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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James Semple House is a frame house with clapboarding, having a two-storey rectangular center section with pedimented gable roof, gableend to the front, and two interior end-chimneys. The entrance is a Roman Doric porch, with dentil pediment and eaves, and a remarkable guilloche on its architrave, a feature probably suggested by <u>The Builder's</u> Companion of William Pain, published in London in 1765.

Flanking the center are one storey wings with gable roofs to the side. They too are frame, with clapboarding, containing the dining room to the east, and a large drawing room to the west. In the center section, originally, was a large salon with a fireplace at the west side. In the nineteenth century, a partition was set up to subdivide the room, forming a narrow east-west hall between the wings.

The two small bedrooms in the upper level of the center section are reached by a narrow, steep, and winding staircase, contained in the East wing of the house, concealed behind the chimney in a manner similar to that used in the drawings for the first Monticello. Indeed, authorship of the design of the Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was constructed c. 1770-1780. Jefferson's first drawing for Monticello (1768), according to Waterman, "paralells the design of the Randolph-Semple House to such a degree that there can be no doubt that they are by the same author."

The Semple House lies at the far eastern end of Williamsburg, in fact, east of the Capitol which is the eastern terminus of the Duke of Gloucester Street east-west axis. The house was acquired and restored by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 1932, after it had passed through the hands of several owners in the nineteenth century. It had been changed little, but had fallen by 1932 into some state of disrepair. The east chimney was rebuilt, as were the front porch steps. On the porch, square piers were removed and replaced with columns. The guilloche on the architrave was restored after traces of the original. A wing attached to the south of the center block, added 1806-1823, was also removed. The nineteenth century hall partition remains in place.

The Semple House, fortunately, is another of those in Williamsburg whose eighteenth century boundaries may still be followed on surviving deed records and maps. This then is the basis for the most reasonable boundary for this Landmark now.

Interestingly, a portion of Williamsburg was laid out according to a system of 5-pole measurements, the age-old measure deriving from medieval agricultural methods. A pole being approximately 5 1/2 yards, a 5-pole lot then would be about 82 1/2 feet. The maps show that the eighteenth century property lines of the James Semple House begin at a point on Francis Street 247.5 feet (15 poles) west of Waller Street, continuing east-west for 165 feet (10 poles). This is two lots, and they were never numbered. The lot

PERIOD (Check One or More as	_		
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	🔀 18th Century	20th Century
15th Century	17th Century	19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab	le and Known) 1770-	1780	
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch	eck One or More as Appropri	ate)	
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🗙 Architecture	Landscape	Sculpture	
Art	Architecture	Social/Human-	
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Conservation	Music	Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James Semple House is an excellent example of Palladio's "Roman Country House" adapted for use as a frame townhouse. It is a distinguished and early example of the classicism which began to change the American architectural scene towards the end of the 18th century. Its beauty derives largely from its perfect proportions, enhanced by delicate classical detailing. Although there is disagreement among architectural experts, the authorship of the design of the James Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was built c. 1770-1780. Its design has a remarkable affinity to those done by Jefferson for his first Monticello in 1768.

MAJOR	BIBLIOGRA	PHICAL R	EFERENCES					
Mar	cus Whiff	en, <u>The</u>	Eighteenth	Centu	ry Houses of Wi	lliamst	ourg (Willia	ims-
		bur	g 1960) .					
Tho	mas T. Wa	terman,	The Dwelli	ngs of	Colonial Ameri	.ca (Cha	upel Hill, 1	.950).
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Form 10-300a (July 1969)	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	STATE Virginia		
	NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	COUNTY		
	INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM	Independent City		
(NATIONAL HIST		FOR NPS USE ONLY		
LANDMARKE		ENTRY NUMBER DATE		
(Number all entries	7. Description second page			

line runs back from the east-west line 264 feet, exactly 16 poles.

Colonial Williamsburg has constructed a number of small buildings on these four lots. None of them are original therefore. A small kitchen building a few feet to the east of the James Semple House is the only other original building on the site.

The house is still owned by the Colonial Williamsburg corporation and is used as a residence for one of its executive employees. It is well maintained, but not open to the public. The boundary line set by Colonial Williamsburg around the property is co-extensive with the historical justification just delivered.



