

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <u>Virginia</u>	
COUNTY: <u>Westmoreland</u>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
John R. Dos Passos Farm

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Spence 's Point

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: On Potomac River, Sandy Point Neck, Rt. 749, .3mi NE of junction with Rt. 610

CITY OR TOWN:
Westmoreland (see map for exact boundaries)

STATE <u>Virginia</u>	CODE	COUNTY: <u>Westmoreland</u>	CODE <u>193</u>
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
Estate of John R. Dos Passos

STREET AND NUMBER:
c/o Mrs. John R. Dos Passos

CITY OR TOWN: <u>Westmoreland</u>	STATE: <u>Virginia</u>	CODE
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:
Westmoreland County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: <u>Montross</u>	STATE: <u>Virginia</u>	CODE
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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1800

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: _____ Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Dos Passos house is a simple, Federal-style two-and-a-half story brick structure, consisting of two gable-roofed units: the original portion, which dates from 1806, and a wing added by Dos Passos in the 1940's. The larger and earlier unit follows a side-hall plan and is three bays wide, with two flush chimneys between which is set a small shuttered attic window at the eastern side of the house. The walls are laid in common bond, with a corbeled brick cornice. The asymmetrically-placed doorway opens into a wide hallway extending through the house to a rear door which looks out upon the Potomac. Two high-ceilinged rooms lie to the east or right side of the hall. The handsome pine paneling here was executed at Williamsburg and installed when Dos Passos restored the house. A straight-run staircase, also dating from the Dos Passos restoration, leads to the second floor, where the ground plan is repeated. The kitchen and some work rooms are located in the basement of this older portion of the house.

The modern wing blends unobtrusively with the older dwelling, to which it is connected by doorways from the west side of the hall. The later unit contains a library, a sitting room, a small dining area, and a bath, with bedrooms on the second floor. The rooms on the river side of the wing open onto a deep, two-tiered veranda. Between the house and the river is a patio and garden which, like the other plantings about the house, were developed by Dos Passos.

Few changes have occurred since John Dos Passos' death in 1970. All the furnishings remain and, at this writing, his book-lined second-floor study in the northeast corner of the house, adjoining his bedroom and facing the river, is virtually undisturbed. The author's widow now occupies the house.

At Sandy Point, about two miles downriver at the juncture of Virginia Routes 604 and 610, stands the house which served as the Dos Passos' family country home during the author's boyhood. The two-story frame residence dates from the late nineteenth century but is on the site of a much earlier structure evidenced by the weathered old out-buildings scattered around it. Both John Dos Passos' own residence and the boyhood place were formerly part of the same large tract purchased in 1885 by Dos Passos' father, then a Washington attorney. The Sandy Point house has, however, passed out of the family.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian <input type="checkbox"/>	16th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	18th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	20th Century <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	17th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	19th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) ca. 1942-1970

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Political <input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning <input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry <input type="checkbox"/>	Science <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Invention <input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Theater <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>		_____
	Music <input type="checkbox"/>		_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Because of his artistry and the incisiveness with which he portrayed the complexities of an emergent twentieth-century America, John Dos Passos has been acclaimed as one of the major and most influential of modern American writers. In U.S.A., Dos Passos invented a new form of storytelling in which social history itself became the dynamic drive of the work, instead of merely its framework.¹ Norris, Dreiser, and others dealt with the separate manifestations of a new industrialism, but none before Dos Passos had brought all of these together and in so sharp a focus; and, as Maxwell Geismar has declared, "perhaps none of them had understood so clearly the nuances of their own historical scene."²

Dos Passos spent most of his boyhood summers on the Tidewater Virginia family farm along the Potomac River. Later, as a successful author and an heir to the property, he returned in the early 1940's and began restoration of a dilapidated early farmhouse on the "Hominy Hall" tract of the large holding. In 1949, he settled there permanently and, while maintaining a home in Baltimore, spent the last twenty-five years of his life in Westmoreland County. His final works, although not as significant as his contributions of the 1920's and 1930's, were largely written here.

Biography

John Dos Passos was born on January 14, 1896 in Chicago. He moved around a great deal as a child, attended Choate and then Harvard, from which he was graduated in 1916. Next he studied architecture in Spain for a time, and became involved in the First World War as a "gentleman volunteer" for the French ambulance service. After the war, he traveled extensively as a newspaper correspondent and free-lance writer. In Paris, he came to know Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and other literary luminaries of the period.

His first two books, One Man's Initiation (1917) and Three Soldiers (1921), were based upon his wartime experiences, stripping war and military life of the romanticism with which traditionally they had been viewed. The first of his many unusual travelogues, Rosinante to the Road Again, appeared in 1922. It dealt with Spain, which attracted and inspired Dos Passos as it did Hemingway. The publication of Manhattan Transfer in 1925 was the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bradley, Sculley; Beatty, Richmond C.; and Long, E. Hudson, eds. The American Tradition in Literature, Vol. II, revised. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1962, pp. 1497-98.

Geismar, Maxwell. Writers in Crisis. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961, pp. 89-139.

Spiller, Robert, and others, eds, Literary History of the United States, revised. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960, pp. 1302-04.

The Washington Post, Sept. 29, 1970, 93rd year, no. 298, p. 1.

Wrenn, John H. John Dos Passos. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE			LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	38°	05'	44"	76°	35'	04"
NE	38°	05'	44"	76°	32'	09"
SE	38°	03'	58"	76°	32'	09"
SW	38°	03'	58"	76°	35'	04"

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Robert S. Gamble, Historian

ORGANIZATION: **Division of History, National Park Service** DATE: **June 17, 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER:
801-19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

John Dos Passos Farm

8. Biography continued (first sheet)

first work in which Dos Passos emerged as a writer of unique force and originality. The book is the story of the plight of the common man in industrial American society, and represents a shift from his earlier emphasis on the more sensitive, artistic personality. Here for the first time Dos Passos employed the stylistic technique, later expanded in his famous U.S.A. trilogy, of interwoven impressionistic vignettes rather than the more conventional narrative approach.

The 42nd Parallel, the first of his trilogy, appeared in 1930. The second book, 1919, was published in 1932, and the third, The Big Money, in 1936. Dos Passos' literary career reached a climax in this trilogy. U.S.A. chronicles the lives of twelve Americans as they attempt to cope with the problems they face. The books grow successively more pessimistic, picturing a society in decline, crushing human lives in the process of its own corruption. Toward the end, the trilogy also revealed Dos Passos' latent conservative tendencies, with a view of man as weak and vicious, inhibited only by societal restraint. Three devices are employed to enrich the narrative: the "Newsreel" of contemporary events, short but vivid biographies of important figures of the day, and the "Camera Eye"--a sort of stream of consciousness autobiography of Dos Passos. It was the impact of these techniques, as well as the message conveyed, that prompted Jean-Paul Sartre to say in 1938, "Dos Passos invented only one thing, an art of story-telling. But that is enough.... I regard Dos Passos as the greatest writer of our time."³

During the 1920's and 1930's, Dos Passos was heavily involved in radical causes. He helped found the magazine, The Masses; was jailed for picketing the Sacco-Vanzetti trial; organized coal workers; and in 1932 supported the Communist candidate for the Presidency, although he never joined the party himself. His social ardor began to wane after 1934 and during the Spanish American War. Adventures of a Young Man (1939), expressing Dos Passos' own feelings at the end of the decade, is the story of an American radical who becomes disillusioned when his visions for society turn sour.

A second trilogy, District of Columbia (1949), confirmed his stance. It concerns the failure of the New Deal and the catastrophe of World War II. Critics have not treated his later work kindly--partially, some feel, because he is considered somewhat of turncoat, but also because the works lack the impassioned vision of such masterpieces as Manhattan Transfer and U.S.A. It was not so much Dos Passos who changed, however, but the world around him. Throughout his life, he was strongly anti-authoritarian, directing this feeling against any established power, no matter what its political hue.

Dos Passos spent the last thirty years of his life traveling and writing, living first in Provincetown, Massachusetts, then in Baltimore and Westmoreland County, Virginia. He died in Baltimore on September 29, 1970.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

John Dos Passos Farm

8. continued (second sheet)

1. Sculley Bradley, Richmond C. Beatty, and E. Hudson Long, eds., The American Tradition in Literature, Vol. II, revised edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 1497.

2. Robert E. Spiller and others, eds., Literary History of the United States, revised edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 1303.

3. Quoted in The Washington Post, September 29, 1970, p. 1.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Virginia	
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(Number all entries)

John Dos Passos Farm

2. Location (boundaries)

The boundaries of the historic area are as follows: from a point on the shore of the Potomac River southeast of the intersection of Routes 604 and 610, 38° 03' 58" Lat., 76° 32' 09" Long., due west approximately 1.4 of a mile, or to a point northwest of the intersection of Routes 604 and 610 at 38° 03' 58" Lat., 76° 33' 23" Long.; thence northwest approximately 1.1 of a mile to a point 38° 04' 33" Lat., 76° 34' 40" Long.; thence continuing northwest approximately .6 of a mile to Route 663, at 38° 05' 00" Lat., 76° 35' 04" Long.; thence due north approximately .2 of a mile to Bonum Creek and along the eastern shoreline of Bonum Creek to the Potomac River; thence southeast along the shoreline of the Potomac to the point of beginning. These boundaries encompass the present acreage of the farm as well as the boyhood home of John Dos Passos on the northwest side of the intersection of Routes 604 and 610.

8°05'44"

38°05'44"

76°35'04"

76°35'04"

76°32'09"

32°03'58"

38°03'58"

Dos Passos House

SANDY

POINT

MARYLAND VIRGINIA

Dos Passos Bayhood

Sandy Pt

Westmoreland

NECK

Sandy Point

John Dos Passos Farm
Westmoreland County, Va.
U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series
Kinsale, Virginia-Maryland Quadrangle
1968

