



**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**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
GOVERNMENT	post office

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	secondary structure

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	BRICK
walls	BRICK
roof	METAL
other	WOOD
	GLASS

**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.)

- X 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.)

Property is:

- 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 fifty years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1893-1917

Significant Dates

1893

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:

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

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approximately 2.35 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 17 601340 4060310

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 J. Daniel Pezzoni  
organization J. Daniel Pezzoni, Preservation Consultant date July 18, 1996  
street & number PO Box 7825 telephone (540) 366-0787  
city or town Roanoke state Virginia zip code 24019-0825

**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 Richard M. Simmons, Jr., for Piedmont Trust Bank, Trustee  
street & number 207 Starling Avenue telephone (540) 638-3688  
city or town Martinsville state VA zip code 24112

**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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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### Summary

The Little Post Office is a one-story gable-fronted brick building dating to 1893 and used as a contract post office by John B. Anglin from 1893 to 1917. Connected to the rear of the brick office by mid-twentieth-century frame infill is a formerly separate wood-shingled frame outbuilding of unknown original function. Both brick and frame sections have brick chimneys and foundations and standing-seam metal roofing. The exterior and one-room interior of the northwest-facing building are detailed in the Queen Anne style. The building stands on a landscaped lot at 207 Starling Avenue in a historic residential neighborhood.

### Exterior and Interior Description

The brick walls and foundations of the front post office section are laid in seven-course American bond with corbeled segmental-arched door and window openings, a corbeled chimney cap, and brick lattice vents in the rear gable. Other details are executed in wood, with a molded cornice and cornice returns, a radially pierced circular vent in the front gable, molded door and window surrounds, and two-over-two sash windows. The front entry features a one-light transom and a door with panels defined by reeded trim and turned corner blocks, a Queen Anne glass upper panel bordered with yellow, red, and green panes, and an iron mail slot inscribed "Letters." Sheltering the entry is a gabled stoop with brackets and simple stick-work decoration. Leading up to the entry are modern brick steps with an iron handrail, and flanking the entry are wooden pegs set into the mortar joints--perhaps attachments for former signs or other fixtures.

The rear wing appears to have been built soon after the 1893 original section. Its exterior features include a side entry with an early glass-paneled door, bracketed stoop, and modern brick steps, an exterior gable-end stretcher-bond brick chimney, a six-over-nine sash window, molded rake boards, and a modern paneled wood enclosure concealing a modern heat pump. The wing is connected to the brick section by frame infill sided with wood shingles that appear to have weathered less than those of the wing itself. These shingles and the brick foundation under the infill appear to date to the mid-twentieth century. The wing may originally have served as a servants quarter or perhaps a laundry or kitchen, as suggested by its chimney.

The post office interior, now used as a private office, preserves key original features. Doors and windows have molded surrounds with turned corner blocks, and the mantel has molded pilasters, incised decoration in the frieze and pilaster caps, and a brick-lined fireplace and hearth. Historic wall treatments with wallpapered plaster above a painted beaded tongue-and-groove wainscot were considered to be in too poor condition to repair and were replaced in kind with sisal

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Section number 7 Page 2

**Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.**

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**Description (continued)**

wallpaper and unpainted tongue-and-groove during a recently completed rehabilitation. Other modern features include a drywall ceiling with recessed lights and a molded cornice, a wood floor (replacing earlier wood flooring), and book shelves to one side of the fireplace. The chimney mass, which projects into the room, was broadened several inches in order to accommodate a painting over the mantel. The interiors of the rear wing and infill have modern tongue-and-groove and painted paneling wall finishes, drywall or paperboard tile ceilings, and parquet or carpeted floors. The wing has been made into a sitting room with a hall and closet, and a kitchenette and bathroom have been inserted in the infill. The back fireplace, which would have opened into the sitting room, has been walled over; its mantel had been removed prior to rehabilitation. Formerly the nominated parcel included two historic residences dating to the turn of the twentieth century; the only fabric to survive from these houses, which were demolished in the 1950s or 1960s, is a low poured-concrete retaining wall along the Starling Avenue sidewalk. Presently the lot is shaded by mature oaks and other trees, and it is planted with saplings, ground covers, and flower beds newly set out.

**Integrity Statement**

The Little Post Office retains good exterior integrity, and its interior, although remodeled, retains key original features. On the exterior, the principal changes or additions are the infill connector, the modern brick steps at the front and side entries, and the heat pump enclosure, but these have been designed to harmonize with the building's appearance. Care has been taken to restore important character-defining features such as the stained-glass border of the front door window, which has two replacement panes that nearly match the originals in color.

**Architectural Analysis**

The Little Post Office is related to two traditional Virginia building types: the country or small-town post office and the domestic office. Fourth-class post offices, when they were not contained in general stores, often occupied small buildings scaled to the low volume of mail that passed through their doors. These simple buildings, usually gable-fronted like the Little Post Office, occasionally survive in Virginia's small towns and villages. The other building type, the domestic office, typically stood in the yard near a principal dwelling and could serve for any of a number of specific uses: a general farm office, a doctor's office and clinic, a lawyer's office, etc. Like the Little Post Office, domestic offices were often finely built and stylishly detailed buildings that served to ornament the grounds on which they stood.

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**Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.**

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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary**

The Little Post Office, located in the City of Martinsville, Virginia, is associated with an important period in the history of the U.S. postal service: the ascendancy of the star route mail delivery system during the late nineteenth century. U.S. mail contractor John B. Anglin had the post office built in 1893 to aid him in supervising hundreds of star route mail delivery contracts located throughout the United States. The diminutive brick building is detailed in the Queen Anne style, with milled ornament and stained-glass accents. Recently rehabilitated, the Little Post Office is a well-known landmark in Martinsville.

**Justification of Criteria**

The Little Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government at the local level of significance for its association with the U.S. postal service. The period of significance extends from 1893, the date of construction, until 1917, the date after which the building no longer served a postal function.

**Acknowledgments**

A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report. First and foremost, Richard M. Simmons, Jr., the owner of the property, sponsored the nomination and provided guidance throughout the process. Megaera Ausman, the historian for the Corporate Information Services office of the U.S. Postal Service in Washington, provided invaluable guidance on researching postal service history. Marty Perry and Michael Southern of the Kentucky and North Carolina state historic preservation offices respectively supplied comparative information on post offices in other states. Others who provided support include Dale Cunningham Box with the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, Carl deHart with the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society, and the staff of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

**Historical Background**

The Little Post Office is associated with the U.S. mail's star route service, the dominant delivery method in rural America during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The service developed as a consequence of railroad expansion before and after the Civil War, and star routes--so named for the custom of designating the routes with asterisks in postal records--served rural post offices located off the rail lines.<sup>1</sup> Star route carriers picked up mail at a rail depot and hauled it on

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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

horseback or by wagon to post offices along their route. These "fourth-class" post offices were usually located in country stores, which benefitted from the trade of local farmers coming to collect their mail. A description of a typical 1890s star route originating in Martinsville reads in part as follows:

"From Martinsville, by Figsboro, Shadygrove, and Crawford, to Snowcreek, 16 miles and back, six times a week. Leave Martinsville daily, except Sunday, on arrival of train from Danville, but not later than 4 p.m. Arrive at Shadygrove in three hours."<sup>2</sup>

Although individual star routes might be relatively small and inconsequential, collectively they represented a huge system embracing the entire nation. The number of routes stood at 16,410 in 1891, and a decade later star routes served an all-time high of 76,945 fourth-class post offices. The routes were awarded on a contract basis and were subject to speculation. As a postal service historian has explained:

"The star route carriers performed their services on the basis of a yearly contract. Usually the actual carrier did not make this contract directly with the government but rather with a contract speculator who had bargained with the government for a number of routes. Once he won the contracts, the speculator subcontracted them to the star carriers."<sup>3</sup>

John B. Anglin (1847-1932) was one of these contract speculators. Formerly a farmer in his native Patrick County, Virginia, Anglin and his second wife, Pocahontas Houchins (b. 1857), moved to Martinsville sometime after their marriage in 1881.<sup>4</sup> In August 1893, Pocahontas purchased a lot on Starling Avenue at the western edge of Martinsville's fast-growing East Church Street residential neighborhood. By 1894, the couple had built a two-story house (no longer standing) and, apparently, the one-story brick office that stands on the parcel and that served as the command center for Anglin's extensive star route contracting business.<sup>5</sup>

Exactly when J.B. Anglin became involved in star route contracting is unknown. By 1895 he already held over three hundred routes located in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. His Virginia contracts clustered primarily in the Martinsville area and in Southwest Virginia, but a few were located in other regions of the state. In 1900, Anglin identified himself as a "U.S.M. contractor" in the federal census, and a year later his contracts probably numbered over five hundred routes concentrated in the states of Virginia (200 routes), Georgia, and North Carolina, with others in Maryland, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Colorado.<sup>6</sup> Martinsville, as Anglin's base of operations,



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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

afforded him direct access to the national rail network and telegraph system via the Roanoke & Southern line, which was built through the town in the early 1890s. Star route contracting may have been a family specialty; other contractors with Anglin surnames appear in postal service registries as early as 1881.

Anglin involved himself in the star route system at the peak of its expansion, but by 1903 he had divested himself of all but three routes.<sup>7</sup> It is unclear why Anglin got out of the business so abruptly, but it probably had something to do with changes in the postal service during the period. The star route/contract system had long been unpopular for its inefficiency and susceptibility to corruption. In 1891, reform-minded Postmaster General John Wanamaker proposed an alternative: delivering mail directly to rural citizens at government cost--the rural free delivery system. RFD won immediate support from farmers organizations, and after a decade of experimentation and political wrangling--the star route speculators, carriers, and fourth-class postmasters naturally opposed the idea--the new system was implemented nationwide.<sup>8</sup> Between 1902 and 1905, the number of RFD routes quadrupled from 8,000 to 32,000, climbing to over 43,000 in 1926. Although star routes continued to operate (there were still 11,187 in 1916), Anglin apparently anticipated the coming end of his form of business.<sup>9</sup>

The Anglins still lived on Starling Avenue in June 1917, when they celebrated the marriage of their daughter Grace (b. 1890) at their home.<sup>10</sup> Within a few months, however, they sold their Starling Avenue lot for \$5,000 to Hugh N. Dyer, a vice-president of First National Bank in Martinsville. J.B. Anglin wrote to Dyer in November 1917 that he had "sold the mail route at \$2,800 profit," indicating continued involvement in mail contracting. The Anglins moved to Holdenville, Oklahoma, where one of their sons, W. Thomas (Tom; b. 1881), practiced law in the firm of Anglin & Hall. According to tradition, the Anglins went west in the hope that the move would lessen the discomfort of J.B.'s arthritis.<sup>11</sup>

The family prospered in Oklahoma. Of J.B., one historian has written, "shrewd business sense or native ability brought to him a large measure of success," and that even when he was well along in years he "took a lively interest in business affairs." With his youngest son, Charles H. (b. 1894), J.B. operated an automobile dealership in Holdenville. Tom Anglin, a graduate of the University of Virginia law school, rose from small town lawyer to state senator, speaker of the house in Oklahoma's 14th Legislature (1932), and a run (unsuccessful) for the Democratic nomination for governor of Oklahoma in 1934.<sup>12</sup>

Back in Martinsville, the Dyers converted the post office into use as a storage building. A son,

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**Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.**

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Horace Dyer, recalls:

"When I was old enough to remember I played in the building, and remember the sorting tables with stacked pigeon-holes just like the ones used in the main post office of that day which were used to sort mail."<sup>13</sup>

The frame outbuilding which is now connected to the post office stood separate in 1922, the first year the property is depicted on Sanborn maps, and it remained separate as late as 1947. Furniture manufacturer R. M. Simmons, Sr., acquired the Dyer property after World War II and had begun to remodel to post office as a personal office before his death. His heir, Richard M. Simmons, Jr., completed the rehabilitation in 1995.<sup>14</sup>

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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Endnotes

1. Melius, *American Postal Service*, 35; Fuller, *RFD*, 9.
2. *U.S. Advertisement of September 15, 1896 . . .*, 152. John B. Anglin held the contract for this route (contract no. 14935) in 1894 and 1895 (*Official Register . . . 1895*, vol. II, p. 1206).
3. Fuller, *RFD*, 90.
4. U.S. census, 1900 Henry County population schedules; Kirkman and Pilson, *Patrick County, Virginia, Marriages*, 4; and Pedigo and Pedigo, *History of Patrick and Henry Counties*, 84-85.
5. Henry County Deed Book 26, p. 357, and 28, p. 307. Tradition holds that the post office was built in 1893, a date supported by the court records and by the building's Queen Anne styling.
6. U.S. census; *Official Register . . . 1895*; and *Official Register . . . 1901*.
7. *Official Register . . . 1903*.
8. Fuller, *RFD*, 18-22.
9. Another reform, put into effect by 1916, was the stipulation that star route contractors live on or contiguous to their route and that they personally supervise mail delivery, both physical impossibilities for speculators like Anglin (Melius, *American Postal Service*, 35).
10. *Henry Bulletin*, June 22, 1917.
11. Henry County Deed Book 38, p. 334; Anglin to Dyer letter; and Richard M. Simmons, Jr., personal communication.
12. Pedigo and Pedigo, *History of Patrick and Henry Counties*, 84-86; Scales and Goble, *Oklahoma Politics*, 128, 180, and 182. Some accounts state--incorrectly--that Tom Anglin served as a governor of Oklahoma (*1995-96 Oklahoma Almanac*, 537-45).
13. Richard M. Simmons, Jr., personal communication, quoting a June 18, 1990, letter from Horace Dyer.
14. Richard M. Simmons, Jr., personal communication.

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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

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**Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.**

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Little Post Office nominated parcel are shown on the 1:100-scale map that accompanies this report.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Little Post Office nominated parcel correspond to the present property lines of the 34,516-square-foot parcel on which the post office stands and of the 67,930-square-foot parcel immediately adjoining the building.

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Martinsville, Va.**

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

All photographs are of: Little Post Office VDHR File No.: 120-47  
All negatives filed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond.

1. CREDIT: J. Daniel Pezzoni DATE: April 1996  
VIEW OF: Post office. View looking southeast.  
NEG. NO.: VDHR # 14832 PHOTO 1 of 4
2. CREDIT: J. Daniel Pezzoni DATE: April 1996  
VIEW OF: Post office. View looking northwest.  
NEG. NO.: VDHR # 14832 PHOTO 2 of 4
3. CREDIT: J. Daniel Pezzoni DATE: April 1996  
VIEW OF: Front entry.  
NEG. NO.: VDHR # 14832 PHOTO 3 of 4
4. CREDIT: J. Daniel Pezzoni DATE: April 1996  
VIEW OF: Mantel in brick section.  
NEG. NO.: VDHR # 14832 PHOTO 4 of 4

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Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.

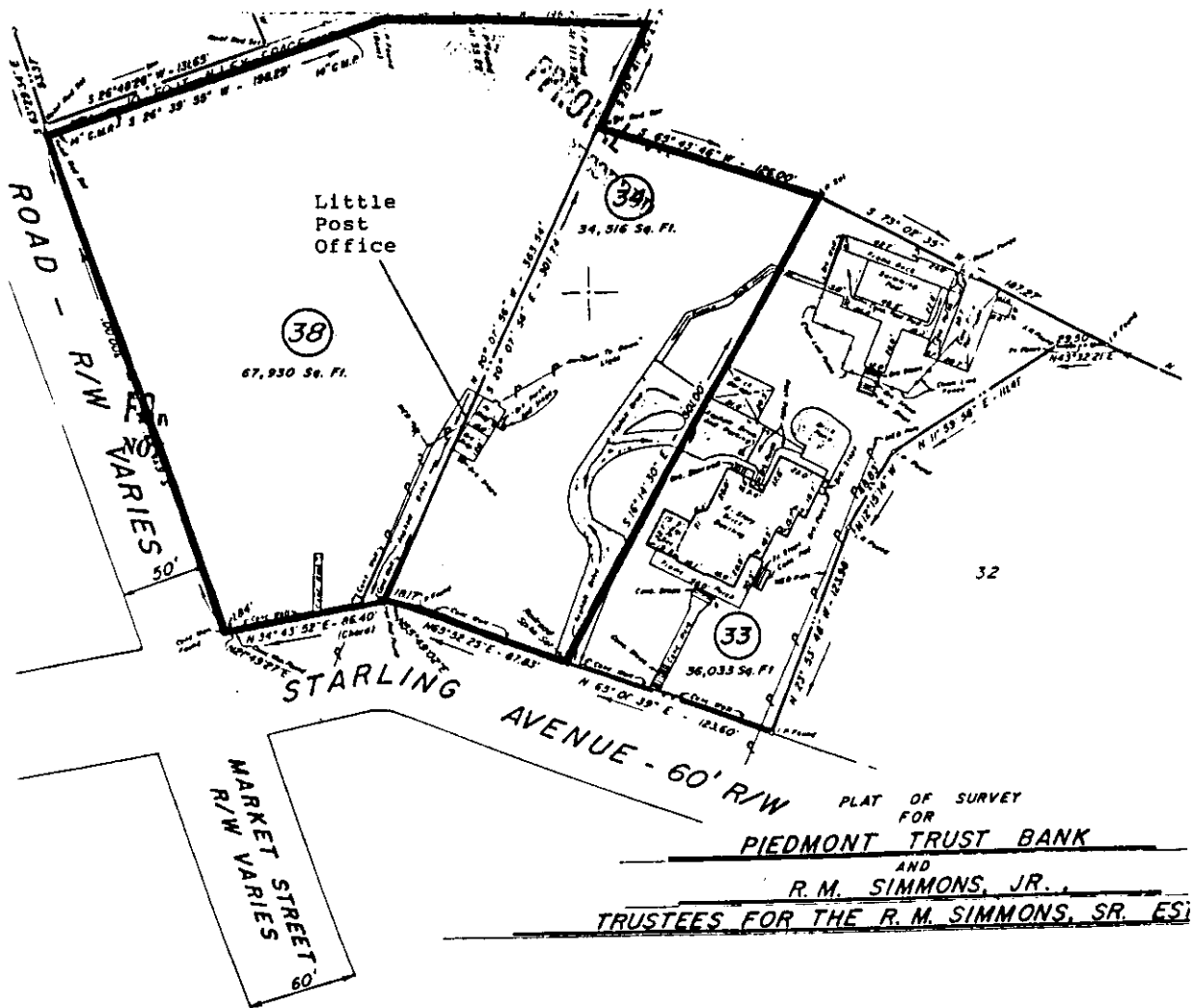


Exhibit A: Little Post Office nominated parcel. Scale: 1" = 100'



Little Post Office  
Martinsville, Va.  
UTM ref. (zone 17):  
1. E 601340 N 4060310

Martinsville East,  
7.5

