

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

VLR Listed: 12/12/2019
NRHP Listed: 3/18/2020

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Dabbs House
Other names/site number: High Meadow; Dabbs House Museum; VDHR #043-0016
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 3812 Nine Mile Road
City or town: Henrico State: VA County: Henrico
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title:</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. 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
- 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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DEFENSE/military facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/government office

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; METAL; STONE: Slate;
WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The Dabbs House, now a county-owned museum, is located in the Varina Magisterial District of Henrico County, off Interstate 64 East at exit 193 B onto Nine Mile Road at the intersection with Dabbs House Road. The building is part of Henrico County's Eastern Government Center complex. The evolved ca. 1820 two-story building began as a two-story, three-bay, side gable, side passage dwelling later expanded with a three-bay lateral addition. To either side of the main block extend 1½-story, three-bay, side gable wings. A two-story rear wing extends from the western half of the main block and a one-story extension wraps around the rear wing's north (rear) elevation. In 1965, an underground emergency operating center was constructed behind the Dabbs House, with access from the former dwelling's basement as well as an above ground frame enclosure that stands north of the house. The building is surrounded by a minimally landscaped bed with bushes and a sidewalk in front of the building. Parking lots and a ballfield are located to the west of the building. In front of the building, separated by a circular drive, is a grassy open space that includes ornamental plantings and a 1969 memorial plaza with flagpoles, a historic marker that commemorates the property's role in the Civil War, a marker that commemorates Henrico County residents killed in World War II, and a marker that commemorates county police officers killed in the line of duty. The plaza is a contributing site and the three markers are contributing objects. A newer Civil War Trails interpretive marker stands next to the historic Civil War marker and is a noncontributing object. North of (behind) the Dabbs House is a picnic area with a paved plaza and frame hexagonal structure. The picnic area's plaza is a noncontributing site and the gazebo is a noncontributing structure as they postdate the Dabbs House's period of significance. A cemetery that is noted on historic documents has not been located and is not

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within the property's nominated boundary. The property originally was known as High Meadow but, in August 1862, Confederate General Robert E. Lee called the property "Dabbs House" after the occupants and this name continued in use thereafter.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Dabbs House is located 570 feet north of Nine Mile Road (Route 33) in eastern Henrico County. Today the former dwelling serves as a museum and a certified Virginia Visitor Center. To the east, Dabbs House Road is 390 feet from the original house's front porch. The former dwelling, now a museum, is within Henrico County's Eastern Government Complex, which occupies 49.66 acres of landscaped grounds. The Eastern Government Center's complex of buildings, parking lots and sidewalks are located a short distance east of the Dabbs House while county-owned recreational resources are to the north and west. A 62-foot wide paved parking lot is immediately west of the Dabbs House and beyond it are athletic fields and recreational resources.

The Dabbs House occupies a grassy lot with a paved parking lot along the west side and a paved access drive along the east side. A paved plaza with concrete tables and seating enters the lot from the east side and terminates at a hexagonal gazebo. The plaza and gazebo are noncontributing as they postdate the property's period of significance.

South (in front) of the Dabbs House is a square, gravel plaza that occupies a triangular median separated from the Dabbs House by a circular drive. The memorial plaza was dedicated on July 4, 1969. Three flagpoles stand along the plaza's north edge, along with a low concrete marker that commemorates Henrico County police officers. A paved sidewalk bisects the plaza from east/west and north/south. At the east and west ends of the plaza are historic markers, each consisting of a base composed of cut stones with mortar joints, a smooth, angled top, and a brass plaque affixed to the top. The east marker commemorates the property's role in the Civil War and the west marker commemorates Henrico County residents killed in the line of duty during World War II. The plaza is a contributing site and the three historic markers are contributing objects. A newer Civil War Trails interpretive marker stands next to the historic Civil War marker and is a noncontributing object.

Dwelling, ca. 1820, 1880s, 1940, 1952

The Dabbs House is an evolved building that originally was constructed ca. 1820. Major additions and renovations took place in the early 1880s, 1940, and 1952. The building's existing floor plans are provided for reference at the end of this section.

The original block of the Dabbs House was built ca. 1820 as a brick, side-passage, three-bay, two-story, side gable dwelling in the Federal style. The interior of this section includes the main

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stair hall and the first- and second-floor rooms on the east (right) side of the stair hall.¹ During the 1880s, the dwelling was expanded with a three-bay lateral addition to the west. Little visual documentation of the building's façade exists prior to a significant remodeling and expansion in 1940. Architect Edward Sinnott added (or enhanced) the Greek Revival cornice elements and a deep soffit with modillions were added at this time, as was a formal Greek Revival entrance portico with a full tympanum and dentils, supported by two Doric columns. The building's original Federal style is evidenced primarily in the brick exterior walls laid in Flemish bond (originally unpainted) and symmetrical fenestration.² On the south façade, replacement black louvered shutters flank the five windows on the main block's first story and six windows on the second story. The house is built on a full basement lit by segmental-arched windows situated just above grade and aligned with the window openings on the first and second stories. Each opening is currently filled with a louvered vent.

Other significant antebellum period features include the following. There is a standing seam metal roof, which most likely replaced earlier wood shingles by the early 20th century, but is appropriate to the character and age of the house.³ The earlier stair hall plan is intact, and both the hall and the first- and second-floor rooms on the east (right) side of the hall have early details.⁴ The main staircase with its walnut handrail and pine balusters are one of the most prominent early features surviving.⁵ Windows and window casings in the first- and second-floor rooms on the east side of the stair hall appear to be from the 19th century. Most of the windows have six-over-six double hung wood sash with simple Greek Revival casings; at least one set of window sash on the first floor is a later replacement.⁶ An original door opening at the rear (north) end of the stair hall was changed to a window opening at an unknown date. During the 1940s remodeling, this window opening was changed back to a door opening, with the Greek Revival-style door's design based on the existing historic doors.⁷ The first-floor room on the east side of the stair hall features painted wood baseboards, wainscot, and chair rail. The baseboard from this period has a simple base with a molded cap. The wood wainscot is a flat panel of wood with a simple chair rail.⁸ Old plaster and hand-split oak lath also remain in situ.⁹ Early doors and casings remain in the second-floor chamber on the east side of the stair hall, where both the entry door and double-leaf closet doors are likely 19th century. The closet doors have three panels and the room entry door has six panels, with all featuring simple Greek Revival casings like the windows.¹⁰ There is some early period wood flooring, either pine or oak, in the original block that shows high craftsmanship.

¹ Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC, *The History and Significance of Dabbs House* (Richmond, VA: 2006), p.4.

² Sadler & Whitehead, p.5.

³ Sadler & Whitehead, p.5.

⁴ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

⁵ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

⁶ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

⁷ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

⁸ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

⁹ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

¹⁰ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

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The Dabbs House continued to function as a dwelling until the Civil War, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee used the building as his headquarters during the summer of 1862. While here, in the ca. 1820 block second-floor room, Lee and his officers planned the battle strategy for the Army of Northern Virginia in what became known as the Seven Days' Battle (June 25-July 1, 1862). After the war, the building resumed use as a dwelling.

Almshouse Expansion, ca. 1883-ca. 1924

Henrico County purchased the Dabbs House on June 5, 1883, for use as an almshouse. During this time the house was expanded with a three-bay lateral addition to the west of the original block, creating today's six-bay façade.¹¹ Interruption in the brick coursing can be seen along the west edge of the front porch. The window openings on the 1883 lateral addition are rectangular, matching the size and shape of those on the original block. Window sash installed during this period were six-over-six double hung wood sash. The original block's six-over-six sash also appear to date to this period. Interior brick chimneys are at each end of the side-gable main block.

Also during the early 1880s, a rear two-story wing with a one-story north extension was built. The rear wing's east elevation on the first story includes a window with a six-over-six wood sash, a concrete-deck, one-story porch with metal railing, and an entry with a six-panel door. A segmental arch above the door suggests a transom originally existed above the door but has been bricked in. The rear wing's second story has two segmental-arched windows with six-over-six sash. The two-story wing's west elevation features three windows on the first and second stories, while its north (rear) wall is blank. The one-story rear extension features two windows with segmental arches and six-over-six sash on the east and west elevations, while the north (rear) wall has three bricked-up windows. All of the additions have brick exterior walls laid in running bond with occasional brick courses laid in Flemish bond (Flemish variant). Standing-seam metal roofing covers the main block and rear additions. Low parapets conceal the rear wing's shed roofs from view.

On the interior, the first-floor corridor in the rear wing appears to date to the almshouse expansion, as evidenced by sections of beaded wainscoting.¹² The window casings in the first- and second floor-rooms on the west side of the stair hall match those in the first- and second-floor rear wing's rooms.¹³ These casings have pilaster moldings with bull's eye corner blocks.¹⁴ At least three doors and door casings in the rear wing's first floor are original. In the main block, the second-floor rooms west of the stair hall have four doors and door casings that are original.¹⁵ The almshouse period doors have four raised panels while the casings feature pilaster moldings

¹¹ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 4, 8.

¹² Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹³ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹⁴ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹⁵ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

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with bull's eye corner blocks that match the window casings.¹⁶ But for the period wood flooring, few other interior finishes remain from the almshouse period.¹⁷

After the County discontinued the use of the almshouse in 1924, the Dabbs House was rented out to private families. During a 1999 interview, former resident Elmore Adams noted that a front porch once spanned the entire primary façade during the early twentieth century, confirming the pre-1940 primary elevation that was likely created during the Almshouse period.¹⁸

Henrico County's Office Expansion, ca. 1939-1952

During the late 1930s, Henrico County officials decided to convert the Dabbs House for use as office space. A major remodeling, designed by architect Edward F. Sinnott, followed that changed the building's overall massing and some aspects of the interior floor plan. The design was generally Colonial Revival in style, with particular reference to the mid-19th century Greek Revival style. Among the first changes to the building was the removal of the façade-spanning porch, which was replaced with the current one-story, one-bay gabled Greek Revival style porch. The modillion cornice was added at the front and rear of the main block.

In 1940, the west lateral addition on the main block was constructed to create office space. It was followed in 1952 with an identical east lateral addition. Each is a 1½ story, side-gabled extension with three bays. The east addition has a right-of-center entry with two windows to the west (left) and three gabled dormers. The west addition has a centered entry flanked by windows and three gabled dormers. All of these windows have six-over-six sash and the first-story windows have replacement black decorative louvered shutters. Both side additions have steeply pitched roofs covered with slate shingles. The brick walls are laid in five-course American bond. Both wings terminate with an exterior end chimney and one-story pent-roofed extensions.¹⁹ The additions' windows and casings match the main block's windows and casings. The windows have six-over-six sash except for the pents, which have two-over-two sash and Greek Revival casings. The entries have six-panel wood Colonial Revival doors with raised panels.

Each of the side wings has its own interior staircase. Doorways were cut into the main block's east and west end walls to link them to the 1940 and 1952 lateral additions.²⁰ Mantels in the ca. 1820 block's two rooms were probably removed when the east and west wings were added.²¹

Due to all of these additions, the Dabbs House grew to approximately 5,829 square feet. The basement alone is approximately 2,497 square feet. Historically, half of the basement was used for storage and as a boiler room. There are horizontal wood grilles in the basement level

¹⁶ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹⁷ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹⁸ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 8.

¹⁹ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 9.

²⁰ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

²¹ Sadler & Whitehead, p. 5.

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windows, early 20th century flooring, and beaded beams. For a time, the police department used the basement for records and for the location of holding cells.

Henrico County Emergency Operating Center, 1965

The Cold War-era underground bunker, designed as a government operating center, is accessed by a stairwell from within a small ell added to the Dabbs House in 1965 to access the underground bunker at the northwestern rear of the building. Another access point is via a one-story, gable-roofed, frame enclosure with vinyl siding that stands on the west side of the grassy area. Measuring approximately 12 by 20 feet (240 square feet), the enclosure has windows with six-over-six wood sash on the west and north elevations and an entry on the south facade. This enclosure is the only above ground indication of the center's presence. The relatively non-descript access enclosure has the appearance of an outbuilding. On its north side is a concrete structure for a protected ventilator bulkhead with fans and HVAC machinery for the bunker.

The bunker is several feet underground and is laid out in a long rectangle that is at a right angle to the house. The far end of the plan has additional spaces extending to the east, a rectangular extension.

The space includes offices, meeting rooms, a larger assembly space, a kitchen, bathrooms, spaces that were meant to be living quarters and men's and women's decontamination bathing rooms. While there had been some remodeling as the space has served as office space over time, most of the original 1960s finishes and some equipment is still intact. The facility was self-powered for emergency use with a large diesel Cummins engine and water pump. Interior walls, concrete block, doors and trim are original to 1965. The Men's Decontamination Room was remodeled in recent years into a bathroom, but the Women's Decontamination Room has been preserved with pink wall tiles, a reclining couch, and the original door sign that reads "Decontamination Ladies."

Dabbs House Museum (2007-present)

The opening dedication of the museum was in November 2008. Construction began in August of 2007, renovating former office space in the west wing to accommodate a front desk and orientation area for museum visitors. A handicap lift was installed. The Dabbs house building now is approximately 5,829 square feet above ground with 6,288 square feet in the underground bunker. The second floor in the story-and-a-half west wing is used as a break room and a modern bathroom was installed. In the main two-story section of the building, the west side of the stair hall on the first floor has exhibit space with displays and informational panels. Additional first-floor rooms in the rear extension house a library, archive collection and two bathrooms. The second-floor room on the east side of the stair hall was used by Lee and his officers to plan the Seven Days Battle. This space has been restored as a museum area to the appearance it may have had during its use as a Confederate Army headquarters. The upstairs of the main block and the Almshouse extension house staff offices. The window casings with pilaster moldings with bulls

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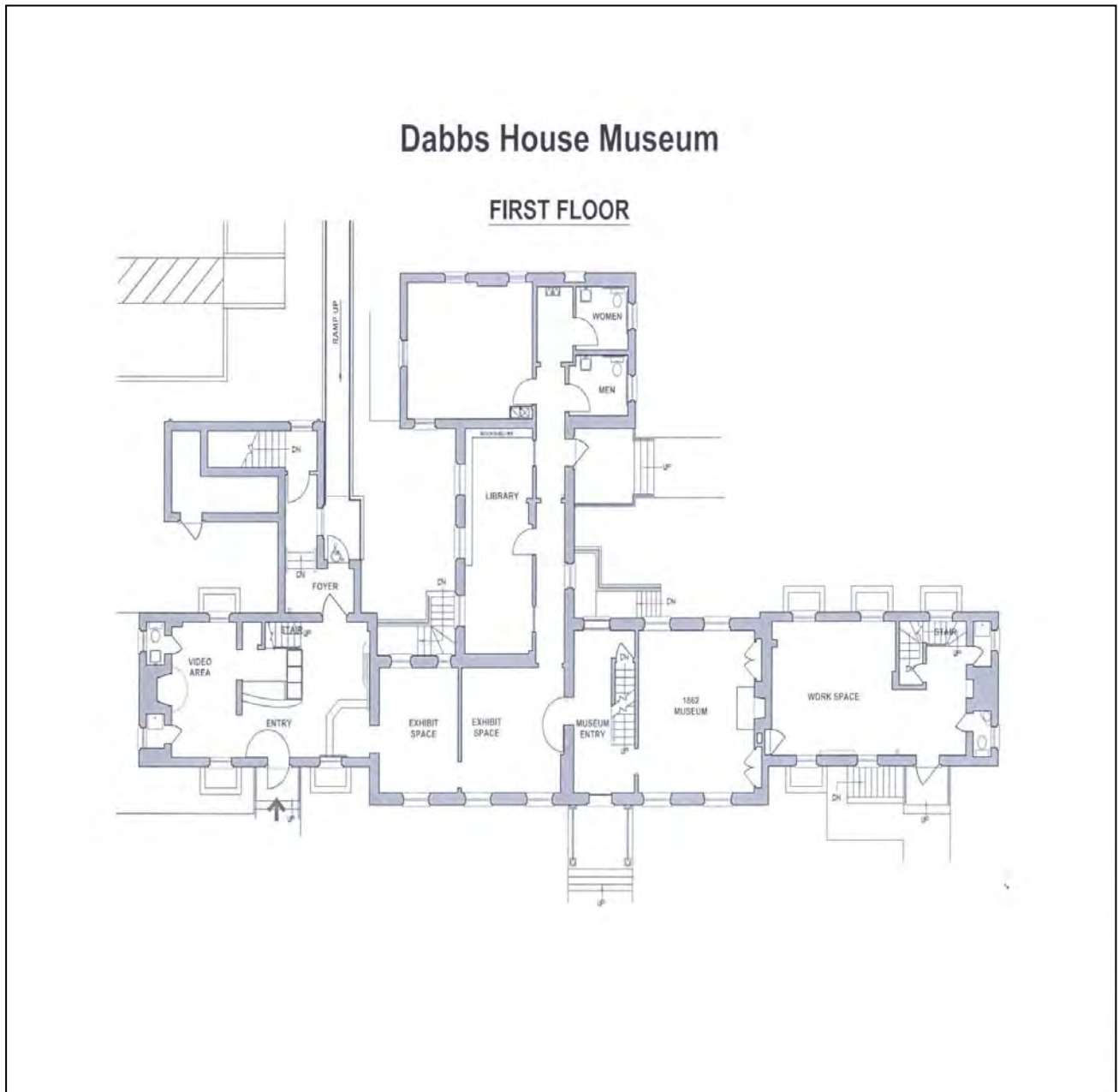
eye corner blocks remain in the offices. The Dabbs House Museum became a State Visitor Center in March 2010.

Integrity Analysis

The architectural fabric of the Dabbs House shows several periods of evolution. Constructed c. 1820, the core of the house is a three-bay section on the west side of the six-bay primary elevation. The house was enlarged in the 1880s with three western bays and a rear ell. From 1939 to 1952 architect Edward Sinnott unified the parts with more decorative Greek Revival style detailing and added two Colonial Revival side wings. A small ell was added in 1965 to access the underground bunker at the northwestern rear of the building. All periods read very clearly from the exterior and while the interior has been remodeled in recent years, care has been taken to retain character-defining spaces, stylized trim, flooring, and wall treatments. The most significant remodeling occurred in 1939-1952 through the work of architect Edward Sinnott. Prior to this, the building had been used as an almshouse for a long period and then as a rental property. It is likely that significant repairs were undertaken and systems were upgraded. The underground bunker shows high integrity to the 1960s-1970s, including the original generator, intact washrooms with period signage, and significant intact elements of the 1960s kitchen. Overall, while there was a lot of evolution of fabric from 1820 to 1965, one can clearly read the several campaigns that led to the current form of the building. The architecture work of the Works Progress Administration, which upgraded the house for county government office in 1940 is the most intact era of physical fabric throughout the building.

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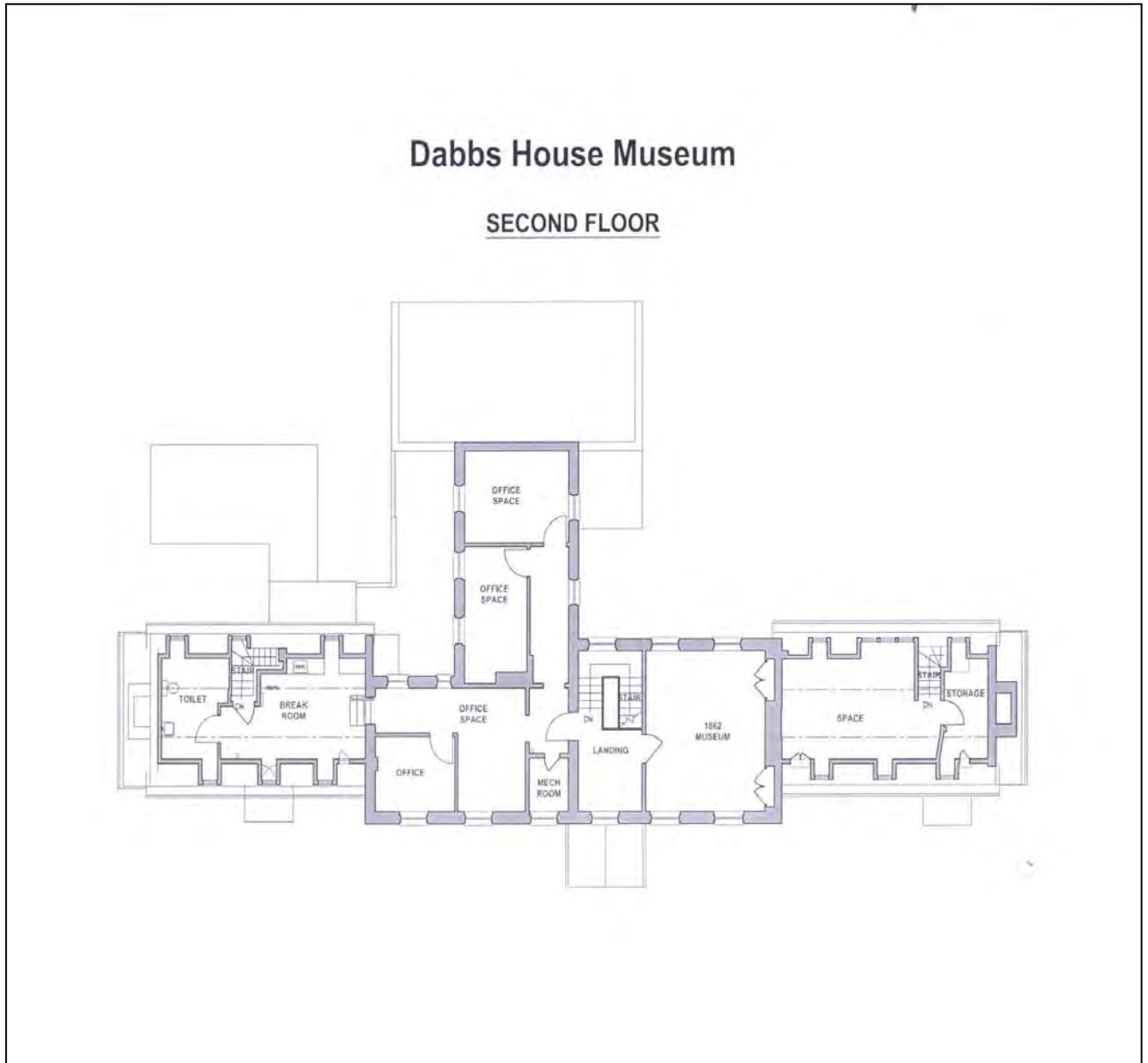
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Dabbs House, Existing First Floor Plan

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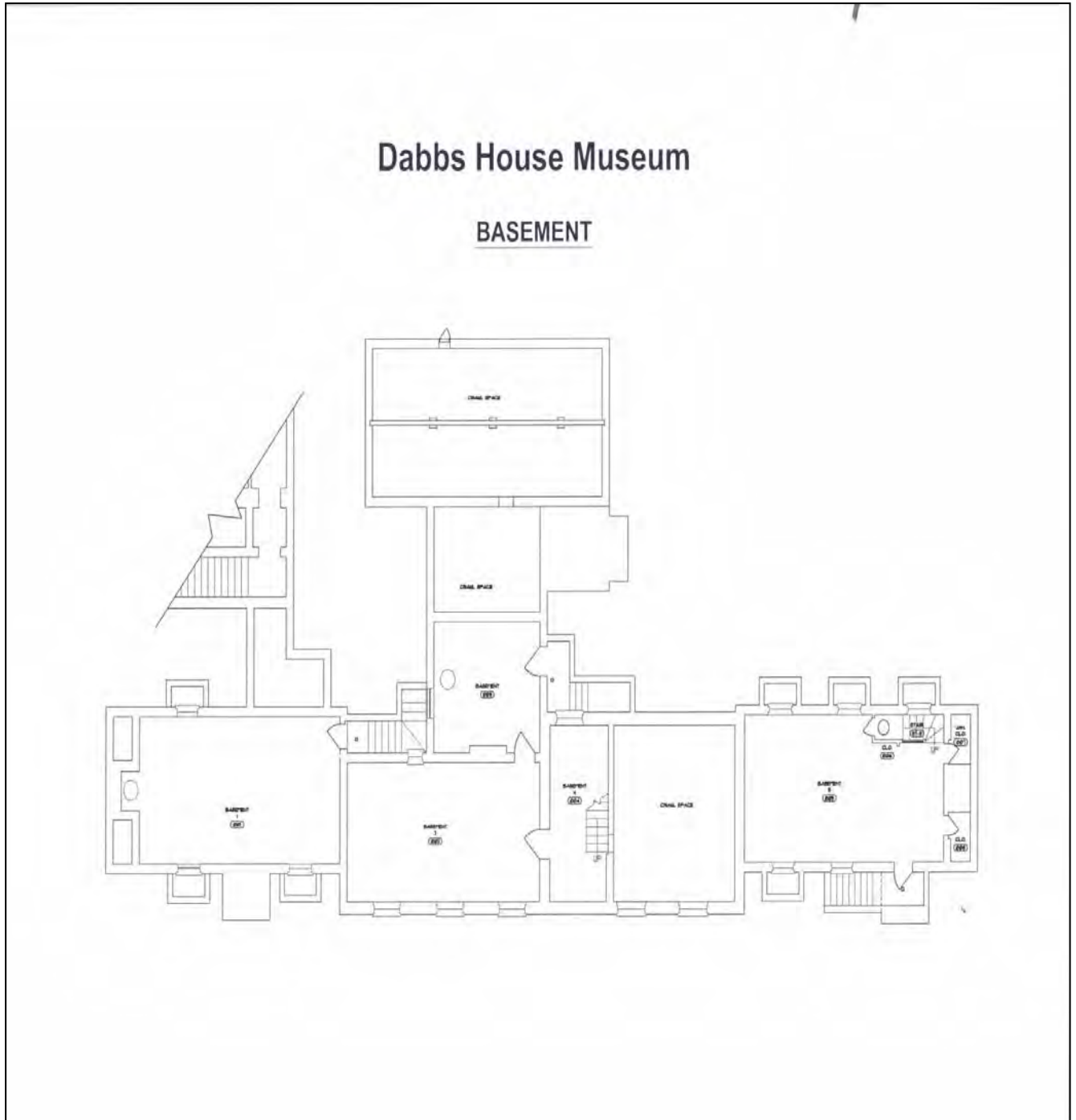
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Dabbs House, Existing Second Floor Plan

Dabbs House
Name of Property

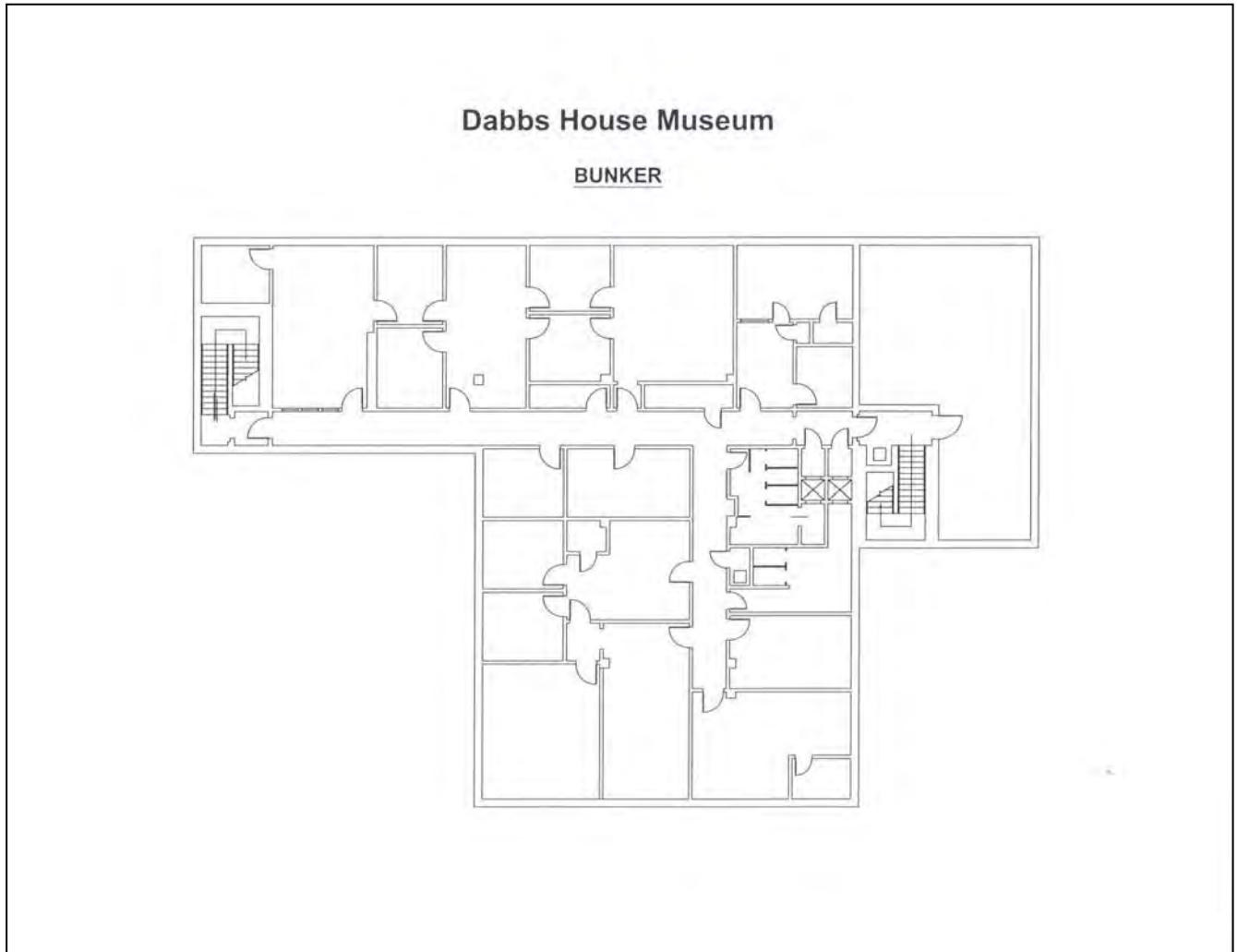
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Dabbs House, Existing Basement Floor Plan

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Emergency Operating Center, Existing Floor Plan

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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.
- 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1940-1969

Significant Dates

1941 (Henrico County Police Station opens)

1965 (Emergency Operating Center completed)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sinnott, Edward

Heisler, J. Albert

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Dabbs House is significant at the local level under Criterion A, for Henrico County's use of the property as a government office building, incorporating the 1820s and 1880s sections. It conveys significance in the area of Politics/Government.²² In addition to serving as a County almshouse, the Dabbs House was converted for use as county office space starting in 1940, and it served as a county police station for over sixty years, from 1941 until 2005. In 1965, the house received its final addition, a large underground fallout shelter named the Henrico County Emergency Operating Center, which was equipped to house county employees, if needed, during a Cold War attack.²³ The center was one of Virginia's first such facilities for maintaining local government operations during times of emergency. In 1969, in front of the house a memorial plaza that includes markers related to the property's history was dedicated. Since 2005, the Dabbs House has served as a museum and visitor center.²⁴ The architecture of the Dabbs House, as executed in 1820, 1940, 1952 and 1965, exhibits a distinctive architectural evolution that makes the building locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.²⁵ The architectural form incorporates the nineteenth century fabric from the 1820s-1880s.²⁶ The ultimate form of the building was achieved by the 1940 renovations, funded partly by the Works Progress Administration with later additions of the wing extensions, designed by notable area architect Edward F. Sinnott Sr. The evolution of the building helps to tell the story of Henrico County's history, from its construction as a farmhouse; its use during a key phase of the Civil War; its county use for housing the poor as an almshouse; to its use as government space and as a Cold War-era emergency operating center.²⁷ The property's period of significance represents the ultimate form of the building completed in 1940, generally in Colonial Revival style, to 1969 when the memorial plaza was completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Dabbs House, now an imposing building situated next to the Henrico Eastern Government Complex on Nine Mile Road, began as a simple two-story, single-pile farmhouse known as High Meadow. Since its construction around 1820, the Dabbs House has been the home of a slave trader as well as a former acting Virginia Governor John Munford Gregory. Locally it housed the county's poor from 1883 until 1924 as the Henrico County Almshouse. It also served as a county police station for over sixty years, from 1941 until 2005. In 1965, the house received its final addition, a large fallout shelter named the Henrico County Emergency Operating Center, which

²² Ibid. 14

²³ Henrico County. *Henrico County Annual Report*, Henrico County, 1965 p 15.

²⁴ *The History and Significance of Dabbs House*, 2006, Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC 800 W 33rd St. Richmond, VA 23225 p 14.

²⁵ Ibid. 14

²⁶ Ibid. 14

²⁷ *The History and Significance of Dabbs House*, 2006, Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC 800 W 33rd St. Richmond, VA 23225 p 14.

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was equipped to house county employees, if needed, during a Cold War attack. As it best conveys the period when it was used for County Offices, the property is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Of note, during the American Civil War, in 1862, Robert E. Lee, the newly appointed General of the Army of Northern Virginia, used Dabbs House as his first headquarters. It is here that he planned and executed his first series of battles known as the Seven Days Battles; many of these battles occurred within just a few miles of the Dabbs House.

Early History, 1820-1859

Dabbs House was originally known as High Meadow, due to the meadow in a floodplain of Stony Run Creek.²⁸ George P. Richardson owned the property from 1790 until he transferred it to J. B. Abbott on February 21, 1821.²⁹ The two-room farmhouse was constructed circa 1820. Abbott owned the property for twenty years until he transferred 216 acres to William Whiting on September 27, 1841.³⁰ On March 11, 1843, a public auction was held by J. B. Abbott on behalf of William Whiting, and it sold for \$6,124 to John Munford Gregory.³¹

Prior to purchasing the house, John Gregory was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates off and on from 1832 until 1841.³² On March 18, 1841, Gregory resigned as a delegate to become a member of the Council of State, also known as the Governor's Council. The same year that Gregory joined the council, the elected governor Thomas Walker Gilmer resigned. Gilmer was quickly followed by two acting governors: John M. Patton, who resigned after just twelve days, and John Rutherford, who served for a year. John Gregory was appointed Lt. Governor under John Rutherford and succeeded him as Acting Governor from March 1841 until January 1843.³³ After his residency at Dabbs House, Gregory was appointed to serve as the United States District Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia from 1853 until 1860.³⁴

In January 1850, Thomas Roy purchased the house and surrounding 216 acres.³⁵ In 1850, the Federal Census lists Roy living there with his wife and three children.³⁶ The Slave Schedule, recorded that same year, indicated that twenty-three enslaved people, ranging from eighteen months old to fifty years old, also lived and worked at High Meadow.³⁷ Five months after Roy purchased the property, the 1850 Agriculture Schedule indicated that High Meadow produced

²⁸ Hugh Pitts, *High Meadow: Where Robert E. Lee Drew His Sword* (Richmond: Henrico County Historical Society, 1999) 1-4.

²⁹ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 3: 249; Henrico County, Deed Book 16: 477.

³⁰ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 44: 35.

³¹ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 46: 207.

³² Gregory served as a delegate in 1832-1833, 1835-1836, and 1839-1841. Library of Virginia, "A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor John M. Gregory, 1842-1843," 2007.

³³ Library of Virginia, "A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor John M. Gregory, 1842-1843," 2007.

³⁴ Library of Virginia, "A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor John M. Gregory, 1842-1843," 2007.

³⁵ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 57: 10.

³⁶ 1850 United States Federal Census, My District, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "TMB Roy," *Ancestry.com*.

³⁷ 1850 Federal Slave Schedule, My District, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "TMB Roy," *Ancestry.com*.

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wheat, Indian corn, oats, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and hay as well as produced butter.³⁸ The property was home to horses, mules or donkeys, cattle, and swine.³⁹

On November 11, 1853, Roy sold the house and 144 acres to James Dickinson.⁴⁰ An attached plat from this 1853 deed shows the Dabbs house, another building and the location of a graveyard.⁴¹ Due to evidence found in newspaper articles, it appears that James Dickinson's brother, Richard Henry Dickinson, resided at High Meadow. The first article, published in 1854, announced that R.H. Dickinson hosted a funeral at High Meadow for his infant son.⁴² In 1859, another article noted that a home "adjoining High Meadow, the farm of Mr. R. H. Dickinson" was for sale.⁴³ Richard Dickinson was the husband of Virginia Scott Blackburn, and together they had at least four children.⁴⁴ Dickinson worked in the slave trade as a financier, auctioneer, and trader.⁴⁵ On January 1, 1856, the Dickinson family sold High Meadow's 144 acres and additional surrounding land to John and Ann Foster for \$17,000. From evidence found in local newspapers, it appears that the Fosters rented the house to at least two tenants; first the Dabbs, who lived at the house from 1859-1862, and W. P. Waring, who lived at High Meadow in 1862 through at least 1864.

Dabbs Family

Josiah Dabbs, a native of Charlotte County, married his third wife, Mary Catherine, on November 27, 1859, in Petersburg, Virginia.⁴⁶ Josiah was a building contractor and part owner of multiple companies such as Smith & Dabbs; Josiah Dabbs & Company; and Dabbs, McDearman & Company. Josiah Dabbs was well known for his business ventures.⁴⁷ He was the building contractor for several properties in the state, most notably, Berry Hill in Halifax County and Staunton Hill in Charlotte County (both are still extant and on the state/federal registers).⁴⁸ Josiah Dabbs placed an advertisement in *The Daily Dispatch* on July 18, 1859, selling his possessions in Halifax County because he intended to move to High Meadow.⁴⁹ He is also

³⁸ 1850 Federal Agriculture Schedule, My District, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "TMB Roy," *Ancestry.com*.

³⁹ 1850 Federal Agriculture Schedule, My District, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "TMB Roy," *Ancestry.com*.

⁴⁰ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 63: 401.

⁴¹ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 63: 402.

⁴² *Richmond Times Dispatch*, August 1, 1854.

⁴³ *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 27, 1859.

⁴⁴ 1850 United States Census, Richmond, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "Richard H. Dickinson,"

Ancestry.com; 1860 United States Census, Richmond, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "R. H.

Dickinson," *Ancestry.com*; 1870 United States Census, Pine Top, Middlesex County, Virginia, digital image s.v. "R. H. Dickinson," *Ancestry.com*.

⁴⁵ Michael B. Chesson, "Richard Henry Dickinson (1811 or 1812–1873)," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, Library of Virginia, published 2015 (http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.asp?b=Dickinson_Richard_Henry, accessed February 2, 2019).

⁴⁶ Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940, digital image s.v. "Josiah Dabbs," *Ancestry.com*.

⁴⁷ "Josiah Dabbs," *Notable Henricoians Database*, Henrico Public Libraries.

⁴⁸ Berry Hill Estate. "Our History." 2016; Louis Este Bruce, "Staunton Hill." Vintage Designs, 2002.

⁴⁹ *The Daily Dispatch*, July 18, 1859.

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registered as paying \$4.84 in personal property taxes in Henrico County in 1859.⁵⁰ The Dabbs appear on the Henrico 1860 population census, slave schedule, and agricultural census. The 1860 Census indicated that Josiah Dabbs was working as a farmer and the agricultural census showed that he owned three hundred acres of property, equaling \$25,000 in real estate, and \$45,000 in personal estate. The 1860 Slave Schedule illustrated that the Dabbs family owned twenty-five enslaved men and women. Four articles published in the *Daily Dispatch* between July and September 1861 demonstrate that Josiah Dabbs was living in Henrico County.⁵¹ Then, on November 19, 1861, the paper published a testimony from Josiah Dabbs, at High Meadow, on his observations about a model camp bed.⁵²

On January 19, 1862, as the American Civil War was already under way, Josiah Dabbs died at the age of 58, his obituary stating that he died “at his residence, High Meadow.”⁵³ His death was caused by erysipelas (strep skin infection). As a member of the local Masonic lodge, Dabbs’s remains were escorted by other members from First Baptist Church in Richmond to his final resting place in Blanford Cemetery (Petersburg) on January 22, 1862.⁵⁴ In May 1862, just four months after Josiah’s death, Mary Catherine Dabbs held a public auction at High Meadow, selling livestock, crops, farm equipment, a carriage, “together with the entire Household and Kitchen Furniture, of excellent quality, and consisting of the usual kinds.”⁵⁵ Mary Catherine Dabbs left High Meadow to oversee the house of Mrs. Archibald Thomas, who had fled from Richmond due to the presence of Federal forces.⁵⁶

The Civil War

Robert E. Lee became commander of the Army of Northern Virginia on June 1, 1862, after the previous commander General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31.⁵⁷ Lee used the Dabbs House as his first headquarters as General of the Army of Northern Virginia.⁵⁸ A newspaper article in 1862 notes that a horse was either lost or stolen “from Gen. Lee’s headquarters, at Dabbs house on the Nine-Mile road.”⁵⁹ Seven staff officers accompanied Lee to Dabbs as well as at least one enslaved man, Perry Parks. In one of Lee’s letters titled “Dabbs farm; Near Richmond 22 June ’62” he stated:

Daughter Came out one evg with Mr Johns, so she Can describe my residence, I am encamped in the house of the widow of the euphonious name, placed at the head of this page, whose husband died during the winter, & who has kindly permitted us to occupy

⁵⁰ Auditor of Public Accounts, *Personal Property Tax Books for Henrico County, 1857 (B) – 1860*, Reel #568, Library of Virginia.

⁵¹ “Local Matters,” *Daily Dispatch*, July 27, 1861; “Subscriptions for the Sick and Wounded,” *Daily Dispatch*, August 1, 1861; and “Contributions for the Sick and Wounded,” *Daily Dispatch*, August 24, 1861.

⁵² *Daily Dispatch*, November 19, 1861.

⁵³ “Died,” *Daily Dispatch*, January 22, 1862.

⁵⁴ Find a Grave, digital database s.v. “Josiah Dabbs.” *Daily Dispatch*, “Masonic Notice,” January 22, 1862.

⁵⁵ *Daily Dispatch* May 12, 1862.

⁵⁶ Pitts, *High Meadow*, 1.

⁵⁷ Louis H. Manarin, *Henrico County – Field of Honor*. Volume One. Henrico: Henrico County, 2004, 89.

⁵⁸ Manarin, *Henrico County – Field of Honor*, 89; and Hugh Pitts, *High Meadow*, 1, and 12-13.

⁵⁹ “Fifty Dollars Reward,” *Daily Dispatch*, July 5, 1862.

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her house. I do not know when she vacated it, but she left it delightfully clean, free of all necessaries or Comforts but her cat & kitten. They do not seem to care how the war goes but enjoy their gambols in perfect security.⁶⁰

Several well-known historical figures visited Dabbs House during Lee's residency. Jefferson Davis visited three times, on June 2 and 7, 1862 and again on June 21.⁶¹ On June 10, Lee summoned J.E.B. Stuart to the house to plan what is now known as Stuart's famous ride around the Union line.⁶² A council of war meeting occurred at the house on June 23, 1862.⁶³ At this time key Confederate military leaders T. J. Jackson, J. Longstreet, D. H. Hill, and A. P. Hill met at Dabbs House to discuss the fate of Richmond.⁶⁴ This meeting culminated into the Seven Days Battles. Lee and his staff closed the headquarters at Dabbs House on August 15, 1862, and boarded a train for Gordonsville.⁶⁵ After Lee's departure in August 1862, Dabbs House was rented to William P. Waring. Waring resided at the house from the end of 1862 until at least June 1864.⁶⁶ On December 13, 1865, an article was published in the *Daily Dispatch* that High Meadow, which included two hundred acres, "a large brick building, with all the usual out-buildings", and "a fine orchard" was available to rent for a year, beginning January 1866.⁶⁷

Henrico County and the Dabbs House, 1883-Present; Almshouse, 1883-1924

In 1874 the General Assembly abolished the township provisions by constitutional amendment and reestablished the magisterial districts.⁶⁸ At this time, the services of the Overseers of the Poor were delegated to each of the County Districts. Each District provided services for the sick and indigent people in its own location. The Henrico County board of supervisors decided to sell the old poorhouse property on Charles City Road, which it had been renting out since 1871, and to purchase a more centrally located site.⁶⁹

Henrico County purchased Dabbs House on June 5, 1883, from Harriet Anable of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and it has been owned by the County ever since.⁷⁰ The deed stated that the property would serve as the county's Almshouse, to assist the county's impoverished population

⁶⁰ "Dabbs farm; Near Richmond" June 22, 1862, Photocopy of original letter, Lee Family Papers, Mss1 L51c 36j0, Section 18, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

⁶¹ Pitts, *High Meadow*, 14, 22, and 26.

⁶² Manarin, *Henrico County – Field of Honor*, 98; and Pitts, *High Meadow*, 26.

⁶³ Pitts, *High Meadow*, 43-46.

⁶⁴ Pitts, *High Meadow*, 43-46.

⁶⁵ Pitts, *High Meadow*, 94.

⁶⁶ "Stray Cows," *Daily Dispatch*, November 8, 1862; "Estrays," *Daily Dispatch*, November 25, 1862; "Estray Cow," *Daily Dispatch*, February 14, 1863; "Estray," *Daily Dispatch*, October 10, 1863; "Estray Cow," *Daily Dispatch*, January 25, 1864; and *Daily Dispatch*, June 29, 1864.

⁶⁷ "High Meadow for Rent at Auction", *Daily Dispatch*, December 13, 1865.

⁶⁸ Louis H. Manarin and Charles H. Peple, *The History of Henrico County: 400th Anniversary Edition* (Henrico: Henrico County, 11), 323.

⁶⁹ Louis H. Manarin and Charles H. Peple, *The History of Henrico County: 400th Anniversary Edition* (Henrico: Henrico County, 11), 326.

⁷⁰ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 111: 249.

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who were referred to as “paupers” or “inmates.”⁷¹ The property contained 65¾ acres with the house, a smaller outbuilding, and a family cemetery.⁷² The Board of Supervisors allocated money out of the fund for the temporary poor for the burial of a child at Almshouse in 1906.⁷³ As indicated by census records, the overseer of the poor was required to live at Dabbs House.⁷⁴

A report entitled, “Erring and the Poor: Condition of life in Virginia jails and almshouses” was published in the *Richmond Times Dispatch* on February 15, 1903. The report was written after a three-day meeting of the Virginia Conference of Charitable and Correction by Dr. John M. Pilcher, the Chairman. It stated that the house could accommodate up to thirty-five people and there were thirty-two “inmates” in residence living in gender-separated quarters at the time of the report.⁷⁵ The acreage behind the house and outbuildings was cultivated to provide produce.⁷⁶ In 1909 the State Board of Charities and Corrections published its first annual report. The report included an assessment of the county Almshouse: “Two houses, one brick and one frame; eight rooms in each house; capacity, three paupers to a room. Heated by stoves; lighted by kerosene lamps. Water arrangements not adequate. The grounds are well kept but the buildings are not in good condition – they need repair. We have assurance that they are to be attended to.”⁷⁷ The frame building was believed to have been located to the east of the current house. Of the 65 acres, 40 were being cultivated: the crops were vegetables, corn, oats, and hay.⁷⁸ There was also a smokehouse and kitchen located behind the house at one time.⁷⁹ The almshouse closed in 1924 upon the request of the Department of Public Welfare. R. Frank Bane, a member of the department, who suggested the closure because the average number of residents had dropped to four and the costs far exceeded the number of people the Almshouse served.⁸⁰

Rental Property, 1924-1939

After Dabbs House fell out of use as the county’s Almshouse, it was utilized as a rental property, still owned by Henrico County. The nearby Masonic Home of Virginia rented the Almshouse farm, exclusive of the yard and lawn for the sum of \$325.00, with the rights to use the loft of the

⁷¹ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 111: 249.

⁷² Louis H. Manarin and Charles H. Peple, *The History of Henrico County: 400th Anniversary Edition* (Henrico: Henrico County, 11), 326.

⁷³ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 4 Henrico County Virginia (January 2, 1906-December 31, 1912) p 64.

⁷⁴ 1900 United States Census, Fairfield, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. “William Holdsworth.” *Ancestry.com*; 1910 United States Census, Fairfield, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. “Branch M. Jones.” *Ancestry.com*; 1920 United States Census, Fairfield, Henrico County, Virginia, digital image s.v. “John H. Apperson. *Ancestry.com*.

⁷⁵ John M. Pilcher, “Erring and the Poor,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, February 15, 1903.

⁷⁶ Louis H. Manarin and Charles H. Peple, *The History of Henrico County: 400th Anniversary Edition* (Henrico: Henrico County, 11), 326.

⁷⁷ Virginia State Board of Charities and Corrections, *First Annual Report of the State Board of Charities and Corrections* (Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Printing, 1909), 64-65.

⁷⁸ Virginia State Board of Charities and Corrections, *First Annual Report of the State Board of Charities and Corrections* (Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Printing, 1909), 64-65.

⁷⁹ “Dabbs House is Remodeled by Henrico,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 7, 1940.

⁸⁰ “Plan to Care for Henrico Mendicants in City Home,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, August 23, 1923.

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barn in 1930.⁸¹ The Board of Supervisors had the roof and downspouts on the residence and barn repaired and accepted a bid to remove two cottages on the lawn.⁸² A member of the board recommended that the rent to the Masonic home for the County Almshouse farm be reduced to the sum of \$175.00 for the year 1934, due to destruction of crops by the construction of the equipment depot.⁸³ The Masonic Home continued to rent the farm through 1938. The Henrico County Board of Supervisors conveyed 15.259 acres of the Almshouse tract to the Henrico County School Board in 1938.⁸⁴ Charles Albert Ragland, a blacksmith with the state highway commission, rented the Almshouse building for 12 months starting in September 1, 1935, at the rate of \$30.00 per month.⁸⁵ The County Manager was directed to notify the current tenant that his lease would expire September 1, 1939.⁸⁶ A Henrico Board of Supervisors resolution was adopted authorizing the County Manager to have plans prepared for the restoration and improvement of the Dabbs House on the County Farm so as to provide suitable offices for use by the Health Department, Welfare Department and any other Functions that may be feasible.⁸⁷

The memorial plaza in front of the Dabbs house contains a “Freeman Marker” named for Douglas S. Freeman. He, J. Ambler Johnston, and others formed the Battlefield Markers Association to identify battlefields and defense lines around Richmond. Each marker consists of a cast iron plate set on a concrete capstone atop a granite base. The markers were set in place from 1925 to 1933.⁸⁸ The marker “The Dabb House” was originally placed on Nine Mile road then later moved to the plaza. This marker is one of 60 that were placed in the City of Richmond, Hanover County, Chesterfield County, and Henrico County. They represent the earliest known historical highway markers in Virginia. The official statewide Virginia Historic Highway Marker program began in 1927. The 60 marker Freeman-Johnson system also was organized around one of the earliest battlefield commemorative auto-trails in the United States.

A Variety of Uses, 1940

In 1940, Dabbs House changed from a residential space to a government building. On July 16, 1940, the county held an open house to allow citizens to see the newly renovated building that housed the Department of Public Welfare, the Health Department, and a Works Project Administration-sponsored sewing room.⁸⁹ The architect, Edward F. Sinnott, drew the plans for the remodeling. Sinnott’s first drafts were dated April 1939.⁹⁰ The architectural drawing notations show the addition of the cornice and the Greek Revival porch. The estimated cost for

⁸¹ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 7, Henrico County, p. 56.

⁸² Board of Supervisors Orders Book 7, Henrico County, p. 56.

⁸³ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 7, Henrico County, p. 388.

⁸⁴ Henrico County, Virginia, Deed Book 273C: 282.

⁸⁵ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 7, Henrico County, p. 441.

⁸⁶ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 8, Henrico County, p. 353.

⁸⁷ Board of Supervisors Orders Book 8, Henrico County, p. 330.

⁸⁸ *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 9, 2016.

⁸⁹ “WPA Approves Fund for Dabbs House Work,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 1, 1940.

⁹⁰ Edward F. Sinnott, Jr., Papers, 1920-1998 (Mss3 Si663 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

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the project plus repairs was approximately \$12,000.⁹¹ In April 1940, Sinnott developed a new series of plans for the construction of the west wing of the building.⁹²

Police Station, 1941-2005

Henrico County police moved from an office located on 22nd Street in Richmond to Dabbs House on November 14, 1941, after the completion of the west wing.⁹³ Dabbs House served as a Henrico County police station for sixty-four years.⁹⁴ The Department of Public Welfare was still located in the house at the time. The original Dabbs House police force was made up of only eleven officers (for the entire County, which in 1940 had a population of 41,960).⁹⁵ The force stayed at eleven officers until 1949 when it expanded to fifteen.⁹⁶ Architect Edward F. Sinnott returned to Dabbs House in 1951 to design plans for an east wing.⁹⁷ A year later in 1952, the Henrico County Board of Supervisors authorized funds to be used to construct the new addition.⁹⁸ The new wing was expected to be completed by December 1952.⁹⁹ The 1960s were a decade of change for the police department and for Dabbs House. In 1962, the first county government-funded photography laboratory was installed in the west wing basement of the Dabbs House.¹⁰⁰ During this time the force also expanded by forty-five officers to a total of 155 employees.¹⁰¹ In 1973, the Fire Department and the Department of Public Welfare moved out of the Dabbs House.¹⁰²

Emergency Operating Center, 1965

The most significant last addition to the house was the underground Emergency Operating Center that opened September 22, 1965. It was designed by architect J. Albert Heisler.¹⁰³ In 1958, Heisler won the first honor award granted by the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for his design of the Beth Sholom Home of the Aged in Henrico.¹⁰⁴ Henrico County was awarded \$256,488 of federal Civil Defense funds to construct the center.¹⁰⁵ It was the first facility of its kind to be built by a local government in the state of Virginia.¹⁰⁶

⁹¹ *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 7, 1940.

⁹² Edward F. Sinnott, Jr., Papers, 1920-1998 (Mss3 Si663 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

⁹³ Article has a photograph of a man carrying a box into the newly constructed west wing. "Police Moving Day," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, November 14, 1941.

⁹⁴ Leland F. Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police* (Henrico: Henrico County, 2008), 3; and Henrico County, "Dabbs House Museum Open House and Dedication," November 1, 2008, Program.

⁹⁵ Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 3.

⁹⁶ Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 4.

⁹⁷ Edward F. Sinnott, Jr., Papers, 1920-1998 (Mss3 Si663 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

⁹⁸ "Henrico Authorizes Bids for Dabb House Wing," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, May 21, 1952.

⁹⁹ "Dabb House Continues to Grow," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 8, 1952 p.3

¹⁰⁰ Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 8.

¹⁰¹ Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 9.

¹⁰² Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 11.

¹⁰³ Henrico County, *Henrico County Annual Report*, 1964.

¹⁰⁴ "Richmonder, Norfolk Firm Honored," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, January 26, 1958.

¹⁰⁵ Henrico County, *Henrico County Annual Report*, 1964.

¹⁰⁶ Henrico County, *Henrico County Annual Report*, 1965.

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Both police and fire departments used the facility. It was intended to serve as the seat of County government if a nuclear attack hit the Richmond area during the Cold War.¹⁰⁷ The police department enacted public programs to help residents prepare for a nuclear attack by teaching food stocking and home preparedness.¹⁰⁸ The Emergency Operating Center had space for the county's governing body, Civil Defense staff, Communications, Engineering, and Fire and Law Enforcement.¹⁰⁹

The Fairfield Ruritan Club donated a memorial to the officers of Henrico Division of Police who died in the line of duty to be installed at the police headquarters. The memorial plaza was dedicated on July 4, 1969. The memorial monument is inscribed, "Dedicated to law and order and those members of the Division of Police, County of Henrico, VA. who serve and those who have given their lives in this service." A walkway and landscaping were provided by the club and County officials provided funding for the three flagpoles. The current plaza contains the police monument, the aforementioned Freeman marker, "The Dabb House," a newer Civil War Trail Marker, "Dabbs House Lee's First Headquarters," and a World War II monument inscribed, "In honor of the men from this community who gave their lives in the Service of their country in World War II 1941-1945, erected by the Dabb House Civic Ass'n 1947."

The police department remained relatively unchanged in size until 1989 when another station was established on the western side of the county. The police headquarters transferred from Dabbs House to the new building. Dabbs House remained a police station until 2005. After the station closed, the use of the property was transferred to the Division of Recreation and Parks.

Current Use

Dabbs House is still owned by Henrico County and is now overseen by the Division of Recreation and Parks. Dabbs House opened as a museum on November 1, 2008.¹¹⁰ Rawlings Wilson & Associates were the renovation Architects. In 2010, it became a Virginia Certified Tourist Information Center.¹¹¹ The majority of the building is used by the museum, which includes two exhibit rooms, a research library and archives, and the original two-room 1820s section where trained interpreters give guided tours five days a week.¹¹² The family cemetery that is noted in historic documents has not been located and is not within the nominated boundaries.

The western wing of the building houses the tourist information center, a video viewing area, and the front desk. The eastern wing houses the Henrico Historical Society. The underground

¹⁰⁷ Webb, *History of the Henrico County (VA) Division of Police*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ "Alert Pleases CD Officials," *Richmond Times Dispatch* July 26, 1967; "Cupboards Bare at Many Fallout Shelters," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 3, 1973.

¹⁰⁹ Henrico County, *Henrico County Annual Report*, 1964.

¹¹⁰ Henrico County, "Dabbs House Museum Open House and Dedication." November 1, 2008. Program.

¹¹¹ Henrico County, "Dabbs House and Henrico County Tourist Information Center," Henrico Recreation and Parks. Accessed April 10, 2016. <http://henrico.us/rec/places/dabbs-house/>

¹¹² Henrico County, "Dabbs House and Henrico County Tourist Information Center," Henrico Recreation and Parks. Accessed April 10, 2016. <http://henrico.us/rec/places/dabbs-house/>

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Emergency Operating Center is now used by Henrico County Public Works. Dabbs House Museum and Tourist Information Center and the Virginia Visitor Center are open to the public.

Politics/Government Significance/Criterion A

Henrico County government purchased the Dabbs House in the 1880s. At the time of this nomination preparation it has been a County facility for 136 years. It first served as a County Almshouse for 41 years and was remodeled into most of its current form for that use. It was leased for residential use from 1924 to 1939 and then converted into the government office that now serves as a central presence for Henrico's eastern area. The County's land mass surrounds the City of Richmond on the west, north, and east and has large western and eastern areas connected by a thinner northern band of area. Henrico's seat with its courthouse was located in the City of Richmond until the 1970s and the City buildings lacked capacity for growth of the County offices so improving the Dabbs House and using the large property was a logical decision. While the county's east end was largely rural, it did contain the unincorporated villages of Highland Springs and Sandston, as well as Byrd Field, which later became Richmond International Airport. In 1939, Henrico County used federal Works Progress Administration funding to convert the Almshouse into offices for the Department of Public Welfare and the Health Department. By 1941 the County's Police Department made Dabbs House a headquarters and they would use the building until 2005. The addition of a Cold War-era underground operating center was a logical evolution given the presence of the police force and perhaps with the proximity of the airport nearby. The Virginia Air National Guard has been located at Richmond International Airport since 1947 (at that time Byrd Field). The 1965 operating center also had quick access to the newly planned east-west Interstate 64, which connected eastern Henrico County with Richmond and the western area of the county. Adapting it from a relatively modest farmhouse, Henrico County government has used the Dabbs House for key programs, departments, and agencies for a long period. It has now become a County history center/museum under the Division of Recreation and Parks as well as a Virginia Visitor Center. Its long evolution as a local government facility meets the eligibility requirements for Criterion A in the Politics/Government area at the local level of significance. The house best conveys the local government use of the building since 1940.

Architectural Significance/Criterion C

The Dabbs House is an evolved work of architecture that displays distinctive historic period fabric from the 1820s to the 1960s. The predominant style of Colonial Revival was set with architect Edward F. Sinnott's work of 1939-1952. Sinnott took an 1820s farmhouse that had evolved in the 1880s into the County Almshouse and unified the design with architectural detailing, most notably the cornice modillion blocks and the Greek Revival porch. Sinnott also added two wings that were finely executed Colonial Revival forms. The house presents a very compelling record of the evolution of uses, from farmhouse to almshouse and then finally as a well-appointed county government building. The 1965 Emergency Operating Center is subterranean except for the rear entrance enclosure that echoes, in size and form, the traditional placement of outbuildings at the rear of the house. The Dabbs House meets Criterion C at the

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local level of significance for its distinctive material evolution that conveys significance from the 1820s to 1965.

The core section of the Dabbs House was built ca. 1820. The side passage plan of the building was a moderately common occurrence in central Virginia. One of the best examples of an intact brick, three-bay, side passage house from this period in Henrico County is the register listed Clarke-Palmore House in Marion Hill. The Clarke-Palmore House dates to 1819 and was originally a story-and-a-half. In 1855, the house was raised to two stories to attain its current form. The Dabbs House stood in this nearly identical three-bay form until the 1880s when the western bays were added. While a once common form in the region, especially in more urban areas, very few antebellum examples survive in what was at one time the rural area of Henrico County. The 1820s section of the Dabbs House retains its interior plan and exterior masonry work.

As adapted for use as an Almshouse in the 1880s, the architecture fabric and styling of that era still survives. The prominent three-bay, two-story brick section laid in five course American bond to match the original three-bay house gives the current form of the primary elevation.¹¹³ The Almshouse architecture was blended with the 1820s building and a two-story ell was added to the rear of the new front addition. Almshouses and poorhouses were common in each locality during the late 19th century. Many of the rural examples were adapted from farmhouses and additional buildings constructed as needed. Very few almshouses and poorhouses survive today in Virginia. A few notable examples have been listed on the state/federal registers: Frederick County Poor House Farm, built c. 1819; the Almshouse at Machipongo, Northampton County, built c. 1840; and the Wythe County Poorhouse Farm, which dates to 1858. The Almshouse in Richmond, built in 1858, is certainly the largest purpose-built almshouse in the state. The rarity of this building type and the ability to convey the story of local government benevolence makes the Dabbs House an interesting example and significant.

The building was upgraded by formal architectural design by one of Richmond's more notable architects, Edward Francis Sinnott, Sr., in 1939 -1940 (and later). He remodeled and renovated the main building by adding a Greek Revival porch and the modillion cornice to the front and rear of the main building. Later, in 1940, a west wing, and in 1952, an identical east wing were added; both completed in the Colonial Revival style. The upgrade signaled the shift in government use from almshouse to agency offices. Sinnott chose to make a more formal Greek Revival Style statement and his later side-wing additions show the persistence of Colonial Revival design. The more formal appearance celebrated the building and gave it a governmental decorum.

Edward F. Sinnott Sr. was born on 27 June 1890 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He moved with his family to Richmond around 1900 and lived there until his death in 1974.¹¹⁴ He was associated with locally well-known architect Duncan Lee. Sinnott specialized in restoration projects; he

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/how-we-can-help-your-research/researcher-resources/finding-aids/sinnott--0>

Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
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completed a renovation of the historic Claudius Crozet House in the same year as this project for Henrico County (1939).¹¹⁵ Other projects he completed circa 1940 include the Franklin Federal Savings and Loan Company Building, (616 E. Franklin Street, Richmond); the Frank A. Bliley Funeral Home, (Richmond); the Richmond Sand and Gravel Co. Building, (Richmond); and the Henrico Theatre (Highland Springs, Henrico County), listed on the state and federal registers.¹¹⁶ The Dabbs House is significant at the local level in the area of Architecture under Criterion C.

The Emergency Operating Center was designed by architect J. Albert Heisler in June 1965. The underground facility of approximately 6,288 square feet is constructed of concrete and steel covered by 14 inches of reinforced concrete and more than two feet of earth. As stated earlier, it was the first facility of its kind to be built by a local government in Virginia. The plan of the interior and many of the finishes are intact to the 1960s and its association with Cold War history is clear. It stands out as an excellent example of a large underground bunker that was meant to survive nuclear warfare. More a work of civil engineering design, it also supports Criterion C as part of the evolved building.

The current form of the house largely reflects the Colonial Revival Style remodeling executed by Edward Sinnott from 1940 through 1952, with the later addition of the underground bunker by 1965.

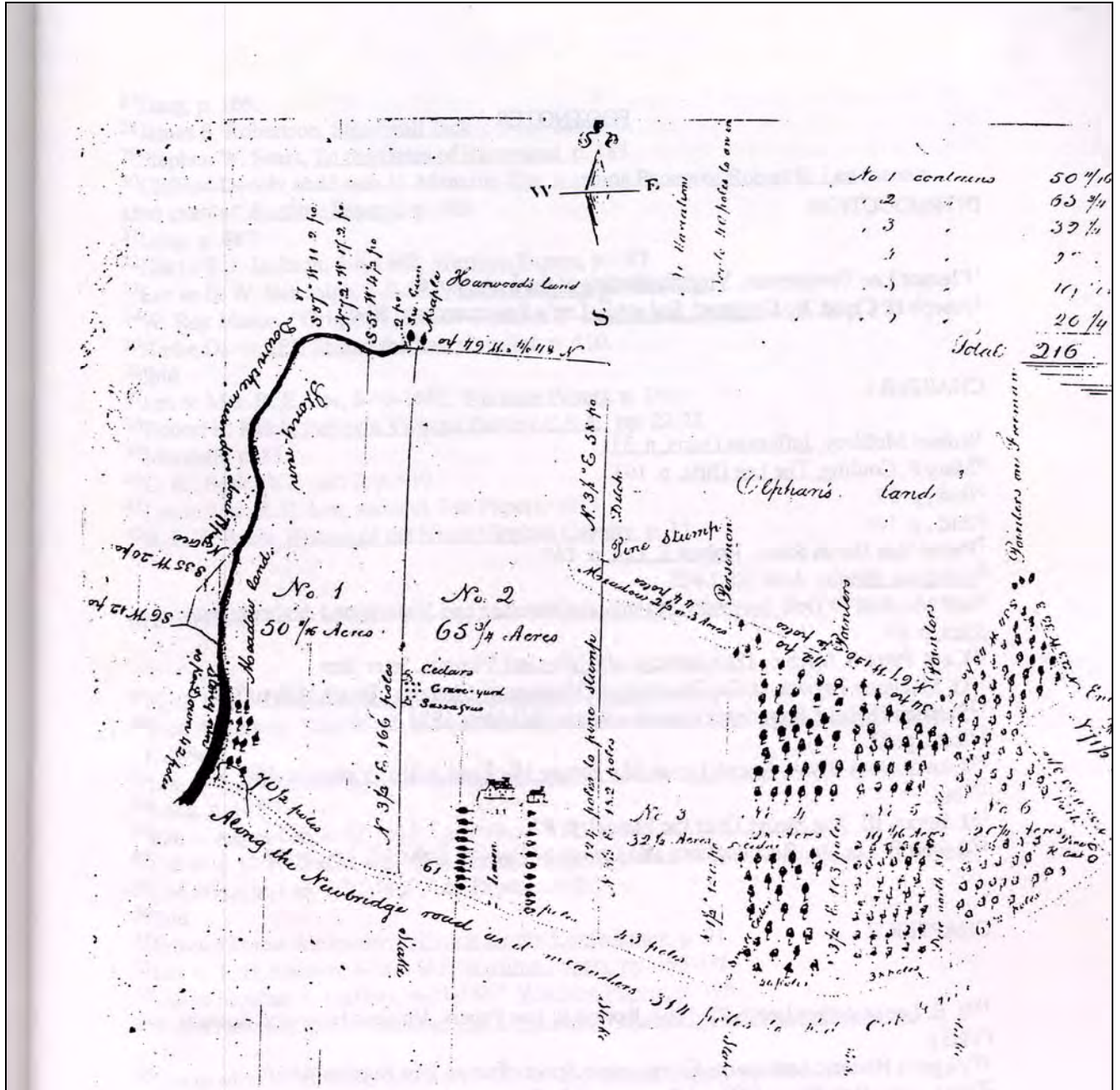
¹¹⁵ *The History and Significance of Dabbs House*, 2006, Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC 800 W 33rd St. Richmond, VA 23225 p 9.

¹¹⁶ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/043-0287/> For additional Edward F. Sinnott Sr. biographical information and architectural accomplishments refer to National Register of Historical Places Nomination 043-0287 Henrico Theatre.

Dabbs House
 Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
 County and State

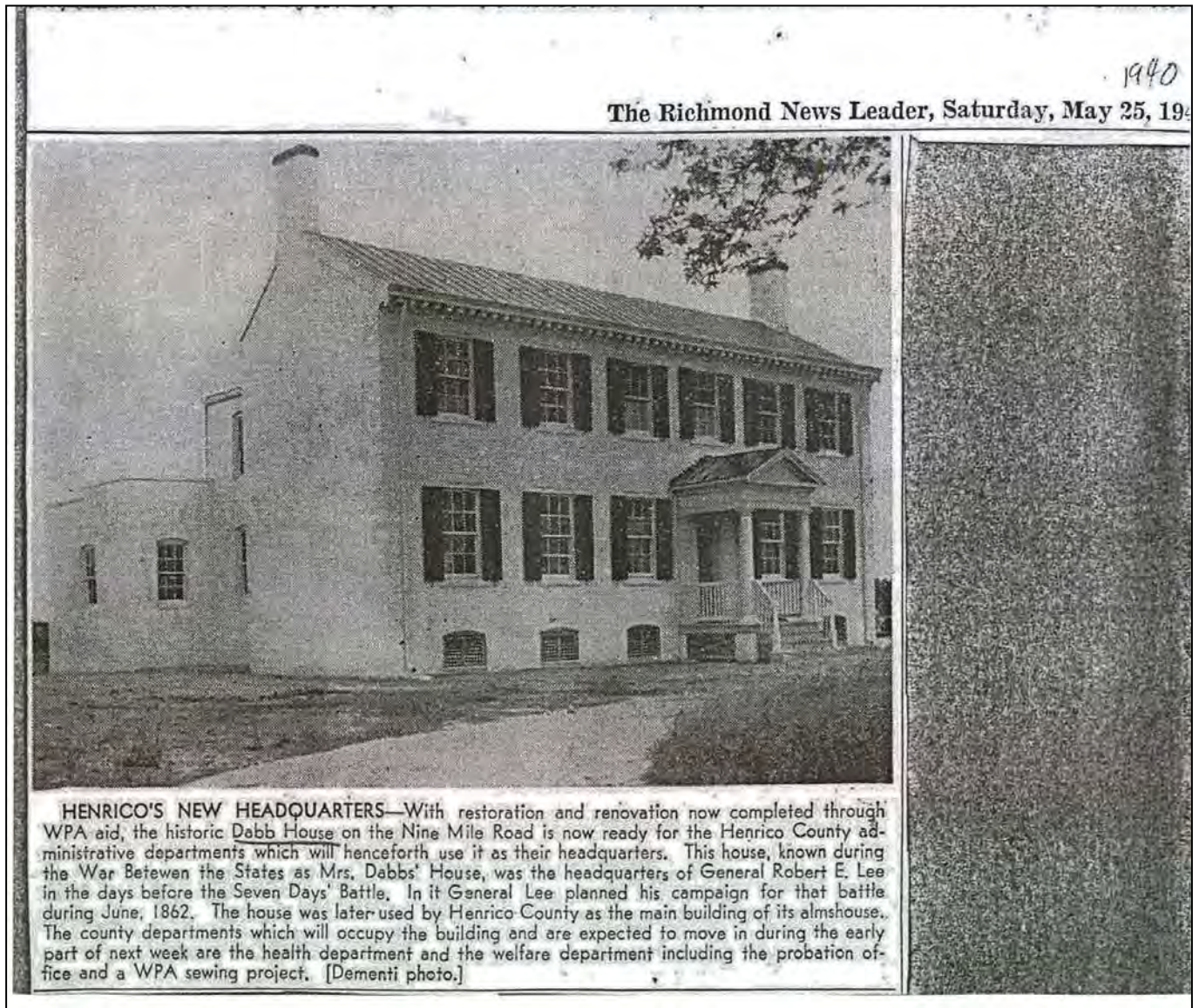
Historic Figures



1853 plat from Deed Book 63, p. 402, showing houses and graveyard

Dabbs House
Name of Property

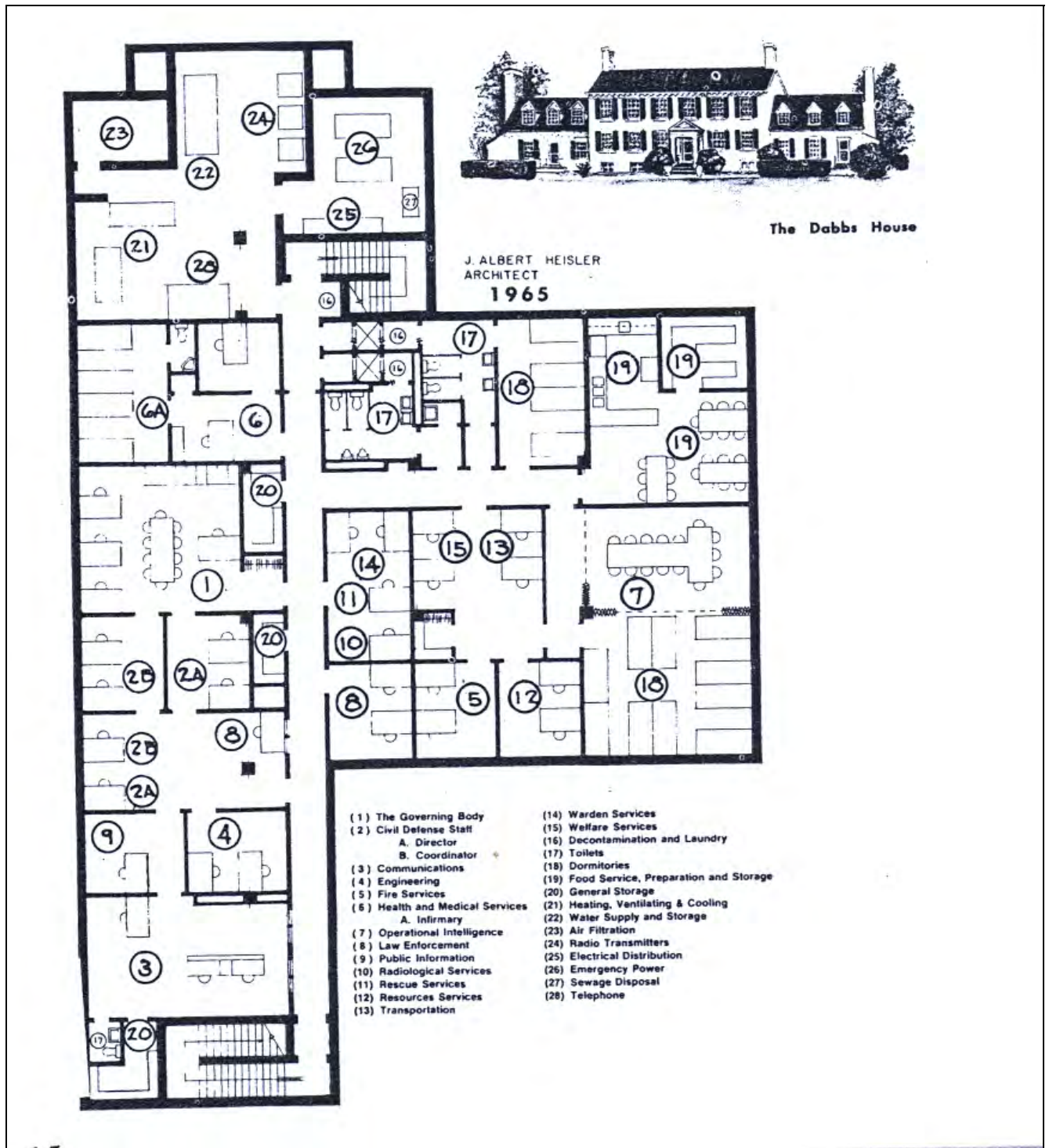
Henrico County, VA
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Richmond Times Dispatch 5/25/1940 Renovation (prior to east and west wing additions)

Dabbs House
 Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
 County and State



Floor plan – Emergency Operating Center 1965 Henrico County Annual Report p. 15

Dabbs House
Name of Property

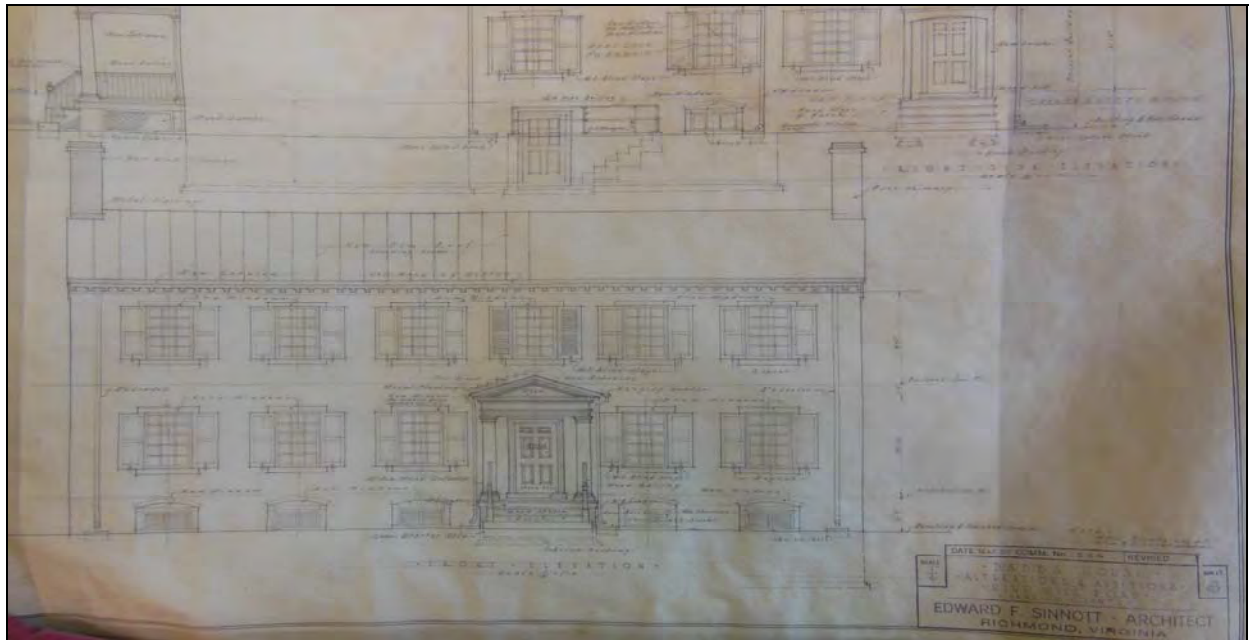
Henrico County, VA
County and State



Henrico County Photographs of construction and entrance of Emergency Operating Center 1965.

Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State



Edward F. Sinnott, Jr., Papers, 1920-1998 (Mss3 Si663 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA

Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State

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Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State

University

Other

Name of repository: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA; Dabbs House Museum, Henrico County, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR #043-0016

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately .53 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NAD 1983 State Plane Virginia South
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.543620 Longitude: -77.382930

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): GCS North American

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 18 Easting: -77 22.98340 Northing: 37 32.606129

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundary encompasses the Dabbs House and its rear grassy lot. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Sketch Map and Tax Parcel Map.

Dabbs House
Name of Property

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Due to the loss of the property's historic setting, the historic boundary is drawn to encompass the building itself, including the underground emergency operating center and the 1969 memorial plaza, while excluding the newer government complex that surrounds the Dabbs House.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mary Ann Soldano
organization: Henrico County
street & number: P.O. Box 90775
city or town: Henrico state: Virginia zip code: 23223
email: sol02@henrico.us
telephone: 804-501-5805
date: November 2019

name/title: Clarissa Sanders
organization: Henrico County
street & number: P.O. Box 90775
city or town: Henrico state: Virginia zip code: 23223
date: November 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Dabbs House
Name of Property

Henrico County, VA
County and State

Name of Property: Dabbs House

City or Vicinity: Henrico

County: Henrico State: VA

Photographer: Mary Ann Soldano

Date Photographed: March 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0001
Façade, south elevation, camera facing north

2 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0002
East rear addition, North elevation, camera facing south

3 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0003
East side view 1, camera facing west

4 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0004
East side view 2, camera facing west

5 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0005
East wing south elevation, camera facing north

6 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0006
Monument Flag plaza, camera facing north

7 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0007
North elevation East wing, camera facing south

8 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0008
North elevation West wing, camera facing south

9 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0009
North Elevation, camera facing south

10 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0010
North rear view 1, camera facing SW

Dabbs House

Name of Property

Henrico County, VA

County and State

- 11 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0011
North rear view 2, camera facing SW
- 12 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0012
North west side, camera facing SE
- 13 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0013
View drive south, camera facing south
- 14 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0014
View north, camera facing NW
- 15 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0015
View west, camera facing west
- 16 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0016
View to east, camera facing east
- 17 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0017
West addition, south elevation, camera facing north
- 18 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0018
West End elevation, camera facing east
- 19 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0019
Baseboard first floor original house
- 20 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0020
Central hall door looking north
- 21 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0021
Central hall front door looking south
- 22 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0022
Central stair walnut handrail, pine balusters
- 23 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0023
Chair rail first floor original house
- 24 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0024
Chair rail first floor original house
- 25 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0025
Door casings with bulls' eye corner blocks alms section

Dabbs House

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26 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0026
Door to west side of stair hall original house

27 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0027
First floor room original side east wall closets

28 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0028
Original house, east room floor

29 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0029
Hall to rear extension

30 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0030
Hall to rear wainscot

31 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0031
First floor south wall molding

32 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0032
Mantel first floor original room

33 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0033
Mantel first floor original room

34 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0034
North facing windows 6 x 6

35 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0035
Second floor closets and oak floor

36 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0036
Second floor door to hall

37 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0037
Second Floor Hall offices

38 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0038
Second Floor Six over six double hung window

39 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0039
South facing windowsill

40 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0040

Dabbs House

Name of Property

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South facing window

41 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0041

South window sash view 1

42 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0042

Stair landing second floor window

43 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0043

Stair landing second floor

44 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0044

Stair second floor view 1

45 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0045

Stair second floor view 2

46 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0046

West side hall exhibit room bull eye door and window casings

47 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0047

West side hall windows

48 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0048

West wing door and fireplace

49 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0049

West wing info center

50 of 50. VA_HenricoCounty_DabbsHouse_0050

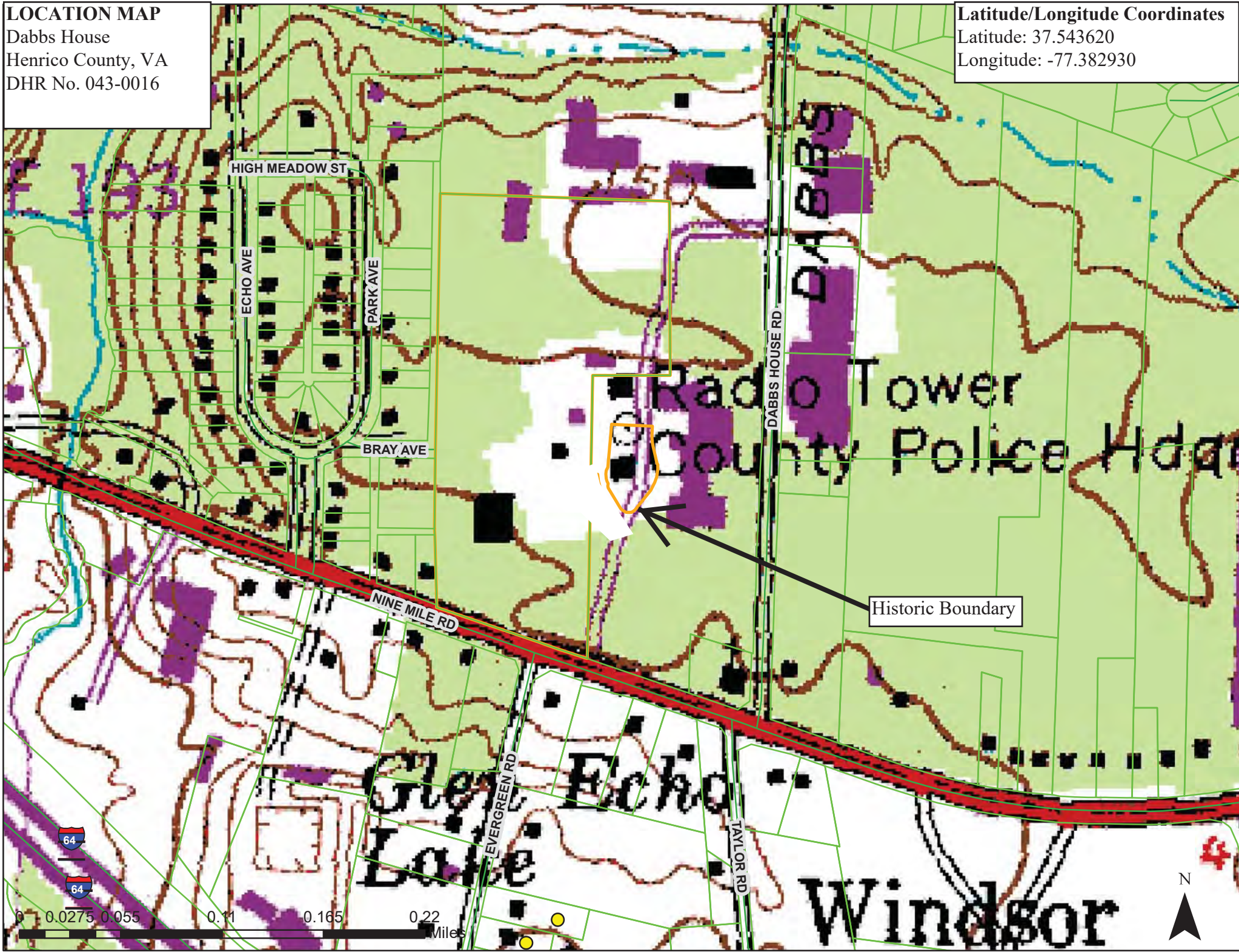
Window frame south facing east room

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

LOCATION MAP
Dabbs House
Henrico County, VA
DHR No. 043-0016

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Latitude: 37.543620
Longitude: -77.382930



SKETCH MAP

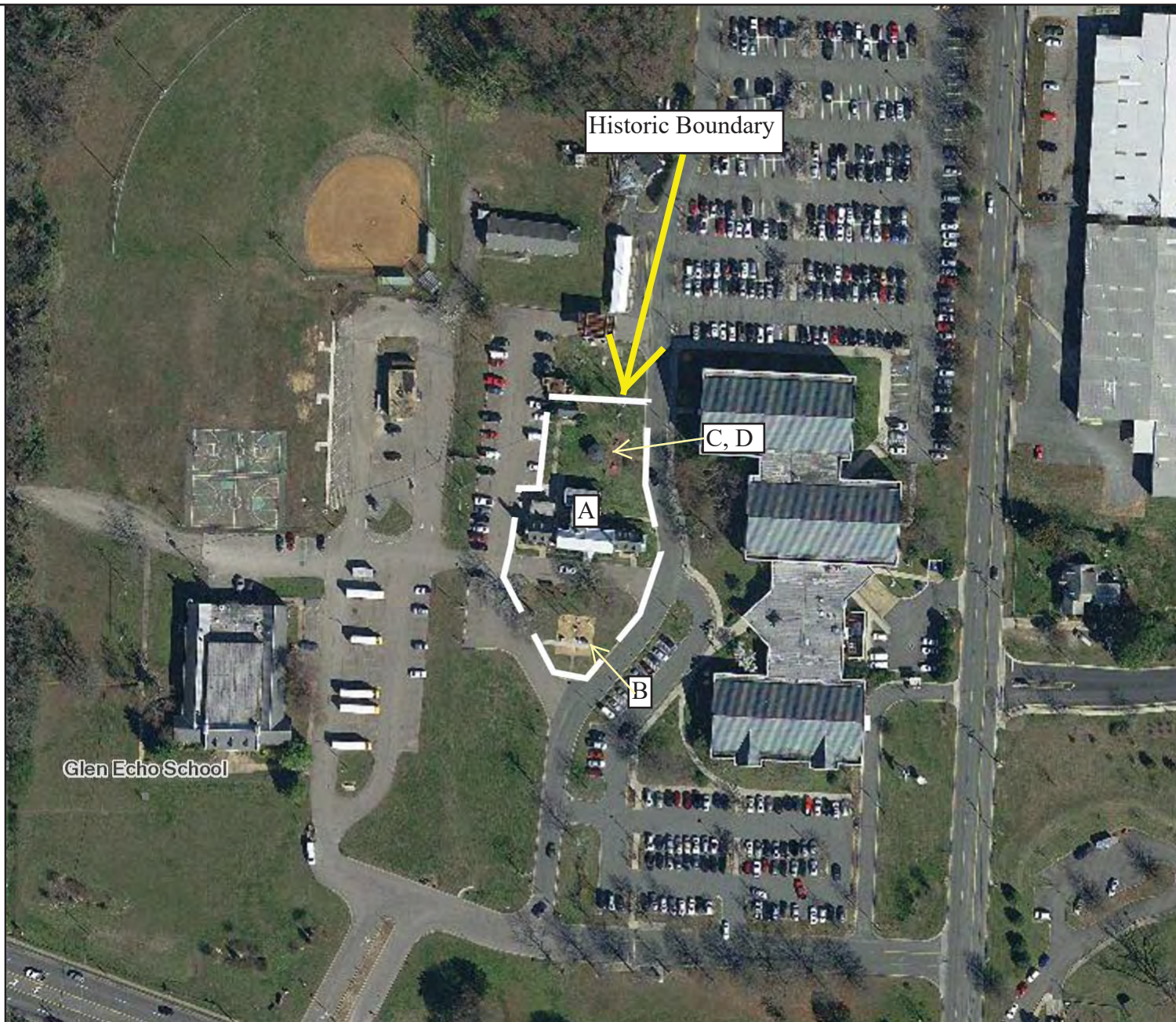
Dabbs House

Henrico County, VA

DHR No. 043-0016

List of Resources

- A. Dabbs House (contributing building)
- B. Plaza and markers (contributing structure and __ contributing objects)
- C. Paved picnic area (noncontributing structure)
- D. Gazebo (noncontributing structure)



Title:

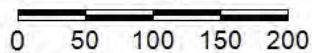
Date: 11/22/2019

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Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.






Feet



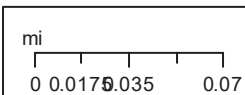
1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet



Legend

-  Tax Parcels
-  Phases
-  Lots

This map has been produced on Henrico County's Geographical Information System using the best data available to the County. This map is to be used for reference purposes only and the County of Henrico makes no warranty as to its completeness or accuracy. Any determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination.



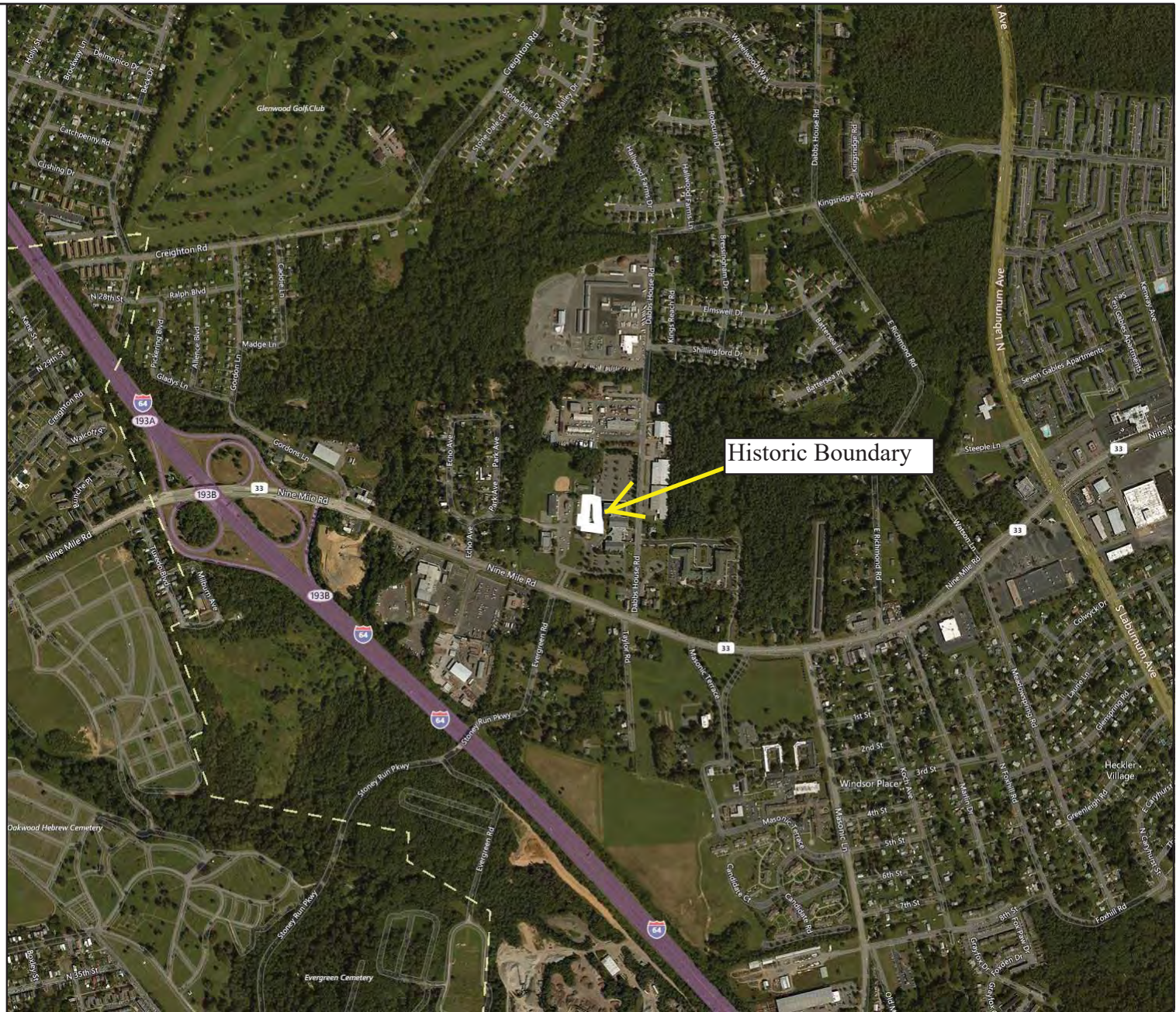
TAX PARCEL MAP
 Dabbs House
 Henrico County, VA
 DHR No. 043-0016



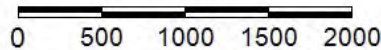


AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY

Dabbs House
Henrico County, VA
DHR No. 043-0016



Feet



1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

Title:

Date: 11/1/2019

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