END NOTES

¹Conway, Moncure D., *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (Houghton, Mifflin and Company, New York, NY, 1904), p. 356. According to Moncure Conway, the original front door was battered down by Union soldiers upon first entering Falmouth in 1862

²Mr. Burley Payne, brother of Laney Payne, owner, rebuilt the corner of this area in the 1960's according to Mrs. William Lynn. Conversation with Mrs. Lynn on January 2003.

³This occurred in 1997 by previous owners, Steven and Leslie Fore.

⁴This occurred in 1997 by previous owners, Steven and Leslie Fore, using remilled heart pine, tongue and grooved flooring.

⁵Ibid.

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**Conway House
Stafford County, Virginia**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Conway House, constructed in 1807 for wealthy merchant and mill owner James Vass in the Rappahannock River port town of Falmouth in Stafford County, Virginia is a well-preserved example of Federal-style architecture. As the town's most prominent dwelling, the house presents a symmetrical front and an unusual flounder form at its eastern end. The house retains many of its original features and meets National Register Criterion C for its distinctive architecture. Later the home of author, clergyman, and abolitionist Moncure Daniel Conway, the dwelling was occupied by soldiers and used as a Union hospital during the Civil War.

HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Conway House sits on the banks of the Rappahannock River in the Falmouth Historic District in Falmouth, Virginia, which was listed on the National Register in 1970. The town lies approximately one and one-quarter miles upriver and opposite from the center of its neighboring city of Fredericksburg. The historic district lies in and around a valley carved out of Stafford Heights at the falls of the river. Because of Falmouth's strategic location, it proved to be the furthest navigable port inland on the Rappahannock—a fact that made it prosper as an early American milling, trade, and manufacturing center from the mid-eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Although the House of Burgesses created both Fredericksburg and Falmouth with the same act of legislation in 1727, Fredericksburg was slow to industrialize and develop as a port community. By 1758, Falmouth had surpassed the growth of Fredericksburg as the area's leading trading center, bringing merchants from far and near to the port town.ⁱ Mills, warehouses, and factories reflected the growth of the town, and nearby, a large iron foundry was established.ⁱⁱ Falmouth was also the port of entry for slaves coming into the region.ⁱⁱⁱ

Falmouth's residents included merchants, millers, and manufacturers. One such entrepreneur was James Vass, original owner of the Conway House.^{iv} Vass immigrated to Falmouth from Forres, Scotland.^v He was an influential and upstanding citizen of the town, serving as member and chairman of many organizations, associations, and committees throughout his lifetime.^{vi} In addition to being a merchant of goods, Vass also owned a large wheat mill in town.^{vii} As a leading businessman at the peak of Falmouth's economic prosperity, Vass exhibited his success and influence by residing in the largest brick house in the town.^{viii} It stood approximately 300 feet directly in front of Falmouth's docks on the flood plain of the Rappahannock.^{ix} This massive residential structure occupied a location clearly visible to passengers and tradesmen coming into the town. The house, grand in material and design, reflected an affluent inhabitant, and a prosperous community.

The Federal style of architecture was extremely popular in port cities of the eastern seaboard of the United States from 1780 to 1820. Federal homes were especially fashionable among wealthy merchants of those port cities.^x The Conway House has many of the typical elements of the Federal style of architecture.^{xi} It is a brick two-story residence over a full basement with a symmetrical five-bay front (south) facade, slate side-gabled roof and interior-end chimneys. A large semi-circular fanlight and small entry porch accent its centrally located

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doorway. Jack arches and shutters accent nine-over-nine and six-over-nine sash windows with thin muntins. The bricks on this primary elevation are laid in Flemish bond. Other archetypal Federal details of the home include lunettes located on the north and west elevations, including one decorated with dentils. The transom above the north entrance contains a handsome decorative pattern created by interlacing muntins.

Although representative of the Federal style in many respects, the Conway House features an unusual form called a "flounder."^{xiii} More often seen in Alexandria, another port town forty miles to the north, the flounder form has part of its roof in the shape of an inclined plane giving the appearance of half a gable roof. Viewed from the front façade the house appears to be a complete symmetrical, five-bay, central-hall-plan dwelling. However, from the east elevation half consists of a flounder and half is a rear ell, creating an L.^{xiii}

Falmouth's prosperity declined as the Rappahannock River silted in, making the waters far too shallow for large ships to dock in the port town. Additionally, the first bridge was constructed crossing the Rappahannock in the early nineteenth century making two ports (Falmouth and Fredericksburg), one on either side of the river, unnecessary.^{xiv} These two factors essentially put an end to the growth of the town and effectively moved the center of commerce across the river from Falmouth to Fredericksburg. The economic base of the town began to dwindle, leaving residents to move their businesses across the river. Because the area's economy was uncertain, residents were slow to finance grand homes such as the Conway House, which still remains grand in comparison to its surrounding buildings.

Although Falmouth's growth as an important trading community had declined, the Conway House remained a distinguished residence for area citizens. William C. Beale, a close friend of Vass and wealthy fellow merchant, next purchased the home and lived there with his newlywed wife Jane Howison for the first few years of their marriage.^{xv} Mrs. Beale recorded that she spent five happy years in "that brick house on the bank of the river so shaded by trees."^{xvi} In 1838, Walker Peyton Conway purchased the property for his family.^{xvii} W. P. Conway, presiding justice of the Stafford County Court for over thirty years, and his wife, Margaret Daniel Conway, were devout Methodists and utilized a room in their basement as a place of worship.^{xviii} One of their sons, Moncure Daniel Conway, was a nineteenth-century internationally known author, lecturer, clergyman, and abolitionist.^{xix}

During the Civil War the Conway House became a Union hospital in April 1862.^{xx} Conway gives a fascinating account in his autobiography as follows:

When the Union army under General McDowell entered Falmouth... The house was left empty and locked up, the house servants remaining in their abode in the back. Yet as the Union soldiers were filing past a shot was fired from a window of the Conway House, or from a corner of its yard, and a soldier wounded. It was never known who fired the shot; our Negroes assured me that the house was locked and watched. The Union soldiers alarmed and enraged, battered down the doors, and, finding no one, began vengeance on the furniture. It happened, however, that in my mother's bedroom was hung a portrait of myself, and this caught the eye of a youth who had known

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me in Washington. He cried to his furious comrades to stop. The servants were called in, and were much relieved when they found that it was to speak of my portrait. Old Eliza cried, 'It's mars Monc the preacher, as good abolitionist as any of you!'... It was some consolation to me that, though long regarded as the black sheep of the family, my portrait saved Conway house from destruction, for that was contemplated. The house was of brick, and the largest in Falmouth; it was made a hospital, and the seriously wounded soldier was its first inmate...

It was in Conway House hospital that Walt Whitman, for a time, nursed the suffering soldiers.^{xxxi} According to Whitman's journal, he describes hospital scenes during his trip to Falmouth in 1862.^{xxii}

"In recognition of the brilliant services of the regiment on the 11th and 13th of December," (1862) the Twentieth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was appointed provost guard of the army, and given winter quarters in the town of Falmouth. Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. of the regiment, was the provost marshal.^{xxiii} "The Twentieth was one of the most notable regiments in the service... It is not unworthy of mention that it was officered largely by young men fresh from Harvard University. For this reason it was popularly known as the Harvard regiment."^{xxiv} The attic of the Conway House attests to the soldiers' occupancy with the recovery of numerous artifacts.^{xxv} On the interior trim of the south elevation attic window is the name of "Edwin H. Eames Bloody F 20th Mass." Private Eames enlisted in Company F as a 17-year-old drummer, and survived the war.^{xxvi} Additionally, the Conway House has been identified in three separate Civil War sketches.^{xxvii}

The Conway House was home to a family truly divided by the tragic struggle of the American Civil War. Walker Peyton Conway left Falmouth in the face of the advancing Union Army in April 1862, by crossing the river to Fredericksburg. Shortly afterward he supported the Confederacy by taking up residency in Richmond and engaging in the banking business.^{xxviii} His wife, Margaret Daniel Conway, held antislavery views and went to live with their daughter Mildred and her husband in Pennsylvania.^{xxix} Moncure Daniel Conway was an abolitionist exiled from his home, while his two younger brothers served in the Confederate army. Peter Vivian Daniel Conway enlisted in the famous Fredericksburg Artillery.^{xxx} Richard Moncure Conway enlisted in the 5th Texas Infantry, and later joined Terry's Texas Rangers (8th Texas Cavalry).^{xxxi} The Conway family experienced a devastating division and separation by a tragedy of epic proportions.

Moncure Conway emerged as a rare abolitionist from the South. In Professor John d'Entremont's biography of Conway, "There always had been a tension in Conway between his drive for independence and his need for interdependence, a compulsion to confront and a craving to reconcile, an impulse toward conflict and a longing for peace. For much of his life he had kept these competing needs balanced, though uneasily. The Civil War had disrupted the balance and forced him to take sides actively in the bloodiest conflict in American history. It had burdened him with the most macabre of ironies, compelling him to fight the violent subjugation of one people by violently subjugating another – his own people."^{xxxii}

The following is taken from a manuscript by Moncure Conway, "Letter from Virginia," October 1875.

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My old Virginian home... I departed 17 years ago under circumstances more grievous than any physical cloud or storm. I had offended against the despot slavery by thought and word, and the kindness of a few could not save me from the bitterness and wrath of the many. Under the threats of some who had once been my playmates and schoolmates I was compelled to leave the home of my parents, the land of my birth; and as I sailed away that day on the broad Potomac, and looked back on the state I passionately loved, its beauty was darkened by a sense of that impending tragedy which since has fallen upon it. On that soil of Virginia from which I was driven with heart full of love for those I was leaving, hosts were soon gathered with rifle and cannon. On the banks of that gentle and silvery river which to my childish eyes seemed far away from the great world, are now thirty thousand graves of young men who might have loved each other but for the remorseless decree of that fell power which held neither love nor life of value compared with its wild and guilty phantasy that man could hold property in man. These events have never changed my feeling towards my early home, my kindred, or even those who threatened me. I was never accustomed to look upon them in any other light than as more unhappy victims of a hereditary evil than I was. Their anger and alienation from me I traced beyond themselves to the tyrant institution which swayed with perpetual terror. It was perfectly true that even my poor presence was a danger. If human beings were to be held in bondage no one hostile to the wrong could move among them without danger of exciting the slaves to some outbreak. Fear can turn even soft hearts to stone. But I knew these hearts from infancy; and I knew that when the wrong was gone, and the danger, and the fear, they would again beat warm with love and generosity. And it was under this conviction that there drew within me that longing to revisit my old home which, for a space, has parted me from you.^{xxxiii}

The Conway House today is unusual in that its original architectural fabric remains intact. Most area houses during the Civil War were devastated by ravaging armies of occupation. Falmouth changed hands many times, and was occupied for months at a time, including the severely cold winter of 1862-1863.^{xxxiv} Many interiors and sometimes, entire buildings were dismantled for firewood.^{xxxv} Because the Conway House was utilized as a hospital, it received special protection and respect. It is remarkable that following Reconstruction, changes of ownership, abandonment, and flooding, the Conway House has endured, and stands in its original grandeur.

The Conway House is a testimony to early American entrepreneurship by those immigrating to a new world where there was the dream of new opportunities and hope for a bright future by an industrious freedom-loving people. This is fully illustrated by the Scots who contributed to Falmouth's early success by establishing many of the town's commercial enterprises and bringing about widespread prosperity to the area.^{xxxvi} Pride and status were exhibited in homes of distinction. The architecture of the Conway House is a fine example of a national style reflective of those new enterprising citizens, proud of their hard work and success. The Conway House also stands as a silent reminder of an American family caught up in the whirlwind of Civil War events that

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defined the nation that we have become today.

NOTES

ⁱ Felder, Paula S., "The Falmouth Story: A View From the Twentieth Century," Fredericksburg, VA: Historic Publications of Fredericksburg.

ⁱⁱ Kelly, Maggie, "1720: Falmouth, VA." Found in vertical file "ST F General," in the Virginiana Room of the Central Rappahannock Regional Library, 1201 Caroline Street, Fredericksburg, VA.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eby, Jerrilynn, *They Called Stafford Home: The Development of Stafford County, Virginia from 1600 until 1865*, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), p. 298. For an additional source see *Cunningham and Company, A Scottish Firm in Virginia*, vol. 20, (Edinburg, Scotland, Scottish History Society, 1984), pp. 4-5.

^{iv} Conway, Moncure Daniel, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 11. See also Stafford County Deed Book AA, pp. 268-270.

^v Correspondence between Mr. & Mrs. Norman L. Schools and James Vass's great-great grandson, Lachlan Maury Vass, Jr., 102 Grande Hills Blvd., Bush, LA, November 18, 2002.

^{vi} Various articles from the Fredericksburg Newspaper *Virginia Herald* name Vass as a merchant selling goods (5/21/1802); bank director (1/1/1807); Commissioner of the Falmouth canal project (8/5/1815); on the board for the Female Charity School (3/11/1820); on the Falmouth school board (12/17/1825); as well as owning the Thistle Mill (9/16/1812).

^{vii} Johnson, John Janney, "The Falmouth Canal and Its Mills: An Industrial History," *The Journal of Fredericksburg History*, vol. 2, (Fredericksburg, VA, Billingsley Printing and Engraving for Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., 1997), p. 28.

^{viii} Conway, Moncure Daniel, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 11.

^{ix} Eby, Jerrilynn, *They Called Stafford Home: The Development of Stafford County, Virginia from 1600 until 1865*, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), p. 298.

^x McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York, NY, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 156-158.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4.

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^{xiii} Harvey, Karen G., and Stansfield, Ross, *Alexandria, A Pictorial History*, (Norfolk, Virginia, The Donning Company/Publishers/Inc., 1977), p. 128. For additional examples and description see: Cox, Ethelyn, *Historic Alexandria Virginia, Street by Street*, (Alexandria, Virginia, Historic Alexandria Foundation, 1976), p.48; Somerville, Mollie, *Washington Walked Here, Alexandria on the Potomac*, (Washington, DC, The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1970) p. 97; Martin, Christopher, "Hope Deferred: The Origins and Development of Alexandria's Flounder Houses," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, II*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 111-119.

^{xiii} Eby, Jerrilynn, *They Called Stafford Home: The Development of Stafford County, Virginia from 1600 until 1865*, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), p. 299.

^{xiv} Felder, Paula S., "The Falmouth Story: A View From the Twentieth Century," Fredericksburg, VA: Historic Publications of Fredericksburg, p. 5.

^{xv} Stafford County Deed Book C O B, p. 306.

^{xvi} Beale, Jane Howison, *The Journal of Jane Howison Beale*, (n.p., 1995), For Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., p. 20. Jane Howison Beale's journal covers the period 1850 to 1862 after the Beale family had taken up its new residency in the town of Fredericksburg. This journal provides a dramatic detailed account of her experiences during the battle of Fredericksburg. Interestingly on page 91 she records a personal visit from Mrs. W. P. Conway, the mother of Moncure Daniel Conway.

^{xvii} Conway, Moncure Daniel, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 11.

^{xviii} d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator: Moncure Daniel Conway: The American Years, 1832-1865* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 5, 24-25. "Although most of the Methodist classes were segregated by sex, church records from 1846 show the class at Conway House to have been the only one composed of both sexes. Its thirteen women and six men reflected the sexual composition of the congregation as a whole." For an additional account see Conway's *Autobiography, Memoirs and Experiences* vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), pp. 19-20, where he writes, "...the basement of my father's house in Falmouth was fitted up for evening prayer – meetings, which were held there twice every week." In addition, "Some of those gathered in the basement he (Conway's father) had picked up out of the ditch.... As I sang in the basement second treble to my mother, I dreamed of the distant beauties of Palestine, though the cedars of Lebanon were thick on our Falmouth hills, and no rose of Sharon ever equaled those of our garden. The wondrous Judas – tree at our door, and fig – trees, myrtles, fireflies, meadows, crystal streams, all the materials of a paradise were around me while I sang of things far off and never to be attained."

^{xix} Eby, Jerrilynn, *They Called Stafford Home: The Development of Stafford County, Virginia from 1600 until 1865*, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), p. 299. In another source, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), pp.

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190-191, Conway describes a harrowing experience in 1855, when he "...went up with a light heart to my dear old home in Falmouth.... Next morning as I was walking through the main street a number of young men, some of them former schoolmates, hailed me and surrounded me; they told me that my presence in Falmouth could not be tolerated. 'There is danger to have that kind of man among our servants, and you must leave.' By this time a number of the rougher sort had crowed up and there were threats. Then a friendlier voice said on account of their respect for my parents and family they wished to avoid violence, and hoped that I would leave.... It was a heavy moment when I left.... It was exile." For a summary of Moncure Conway's life and achievements see "Who Was Moncure Conway," South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL. For an in depth work of Moncure Conway see d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator: Moncure Daniel Conway: The American Years, 1832-1865*, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987). Mr. d'Entremont is Associate Professor of History at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. His study of Moncure Conway received the Allan Nevins Prize of the Society of American Historians.

^{xx} Conway, Moncure Daniel, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, (New York, NY, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 11. Conway states that the house was used as a hospital 1862 – 1865. An additional reference by Conway appears in "Hunting a Mythical Pall Bearer," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. LXXII, (New York, NY, Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1886) p. 211. For an account of the first occupation of Falmouth by Union troops see Noel G. Harrison's *Fredericksburg Civil War Sites*, (Lynchburg, VA, H. E. Howard, Inc., 1995), pp. 68-69. Additionally, there is evidence in the Conway House that spikes and Civil War bayonets were driven into the back of two fireplaces and the back of a built-in closet, and utilized as hangers by the soldiers.

^{xxi} *Ibid.*, pp. 353-354. The following excerpt is taken from White, Russell C., ed., *The Civil War diary of Wyman S. White, First Sergeant of Company F, 2nd United States Sharpshooter Regiment, 1861 – 1865*, (Baltimore, MD, Butternut and Blue, 1993), pp. 63-68, that in April 1862 "The company was detailed to go on guard duty in the village (Falmouth).... I was put on guard at a house used as a hospital."

^{xxii} d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator: Moncure Daniel Conway: The American Years, 1832-1865*, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 176. In *The Better Angel, Walt Whitman in the Civil War*, by Roy Morris, Jr., on pages 59 – 61, "A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim," was Walt Whitman's first important poem of the Civil War from his personal experience and notes at Falmouth, Virginia. This poem was included in his work: *Drumtaps*.

^{xxiii} Bruce, Brevet Lt.-Colonel George A., *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1861-1865*, (Boston, MA, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), p. 227. In the same source on page 221, "The casualties in the regiment were over thirty per cent of its strength on the 11th and a little more than thirty-three on the 13th...." The Twentieth Massachusetts was one of the regiments that first crossed the Rappahannock River to fight in the streets of Fredericksburg on December 11th, losing many men only to fight again on December 13th. Because of the bravery exhibited, and the high casualty loss, the regiment was rewarded by being assigned as provost guard of the army and given winter quarters in the vacant houses of Falmouth. For an additional account see, Howe, Mark DeWolfe, ed., *Touched with Fire: Civil War Letters and Diary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.*, (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 85. Captain Oliver

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Wendell Holmes, Jr. later became the celebrated U.S. Supreme Court Justice as noted in Miller, Francis Trevelyan, *The Photographic History of the Civil War, 10 vols.*, (New York, NY, The Review of Reviews Company, 1912), p. 24.

^{xxiv} Ibid., p. vii.

^{xxv} Discovered in 1998 by Norman Schools, owner. Some of the items found include: accoutrement plates, uniform buttons, bullets and cartridges, rifle parts, Civil War era playing cards, an era ink pen, and lice combs; remnants of tents, clothing, knapsacks, and accoutrement straps and belts; an era medicine vial, a soldier's hymnbook dated January 16, 1863, a camp candle holder with patent date Nov. 1861, many remnants of Civil War newspapers, and numerous small items.

^{xxvi} National Archives, Military Records. In addition: *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War* cited in Historical Data Systems, Inc., Duxbury, Massachusetts, lists Private Edwin H. Eames as wounded 10/27/1864 Boydton Plank Road, VA.

^{xxvii} Sketch #1 by Edwin Forbes, Falmouth, May 1862, Library of Congress. Sketch #2 by John G. Keyser, Company H, 24th New Jersey, March 1863, Cumberland County, New Jersey Historical Society. Sketch #3 by an unknown Union soldier. This wartime sketch surfaced in 2002 at the National Civil War Show in Richmond, Virginia, and purchased by a private collector from California. A copy of this sketch is in the possession of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Norman L. Schools. This sketch depicts a large encampment adjacent to the Conway House and is identified as "1 Minnesota Camp." For an account of the 1st Minnesota Regiment including their camp at Falmouth see Moe, Richard, *The Last Full Measure, The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, NY, 1993.

^{xxviii} Hayden, Horace E., *Virginia Genealogies*, (Baltimore MD, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 284.

^{xxix} d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator: Moncure Daniel Conway: The American Years, 1832-1865*, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 152.

^{xxx} Krick, Robert K., *Fredericksburg Artillery*, (Lynchburg, VA, H.E. Howard, Inc., 1986), p. 99. In addition d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator*, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 217 states that "The war had been hard on him (P.V.D. Conway), dealing him a nearly fatal bout with typhoid plus a leg shattered by an artillery shell. But he had survived, and now wore his wound as a badge of honor."

^{xxxi} Hayden, Horace E., *Virginia Genealogies*, (Baltimore, MD, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 287. According to Civil War Research and Genealogy Database, Historical Data System, Inc., the 5th Texas Infantry was assigned to the Department of Northern Virginia in the early part of the war. Its Division assignment was located at Dumfries, Virginia, just north of Stafford County. This may be the reason for Richard Conway joining a Texas organization.

^{xxxii} d'Entremont, John, *Southern Emancipator: Moncure Daniel Conway: The American Years, 1832-*

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1865, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 219.

^{xxxiii} Conway, Moncure Daniel, "Letter from Virginia, October 1875," Columbia University Libraries, Special Collections, Manhattan, New York, NY.

^{xxxiv} Bruce, Brevet Lt.-Colonel George A., *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1861 – 1865*, (Boston, MD, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), p. 228.

^{xxxv} The Union Church in Falmouth is a separate property adjacent to the rear of the Conway property. According to a document (undated) in possession of William G. Shelton, Jr., Hartwood, Virginia, Trustee of the Union Church Cemetery, "The interior of the church was entirely destroyed by the Federals. The pews were all chopped to pieces and taken down and practically all the woodwork was cut up." This document gives its source of information from Mr. H.G. Lightner – oldest citizen of Falmouth, Virginia. An additional source is "Religion in America 276, Churches of Olde Falmouth Towne," by W. G. Shelton, Jr., April 9, 1987. Mr. Shelton apparently used the information from Mr. Lightner as a source, although credit is not given. For two additional accounts of houses being dismantled see: (1) the Civil War journal of William Ray, *Four Years with the Iron Brigade*, (Cambridge, MA, Da Capo Press, 2002), p. 29 entry for December 3, 1861; p. 242 entry for December 15, 1863, and (2) letters from Child, Dr. William, *Letters from a Civil War Surgeon, Fifth New Hampshire Volunteers*, (Solon, ME, Polar Bear and Company, 2001), letter dated November 3, 1864, p. 291.

^{xxxvi} Eby, Jerrilynn, *They Called Stafford Home: The Development of Stafford County, Virginia from 1600 until 1865*, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), p. 296.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property are defined as Falmouth lot number 31 on tax map insert 53D in the Clerk's office of the circuit court of Stafford County, Virginia.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the property include the house and all of the lot of land historically associated with it.

CONWAY HOUSE
Sta. 1000 0.00, VA
Fredericksburg Quad

UTM's
= 18
E = 60
N 4244125

