

VLR 12/18/19  
NRAHP 2/18/19

**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, an 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 Baker-Strickler House  
other names/site number May's Place; DHR File No. 054-5034

**2. Location**

street & number 10074 W. Gordon Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Gordonsville vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county Louisa code 109 zip code 22942

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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] \_\_\_\_\_ [Signature] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date  
**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title 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 the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: GREEK REVIVAL

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof METAL: Tin
walls WOOD: Timber frame and weatherboard
other CHIMNEYS: brick

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

Baker-Strickler House

Louisa County, Virginia

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

- \_\_\_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
\_\_\_ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
\_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** 1856 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates** \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**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.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**
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(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Baker-Strickler House

Louisa County, Virginia

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

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

Name of repository: VDHR and Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA; Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va; Orange County Historical Society, Orange, VA

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property** 1.2 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet) (Datum NAD83)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	
1 <u>17 745070 4223700</u>	2 _____	___ 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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

name/title	<u>Nancy. W. Kraus</u>		
organization	<u>First &amp; Main, LLC</u>	date	<u>September, 18, 2008</u>
street & number	<u>6224 New Harvard Lane</u>	telephone	<u>(804) 304-6053</u>
city or town	<u>Glen Allen</u>	state	<u>VA</u> zip code <u>23059</u>

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**Additional Documentation**  
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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	<u>Caleb Stowe</u>		
street & number	<u>600 Kearsarge Circle</u>	telephone	<u>(434) 295-6161</u>
city or town	<u>Charlottesville</u>	state	<u>VA</u> zip code <u>22903</u>

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**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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions,

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**Baker-Strickler House  
Louisa County, VA**

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

The Baker-Strickler House is located on the east side of the historic Louisa-Charlottesville Road, approximately one mile south of the town of Gordonsville, in Louisa County, Virginia. The two-story, three-bay frame dwelling is a mid-nineteenth-century example of the Greek Revival style in a rural setting and is a good local example of the I-house form. The finely-crafted, decorative wood trim represents Greek Revival period detail. On the exterior of the house, the decorative corner pilasters, the peaked door and window lintels, and frontispiece with pilasters, compound moldings, and tripartite arrangement of rectangular transom and vertical sidelights, are examples of Greek Revival-style elements. On the interior, the symmetrical, molded door and window surrounds with deep elliptical channels and wood mantels with Doric-style pilasters, square bases, and inset panels, typify period design. The Baker-Strickler House retains most of its original exterior and interior building fabric in good condition. Three unusual embellishments distinguish this dwelling: (1) a two-layer exterior frieze on all four elevations composed of scallops and swags; (2) applied six-pointed stars in the corner blocks of the interior-door architraves; and (3) applied vine-like motif that appears on one interior mantel and on the original primary egress door.

The property is approached from Route 231 from a curvilinear gravel driveway that terminates in front of the house. Baker's Branch is located to the west of the dwelling, and the tracks of the CSX Railroad, formerly the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, are located to the south. The house is framed to the east and west by mature oak trees. Approximately 25 yards south of the house, a row of trees delineates the bed of an earlier road that appears to have run parallel to the railroad tracks. The house was formerly the center of a farm, and outbuildings were located to the northwest and northeast of the dwelling. The dwelling occupies a rectangular-shaped parcel of 1.2 acres.<sup>1</sup> The land surrounding the house is dotted with large, old trees.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

The Baker-Strickler House is a two-story, three-bay building representing the Greek Revival style of architecture. The envelope, built of a heavy-timber frame with mortise-and-tenon joinery, is clad in flush weatherboards. All four corners are finished with decorative two-story pilasters that feature square bases, fluted shafts, and Doric-style capitals. Door and window lintels have molded trim that forms a peak in the center. Wrapped around all four elevations, the entablature is tripartite, composed of a broad, flat architrave, an applied, ornamental frieze, and a molded cornice. The two-layer frieze is quite unusual, consisting of a bottom layer of rounded scallops and a swag-like top layer of alternating scallops or half-moons and V-shaped points. The exterior is also embellished just beneath the boxed eaves. Where the eave meets the roof, the edge is trimmed with a convex molding and a carved band of contiguous Xs.

The building is supported upon a raised basement, constructed of red brick laid in 1:5 American bond. The foundation is cut into a steep grade, causing fuller exposure of the brickwork along the south elevation than along the north elevation. A brick and stone retaining wall protects the north elevation from erosion. The basement is accessible through an exterior (modern replacement) door at the southwest corner. The low-pitched, hipped roof is sheathed in standing-seam metal. Slender, exterior-end, brick chimneys, also laid in 1:5 bond, puncture the deep over-hanging eaves on the east and west elevations. Only one other example has been identified in Louisa County where deep over-hanging eaves are interrupted by exterior end chimneys, at Cedar Grove, circa 1840. In Orange County, this detail is observed at Inglewood, circa 1850; Bittersweet, circa 1830; maybe Old Verdiersville, circa 1854-1856; and Glenmore, circa 1857.

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Windows are vertically aligned from the basement to the second story. Window openings at the first and second stories are flanked by molded trim featuring wide, symmetrical elliptical flutes separated by a central double-bead. Each window is topped with a wood lintel fabricated of cornice-type trim with a peaked center. Sills are wood, square and thick. Although the first-story windows are larger than the second-story windows, and the second-story windows are larger than those at the basement level, fenestration is composed uniformly of six-over-six, single-hung sash. Each sash exhibits delicate, slender rails and stiles; beaded, v-shaped muntins; and glass panes measuring 12-inches by 16-inches. The basement windows are framed with plain boards with an applied rectangular back-band. On the upper stories, there are no windows on the east or west walls.

The building is double-faced. It appears that the original primary facade was the south elevation, overlooking the valley and the railroad tracks. Both facades originally displayed one-story, one-bay porticos with Doric-style expression. Historic photographs reveal that the south facade once had a central, square, one-bay, one-story portico supported by four substantial, round columns with Doric-style capitals. Railings had turned balusters and molded handrails. Because of the sharp grade, the porch was approached from ground level from unusually elongated wood steps. The nearly-flat roof served as an open, second-story porch. At both the first and second story, the portico was accessed from the interior through vertically aligned entrance doors. Early in the twentieth-century, the portico was replaced by a two-story concrete-block and frame addition that provided space for bathrooms. Due to deterioration, the addition was removed in March, 2008.

Each of the south entrance systems consists of a 43-inch-wide, single-leaf door framed by a three-light, rectangular transom and sidelights. The doorframe and sidelights are separated by engaged Doric-style pilasters. The sidelights are composed of two rectangular lights above a molded raised panel. The transom is separated from the doorframe by a heavy bullnose or torus-type molding. The door system is flanked with molded trim featuring bilateral, elliptical channels separated by a double-bead. Like the window heads, the door lintel is formed of molded, cornice-style trim that forms a peak in the center.

The frontispiece on the north elevation, the present-day facade, is similarly detailed, except that the central bay at the second-story has a sash window instead of a door. The entrance door is protected by an historic double-leaf screened door. The ornamental wood doors have butterfly hinges, elliptical moldings, fretwork, and sawn brackets. The north entrance is sheltered by a one-story, one-bay portico with a shallow, hipped roof with exposed rafter-ends. The porch deck rests on brick piers. The porch roof, supported by four square columns, is sheathed with standing seam metal. The existing portico was erected in 2008, a replacement for a similarly-styled portico depicted in historic photographs.

Two of the three entrances are filled with four-panel wood doors. Unusual in style, the doors have flat panels with articulated square returns on each panel corner. Each shouldered panel is surrounded by back-ogee molding. This style of door is unusual, and very few other documented examples have been located in Virginia.<sup>2</sup>

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The exterior door at the first floor of the north entrance has an applied sawn vine-like embellishment. The decorative design, composed of an urn-like base and an elongated stem-and-leaf vine, is repeated on each of the vertical central stiles of the door. The same motif is repeated on the wood mantel in the parlor. The vine-like motif is similar to some depictions of the "tree of life", a universal symbol that appears frequently in folklore and other cultural expressions. The pictorial image appears in a wide variety of forms. In its most basic form, the motif has a central branch or stem with flowers or leaves or both on either side. One feature of the tree of life is that the branch may run either horizontally or vertically. In most of its manifestations, the tree of life symbolizes the connection between heaven and earth. As such, the base or root is firmly grounded and the branch or branches reach toward the sky. Although the tree of life may symbolize different cultural and/or religious significance for different ethnic groups, the motif frequently relates to immortality or fertility.<sup>3</sup> The vine-like appliqués of the Baker-Strickler House have a central branch with leaves on either side, display a weighty, urn-like base, and appear in both vertical and horizontal forms. Gay Strickler Powell, who grew up in the Baker-Strickler House, remembers that the vine-decorated door was originally installed on the south elevation, the original front, and that the north entrance opening was filled with double-leaf, paneled wood doors. The accuracy of her recollection is supported by survival of rectangular, symmetrical notches on the doorframe from the mortise-hinges that once supported the original entrance doors. The surviving double-leaf screened doors with scroll-sawn embellishment probably were aligned with the original double-leaf doors.

The plan of the Baker-Strickler House is typified as an I-house. The plan on each of three floors is similar, having a central axial hall and asymmetrically-placed doors that open into spacious, almost square, flanking rooms. In the basement, white-washed brick walls and a fireplace suggest that the east room served as the kitchen. The partition wall that separated the west room from the passage hall has been removed, but the summer beam that supports the walls above is intact. The west room appears to have been utilitarian, perhaps used for storage. Two doors provide access to the basement. One door opening is located on the west basement wall. It is filled with a modern flush door. The second door opening, centered on the south wall, opens into a central passage with an open-string stair to the floors above. In its original form, this stair appears to have been boxed.

The central hall on the first floor contains a straight run of stairs. Stair elements include a substantial, turned walnut newel post, delicate turned balusters and rounded handrail. There are two balusters per tread. Decorative sawn scrolls are applied to the string-board. Plate 21 of The American Builder's Companion; Or A New System of Architecture, published in 1806, depicts a stair with two square balusters per tread and double-scroll ornament applied to the string-board. Slender, flat vertical panels, each outlined with molded trim, adorn the space underneath the string-board. Photographs in the Ferol Briggs scrapbook for Louisa County reveal that the stair elements of Jerdone Castle, c. 1858, match the stair elements of the Baker-Strickler House.<sup>4</sup>

The stylized interior woodwork remains remarkably intact. The finely-crafted Greek Revival-style trim is comparable in quality to the woodwork of various buildings in Gordonsville that were constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Other similarly-appointed period buildings include two E.J. Faulconer houses, the Exchange Hotel, and other buildings credited to master builder Benjamin Faulconer.<sup>5</sup>

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On the interior, the woodwork that surrounds each of three entrance doors is remarkable with elaborate compound moldings and multi-fascia trim. The balance of the interior doors and windows are surrounded by symmetrical, molded trim with deep elliptical channels separated by a double-bead. The chamfer-edged corner blocks are significantly wider than the architrave trim, creating the illusion of ears at the top of each surround. Decorative scroll-sawn, six-pointed stars are applied to the corner blocks in the entrance hall on the first floor. The space underneath the windows on the first floor has four, neatly spaced, raised wood panels. The window sills are rounded. The baseboards, nine-inches high, have chamfered tops. The woodwork throughout the dwelling is painted white, except in one second-floor bedroom where the wood mantel, door, and woodwork retain historic faux graining.

There are two different styles of interior doors in the Baker-Strickler House. The basement doors have five raised panels. The upper and lower paired panels are vertical, separated by a central, horizontal panel. In the principal living spaces on the first and second floors, the public (stair hall) side of each door displays the same unusual shouldered panels as the exterior doors. Like the exterior doors, the interior doors, on the public side, have flat panels with articulated square returns on each panel corner with back-ogee molding that surrounds the flat, inset panel.

The doors exhibit a variety of hardware styles, indicating regular failure and replacement of the door hardware. A few doors retain simple keyholes combined with porcelain knobs, both elements surrounded by plain, undated cast iron escutcheons. Most of the other doors have ghosting that suggests the earliest type of door hardware was the keyhole and independent knob type. One of the iron escutcheons on the step side of the basement door is dated "PAT May 16 1862". Other doors have surface-mounted, cast iron box locks with painted steel or porcelain door knobs. One of the iron box locks, attached to the second-story exterior door, is stamped "R & E MFG Co PAT May 23 1856".<sup>6</sup> Several doors have iron push bolts.

On both the first and second floors, the rooms are characterized by fireplaces with substantial wood mantels centered on the east and west walls, respectively. All four wood mantels have similar form: rectangular, Doric-style pilasters with square bases, inset panels, and Doric-type capitals; a broad flat frieze; multi-fascia molded architrave; and thick rectangular shelf with clipped front corners. Three of the mantels are distinguished by curvilinear, geometric forms that are applied to the inset panels. On the first floor, the mantel in the east room, perhaps the most formal room, exhibits sawn vine-like decoration, applied vertically to the inset flush panel of each pilaster and applied horizontally to the frieze.

The six-pointed stars and vine-like motif have a folk quality reminiscent of the decorative tradition of Pennsylvania German artisans.<sup>7</sup> German immigrants brought with them a tradition of fine craftsmanship combined with decorative embellishment. Stars, vines, flowers, and geometric motifs appear often on gravestone, chests, bureaus, and other types of furniture crafted by farmers of German descent. The Baker-Strickler House designs may be the artistic expression of a local craftsman familiar with traditional German decorative arts. At least one other building in Louisa County indicates local expression of German motifs in the mid-nineteenth century. Photographs in the Ferol Briggs scrapbook for Louisa County show a barn associated with Oak Leigh, a dwelling constructed circa 1856, with a painted "hex sign" in the form of a six-pointed star. The stair elements and the mantels at Oak Leigh are also similar to those of the Baker-Strickler House.



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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Baker-Strickler House is a notable example of Greek Revival-style architecture. On the exterior of the house, the decorative corner pilasters, the peaked door and window lintels, and frontispiece with pilasters, compound moldings, and tripartite arrangement of rectangular transom and vertical sidelights, are examples of Greek Revival-style elements. On the interior, the symmetrical, molded door and window surrounds with deep elliptical channels and wood mantels with Doric-style pilasters, square bases, and inset panels, typify period design.

The Baker-Strickler House, which retains much of its original exterior and interior building fabric in good condition, is notable for three unusual features. First, the exterior entablature displays, on all four elevations, an ornate frieze composed of applied scallops and swags. Second, scroll-sawn six-pointed stars, are applied to the corner blocks in the main public space. And third, a vine-like motif is applied to the mantel frieze and pilasters in the parlor and to the center stiles of the principal entrance door. These signature embellishments could exemplify the spontaneous artistic expression of a local craftsman.

The Baker-Strickler House is associated with members of the locally prominent Baker family who played a significant role in the commercial and religious developments in Louisa County and Gordonsville in the nineteenth century. Members of the Baker family were active in the Campbellite movement during the Second Great Awakening.

The period of significance is 1856, the estimated date of construction based on physical and documentary evidence.

**JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA**

The Baker-Strickler House is eligible under Criterion C at the local level in the area of architecture as an important example in Louisa County of a mid-nineteenth-century dwelling exemplifying the Greek Revival style. Unusual decorative architectural features distinguish the dwelling from other period Greek Revival-style dwellings. The Baker-Strickler House retains integrity of design, location, feeling, materials, and workmanship.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Baker-Strickler House is an important example in Louisa County, Virginia, of Greek Revival-style architecture, especially because its distinctive and character-defining features are so well preserved. Illustrated pattern books, published between 1806 and 1845 by Asher Benjamin, and in 1839 by Minard Lafever, popularized Greek Revival design, a movement that flourished in the United States in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The Baker-Strickler House retains nearly all of its original exterior and interior building fabric in good condition, and the decorative elements found on the exterior frieze, interior door surrounds, and door and mantel detailing are architecturally distinctive.

The six-pointed stars found in the corner blocks of the passage doorways and vine-like ornaments found on the front door and one mantel are bold and well-executed, but primitive. Both motifs have a folk quality reminiscent of the decorative tradition of Pennsylvania German artisans. German immigrants brought with them a tradition of fine craftsmanship combined with decorative embellishment. Stars, vines, flowers, and geometric motifs appear often on gravestones, chests, bureaus, and other types of furniture crafted by farmers of German descent.<sup>8</sup> It cannot be proved, but the designs could be the artistic expression of a local craftsman familiar with or inspired by the traditional German decorative arts.

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Also remarkable are the four-panel wood doors. Unusual in style, the doors have flat panels with articulated square returns, or shoulders, on each panel corner. Each shouldered panel is outlined with back-ogee molding, accentuating the unusual panel design. Identifying the antecedent of the shouldered panels has proven illusive. A specific illustration of the door style does not appear in any of the pattern books by Asher Benjamin or Minard LaFever. However, the 1805 edition of The Country Builder's Assistant contains two separate drawings that could underlie the unusual shouldered door panels. A panel design with shouldered corners appears on Plate 33, "Plan of a Pulpit". The structure of the doors is consistent with the drawing on Plate 14 which illustrates the relationship of the stile, "pannel", and moldings. This plate depicts a four-panel door prototype and back-ogee style molding among the four choices of "Moldings for Pannels".

Scholars respected for their knowledge of Virginia's architectural landscape are not yet able to identify other historic dwellings with comparable doors or their pattern-book source.<sup>9</sup> Page-by-page review of pattern and reference books under the topic Greek Revival architecture<sup>10</sup> has yielded only one measured drawing of a front entrance door with shouldered panels: 41 Mill Street in Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>11</sup> Although no other doors of this type have been located in Louisa County, one house has similarly shaped panels surrounding the deeply recessed frame at the front entrance. This detail appears at Kenmuir, c. 1850, in the Green Springs area of Louisa County, not far from the Baker-Strickler House. The same panels are also used at The Maples in Loudon County, Virginia.

The exterior door at the first floor of the north entrance displays an applied, sawn, vine-like embellishment. The decorative design, composed of an urn-like base and an elongated stem-and-leaf vine, is repeated on each of the vertical central stiles of the door. The same motif is repeated on the wood mantel in the parlor. The vine-like motif is similar to some depictions of the "tree of life", a universal symbol that appears frequently in folklore and other cultural expressions. In its most basic form, the motif has a central branch or stem with flowers or leaves or both on either side.<sup>12</sup>

Wrapped around all four elevations, the entablature is tripartite, composed of a broad, flat architrave, an applied, ornamental frieze, and a molded cornice. The two-layer frieze is quite unusual, consisting of a bottom layer of rounded scallops and a swag-like, top layer of alternating scallops or half-moons and v-shaped points. No other frieze of this style has been identified in pattern or reference books. The exterior is also embellished just beneath the boxed eaves. Where the eave meets the roof, the edge is trimmed with a convex molding and a carved band of contiguous Xs. A similar criss-cross pattern is depicted on Plate 48 of The Modern Builder's Guide by Minard LaFever. The authorship of the distinctive decorative moldings of the Baker-Strickler House remains a mystery. The unusual embellishments are likely the invention of a wood carver familiar with but not necessarily confined by pattern book designs.

## **HISTORY**

The Baker-Strickler House was probably built in the middle of the nineteenth century by William Martin Mills Baker (1800-1870), "a large landholder" and "a man of importance" in Louisa County.<sup>13</sup> Three historic records shed light on the history of the house. First, the Baker-Strickler House is situated on land identified for more than 150 years in deeds, wills, and plats as the "W. M. Baker tract". Second, the Virginia Land Tax Books show that in 1840, the value of the only land in Louisa County owned at that time by William Martin Mills Baker<sup>14</sup> increased by \$600 for "value of building(s)". Between 1836 and 1840, William M. Baker owned 344 acres of land in Louisa County. The land tax records do not show any values for buildings on the tract during this period. But in 1840, the entry for William M.

Baker lists 334 acres, with a building valued at \$600 with a total property value of \$3032.50.<sup>15</sup> The 1840 Federal census for Louisa County lists William M. Baker as “head of household” residing in Dove Fork, an area that currently

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encompasses the land associated with the Baker-Strickler House.<sup>16</sup> Third, the railroad track of the Louisa Railroad, subsequently C&O and today CSX, forms the south boundary of the Wm. M. Baker tract. The south-facing orientation of the house may evidence a connection between the completion of the railroad in 1840 and the construction of the house.

William M. Baker, son of Clevears Baker of *Hopewell*, was a legatee of the prominent Baker family of Gordonsville (Orange County) and Louisa County, Virginia. The Baker family in Virginia is descended from Martin Baker (I) who settled in the vicinity of Yorktown in 1625. By 1765, descendants of the first Martin Baker had migrated to Hanover County. Late in the eighteenth century, Clevears Baker and his brother Martin Baker (V) migrated to Louisa County from Hanover County. Clevears Baker married Mary Elizabeth Mills on January 3, 1797 in Louisa County.<sup>17</sup> Where the couple resided during the early years of their marriage is not known, but they are identified in various deeds as “of Louisa County.”<sup>18</sup> They may have lived for some time at *Bloomingtondale*.<sup>19</sup> In 1821, Clevears Baker moved with his wife and their only child, William M. Baker to *Hopewell* on a contiguous parcel just south of the Baker-Strickler House. In 2008, *Hopewell* survives on the tract of land contiguous to the Baker-Strickler House tract and west of Baker’s Creek.

Situated approximately one mile south of Gordonsville, *Hopewell* was a widely recognized landmark in Louisa and Orange Counties in the early 1800s because of its association with the Reverend James Waddell, “the eloquent Blind Preacher”.<sup>20</sup>

In 1810, at the age of eleven, Clevears’ son William M. Baker became a landowner in his own right, independent of his father’s assets. A “Deed of Gift” for 200 acres of land in Louisa County was conveyed “to Wm. M. Baker and Peggy”.<sup>21</sup> “Peggy” Mills was the maternal grandmother of William M. Baker. Jointly owned, this land was likely held in trust by Peggy Mills until her death in 1833. No document demonstrates the exact location of this land, but the original “William M. Baker tract” may have been derived from this inheritance. The Virginia Land Tax Records confirm that all of the acreage owned by Clevears and William M. Baker in Louisa County, individually or jointly, was situated in “Dove Fork”, 16 miles west of the Louisa Courthouse.

In January, 1822, Clevears Baker, his wife Mary, and William M. Baker conveyed 105 acres in Louisa County to John Swift, Jr.<sup>22</sup> Three years later, on October 19, 1825, William M. Baker married Lucinda Swift.<sup>23</sup> Records illuminating the relationship between John Swift, Jr. and Lucinda Swift (Baker) have not been discovered.

Only a few surveys and plats dating from the antebellum period in Louisa County survive today because much documentation was destroyed when the Louisa Courthouse burned. Preserved among the original papers of William M. Baker, a hand-drawn map shows that he anticipated the construction of the railroad as early as 1836, when the charter for the extension of the Virginia Central Railroad was approved. The proposed extension of the railroad is neatly drawn across the Baker land, and the location of the train depot is also depicted.

A portion of a hand-drawn survey, dated “1791-1836” and titled “Area 473 acres” survives among the personal papers of William M. Baker.<sup>24</sup> Two tracts of land are neatly delineated and labeled, no. 2 encompassing 232 acres; and no. 7

encompassing 241 acres. The parcels are contiguous; are situated north of the “Va Central Rail Road”; and are separated by a creek. The “station house” in Gordonsville is also depicted. A section of the 241 acre tract is labeled “126 A”. The location and geographic features of the 126 acres correspond to the 120-acre parcel identified in the

deed chain as the "William M. Baker tract".

The fragmentary survey reveals three important bits of information: (1) the drawing depicts the perimeter boundaries of two of at least seven parcels of land owned by Clevears and/or William M. Baker in 1836; (2) the drawing may anticipate the sub-division of the Baker-Strickler House tract; (3) the drawing shows an awareness of the proposed

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railroad line. One other small detail on the drawing may be important, that is, a small trapezoidal area, south of the railroad track, labeled simply "39". A sawmill owned by William M. Baker was in the general vicinity of the 39 (acres).

Another smaller, survey drawing, labeled "Wm M. Baker, Louisa County" is also preserved among the papers of the Baker family.<sup>25</sup> The undated sketch depicts a parallelogram of "Acres 125". This drawing almost certainly represents the 120-acre site of the Baker-Strickler House. The 120-acre "W.M. Baker tract", deeded to W.C. Baker on 10 January 1913, was composed of two tracts, "more or less", of 40 acres and 80 acres.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to 1836, Gordonsville was comprised of a tavern, several dwellings, a mercantile store, and a blacksmith shop. In 1840, the Louisa Rail Road Company extended its railway to Gordonsville, providing service between Taylorsville north of Richmond to this westernmost depot. The railroad fostered commercial and residential expansion and corresponding prosperity in and around the village of Gordonsville.<sup>27</sup> An account book spanning the years between 1811 and 1821 indicates that Clevears and William M. Baker had business dealings in blacksmithing, carpentry, shop work, and grain sales. A record of lumber transactions from 1852 and 1866 through 1888 are also preserved.<sup>28</sup>

William M. Baker appears on the census of 1840 as a "head of household" including six males and three females. It is likely that the Baker household included William M.; Lucinda; Thomas; Mary; Clevears; Susan; and William M. Jr., plus two other young males.<sup>29</sup> Since the 1840 census records do not give names and specific ages, the two young males cannot be identified. The 1850 Federal census lists William M., 51; Lucinda, 42; Thomas, 22; Mary, 20; Clevears, 19; Susan, 17; and William M., Jr., 15, plus Margaret Baker, 8, and Henry C. Baker, 5.

The Bakers were among the formally educated residents of Louisa County. William M. Baker attended the University of Virginia, and at least two of his sons attended the School of Gordonsville. Between July 6, 1855, and July 2, 1856, William M. Baker, Jr. received eight certificates for completing Chemistry; French; Italian; Greek Language and Literature; Algebra; Theory and Practice of Land Surveying; Synthetic Geometry; and Latin Language and Literature.<sup>30</sup> The certificates, signed by W. Kemper, Principal, identify the instructors as William S. and Delaware Kemper. His brother Clevears B. Baker also attended the school in 1856, completing Greek Language, French, and Latin.

When Clevears Baker died on in 1859 at the age of 86,<sup>31</sup> the *Hopewell* tract, including the house, valued at \$600, and 690 acres, was inherited by William M. Baker "from Clevears Baker by descent".<sup>32</sup> At the time of his death in 1870, William M. Baker was survived by his wife Lucinda and five of his seven children: William M. Baker, Jr.; Thomas S. Baker, a lawyer who practiced in Richmond before retiring to live near Gordonsville; Henry Clay Baker; Margaret L. Baker; and Mary E. Baker.<sup>33</sup> His estate was divided among his surviving children, including land "I have given to my son William M. Baker, Jr., 136 acres, clear deed and title, part of my former tract."<sup>34</sup> The parcel encompassing the Baker-Strickler House was apparently conveyed to William M. Baker, Jr. following his safe return from service in the Civil War and also following the death his older brother Clevears Baker who died in 1865 at the age of 34.<sup>35</sup> On May 1, 1867, William M. Baker and his wife Lucinda conveyed "130 acres and appurtenances" in Louisa and Orange County to their son William M. Baker, Jr. for land described as "on the railroad, Louisa Road, adjoins William Baker, Margaret L. Baker, Henry C. Baker, and Mary E. Baker."

William M. Baker, Jr. and Frances (Fanny) Mahanes married around 1875 and produced six children: William C. Baker; Margaret C. (Maggie) Baker; Mary Voorhees Baker; Frances Lucinda Baker; Lizzie M. Baker; and George Granville Baker. The family apparently occupied the Baker-Strickler House in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The 1880 Federal Census lists William M. Baker (Jr.) as "Farmer & Miller" and his wife Frances as "keeping house". Perhaps to ensure the security of their domicile, William M. Baker, Jr. conveyed the 130-acre "Wm. M. Baker tract" to his wife Fannie E. Baker and their children twenty years before his death.<sup>36</sup> William M. Baker, Jr. died in 1888

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of pneumonia.<sup>37</sup> Between circa 1821 and 1913, *Hopewell* and the W.M. Baker tract, sometimes referred to as the "old Baker place", were occupied by various heirs of the first William M. Baker.

When Mary E. Baker, the youngest sister of William M. Baker, Jr., died in 1913, her estate was divided between her nephews George G. Baker and William C. Baker (the sons of William M. Baker, Jr. and Fanny Baker). The former inherited the *Hopewell* tract; the latter inherited the "W.M. Baker tract", composed of two tracts, "more or less", of 40 acres and 80 acres. Throughout the twentieth century, the 40-acre tract encompassing the Baker-Strickler House was identified in court documents as "that certain tract or parcel of land, situated about one mile west of the Town of Gordonsville, in Louisa County, State of Virginia and being that tract or parcel of land known as W.M. Baker Tract, and lying on the East side of Bakers Creek..."<sup>38</sup>

In 1919, the 40-acre parcel was conveyed to R.N. Mays.<sup>39</sup> Between 1919 and 1928, the house and tract were called "May's Place." In August, 1928, Mrs. F.L. Mays conveyed the property to Vernon C. Strickler<sup>40</sup> Vernon C. Strickler and his heirs owned the dwelling for more than 75 years, between 1928 and 2005. In 1979, Mabel Norford Strickler, widow of V.C. Strickler, willed the property to her three daughters: Mae Strickler Taylor; Gay Strickler Collier; and Gwendolyn Strickler Pickett. They sold the property to Caleb Stowe in 2005.<sup>41</sup>

The Baker-Strickler designation acknowledges the Baker family who owned the tract when the house was built in the middle of the nineteenth century and the Strickler family who owned the dwelling from 1928 until 2005.

The history of the Baker family is intertwined both with the history of Louisa County and with the development of the town of Gordonsville. Baker's Creek in Louisa County and Baker Street in Gordonsville are reminders of the prominence of the Bakers in those locales. William M. Baker was a significant figure in establishing the Christian Church in Gordonsville.

The Baker-Strickler House is an outstanding example of a mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival I-house in Louisa County. The resource has excellent integrity to the period of significance and, as a result, can broaden our understanding of the quality and variety of decorative details that could be used to give a gloss of individuality to an otherwise typical form and popular style. It is this quality and variety that sets the Baker-Strickler House apart from other Greek Revival houses in the area. Future research may one day reveal the elusive craftsman responsible for this work and the role that Mr. Baker played in the design of his distinctive dwelling.

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the 1.2 acre Historical Preservation Easement are depicted on the attached survey completed by The Engineering Groupe, Inc. dated October 23, 2008. (The term "Historical Preservation Easement" is being used by Louisa County only as the property reference on the parcel survey and does not reflect an easement held by the Department of Historic Resources.)

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated property delineate a 1.2-acre historic preservation easement surrounding the historic dwelling called the Baker-Strickler House. The parcel is dotted with large, old trees. No new buildings will be constructed within the historic preservation easement area. The surrounding acreage has been approved by the County for an office park development and the proposed boundaries capture the acreage around the house that will be protected from this development in order to preserve the setting of the historic house. The Baker-Strickler House is the only contributing building situated on the parcel.



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The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: Baker-Strickler House, DHR File No. 054-5034  
Location: Louisa County, Virginia  
Photographer: Nancy Kraus  
Date: September, 2008  
Digital Image Stored: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Photo # 1 of 8: North elevation  
Photo # 2 of 8: South elevation  
Photo # 3 of 8: Entablature  
Photo # 4 of 8: Door  
Photo # 5 of 8: Door panels  
Photo # 6 of 8: Door surround  
Photo # 7 of 8: Entrance door  
Photo # 8 of 8: Parlor mantel

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<sup>1</sup> The 1.2-acre historic preservation easement is located in the center of a future proposed office development. No new buildings will be constructed within the easement area.

<sup>2</sup> Two documented examples of houses with this panel detail are Upper Brandon Plantation in Prince George County and The Maples in Loudon County, Virginia.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of comparable motifs derived from the Pennsylvania German tradition are illustrated in Yoder, Don, and Thomas E. Graves. Hex Signs. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000, and McKillip, Rebecca. Pennsylvania Dutch Designs. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983. A web-based search for the topic "tree of life" also yields a variety of examples of tree of life imagery in human artistic expression.

<sup>4</sup> Briggs, Ferol. Scrapbook, Louisa County, volume 19. Virginia Department of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, Ann L. Antebellum Orange. Orange, VA: Moss Publications, 1988, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Lounsbury of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation recommends that "Door hardware should not be used as a dating device for the entire building since locks and knobs often get replaced for wear and breakage."

<sup>7</sup> Multiple examples of comparable vine-life motifs may be found in Yoder, Don, and Thomas E. Graves. Hex Signs. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000, and McKillip, Rebecca. Pennsylvania Dutch Designs. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> Multiple examples of comparable vine-life motifs may be found in Yoder, Don, and Thomas E. Graves. Hex Signs. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000, and McKillip, Rebecca. Pennsylvania Dutch Designs. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Photographs of the Baker-Strickler House were reviewed through e-mail by Charles Brownell, Edward Chappell, David Edwards, Willie Graham, Jeffery Klee, and Carl Lounsbury. None were able to identify houses other than Upper Brandon with this door type.

<sup>10</sup> The author reviewed more than two dozen period reference books between June and August, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Ware, William R. The Georgian period; being photographs and measured drawings of colonial work with text. New York, NY: U.P.C. Book Company, Inc., 1923 edition in 3 volumes, Part III, plate 85.

<sup>12</sup> Examples of comparable motifs derived from the Pennsylvania German tradition are illustrated in Yoder, Don, and Thomas E. Graves. Hex Signs. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000, and McKillip, Rebecca. Pennsylvania Dutch Designs. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983. A web-based search for the topic "tree of life" also yields a variety of examples of tree of life imagery in human artistic expression.

<sup>13</sup> Baker, William Thomson, Sr. The Baker Family of England and of Central Virginia: Their Many Related Families and Kin. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1972, 155. Lounsbury, Carl. Email correspondence to Nancy Kraus, July 8, 2008, states in response to a query about the date-stamped door hardware that "Door hardware should not be used as a dating device for the entire building since locks and knobs often get replaced for wear and breakage. The house may be 1840 but it looks about 10 years later--about mid-century."

<sup>14</sup> Hereafter William M. Baker. In census and land tax records, his will, and various other legal documents, William Martin Mills Baker identified himself as William M. or Wm. M. Baker. His son is identified as William M. Baker, Jr.

<sup>15</sup> The father of William M. Baker, Clevears Baker, who lived on a contiguous tract, also paid taxes that year on acreage with building(s) valued at \$600. Clevears Baker is known to have resided at *Hopewell*.

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<sup>16</sup> Dove Fork is a triangular-shaped area, mostly in Louisa County, roughly bounded to the north and south by the two branches of "Dove Fork", the westernmost extension of the South Anna River, and the Louisa-Albemarle County line to the west. Baker's Creek, which bounds the William M. Baker tract, is a terminal tributary of the north branch of Dove Creek.

<sup>17</sup> Kiblinger, William H. and Janice L. Abercrombie. Marriages of Louisa County, Virginia, 1766-1861. Orange, VA: Central Virginia Newspapers, 1989, 79.

<sup>18</sup> Baker, William Thomson, Sr. The Baker Family of England and of Central Virginia: Their Many Related Families and Kin. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1972, 155.

<sup>19</sup> Chisholm, Claudia Anderson and Ellen Gray Lillie. Old Home Places of Louisa County. Louisa, VA: Louisa County Historical Society, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Chisholm, Claudia Anderson and Ellen Gray Lillie. Old Home Places of Louisa County. Louisa, VA: Louisa County Historical Society, 165.

<sup>21</sup> Baker family, Papers, 1800-1880, Accession #38-65-a, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

<sup>22</sup> Baker, William Thomson, Sr. The Baker Family of England and of Central Virginia: Their Many Related Families and Kin. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1972, 153.

<sup>23</sup> Kiblinger, William H. and Janice L. Abercrombie. Marriages of Louisa County, Virginia, 1766-1861. Orange, VA: Central Virginia Newspapers, 1989, 209.

<sup>24</sup> Baker family, Papers, 1800-1880, Accession #38-65-a, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

<sup>25</sup> Baker family, Papers, 1800-1880, Accession #38-65-a, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

<sup>26</sup> DB 31-270, 271.

<sup>27</sup> Miller, Ann L. Antebellum Orange. Orange, VA: Moss Publications, 1988, 41-42.

<sup>28</sup> Baker family, Papers, 1800-1880, Accession #38-65-a, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. This collection of personal papers and account books, dated 1800-1880, belonging to Clevears and William M. Baker, are preserved in Special Collections Library of the University of Virginia. The documents offer insight, though not a complete picture, of the life of the Baker family in Louisa County and Gordonsville. The collection was donated on October 10, 1931, by the children of William M. Baker, Jr.

<sup>29</sup> The 1840 census lists genders, numbers, and ages in ranges. No names are listed, except the head of household. Names, genders, and dates are enumerated on the 1850 census and correlated with the data on the 1840 census in an attempt to distinguish separate family units. The exercise is not an exact science.

<sup>30</sup> The certificates are preserved among the Baker family, Papers, 1800-1880, Accession #38-65-a, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. William M. Baker, Jr. was born in 1835.

<sup>31</sup> Abercrombie, Janice, compiler. Louisa County, Virginia, Death Records, 1853-1896. Athens, GA: Iberian Publishers, 1997, 123. Date of death was February 19, 1859.

<sup>32</sup> "Virginia Land Tax List, 1860.

<sup>33</sup> His son Clevears, identified in his obituary as a 34-year-old farmer, died in 1865 from pneumonia. There is no record of his having married. Susan apparently died sometime between 1850, when she was listed as a 17-year-old white female in the 1850 Census, and 1860 when she has disappeared from the Census. See also Baker, William Thomson, Sr. The Baker Family of England and of Central Virginia: Their Many Related Families and Kin. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1972, 157, and Federal census, 1870.

<sup>34</sup> "to my daughter Margaret L. Baker 233 acres, part of my former tract; to my son Henry C. Baker and my daughter Mary Elizabeth Baker 309 ½ acres, given by deeds;...to my son Thomas S. Baker land in Caswell County in the state of North Carolina, 260 acres by deed; also I loan to my wife Lucinda Baker, the mill and mill property and 14 acres adjoining Robert King, deceased, and at her death to my son Wm. M. Baker, Jr.,...appoints three sons, Thos. S. Baker, Wm. M. Baker, Jr., and Henry C. Baker executors. <sup>34</sup>

<sup>35</sup> William M. Baker, Jr. enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army on October 11, 1862 at the age of 27. He served in Company L, 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of Virginia. Two of his letters, written to his sister Margaret on May 21 and June 11, 1864, show that he was serving under General James Dearing in the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment, North Carolina Troop 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry. Clearly homesick, he describes his camp near Newmarket Hill, about having the blues, and about his efforts to get used to camp life. See Baker family, Papers, 1800-  
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<sup>36</sup> In July, 1868, Louisa County DB GG,66.

<sup>37</sup> Abercrombie, Janice, compiler. Louisa County, Virginia, Death Records, 1853-1896. Athens, GA: Iberian Publishers, 1997, 270.

<sup>38</sup> Louisa County DB 49, 30; DB 45, 525; and DB 31, 270-271.

<sup>39</sup> Louisa County DB 39, 641.

<sup>40</sup> "That certain tract of parcel of land situated one mile west of the town of Gordonsville Virginia in Louisa County, State of Virginia, containing 44.52/100 acres more or less per plat and survey made thereof by Keesee Brooking, made July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918, and recorded in the Clerks Office of said county, and being that tract or parcel of land known as the W.M. Baker tract...together with all the buildings and improvements thereon..." Louisa County DB 49, 30 .

<sup>41</sup> Louisa County DB 684, 894.