

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

LISTED ON:	
VLR	12/16/2010
NRHP	02/22/2011

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

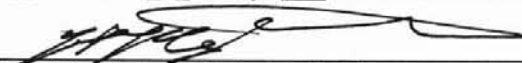
historic name Baker-St. John House
other names/site number DHR File #095-5264

2. Location

street & number 18254 Providence Road (Route 611) not for publication
city or town Abingdon vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Washington code 191 zip code 24210

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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


Signature of certifying official _____ Date 1/4/11
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)

- 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> 1 </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> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	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
 HEALTH CARE medical office

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 MID 19th CENTURY: Greek Revival
 LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
 roof ASPHALT
 walls WOOD: Weatherboard
 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 ca. 1866

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.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5 acres

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

Table with 4 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing. Values include 17, 406964, 4060288, 2, 3, 4.

See continuation sheet.

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian
organization Coastal Carolina Research/CCRG, Inc. date October 11, 2010
street & number P.O. Box 1198 telephone (252) 641-1444
city or town Tarboro state NC zip code 27886

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 Rufus and Joanne Hairston
street & number 18254 Providence Road telephone (276) 628-3591
city or town Abingdon state VA zip code 24210

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.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form.

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Baker-St. John House, located about 3.5 miles southwest of the Town of Abingdon in Washington County, is situated on a 2.5-acre parcel on the west side of Route 611 (Providence Road) .5 mile north of its intersection with Route 11 (Lee Highway). The two-and-a-half-story, frame house, constructed about 1866, is an example of a front-gable-and-side-wing dwelling that reflects influences from the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Elements of the Greek Revival can be seen in the use of molded interior and exterior window and door surrounds that feature crossettes at the top and bottom, the slender stair balusters, and the elongated window openings. Italianate influences are seen in the use of paired brackets along the cornice line of the house, decorative sawn brackets on the porch supports, and the extended bay window and tripartite window on the front-gable end. The house also is notable for its intact and highly detailed interior woodwork that includes molded window and door surrounds, paneled wainscoting, decorative mantels, tall baseboards, and hand-hewn stair elements. Many of the latter elements are vernacular in nature. Poplar, oak, and walnut woods are present in the house. The context of the house is enhanced by its rural surroundings.

Setting

The Baker-St. John House faces east towards the road and is accessed by a paved, curving driveway that crosses a creek and leads to the rear of the house. The house is located in a flat area that is edged on the north and west by steep, wooded hills and on the south by Spring Creek, which is fed by at least two natural springs. A large yard, edged by heavy woods, encompasses the house. The farm pond located on the south edge of the property was created in the late twentieth century and is presently heavily overgrown. The topography of the general area consists of steeply rolling hills, dense woods, and open pastureland; the area retains a predominantly rural character. Land lying adjacent to the present tax parcel, which was historically associated with the house, consists of pastureland and woods. A frame barn (VDHR #95-5258) located east across Route 611 was formerly associated with the property, as was a concrete block dairy building located south of the property. Non-extant outbuildings formerly associated with the Baker-St. John House include a kitchen, two small barns, and a springhouse. The supposed sites of these outbuildings are depicted on the enclosed sketch map.

Exterior

The Baker-St. John House, built circa 1866, is a two-and-a-half-story, frame dwelling that is set on an ashlar limestone foundation, is clad with weatherboard with cornerboards, and is covered by cross-gable roofs that are clad with asphalt shingles. The original roof cladding is believed to have been slate shingle.¹ The front (east) and rear (west) of the front-gable wing feature boxed eaves. The one-story, hip-roofed porch extends across the front (east) and side (south) of the side-facing wing and is supported by square wooden columns with hand-sawn decorative brackets at the top. The main roof of the house is detailed with a wide cornice board and paired wooden brackets. Two tall, interior brick chimneys pierce the side-facing gable roofline. A narrow, two-story, cross-gable wing extends to the south at the rear of the house and is accessed by a secondary entrance off the west end of the porch. This space is believed to have served as Dr. Baker's clinic. Other details on the house include large six-over-six windows with molded surrounds featuring crossettes at both the top and bottom of the window openings, a one-story extended bay window on the front-gable wing, a three-part window on the second-floor level of the front-gable wing, and a detailed entrance featuring a multi-light transom and sidelights. Stylized, diamond-shaped windows also are present in the gable ends of the house at the attic level. The dwelling is of frame construction reportedly with nine-by-nine hand-hewn corner beams.² In the late twentieth century, a one-story, frame, hip-roofed addition was constructed to the rear of the dwelling. The house has an attic level, but lacks a basement.

The façade (east elevation) of the two-and-a-half-story house consists of a two-bay, side-facing gable-roofed wing and a one-bay, front-facing gable-roofed wing. The main entrance to the house, located in the northernmost bay of the side wing, features a wide, paneled door with a wide, molded surround with crossettes at the top and bottom corners, three-light sidelights with a recessed panel below, and a full-width, four-light transom above. The large six-over-six window located south of the entrance features folding wooden panels below that open fully for added ventilation. The two six-over-six windows present on the second floor of the side wing also are detailed with molded surrounds (without crossettes) and extend up to the cornice line. The front-gable wing features a three-sided bay window that holds four-over-four windows that extend to the interior floor level. The bay is detailed on the exterior with paired brackets along the roof eave. The three-part window on the second floor is a stylized version of a Palladian motif, but with a rectilinear profile and is detailed with a molded surround with simple corner blocks. A stylized diamond-shaped window is located in the gable end of the wing. The north side of the front-gable wing holds three six-over-six windows on each

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

floor level.

The one-story porch that extends along the front and side of the side-facing wing of the house is four bays wide along the east and three-bays-deep along the south. The square supports are set on the raised wooden floor of the porch and are detailed with hand-swan brackets at the top. The wooden ceiling of the porch is shiplap. A secondary entrance, which leads into the narrow wing at the rear of the house, is located on the west end of the porch. This opening holds a paneled wooden door with a molded surround and simple corner blocks. The door is believed to have accessed Dr. Baker's office and exam room that were housed in this wing of the house. Limited interior access gives credence to this assertion.

The one-story rear addition, constructed in the late twentieth century, is clad with weatherboard and is covered by a hipped roof of asphalt shingles. The west side of the addition holds paired, ten-paned vinyl windows within arched openings. Doors are located on the north and south sides; the latter door gives access to a brick patio located at that corner of the house.

Interior

The interior of the house has been well preserved and features a center hall plan with a three-story open walnut staircase that leads to the attic and features a hand-hewn handrail, slender and elegant shaped balusters, and a faceted newel post at the base with raised panels on each facet. The side enclosure wall of the staircase is detailed with recessed panels. Finishes in the house include wooden floors (poplar and oak), plaster walls and ceilings, wooden windows, and paneled doors. Notable details include wooden mantels; a high baseboard with a top molding; wooden door surrounds that feature crossettes, simple bull's eye, and corner blocks; built-in wooden cabinets with pegged members; and four-panel wooden doors with applied moldings. Ceilings in the house are approximately ten feet in height.

The living room is accessed via a doorway that leads north from the center hall. The large space is well lit by a window in the north wall and the deep, extended bay window on the east side. The door and window openings in the room are detailed with molded surrounds that feature stylized bull's eye corners. The bay window is further detailed with vernacular pilasters that are fluted at the top and bottom. This detail is replicated in the built-in bookcase in the northwest corner of the room, which was added by the present owner. The fireplace located in the southwest corner features a wooden mantel that is flanked by paired projecting, round moldings (perhaps to emulate columns) that carry a block above, and a wide cornice above that features a curving, beveled arch with a circular motif in the center. A deep shelf with a curved edge tops the mantelpiece.

A broad set of six-panel pocket doors in the west wall leads from the living room into the dining room. This large space is lit by two windows in the north wall. The fireplace, located in the southeast corner, features a mantel that is identical to the one in the living room. The door on the west wall, which formerly opened to the exterior and now opens to the rear addition, was moved a few feet to the south to accommodate the rear addition. Another door in the south wall leads to the rear of the center hall.

The parlor, located on the south side of the center hall, extends the depth of the house. The space is accessed by a doorway near the rear of the center hall. The room holds tall window openings on the south and east walls; these openings extend to the floor level with folding shutters at the bottom that open for additional ventilation. The floors in the parlor are of oak, as is the floor in the center hall. Notable details in the parlor include the paneled wainscoting on all walls and the built-in cabinet in the northeast corner, which features slender, Gothic-arched panels. The mantel in the parlor, located on the north wall, is unpainted and features simple, flat pilasters and a curved shelf above. A door in the west wall leads into the rear wing of the house. The rear rooms, believed to have been the doctor's clinic, have been converted into a bath and laundry space.

The second floor reflects the same floor plan as the first floor with a center hall, two bedrooms on the north, and a master bedroom on the south. The second floor of the house is accessed by the center stair; the rear (northwest) bedroom on the second floor is accessed by a short run of stairs that lead from the first landing of the main stair. The main stairs then turn back to the east (front of house) and access the second floor landing and the other two bedrooms. The stairs turn again and lead up to a batten door into the attic space. The attic has been modified for living space and features carpeted floors and drywall. Finishes in the second-floor bedrooms include wooden floors and plaster walls. The window and door openings on the second floor are detailed with molded

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surrounds with crossettes at the top and bottom and tall baseboards are present throughout.

Both the northwest (rear) and the northeast (front) bedrooms were originally square spaces. An additional wall was constructed in each room in the late twentieth century to accommodate the construction of a bath and a closet. Both bedrooms have corner fireplaces with mantels that are similar to those found in the living room and dining room. The beveled arch in the mantel, however, is a simple ogee arch and does not have the circular motif found in the fireplaces downstairs. Each bedroom holds a single window in the north wall. The tripartite window featured in the front gable is located on the east wall of the front bedroom.

The master bedroom, located on the south side of the center hall is a large space that extends the depth of the house. Windows are located on the east and south walls. The fireplace located on the north wall is similar to the mantel in the parlor and is topped by a curving shelf that extends around the east side of the wall. A built-in cabinet with pegged members is located south of the fireplace. A door on the west wall leads into the second floor of the former clinic space; this space has been converted into a closet and a master bath.

The one-story, rear addition consists of a great room with a full kitchen and sitting area. Details of the built-in cabinets reflect details found in the main house. The space is modern, but is sympathetic to the original house.

INVENTORY

18254 Providence Road 095-5264

Baker-St. John House

Primary Resource Information: Single Dwelling, Stories 2.5, Style: Greek Revival, Italianate, ca. 1866

Individual Resource Status: Single Dwelling Contributing *Total:* 1

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Baker-St. John House, located about 3.5 miles southwest of the Town of Abingdon in Washington County, was constructed circa 1866 as a home for Dr. John Alexander Preston Baker and his family. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The house embodies the distinctive Greek Revival style of the mid-nineteenth century, while also exhibiting influences of the Italianate style that became popular during the last half of that century. The dwelling is eligible on a local level and relates to both the architectural heritage of the county, as well as the social and professional history of the area through its long associations with the Baker and St. John families. The identified period of significance is circa 1866, the date the house was likely constructed. The NRHP property encompasses the 2.5-acre tax parcel that is now associated with the house, which preserves some of the land historically linked to the dwelling. Although a one-story addition was constructed on the rear of the dwelling in the late twentieth century, the Baker-St. John House possesses a high level of architectural integrity on both the exterior and the interior, the latter of which retains highly detailed woodwork that reflects influences of the Greek Revival style and vernacular trends.

Architectural Analysis

The Baker-St. John House is a late nineteenth-century farmhouse that features transitional architectural elements from the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. The two-and-a-half-story dwelling exhibits a front-gable-and-side-wing form. Notable Greek Revival details on the exterior of the house include a wide cornice board; molded window and door surrounds that feature crossettes at the tops and bottoms; and large, elongated six-over-six wooden-sash windows with openings that reach to the interior floor level. Italianate-style details include paired brackets at the house roof eave; sawn brackets on the porch supports; and an extended, three-sided bay window on the front gable end. The rich, detailed interior woodwork includes window and door surrounds similar to the exterior, built-in cabinetry, and molded baseboards. The house is impressively sized with large public rooms on the first floor and equally large bedrooms on the second floor. There is no basement level, but there is a full-height attic.

The house form, which became popular during the mid-nineteenth century, is not uncommon in the region and is often seen in the Town of Abingdon, although more often as brick examples. The form became common in rural areas for farmhouses and presented large, complex floorplans. Between the 1860s and the 1890s, such forms were often detailed with both Greek Revival and Italianate elements.³ The Baker-St. John House is notable for its impressive, intact interior woodwork including highly detailed window and door surrounds, mantels, and tall baseboards. The mantels consist of vernacular details of beveled arches, engaged round moldings, and deep shelves. There are no wall moldings in the house. The details of the central stairs also are notable and include a faceted newel post with raised panels, slender balusters, a paneled sidewall, and a hand-hewn walnut handrail. The floors in the house, which are of poplar and oak wood, are in very good condition, although the thresholds commonly show wear.

Ownership History

The house is believed to have been built for Dr. John Alexander Preston Baker (1841-1899), a local physician. The Baker family were considered "pioneer settlers" in the Holston River region having arrived there in the late eighteenth century.⁴ In 1814, John Baker (1794-1853) married Susannah Hortenstine (1798-1876), and throughout the early nineteenth century Baker amassed large acreages of farmland in the Spring Creek area of Washington County, as well as in other parts of the county and in Tennessee. Part of his land was originally within Edmund Pendleton's 950-acre patent, which lay on both sides of Spring Creek and parallels present-day Route 611. Some documents indicate that Baker's house was located on the approximate site of the present Baker-St. John House.⁵ The Hortenstine family was also a well-known local family whose relatives include Captain John Hortenstine, a veteran of the Civil War. The farms of the Bakers and Hortenstines adjoined and were eventually united by inheritance and purchase.

Upon John Baker's death in 1853, his will was probated in the Washington County court; the extensive inventory of Baker's estate attests to the wealth he had accumulated and included 30 slaves. At his father's death, John Alexander Preston Baker was only 12 years old and was placed under the guardianship of his older brother Isaac.⁶ In his will, John Baker left each of his children large tracts of land and a division of his slaves. His widow, Susannah, inherited the dwelling house. Land that was inherited by Joseph H. Baker was eventually inherited by John A.P. Baker after his brother was killed in action during the Civil War and his mother's death. John A.P. Baker inherited through his father's will the "land called and known as Hortenstine place and also the land on Reedy Creek Road on which John Painter now lives and which was purchased by me [John Baker] from Peggy Fulkerson at the sale of the land of

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Robert Bradley, deceased.⁷ This land, located in what is known as the Preston Valley, included approximately 170 acres and was eventually sold by John A.P. Baker in several tracts.

From 1856 through 1858 John A.P. Baker pursued his education at nearby Emory and Henry College, which his older brother Joseph also attended. John then embarked upon his medical training at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, which he attended from 1859 through 1861. Since there were no medical colleges in the South until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Jefferson became a favored school among Southerners. Part of this popularity is attributed to the fact that a Southerner was head of the school during that period; Jefferson was held in favor throughout the remainder of the century. Baker augmented his education by apprenticing with Abingdon physicians Preston and Pitts.⁸

The onset of the Civil War in 1861 ended Baker's formal education, and he returned home to fight for the Confederacy. On May 14, 1861, he enlisted with Company D of the 1st Virginia Cavalry. His brother Joseph also enlisted with the company. John A.P. Baker attained rank as a 2nd Corporal, then in 1862 was detailed as a courier to the headquarters of Gen. Robert E. Lee. In March 1863, he was returned to his company and was detailed as a hospital attendant throughout the remainder of the year.⁹

On August 1, 1865, Baker applied for his license to practice medicine. On October 25, 1866, the 25-year-old Baker married 19-year-old Susan C. Davis (1845-1889), whose family lived near Emory. The 1870 census lists John and Susan Baker in a household with Susannah Baker and two children—Joseph H., 2 years old, and Lucy Ann, eight months. Baker is listed as a doctor with an estate valued at \$12,000. Jacob Hall, listed as a black common laborer, was also in the household.¹⁰

Dr. Baker is recorded as having attained a good reputation as a local physician who traveled to patients throughout Southwest Virginia, as well as attended patients near his home. As noted in the description of the Baker-St. John House, a wing with a separate entrance is believed to have served as the doctor's home clinic. Despite his success and his sizable inheritances from his father, mother, and brother, Baker appears to have lived beyond his means or at least to have been cash-poor during the height of his career. During the 1870s and 1880s, Baker sold off parcels of land to produce much needed cash.¹¹

Tax records indicate that in 1884, Baker retained 267 acres along Spring Creek, the site of his home. This area was also called Baker's Chapel since the family had donated land to the Episcopal Church for a building. The church was located south of the present house site, but it burned around 1890. A small family cemetery, known as the Baker Cemetery and also as Spring Creek Cemetery, is located on the west side of Route 611 just south of present-day Interstate 81. John and Susannah Baker are buried there, as is Susan Davis Baker. Dr. Baker is believed to have been buried there, but no headstone is known to exist for him.¹²

In 1880, the Baker household, recorded in the Goodson District east of the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Railroad, included the doctor, his wife, and five children. Two boarders were also listed. Susannah Baker, the doctor's mother, had died in 1876. Despite his continued professional success and a growing family, the Bakers were not without tragedy in their lives. Two of their eight children had died in infancy and Susan Baker is reported to have miscarried twice.¹³ In 1889, Susan Davis Baker died while pregnant. County death records indicate the cause of death as "ellamsia" (possibly, eclampsia), or a complication of pregnancy. She was buried in the Baker family cemetery.

On August 28, 1890, Dr. Baker sold his entire farm holdings (294 acres) to William T. Range who lived in Washington County, Tennessee.¹⁴ It appears that simultaneously, Range transferred control of the property to his daughter Annie (1866-1954) and her husband David S. St. John (1861-1939). This conveyance was formalized by Range's 1902 will in which he left to his daughter Annie "the farm she now lives on."¹⁵ Thus began the 100-year association of the property with the St. John family.

Dr. Baker moved his family to Abingdon where he continued to practice medicine. His later years, however, were veiled in scandal. In 1891, Dr. Baker was accused of having poisoned his wife and of attempting to poison Windom Gilmer, the husband of Margaret Gilmer who was identified as the doctor's paramour. The scandal rocked Abingdon and the trial was a huge sensation, reaching newspapers as far as New York City. Mrs. Baker's body was exhumed and tested for arsenic, which was found, but which the defense attributed to the embalming fluid used at her death. On the basis of letters from the doctor to Mrs. Gilmer, which were

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produced as evidence, he was found guilty and sentenced to hang. One month before his execution, the doctor was granted a second trial and was found by another jury "not guilty." He lived his remaining years in Abingdon and died in 1899. His small estate was probated in a will in 1905.¹⁶

The St. John family were engaged in farming and acquired additional acreage around the Baker tract. Tobacco, corn, and hay were likely products on the farm. The family also constructed barns and other outbuildings on the property. In his will of 1939, David St. John refers to the property as "Heavenly Rest Farm" located in Black Hollow. In his will, St. John noted that he wished to be buried in the cemetery at his home farm and he left money to erect a "nice iron fence" around the cemetery. The cemetery is located north along Route 611 and is not part of the present house parcel. The home farm and dwelling was left to his wife, Annie, who had inherited it from her father. Annie, who continued to live at the property until her death in 1954, left the farm to her daughter Bessie St. John Jones (1896-1984) and her husband Nick through instructions in her will and also through a series of deeds.¹⁷

In 1961, Nick Jr. and Bessie signed an agreement with the Abingdon Flying Club to lease acreage on the west side of Route 611 for use as an air strip. The club was to pay \$25 a month and the agreement was to last for 10 years. At present, this is the part of the site of the Virginia Highlands Airport. The farm remained in the St. John-Jones family through the late twentieth century. At the death of her husband, Bessie St. John Jones became sole owner of the property; in 1967, she conveyed the property to her children, Nick Jr., Frances, and William. Bessie remained in the house until her death in 1984. Since the Jones children lived elsewhere, the house was vacant for 14 years after her death.¹⁸

On May 18, 1990, the Jones heirs sold the a 40-acre parcel of the property to Bernard R. Simmons and Loretta J. Simmons, which ended the 100-year ownership of the St. John family. A 2.5-acre parcel was sold from the property to the Simmons' son, William B. and his wife Joanne Lindsey Simmons on May 1, 1991. The property became involved in a legal dispute and was held at public auction in 1997. In 2002, the 2.5-acre parcel was purchased by Rufus T. Hairston Jr. and Joanne Lindsey Hairston.

Under the ownership of the Simmons and Hairstons, the Baker-St. John House was restored and renovated. Architectural elements on the house, such as the brackets on the front porch, were replicated by hand, and new systems (heating and plumbing) were installed. All floors were refinished, but only replaced where necessary using old floorboards, and a new built-in book case was constructed in the living room that replicated architectural details found on window details in the room. In the late 1990s, a one-story addition was constructed to the rear of the house.

Endnotes

(Section 7)

1. Personal communication, Joanne Hairston to Debra McClane, October 7, 2010, at the Baker-St. John House. Mrs. Hairston reports having found shingle-sized slates in the house yard.
2. Ibid. Mrs. Hairston reported that during restoration of the house in the late 1990s, the corner beams were exposed and were photographed.

(Section 8)

3. Thomason and Associates, "Architectural Survey Report, Abingdon, Virginia." Prepared by Thomas and Associates, Nashville, Tennessee. Prepared for Town of Abingdon, Virginia, 1998, 14.
The gable-front-and-side-wing form often evolved in rural areas from the addition of a front-gable wing to an existing hall-and-parlor plan house (which became the "side wing" section of the house). This may have been the case at the Baker-St. John House, but available architectural evidence of such an evolution was not conclusive. See also Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 92.
4. Washington County Marriage Register, A-C and Index through 1902.
Philip Hortenstine Ropp, "The Hortenstine Family, Washington County, Virginia, with notes on the Wilson, Dryden and Widener Families." Undated manuscript in the holdings of the Washington County Historical Society, 73.
5. Washington County, Virginia, General Index to Deeds.
Ropp.
6. Will of John Baker: Washington County Will Book 12:403 (1853). Inventory of John Baker's Estate: Washington County Will

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

- Book 12:453. Washington County Minute Book 10, February 1851-April 1853, 351-352.
7. Washington County Will Book 12:403.
 8. Joe Barker, deceased, Miscellaneous Papers pertaining to Dr. John A. P. Baker now in possession of Joanne Hairston. These papers include a typewritten biography of Dr. Baker and his family (source unknown) and copies of newspaper articles concerning the trials of Dr. Baker, 1891-1892.
Wyndham B. Blanton, M.D., *Medicine in Virginia in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1933), 9-12. During the early nineteenth century, 68 percent of the graduates from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and Jefferson Medical College were Southerners and of that percentage, nearly 50 percent were from Virginia and North Carolina.
 9. Robert J. Driver, Jr., *1st Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1991), 148. Joseph Baker was killed at Spotsylvania Court House.
 10. Thomas Jack Hockett and Shelia Steele Hunt, *Census of Washington County, Virginia (1870, 1880)*(Kingsport, Tennessee: By authors, 1998), 64. Baker is listed as entry #248.
 11. Barker papers. This account of Baker's life also notes that he often did not press his clients for payment for his services. His financial situation, if it were known, did not deter the county from appointing him in 1869 as surveyor of the public road from Reedy Creek Road to the Jonesboro Road (now Route 611).
 12. J. Allen Neal, *Bicentennial History of Washington County, Virginia, 1776-1976* (Washington County Bicentennial Commission, Berryville, VA, 1976), 379. "Pleasant View United Methodist Church." Baker's Chapel was a Methodist Episcopal Church. A new brick church was constructed on the site in 1894. The name was changed to Pleasant View in 1961 and the church moved to its present five-acre site along Lee Highway (Route 11). The transfer of land for Baker's Chapel is noted in John Baker's will (1853): "the land on which Bakers Chapel now stands and land around said chapel." There is also a deed between John A.P. Baker and Susan Baker and the church from 1881 that conveyed .73 acre to the church. Washington County Deed Book 36:138 (March 12, 1881).
Catherine S. McConnell, *High on a Windy Hill* ([Abingdon]: By Author, 1968). Reprint, Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995. Spring Creek Cemetery is #271 in the records.
The Baker's Chapel area also was known as "Montgomery Switch" or "Montgomery." A post office was established there and operated from 1870 through 1912. Jack and RubINETTE Niemann, abstractors, "Washington County, Virginia, Post Offices and Postmasters, 1792-1992" in the Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, Bulletin, Series II, No. 36, 1999, 41-50.
Route 611, now known as Providence Road, for many years was known as Baker's Chapel Road. Personal communication, Joanne Hairston.
 13. Hockett and Hunt, 101. Barker papers.
 14. Washington County Deed Book 46:233.
 15. Washington County Deed Book 27:168.
 16. For news of the two trials of Dr. Baker: *Richmond Times*, "Indicted for Murder," May 8, 1891; *Richmond Dispatch*, "The Dr. Baker Case: Second Trial of Alleged Wife-Poisoner Commenced," February 24, 1892; *New York Times*, March 8, 1892. Also, numerous articles from the *Bristol Courier* and the *Abingdon Weekly* were consulted. *Baltimore Sun*, "Death of Dr. J.A.P. Baker," December 23, 1899; William T. Range's will: Washington County Will Book D:131.
 17. David S. St. John's will: Washington County Will Book 39:230; Annie Range St. John's will: Washington County Will Book 50:437. Washington County Deed Book 265:221 and 266:294.
 18. Washington County Will Book 59:591 (1961), Washington County Deed Book 346:364 (1961), Washington County Deed Book 427:557 (1967), Personal communication, Joanne Hairston.
 19. Washington County Deed Book 796:783 (1990), Washington County Deed Book 814:397(1997), Washington County Deed Book 976:105 (1997), Washington County Deed Book 1080:216 (2000).
 20. Personal communication, Joanne Hairston.

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Barker, Joe. Miscellaneous newspaper clippings and manuscript concerning Baker trial and Baker family history. Courtesy of Joanne Hairston.

Hockett, Thomas Jack and Shelia Steele Hunt, abstractors. *Census of Washington County, Virginia (1870, 1880)*. Kingsport, Tennessee: By authors, 1998.

McConnell, Catherine S. *High on a Windy Hill*. [Abingdon]: By Author, 1968. Reprint, Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995.

Neal, J. Allen. *Bicentennial History of Washington County, Virginia, 1776-1976*. Washington County Bicentennial Commission, Berryville, VA, 1976.

Driver, Robert J., Jr., *1st Virginia Cavalry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1991.

Ropp, Philip Hortenstine. "The Hortenstine Family, Washington County, Virginia, with notes on the Wilson, Dryden and Widener Families." Undated manuscript in the holdings of the Washington County Historical Society, Abingdon, Virginia.

Washington County, Virginia, Clerk of the Circuit Court [Abingdon], Washington County Deed Books. Various.

Washington County, Virginia, Clerk of the Circuit Court [Abingdon], Washington County Will Books. Various.

Personal Communication

McClane, Debra A. Interview with Joanne Hairston, present owner of Baker-St. John House, 7 October 2010.

Mrs. Hairston has in her possession the above-mentioned Barker papers, as well as numerous other newspaper copies and items relating to the history of the house and its restoration.

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**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Baker-St. John House is located on the west side of Route 611 (Providence Road) .5 mile north of its intersection with Route 11 (Lee Highway) and about 3.5 miles southwest of the Town of Abingdon. The property currently consists of 2.5 acres and is identified on the tax parcel maps for Washington County as Parcel #124-A-2E. The nominated property corresponds to the current tax parcel, which encompasses the house, yard, and parts of the surrounding woods. The southeastern edge of the property boundary follows the edge of the right-of-way for Route 611. The property boundaries are shown on the enclosed USGS topographical map, Wyndale Quadrangle.

Boundary Justification

The proposed Baker-St. John House property boundaries encompass the present tax parcel of 2.5 acres, which includes land that is historically associated with the property's historical setting and adds to the historical integrity of the property.

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Section Photographs Page 15

**Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia**

All photographs are of
Baker-St. John House
Washington County, Virginia
VDHR File Number 095-5264
Date of Photographs: October 2010
Photographer: Debra A. McClane

A compact disk with digital images is also on file with VDHR.

SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: View looking NW at house from Route 611 Photo 1 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0001)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Corner fireplace in living room, looking southwest Photo 11 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0011)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Front of house, view to west Photo 2 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0002)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Interior detail of bay window, living room, looking northeast Photo 12 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0012)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Rear of house, view to east Photo 3 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0003)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Detail of window trim and baseboard, living room, looking east Photo 13 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0013)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Detail on west gable end of house Photo 4 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0004)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Pocket doors between living room and dining room, looking west Photo 14 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0014)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Exterior detail of front entrance, view to west Photo 5 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0005)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Corner fireplace in dining room, looking southeast Photo 15 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0015)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: View through center hall, looking east Photo 6 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0006)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Detail of window in parlor with lower shutters Photo 16 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0016)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Interior detail of front entrance, view to east Photo 7 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0007)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Detail of built-in cabinet, parlor, view to north Photo 17 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0017)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Center hall stair, view to west, note short flight of stairs at top that lead to rear bedroom Photo 8 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0008)	SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Wainscoting in parlor, view to east Photo 18 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0018)
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Vertical view of stairs as they ascend to third (attic) floor Photo 9 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0009)	
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House VIEW: Doorway into living room; note built-in cabinet in background, view to north Photo 10 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0010)	

SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House

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**Section Photographs and Additional Documentation Page 16
Virginia**

**Baker-St. John House
Washington County,**

VIEW: Three-part window, second floor front bedroom,
view to east
Photo 19 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0019)

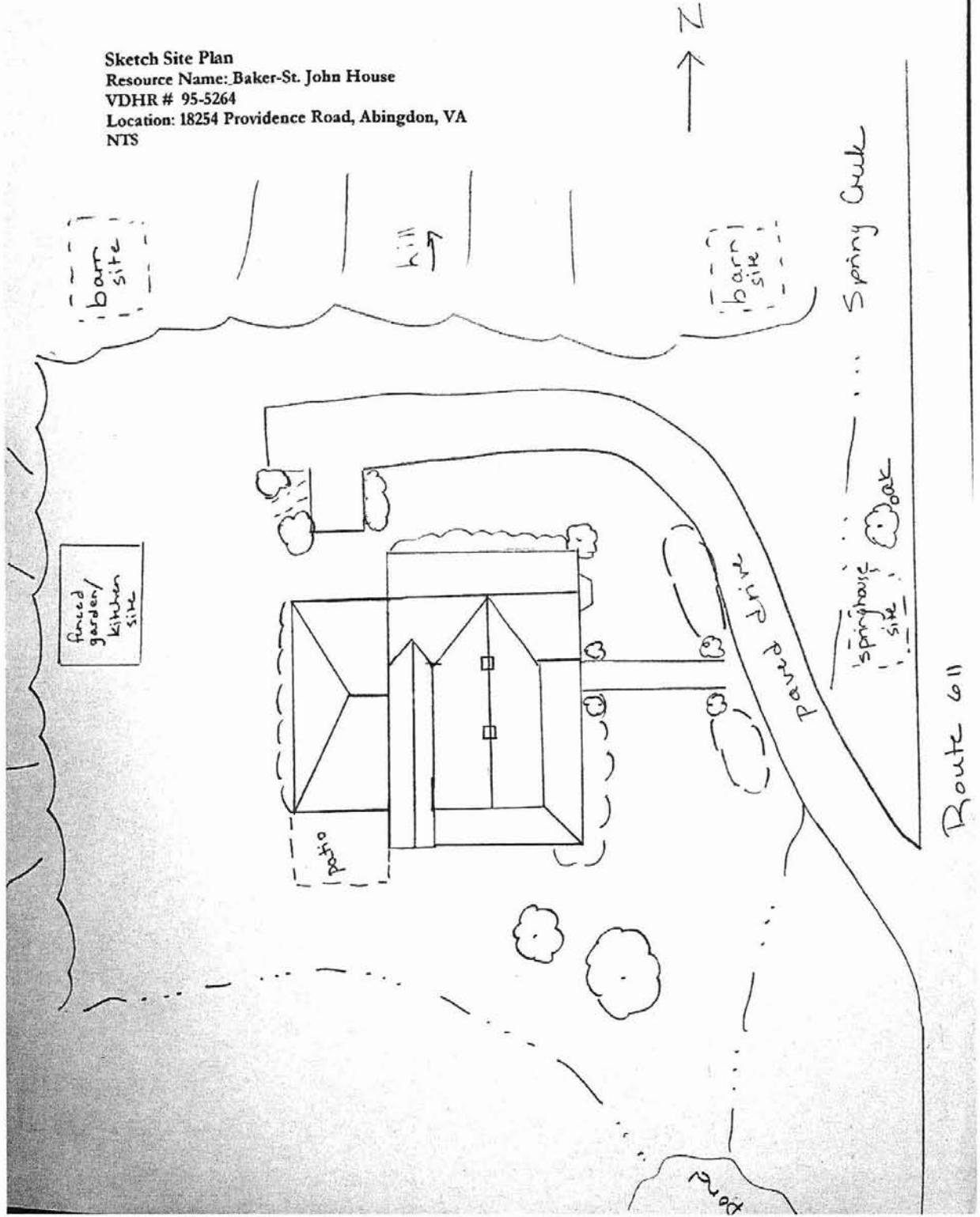
SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House
VIEW: Built-in cabinet, second floor master bedroom, view to
northwest
Photo 20 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0020)

SUBJECT: Baker-St. John House
VIEW: Fireplace, second floor rear bedroom, looking east
Photo 21 of 21 (VA_Washington_Baker-St. John House_0021)

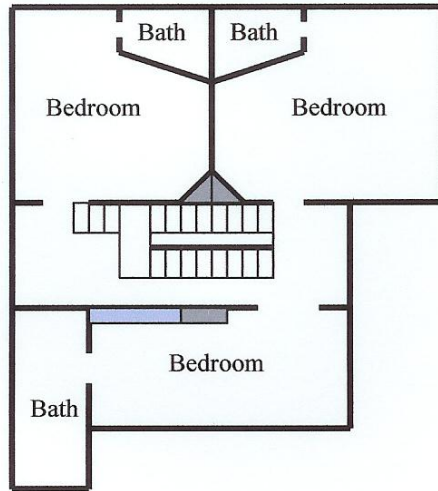
Additional Documentation and Maps

1. Sketch Map of Baker-St. John House Site, NTS
2. Floor Plan of Baker-St. John House, NTS
3. Copy of circa 1891 photograph of Baker-St. John House,
view looking west, photographer unknown. Courtesy of
Joanne Hairston
4. Parcel Map (124-A-2E), Baker-St. John House,
Abingdon, Washington County, Virginia

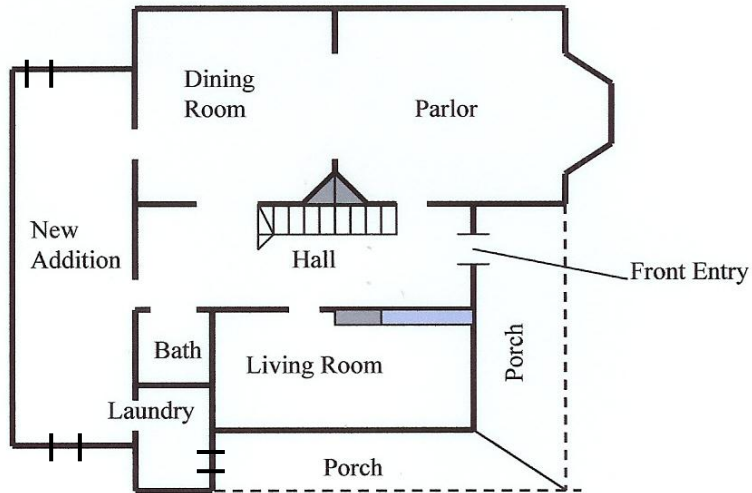
Sketch Site Plan
Resource Name: Baker-St. John House
VDHR # 95-5264
Location: 18254 Providence Road, Abingdon, VA
NTS



Additional Documentation 1. Sketch Map of Baker-St. John House Site, Not to Scale, Drawn 10-7-2010.



Second Floor Plan

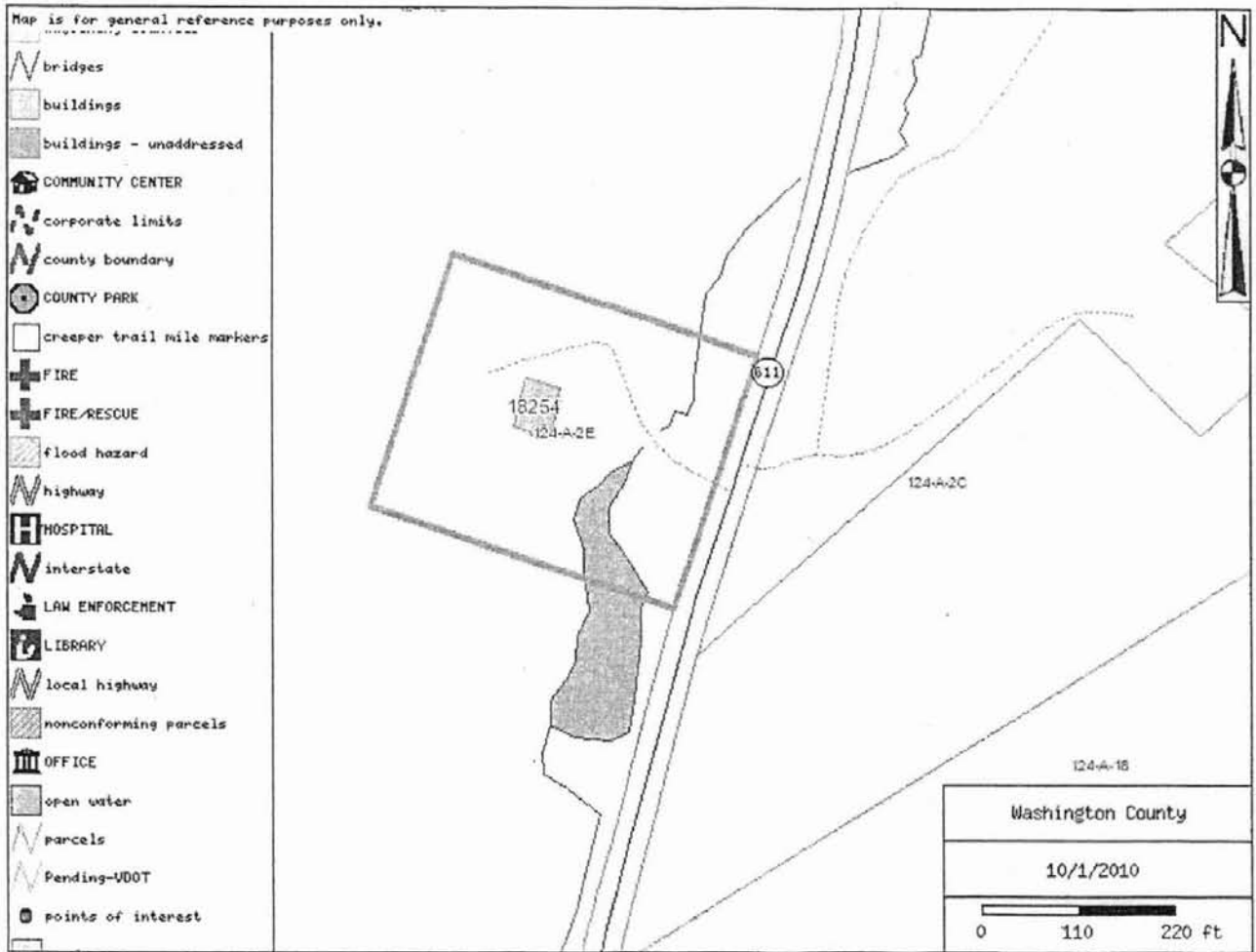


First Floor Plan

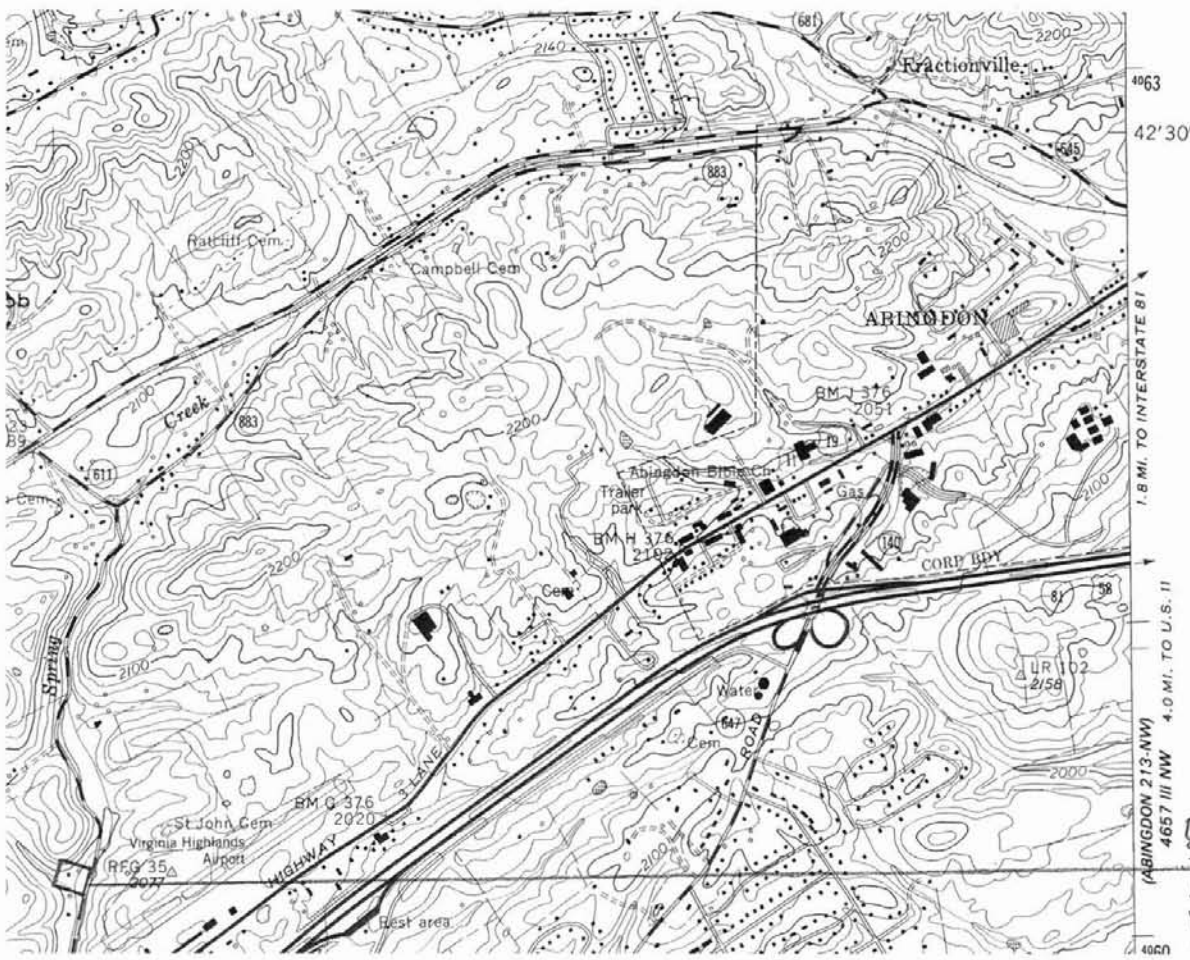
Additional Documentation 2. Floor Plan of Baker-St. John House, Not to Scale, Modified 10-07-10.



Additional Documentation 3. Copy of circa 1891 Photograph of Baker St. John House, View Looking West, Photographer Unknown. Copy Provided Courtesy of Joanne Hairston.



Additional Documentation 4: Parcel Map (124-A-2E), Baker-St. John House, Abingdon, Washington County, Virginia, VDHR # 095-5264.



4063
42'30"
1.8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 81
4.0 MI. TO U.S. 11
4060

Baker-
St. John House
Abingdon
Washington Co.
Virginia

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State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X additional documentation ___ move ___ removal
___ name change (additional documentation) ___ other
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.

Julie V. Langer _____ 5/19/21
Signature of Certifying Official/Title: Date of Action

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ additional documentation accepted
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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The Baker-St. John House was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2010 and the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. The dwelling is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture with a period of significance of 1866. The property’s historic boundary *has not changed* as a result of this additional documentation.

The original nomination for the Baker-St. John House includes information about the dwelling’s owners from the 1860s through the early 2000s. A descendant of persons associated with the house found additional information concerning participants in the sensational 1891-1892 trial for murder of Dr. John A. P. Baker, who had sold the Baker-St. John House in 1890, shortly before the trial occurred. Analysis of this information and a check for properties more closely related to it identified no other potential candidates. As a result, this information is being added to the statement of significance for the Baker-St. John House. No new areas of significance have been identified for the property as the new information is not directly related to it; however, it highlights interesting links to other listed properties in southwestern Virginia for future researchers to consider.

Section 8. Statement of Significance

During John A. P. Baker’s trial, both Margaret Gilmer, a patient and rumored paramour of Baker’s, and her son, Howard Cecil Gilmer, testified about encounters during which Dr. Baker gave medicines or poisons, one of them hydrocyanic acid, for Margaret Gilmer to give to her husband. Testimony places the encounters on Jonesboro Road or Bristol Road, also called Island Road or Baker Road, with Mrs. Gilmer and her son in a two-wheeled cart and Dr. Baker on horseback.

Howard Cecil Gilmer (1879-1944) grew up to become an attorney and spent most of his adult life in southwestern Virginia. He married Lila Saul in 1905 and the couple had two children, Howard Cecil Gilmer Jr. and Lila Gilmer Sadler. In 1912, the senior Gilmer survived a widely publicized courthouse shooting in Carroll County, Virginia, that killed five people, including Gilmer’s friend, Judge Thornton Massie. Gilmer testified in the subsequent murder trials of members of the Allen family, who had perpetrated the shooting. Floyd Allen and his son, Claude Allen, were convicted and executed in 1913 for their roles in the massacre. The Carroll County Courthouse (DHR #237-0001) was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1981 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Its period of significance is 1870-1875, but the nomination includes information about the 1912 shooting. Also in Carroll County, the Sidna Allen House (DHR #017-0005) was listed in both registers in 1974 for its architectural significance and significance in “local history” due to its association with the Allen family and their participation in the courthouse shooting.

The senior Gilmer and his family lived in Pulaski County, Virginia, by the 1910s but the exact location of their residence is not known. A search of the Virginia Cultural Resources Information System (VCRIS) at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources identified four dwellings in the Town of Pulaski’s Historic Residential District, which was listed in the historic registers in 1988. One is identified as the W. S. Gilmer House (124 Third Street NW; DHR #125-0006-0269; the house is no longer extant) and another is called the Leo Gilmer House at 140 Third Street (DHR

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#125-0006-0271). A 1932 dwelling at 907 Prospect Avenue (DHR #125-0006-0063) is identified as simply "Gilmer House," as is a ca. 1910 dwelling at 154 4th Street (DHR #125-0006-0376).

During the great influenza pandemic in 1918-1919, H. C. Gilmer served on the central relief committee. The committee canceled or limited public gatherings and ordered other measures, such as business closures, to curtail the flu's spread during the pandemic.

H. C. Gilmer also became a locally significant figure in Virginia history as a supporter of the women's suffrage movement. In 1918-1919, he served as a delegate in the Virginia General Assembly, representing Pulaski County. In January 1920, when suffragist leader Carrie Chapman Catt appeared in Richmond to urge Virginia to ratify the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Gilmer was one of nine prominent speakers to make the case for ratification before the Virginia General Assembly. Although Virginia voted against ratification, the 19th amendment became law in August 1920 after Tennessee ratified it.

Gilmer returned to Pulaski County after his term as a delegate in the Virginia General Assembly. He continued to practice law and his son, Howard Cecil Gilmer, Jr., followed in his footsteps. The senior Gilmer died at his home in Pulaski in 1944.

Section 9. Major Bibliographical References

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"H. C. Gilmer, Sr., Succumbs at Residence in Pulaski." *Richmond Times Dispatch*. June 19, 1944. P. 13.

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“Rushing! The Prosecution Gets in its Best Day’s Work.” *Bristol Herald Courier*. February 28, 1892.

“Sensational! New Developments in the Baker Case Yesterday.” *Bristol Herald Courier*. February 25, 1892.

“Suffrage Up in House for Final Action.” *The News Leader*. January 27, 1920. Pgs. 1, 17.

Worrell, Allen. “Courthouse shooting items returning to scene of crime.” *Carroll News*. March 2, 2017. <https://www.thecarrollnews.com/news/2906/courthouse-shooting-items-returning-to-scene-of-crime>.

Section 11. Prepared By

name/title: Christa Anderson
e-mail: csmithanderson@gmail.com
date: May 2021

Additional Documentation

A descendant of persons associated with the house found a historic copy of the photograph (Additional Documentation #3) included in the original nomination of the Baker-St. John House (see Figures 1 and 2 below). The back of the 1891 photograph identifies those shown in the image: Annie Range St. John, David Sampson St. John, Ollie St. John (as a baby) and Nan and Tom Cunningham (the African Americans standing on the porch).

An undated early 20th century photograph shows details of the dwelling’s front porch and upper-story window and shutters (Figure 3). A 1939 photograph shows a portion of the dwelling’s façade, notably the bay window that continues to be a character-defining feature (Figure 4).

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Figure 1. 1891 photograph of the Baker St. John House.

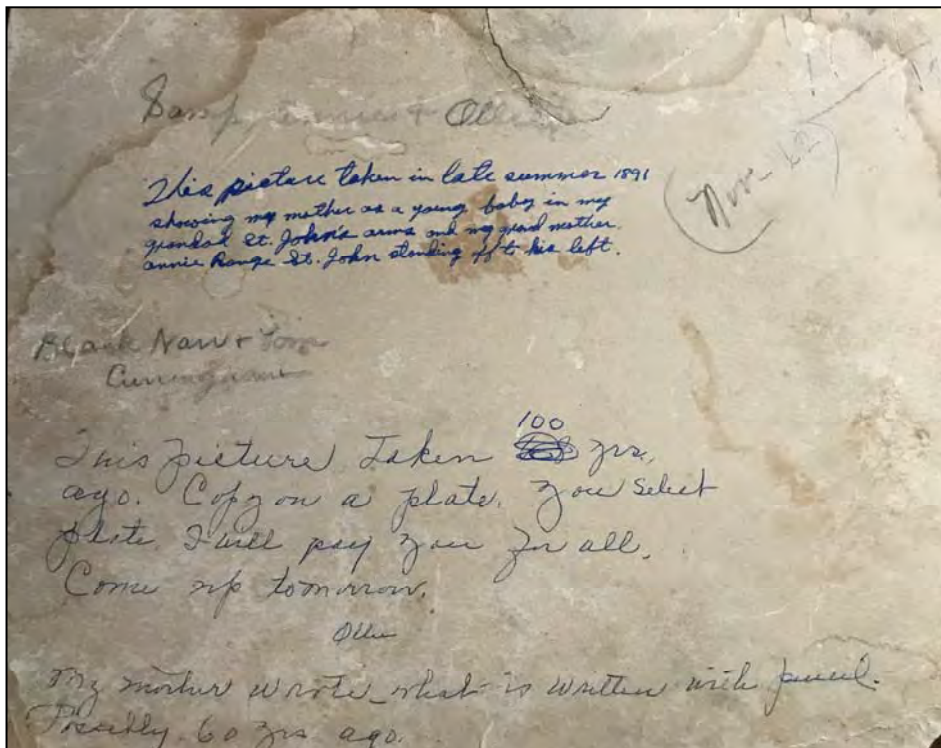


Figure 2. Back of 1891 photograph, identifying persons shown in the image.

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Figure 3. Undated early 20th century photo showing dwelling's front porch and upper-story window and shutters.

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Figure 4. 1939 photograph of family members with dwelling in background.