

VLR-12/6/00 NRHP-2/16/01

(Rev. 10-90)  
NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 Abell-Gleason House

other names/site number DHR File No. 104-0008

#### 2. Location

street & number 521 North First Street not for publication

city or town Charlottesville vicinity \_\_\_\_\_

state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 540 Zip 22902

#### 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.)

H. Alexander Wise 12/29/00  
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 \_\_\_\_\_

**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>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	buildings
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	objects
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register     

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

  N/A  

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**6. Function or Use**

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

Cat:   Domestic   Sub:   Single Dwelling    
  Domestic     Secondary Structure    
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Cat:   Domestic   Sub:   Single Dwelling    
  Domestic     Secondary Structure    
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_ Mid-Nineteenth Century – Greek Revival \_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_ brick \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_ 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.
- X 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 1859 - 1950

Significant Dates 1859

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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: Collection of Madison and Brooke Spencer

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property One acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	721160	4212500	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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\_\_\_ 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: Courtney LaRuffa

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: 110 Commodore Lane telephone 757-357-4301

city or town Smithfield state VA zip code 23430

**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 Anne W. H. Spencer and Reid Madison Spencer

street & number 521 North First Street telephone 804-293-4605

city or town Charlottesville state VA zip code 22903

=====  
**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 Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

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### Summary Description

The Abell-Gleason House is located at the north end of North First Street in the Downtown Historic District of Charlottesville. Its principal (east) facade faces onto the street, and the northern and western boundaries of the property slope away from the house. The two-story brick building was built circa 1859 for Alexander Pope Abell in the Greek Revival style.<sup>i</sup> The eastern and western facades have three bays each, with the principal facade divided by raised brick pilasters. The pilasters were a common decorative feature used on buildings of this period in Charlottesville, but few such examples remain. The brick is laid in five-course American bond with Flemish variant.<sup>ii</sup> The secondary contributing structure on the property is a four room servants quarters, built at the same time as the main house.

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### Detailed Description

The Abell-Gleason House is a two-story brick building on a raised basement. The three-bay house measures 48 ½ feet north to south by 34 feet east to west. The front facade has four raised brick pilasters with doric inspired capitals faced with stucco to separate the three bays. This local building feature can also be seen on such prominent buildings as the Levy Opera House.

The front and rear facades both have wooden porches on raised brick piers. The front porch is reached by a monumental wooden staircase, adding a sense of grandeur to the house, as well as calling attention to the fact that the main floor of the house is actually one story above ground. The "Chippendale" railings were recently installed and reflect the local architecture of Thomas Jefferson's Lawn and Monticello. Originally, the roof of the porch served as a balcony for the top story of the house, with a soldered deck. Upon examination of the brick at this level, the ghostmarks of missing railings are visible. The rear porch, reached by a narrower wooden staircase, was recently restored to its original size by removing a later addition.

The exterior of the house is capped by a deep decorative cornice. Like the capitals of the pilasters, it is coated in stucco. Large Italianate brackets, of wood, embellish the cornice and recall popular pattern books of the period. The hipped roof is of slate, and four simple brick interior chimneys rise above it.

The plan of the main house remains largely unchanged. The Greek Revival house has a relatively open plan on the first floor, with a central hallway and grand staircase, reminiscent of Georgian houses in Virginia. Pairs of rooms on either side of the hall open into each other. The northwestern room now functions as the kitchen, having been moved upstairs from the basement. The flow of the second story plan has been interrupted by the addition of bathrooms, which partially fill in what was a gracious hall. The bathrooms were added in the 1940s and have done little to alter the exterior appearance of the house.

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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

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### Summary Statement of Significance

The Abell-Gleason House is an example of ante-bellum, Greek Revival architecture in Charlottesville. Few dwellings of this period remain intact, serving their originally intended purpose in this region. The form of the house has changed very little since its construction in 1859, with the majority of the alterations being superficial. The dwelling has been home to members of several prominent local families, and served as the residence of the mayor of Charlottesville in the 1940s.



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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

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### Historical Background

The house is sited on a parcel of land associated with the original 1755 land survey of Charlottesville.<sup>iii</sup> The property changed hands frequently prior to the construction of the dwelling. In 1859 the land was purchased by Alexander Pope Abell<sup>iv</sup> and he constructed the Greek Revival brick house upon the site, but was forced to sell it in 1888<sup>v</sup>, in order to pay off debts.

The house changed hands infrequently during its hundred and fifty year history. In 1891 the Page family purchased the house, and owned it until 1909. The owner, Carter H. Page, had been nominated for the county magistracy in 1850, but was not appointed to the position.<sup>vi</sup>

In 1909 the house was sold to Gertrude Waller Massie. In 1943 Ms. Massie sold the property to Frank C. Burnley.<sup>vii</sup> Frank Burnley was an employee of Charlottesville Hardware, and eventually became its owner. His "one absorbing interest was the restoration of the Massie home on North First Street from a state of dilapidation to that of its former elegance."<sup>viii</sup> Burnley owned the house only three years, and when he married he sold the property to the Gleasons.

J. Emmet and Helen S. Gleason were arguably the most significant owners of the building. They purchased the house in 1946, and lived there until 1974. The Gleasons made the changes that brought the house into the modern era, adding electricity and plumbing. The addition of plumbing caused the greatest change to the form of the house, though it is barely visible on the exterior.

The upstairs of the house originally had an open, central hallway flanked on either side by two bedrooms. The addition of plumbing created the necessity to fill in this space, diminishing the grand scale of the upstairs sitting room. While the hallway still provides views out the front and rear of the house it is no longer a continuous view through the upper space.

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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

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Mr. Gleason was a prominent figure in local politics. He served on the City Council of Charlottesville for twelve years. He was elected mayor for the term 1942-44, and served eight years on the City Library Board.<sup>ix</sup> During the Gleasons' residence there, they frequently opened the doors to the public. As mayor, Mr. Gleason allowed use of the house for parties and funerals, weddings and wakes.

The Gleasons sold the house in 1974 to local architect Robert Vickery. Until recently, he served as a professor of architecture and preservation at the University of Virginia. He is also a principle founder of the architecture firm VMDO.

It was during the Vickery residence that the house experienced the most superficial changes. He altered the interior of the house to reflect his modern tastes, adding floating columns between the southern two drawing rooms. Between the northern rooms he cut decorative shapes through the plaster walls, and subdivided the northwestern room. He also added a window-greenhouse in this room, changing the exterior appearance of the facade. The window-greenhouse is the only change Vickery made to the house that still remains. The current owners have worked to restore the house to its 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance.

The fact that this is one of the few grand residences from this period still intact in Charlottesville speaks of its significance. Though the original size of the property has been diminished due to the sales of parcels adjacent to the house by both Abell,<sup>x</sup> and the Gleasons<sup>xi</sup> it has done little to alter the way the house works in its setting. The residential quality of the neighborhood still exists, with this house as the grand, northern terminus of the street.

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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

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Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Albemarle County Deedbook 58, (July 15, 1859) 243.

<sup>ii</sup> K. Edward Lay, The Architecture of Jefferson Country: Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000) 31.

<sup>iii</sup> Alice Bowsher, "The Abell-Gleason House, 521 North First Street, Charlottesville, Virginia," diss., U of Virginia, 1975, 1.

<sup>iv</sup> Albemarle County Deed Book 58, (July 15, 1859) 243.

<sup>v</sup> Charlottesville Deed Book 1, (September 1, 1888) 148.

<sup>vi</sup> Bowsher 5.

<sup>viii</sup> Kate Burnley Wilson, "Frank Chancellor Burnley, 1890-1968," Memorial Book of Albemarle County Historical Society.

<sup>ix</sup> "James Emmett Gleason," Charlottesville Daily Progress 24 Nov. 1981.

<sup>x</sup> Bowsher 5.

<sup>xi</sup> Bowsher 5.

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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

Continuation Sheet

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### Bibliography

Albemarle County Deed Book 58, 1859.

Bowsher, Alice. "The Abell-Gleason House, 521 North First Street, Charlottesville, Virginia," Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1975.

Charlottesville Daily Progress. "James Emmett Gleason" obituary, November 24, 1981.

Charlottesville Deed Book 1, 1888.

Lay, K. Edward. *The Architecture of Jefferson Country: Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Wilson, Kate Burnley. "Frank Chancellor Burnley, 1890-1968." *Memorial Book of Albemarle County Historical Society*.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The Abell-Gleason House is identified as number 33-2, parcel one on the tax parcel maps for the City of Charlottesville, Virginia.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary for the one-acre property includes the main house and the servants' house, both of the resources historically associated with the property.

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Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA

Continuation Sheet

Section Photo List Page 9

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: Abell-Gleason House (DHR # 104-0008)  
Location: Charlottesville, VA  
Photographer: Courtney LaRuffa  
Date: June 2000  
Negative Number: 18,631  
Negatives Filed: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

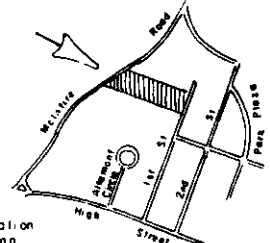
- 1 of 9 Oblique view of principal (east) façade
- 2 of 9 View of the northern façade showing window greenhouse
- 3 of 9 View of rear (west) façade
- 4 of 9 View of southern façade
- 5 of 9 Detail of main floor window with wood panels
- 6 of 9 View through entryway to stairhall
- 7 of 9 Typical bedroom
- 8 of 9 Typical mantel
- 9 of 9 View of entry façade of servants' house

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE  
PLANNING COMMISSION

CONWAY H. LINDSEY III  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
SECRETARY

DATE

Location Map



OWNER'S APPROVAL

THIS DIVISION IS MADE WITH MY  
CONSENT Roberto Vicens, contract purchaser

CERTIFICATION

THIS PLAT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED TO  
BE CORRECT Wm Morris Foster  
Wm MORRIS FOSTER, C.L.S.

LAFAYETTE REALTY  
CORPORATION  
D.B. 247 - 175

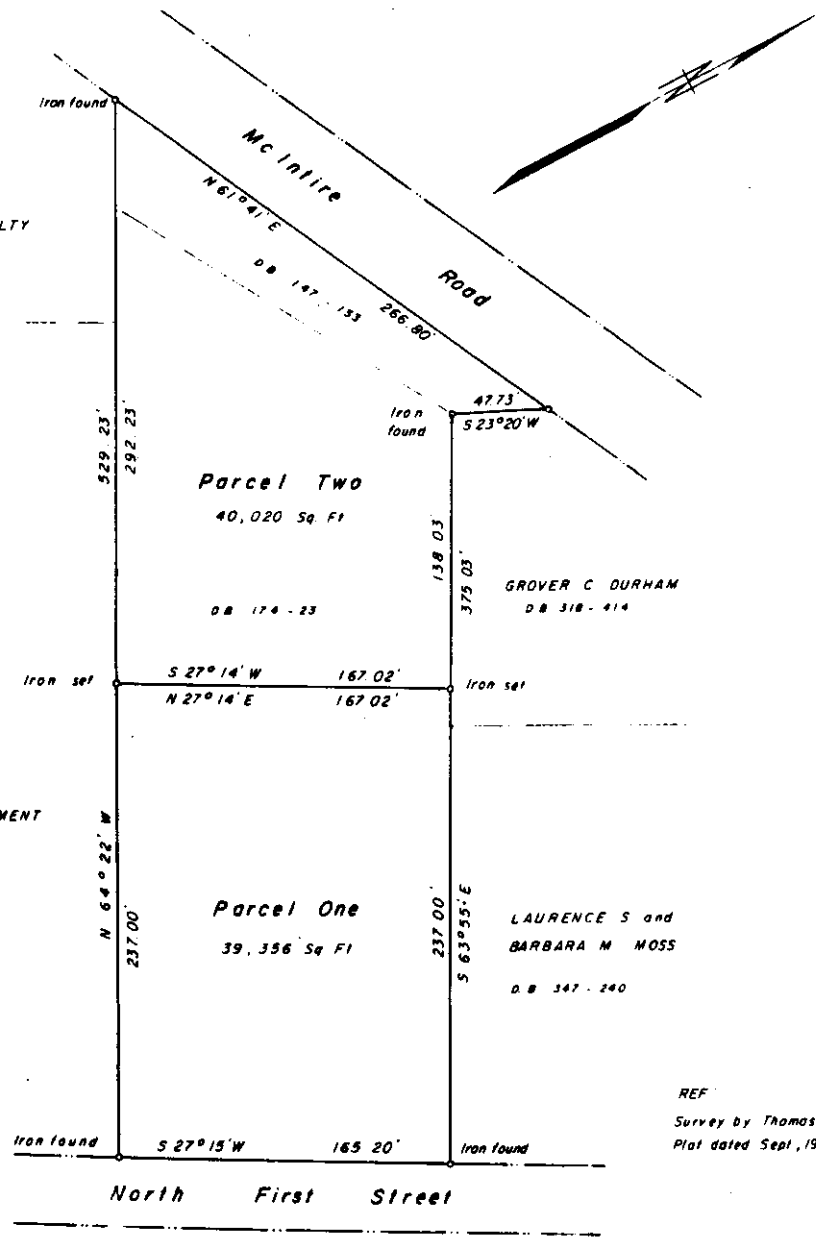
McINTIRE DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION  
D.B. 275 - 346

Parcel Two  
40,020 Sq Ft  
D.B. 174 - 23

Parcel One  
39,356 Sq Ft

GROVER C DURHAM  
D.B. 318 - 414

LAURENCE S and  
BARBARA M MOSS  
D.B. 347 - 240



REF  
Survey by Thomas D Blue, C.L.S.  
Plat dated Sept, 1963 File No 101

*Wm Morris Foster*

PARCELS ONE & TWO - A DIVISION OF  
**521 N. FIRST STREET**  
CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Wm. MORRIS FOSTER  
CERTIFIED LAND SURVEYOR  
Charlottesville, Virginia

Scale: 1" = 60' July 24, 1974

*TWB OK*  
2/3/74

Abell-Gleason House  
Charlottesville, VA.  
ZONE 17  
EASTING  
721160  
NORTHING  
4212500  
CHARLOTTESVILLE  
EAST  
USGS

