

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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Chinn House

Other names/site number: DHR # 321-0010

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: 5554 Richmond Road

City or town: Warsaw State: Virginia County: Richmond County

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A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,

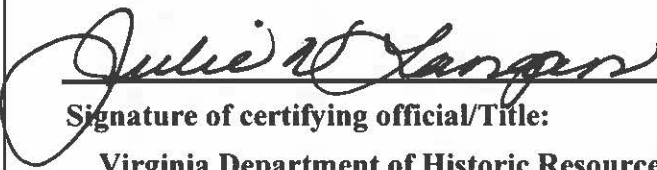
I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

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:

    A   X   B   X   C     D

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <br>Signature of certifying official/Title:<br><u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> | <u>9/27/2021</u><br>Date |
| State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  |                          |

|   |      |
|---|------|
| In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria. |      |
| Signature of commenting official:   | Date |
| Title : <span style="float: right;">State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</span>        |      |

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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>0</u>        | buildings  |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | sites      |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | structures |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | objects    |
| <u>1</u>     | <u>0</u>        | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/college/offices

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; WOOD; SYNTHETICS: Vinyl;  
STONE: Slate

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Chinn House is a large, frame, center passage, two-story, early-twentieth-century, Colonial Revival-style single-family dwelling. Colonial Revival style houses rose in popularity beginning in 1880 in Virginia and reached a peak at the turn of the twentieth century. The notable front entrance of the Chinn House, with sidelights and use of columns, is particularly illustrative of the Colonial Revival style. The house has vinyl siding on the exterior over the original wood siding. Designed for the Chinn family, there are spacious rooms on the first floor to entertain and the second floor to house the large family. Almost every room is equipped with a fireplace with Colonial Revival-inspired mantels, on both the first and second floor. Colonial Revival-inspired decorative elements are consistent throughout the house. The house was begun in 1907 and completed in 1908. Constructed on the main road (today's US 360/ Richmond Road) of Warsaw in Richmond County, the house is an architectural statement as it is one of the best examples of Colonial Revival domestic architecture in Richmond County. Today, the house figures prominently as the entrance to the Rappahannock Community College Warsaw campus. The house has not undergone major renovations or relocation; therefore, the house retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The dwelling's integrity of setting has been adversely affected by loss of farm outbuildings once associated with the property and a small office that was built for Judge Chinn's use. Despite changes to the setting, the Chinn

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House's integrity of feeling and association as a commodious dwelling built for a socially prominent family are retained.

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### **Narrative Description**

#### **Setting:**

The Chinn House is located on the original main street of Warsaw (US Rt. 360/ Richmond Road; state route 3) on a parcel, donated by Austin B. and Joseph W. Chinn, Jr., in memory of their parents, to create part of the Warsaw Campus of the Rappahannock Community College in 1969.<sup>1</sup> The Chinn House started serving as the administrative headquarters of Rappahannock Community College in 1970. The remainder of the Chinn's 117-acre farm surrounding the house was purchased by the Commonwealth of Virginia to enlarge the campus for additional facilities, including a new academic building dedicated in 1973. The Chinn House was built in the early 1900s on working farmland originally owned by Dr. and Mrs. William Walter Douglas, who gifted the land to their daughter, Sarah Douglas and her husband, Joseph Chinn, to build a house and raise their five children. To the south is a wooded tract of land, which includes Jugs Creek. The yard area immediately surrounding the house is cleared with several mature trees remaining.

South of the house is the main academic building for the Warsaw Campus built in 1973. A later academic building stands behind the main building. The 117-acre campus includes sports facilities for tennis, volleyball, and softball. A scenic walking trail is behind the athletic fields. A modestly sized asphalt parking lot lies immediately southwest of the house. Across the road and to the west are residential dwellings from the early twentieth century, intermixed with modern dwellings, including an apartment complex. Just east of the house is the beginning of Warsaw's core commercial area, including the colonial period Richmond County Courthouse (NRHP listed, 1972), additional early-twentieth-century commercial buildings and several modern commercial and county government buildings. Warsaw, the county seat, is the only incorporated town in Richmond County, a rural agricultural community in the region of Virginia known as the Northern Neck. This five-county peninsula is surrounded by the Potomac River to the north, the Rappahannock River to the south and the Chesapeake Bay to the east. Richmond County is on the Rappahannock River side of the Northern Neck.

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<sup>1</sup> Carter, 1995. Page 3

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Photo of the Chinn house, 1908, Warner Collection, images of America: Warsaw

### Main House - Exterior

The Chinn House was built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for Joseph W. Chinn (1866-1936) and his wife, Sarah Douglas, and their five children. Joseph Chinn was a local lawyer in Warsaw and the Richmond County Commonwealth Attorney at the time of the building's construction. Newspaper and photo evidence date the initial construction of the house beginning in late 1907 through mid-1908.

The former residence is a two-story, five-bay (w/w/d/w/w), hipped roof, frame Colonial Revival building. The building rests on a brick foundation, has walls clad in vinyl siding over weatherboards, and is covered by a slate roof pierced by two brick interior chimneys. Hipped-roof dormers rise from each slope of the roof, each containing two, 3-over-3 double hung window sashes. Wood pilasters adorn the corners of the house. Most windows contain six over-one wood sashes flanked by operable shutters. The top of the building is crowned with a metal rooftop deck with balustrade, accessible through the attic. The decorative railing includes wood square balusters with decorative panels between square pedestal bases in the four corners.

The central main entrance, on the north façade, contains a wood five-panel door set in a decorative classically-inspired surround featuring leaded sidelights above wood panels and framed by pilasters supporting a simple entablature. There are five steps up to the main porch. The porch is supported by brick piers and has modern wooden decking. The entrance is sheltered by a single-bay, single-story, flat-roof porch. The porch has simple round Doric columns, which match the pilasters in both design and number, supporting an entablature featuring a cornice with dentils topped by a decorative balustrade. A turned railing lines the porch deck and stairs. A three-sided bay window is located above the entrance and has a door that is accessible through a

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second-floor room. The second-floor balcony is lined with a railing with square balusters with decorative “diamond in oval” panels set between square pedestal bases in the two front-facing corners.

#### West Elevation:

On the west elevation, a single-story semi-circular bow window projects from the front parlor. The window is supported by a brick foundation and features wood vertical bead board paneling below the lights. The window has three lights, with alternating 4-paneled wood panels. The roof to the bow window is flat with a simple entablature with a dentiled cornice. On the west elevation, the rear ell is visible. It is constructed in the same style and using the same materials and decorative elements as the house’s main block.

#### South Elevation and Rear Ell:

The south-facing (rear) elevation has the same vinyl siding as the other sides of the house. A rear entrance from an interior back hall opens onto a small stoop to the west of the rear ell. A second exit on the south side of the house also exits from the interior rear hall onto the rear ell porch, located on the east side of the ell. This door is lit by a transom window. Above this entrance on the main block’s south wall is a tri-part ribbon window that features casement openings with transoms above, all of which light the interior staircase and second floor passage. The hipped-roof, 1-story, 3-bay porch with chamfered posts spans the east side of the two-story rear ell, sheltering a second side entryway with transom that enters the kitchen. The two-story ell houses the original kitchen on the first floor and small bedrooms on the second floor. Adjacent to the ell’s porch, the east one-third of the main block’s south elevation has two 6-over-1 window sashes on both the first and second stories.

#### East Elevation:

The east elevation of the main block features a shallow-pitched hipped roof porch sheltering a side entrance with transom, flanked on each side by full-length, two-leaf casement doors with transoms, each entering a different space on this side of the house. The porch is raised on brick piers at each of the four corners and the roof of the porch is supported by four evenly spaced Doric columns connected by a handrail with turned balusters. A wooden wheelchair ramp was later added to this porch, and is designed in a way that makes the alteration reversible if needed. The main block’s second story has three evenly spaced windows centered above the porch.

#### Interior:

The interior maintains a significant level of integrity, with no major renovations or alterations undertaken since the time of construction. The building is two stories tall with a large center passage and staircase. The main block of the building has interior access to the unfinished brick basement. The first and second floors now serve as offices and many original elements remain intact, including wood floors, baseboards, door and window trim, plaster walls, and fireplaces. Attached to the south side of the building is the two-story rear ell containing a kitchen. The ell has two entrances, one on the south side of the main building and on the east side of the ell. There is access to the attic and the rooftop deck through a back staircase on the second floor of the main block.



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A large center passage features a wide foyer with fireplace that has a walnut Colonial Revival mantel and overmantel with mirror. The firebox surround and hearth is composed of thin red bricks in stretcher bond. Oval-shaped fluted Doric columns sit on plinths on either side of the fireplace extending into the overmantel. The overmantel is decorated with two Colonial Revival decorative horizontal oval rosettes, one above each column's capital. In the middle of the foyer ceiling and centered with the front door is a chandelier decorated with a small ceiling medallion.

An elaborate stained oak open string staircase ascends four steps to a landing, turns, and ascends along the east wall of the hall to another landing that is lit by a multi-pane tri-part ribbon window. Atop a bullnose starting step, the newel posts are square, paneled posts on plinths and topped with ornately turned pendants. Wood turned balustrades, three to each tread, finish the main portion of the staircase. Along the spandrel panel on the east wall of the staircase is a built-in bench with an inlaid lid that opens for storage. Corbels with an acanthus leaf motif support the plaster wall arches over the staircase and connecting the central hall to the west portion of the house.



First floor, center passage, stair. Photo by Mae Tilley, DHR Archives, 2021

The front parlor, the northwest room, is accessed through six-panel double-pocket doors. The parlor features a walnut-stained neo-classical mantel with a green tile firebox surround and hearth. The mantel is decorated with fluted Ionic pilasters. The frieze is decorated with vertical decorative oval fanlight rosettes on both ends, a central decorative oval between two carved wood floral swag appliques with female figures and egg and dart crown molding. The west end of the room is extended by the 3-bay semi-circular bow window.

Behind the front parlor, opposite the staircase is a parlor, the southwest room, now used as an office. This parlor includes a simple wood mantel with Ionic columns and a plain frieze supporting dentil crown molding. The mantel shelf is supported by three equally spaced carved



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wood scroll corbels. Other decoration in the room includes a simple baseboard and a painted rail molding.

East of the entry hall is the dining room, the northeast room, also with a fireplace with green tiles and a Colonial Revival mantel with mirrored overmantel. The mantel is decorated with two fluted Doric columns with an acanthus leaf motif in the capitals. There are central decorative carved wood scroll corbels in both the mantelshelf and overmantel. The cut stones of the firebox floor are stamped with "H. SAVAGE." There is a metal liner in the firebox with a woven motif. Other decoration in the room includes a baseboard, chair rail and a floret ceiling medallion with egg and dart motif surrounding the chandelier.

A side hall intersects the main hall on the east side just before the staircase. The side hall leads to the east entrance. Another parlor, the southeast room, is on the south side of this hall with a fireplace with thin red brick and a wood mantel with mirrored overmantel. The mantelshelf is supported by four carved wood scroll corbels. The frieze has three wood panels with an acanthus leaf motif. Two engaged fluted Doric columns extend through the mantel and overmantel.

At the back of the central hall is a perpendicular hall that contains the entrance to the kitchen ell, the basement stairs, and the back stairs. The back stairs are a closed stringer staircase with a bullnose starting step with a turned wooden newel post, unpainted handrail, and wood turned painted balusters. A door with a concave curved ornate glass and lead filigree separates the main hall from the back hall. Original wood floors survive throughout the house. The kitchen contains original built-in cabinetry on the south wall. Modern appliances, cabinet, and countertops were added in 2019.

The second-floor rooms have been converted to office spaces, some with modern carpet. Original mantels and tile hearths survive in every room, all neoclassical in style. The large second-floor hall features original wood floors, unpainted hardwood-stained doors and trim and a large tri-part, ribbon window with four operable casements and transoms above. There are four main rooms in the original section of the house and one room on the second floor of the rear ell.

The north-facing room sits above the center passage on the second floor and looks out onto the balcony above the main entrance. A short door with glass panes, which allows for access onto the balcony, is centered between two 4-over-1 windows which are slightly angled in a bay window style. There is also a transom window above the door to the balcony.

The decorative finishes on the second floor include painted rail moldings in a majority of the rooms and mantels with various Colonial Revival details. Many mantels on the second floor mimic the first-floor mantels in both style and material. The mantel in the northwest room is supported by two tapered engaged Doric columns with a mirrored overmantel with oval ribbon appliques on either side that match the central oval ribbon design in the architrave. The fireplace is closed off with rectangular yellow tiles on the hearth. The mantel in the southeast bedroom has a brick hearth with a mirror overmantel. Each side of the architraves on the mantel and overmantel are supported by two Doric pilasters. In the northeast room, the mantel is decorated with

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vertical decorative oval fanlight rosettes on both sides, a central decorative oval between two carved wood floral swag appliques and rectangular pilasters on the mirrored overmantel. The hearth has large rectangular burgundy tiles, and the firebox surround is smaller rectangular yellow tiles. This is the only functional fireplace on the second floor.

The main hallway on the second floor has modern lighting fixtures with a surviving ceiling medallion without a chandelier. Contrasting the white painted walls are unpainted wood baseboards, doors, architraves, and painted rail moldings that match the oak staircase.

From the main second-floor passage is an enclosed stair to the attic space. Large open spaces, lit by dormers, at one time were finished with lathe and plaster walls and provided quarters for servants working for Judge and Mrs. Chinn.

### Integrity Analysis

The Chinn House, still on its original location, prominently sighted on a slight rise along Richmond Road, the primary east-west route through Warsaw, retains a high degree of integrity of location and feeling. Now the focal point of the entrance to the Rappahannock Community College, the house stands near the road while the campus buildings are all located to the rear of the property, separated from the house by an unobtrusive asphalt paved parking lot and a stand of trees, therefore preserving a small aspect of the property's setting. Loss of outbuildings and acreage from the period the Chinns operated a working farm here has adversely affected the integrity of setting. The house, although now used for offices, retains all of its original floor plan and finishes. The first-floor center passage, the principal parlor, and the dining room are finished to be used as social and event spaces for the college, therefore retaining integrity of association and feeling as formal spaces with the current uses similar to the historic uses. No historic features or materials have been covered with modern materials, with the exception of a few second-floor offices having carpet over the wood floors. The introduction of a few modern fixtures to comply with building codes, such as exit signs and some modern lighting, do not detract from the integrity of the house's design and materials. With few alterations overall, the house retains a significant degree of integrity of materials, design and workmanship.

The Rappahannock Community College completed a cosmetic rehabilitation of the house in 2019. The work was well executed and included repairing, prepping and painting all wood exterior trim, windows, doors, shutters, and porches, installing new "invisible" storm windows and doors, uncovering and restoring original interior wood elements that had been painted over, painting all interior walls and trim, converting rear first-floor parlors and second-floor rooms to offices, mostly with new paint and carpet (no partitions were added), and upgrading existing bathrooms and kitchen fixtures. All changes were consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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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**

1908-1936

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Chinn, Joseph William

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Newman, James E. (builder)

Barker, Willie & Clark, Otis (foundation construction)

\_\_\_\_\_

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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 Chinn House, located in the town of Warsaw in Richmond County, is eligible at the local level of significance under Criteria B and C. Under Criterion B, the property is significant for its association with Judge Joseph William Chinn in the area of Politics/Government. Judge Chinn built and occupied this house during the formative years of his career as a prominent and influential political figure in the County and the Commonwealth of Virginia, including becoming a circuit judge in Virginia's 12<sup>th</sup> court and ascension to the Virginia Supreme Court. As one of the best examples of Colonial Revival architecture in Warsaw and Richmond County, the house is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The dwelling features character-defining aspects of the style, including its embellished primary entry featuring leaded sidelights, wood panels, pilasters, and simple entablature, one-story porch with Doric columns, six-over-one wood sash with flanking operable shutters, interior finishes including wood trim, paneled staircase, and classically-derived fireplace mantels with overmantels. The period of significance begins with the house's construction in 1908 and ends with the death of Judge Chinn in 1936.

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

**Criterion C, Local level, Architecture**

The Chinn House is locally significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of Colonial Revival architecture in the Town of Warsaw and Richmond County. Its form and detailing, including entry porches and bay windows, are exemplary of the hipped-roof variation of the style that was particularly popular in Virginia around the turn of the twentieth century. The semi-circular bow window on the west elevation is a hint to the also common Queen Anne style, as it was not uncommon during this time for Colonial Revival buildings to include details from other popular styles. The Chinn House is one of only three houses of comparable scale in the town, the other two designed more towards the decorative Victorian-era and later Craftsman styles. The Colonial Revival style was often the style of choice for residents in early twentieth century Virginia and throughout the country as Americans became fascinated by early colonial history. Gaining popularity in the 1880s through the twentieth century, Colonial Revival is defined by its use of accentuated front doors, normally with a decorative pediment, on buildings often two stories in height with symmetrically balanced windows.

As Commonwealth's Attorney at the time, Judge Chinn built his home within walking distance of the Richmond County Courthouse in 1908 for his wife, Sally Fairfax Douglas and their five children. In 1908, Chinn was gifted the land by his in-laws, who lived in a separate dwelling on the same property. Warsaw, at the time a quiet village, consisted of a cluster of buildings around the courthouse. The Chinn house, on its western edge, sat amongst several outbuildings on a

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farm of 40 acres on which were raised both animals and crops, overseen by Walter Richardson.<sup>2</sup> Over time, Chinn purchased additional acreage. Notable farm buildings on the property included a large red barn that housed horse stalls, a corncrib, a tack room and an attached carriage house. Nearby was a silo, a farm machinery shed, a milking shed and a windmill with a water tank. Behind the barn area was a hen house, a smokehouse, a woodshed and a house for a family employed by the Chinns to support farm and house operations<sup>3</sup>



ENTERING WARSAW FROM THE WEST AROUND 1909. The new home of the Judge Joseph W. Chinn family, complete with a widow's walk on the rooftop, overlooks a sandy Main Street framed by white board fences. The place was a working farm of about 40 acres where Walter Richardson cultivated corn, wheat, tomatoes, and crimson clover and raised pigs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, cows, and horses, all for the use of the family. The Richardsons lived in a house on the property for their entire married life. Note the roof of a large barn on the property across the street. (Courtesy of Warner Collection, Mary Douglas Lawton, and Howard W. Reisinger Jr.)

Joseph Chinn commissioned the house to be built by James Eppey Newman of Baltimore, who had family ties to the area<sup>4</sup> and Willie Barker and Otis Clark of Lancaster, Virginia, laid the building's foundation.<sup>5</sup> Conveniently located to the courthouse and the center of commerce for the county, attorney Chinn had the financial means and community standing to hire a Baltimore builder to execute a commodious dwelling of fashion and taste, visually prominent in the small courthouse town of Warsaw, to house his large family and entertain his widening circle of political and community constituents.

The staircase made of quartered oak was shipped by steamboat from Baltimore, as were much of the house's building materials, including the Rift Pine wood floors and concave, leaded glass windows in the front door, the door between the pantry and parlor, and the custom-curved windows of the sitting room. Electricity was installed in the house in 1930. Prior to that

<sup>2</sup> Barber, Jett, Harhai, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Sally Fairfax Chinn Reisinger, *A Virginia Village*, Barbour Printing, Tappahannock, Virginia, 2019. p.15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Northern Neck News, Volume 30, Number 1, Page 3. May 22, 1908. Page 3.

<sup>5</sup> Northern Neck News, Volume 29, Number 17. September 13, 1907. Page 3.

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acetylene gas wall sconces lighted the house, and water was pumped in from a windmill on the property. Mary Douglas Lawton, granddaughter of the Chinns recalls, "My grandmother (Sarah Douglas) would entertain a lot, and she had the most unique push-button installed in the floor of the dining room, where she'd just push it with her foot and a bell would ring in the kitchen."

Chinn often used the Library Room for his work, later building a separate office building on his land, which, through acquisitions from the family, eventually totaled over 140 acres of property. With such a busy family and social life, numerous outbuildings were added to the land in addition to Chinn's office. Along with the outbuildings mentioned above, the property included a garden house, garage, and a schoolhouse, where the Chinn children, along with a few other students from the community, were tutored. None of these outbuildings survive today.

A large herd of sheep was also grazed at the front of the property, where passersby often would watch the beautiful flock, tended by employee Walter Richardson. Richardson, and his wife, Sarah Evans, who lived with their family in a home on the property, assisted with the farming of the corn, wheat, tomatoes, and crimson clover fields, as well as upkeep of the Chinn residence.

Richmond County is a rural agricultural community where large, stylishly designed dwellings were uncommon during the early twentieth century. Architecturally, Richmond County is better known for its exemplary examples of surviving colonial period houses. A short distance from the Chinn House are Sabine Hall, constructed ca. 1738 (NRHP listed, 1969, NHL, 1970), Mount Airy, built ca. 1760-1764 (NRHP, 1966, NHL, 1960) and the ruins of Menokin, built in 1769 (NRHP, 1969, NHL, 1971) all revered as exceptional examples of Georgian architecture. Like other early colonial period counties of Tidewater Virginia, Richmond County experienced the transition of a post-tobacco dominated economy to other agrarian pursuits that were dependent on enslaved labor, followed by the post-Civil War landscape transition from less expansive land holdings to smaller farms. Never wavering from its primary economic base of agriculture, the county has domestic architecture from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that are predominately vernacular and regional variations with Folk Victorian stylistic attributes and the I-house form with rear ell. A search of the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (VCRIS) at the time of this writing revealed only ten other examples of Colonial Revival architecture in the county, eight of which were single dwellings. Three of the eight are located in Warsaw and were recommended not eligible for the National Register in 2016. The count of dwellings in the county constructed between 1900 and 1910 numbers 38 in VCRIS, with only one identified as potentially eligible: the Jones House, an ornate Folk Victorian neighbor to the Chinn House, built ca. 1902 (DHR file no. 321-5008). Therefore, the Chinn House is considered one of the finest, if not the finest, example of Colonial Revival domestic architecture in the town and the county.

**Criterion B, Local level, Politics/Government: Judge Joseph Chinn**

Joseph Chin devoted most of his career to public service in a variety of local and state positions that contributed to the political, economic, and educational growth of the Northern Neck and the



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Commonwealth of Virginia. For this reason, the Chinn House is locally significant under Criterion B for its association with his life and career in the area of politics and government.

Joseph William Chinn was born February 15, 1866, in Tappahannock, Virginia, across the Rappahannock River from Richmond County. His parents were Joseph William Chinn (1836-1908) and Gabriella Brockenbrough Chinn (1839-1874). His father fought for the Confederacy, but later received a presidential pardon. He descends from a long line of politicians from the Northern Neck region who served in both the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. Congress. One grandfather, Joseph W. Chinn, was a lawyer on Virginia's Northern Neck, admitted to the bar in 1821. A Virginia Jacksonian democrat, he served as a delegate, a senator, and as House of Representatives member, later continuing with a law practice while overseeing his plantation near Stafford County, Virginia.

Joseph Chinn attended the Colonel Council's School in King and Queen County followed by a position as a tutor in South Carolina for several years. Choosing law as a profession, Chinn graduated from the University of Virginia law school and passed the bar exam in 1890. He began his private practice in the Town of Warsaw, soon to be elected, at age 23, as Commonwealth's Attorney for Richmond County in 1891, a position he held for 24 consecutive years until he resigned in 1915 to become a circuit judge in Virginia's 12<sup>th</sup> court, a position he held until 1931. While Chinn was serving as a circuit judge, the Commonwealth of Virginia formed a special Court of Appeals in 1924. Chinn was appointed a member of this court in 1925 and held the position until the court was dissolved in 1928.<sup>6</sup> In 1930, Governor John Garland Pollard appointed Chinn the Chairman of the Commission of Fisheries, for which he served two years.<sup>7</sup>

Chinn found himself in the midst of a controversy in 1930 that would lead to some heated debates about how judiciaries were selected in Virginia. Having a unanimous endorsement from the 12th judicial district of Richmond, Lancaster, and Northumberland counties, Chinn was presented to the Virginia legislature as a candidate for the Supreme Court of Appeals.<sup>8</sup> Local newspapers reported on Chinn's fitness to be elected, citing his extensive experience and stating, "No man in the State possesses a more brilliant legal mind."<sup>9</sup> A debate ensued after George Browning, considered by some legislators as underqualified compared to Chinn, was nominated and elected by a margin of one vote. At issue was whether the members of the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, appointed by the governor, should then be subject to the confirmation of the politically motivated General Assembly.<sup>10</sup> Local high schools in Richmond County took up this subject in debate contests sparked by Chinn's struggle through the General Assembly during his

<sup>6</sup> Saison, Dianne, 2018 | [http://thehouseandhomemagazine.com/culture/tradition\\_1/](http://thehouseandhomemagazine.com/culture/tradition_1/)

<sup>7</sup> Newport News, *Judge J.W. Chinn is Named to Head Fish Commission*. Volume 52, Number 2. May 23, 1930. Page 3.

<sup>8</sup> The name "Virginia Supreme Court" was adopted in 1971. Prior to that date, the Court was referred to as the "Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals."

<sup>9</sup> Northern Neck News, *Judge Joseph W. Chinn Endorsed for the Supreme Court of Appeals*, Volume 51, Number 29, 29 November 1929.

<sup>10</sup> Northern Neck News. *Mr. Browning's Election*. Volume 51, Number 43 March 14, 1930. Page 4.

Chinn House  
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first nomination.<sup>11</sup> Although heavily debated, the system remained the same, with all judges elected by majority vote from the combined houses of the Virginia General Assembly.

One year later, in 1931, Governor Pollard appointed Chinn to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court of Appeals following the death of Robert Riddick Prentis.<sup>12</sup> Chinn was elected to fill this position by the General Assembly in 1932.<sup>13</sup> In 1934, upon expiration of the term originally held by Prentis, Chinn was elected by the General Assembly for a twelve-year term, which he did not complete due to his death in 1936.

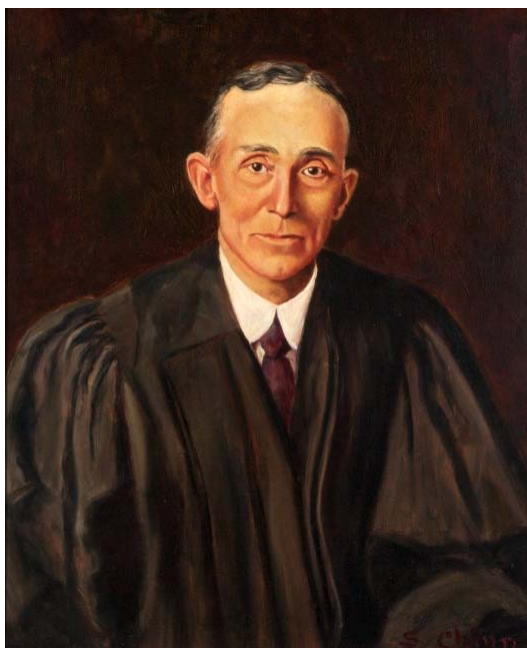


Image of a painting of Judge Chinn. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, by his daughter, Sally Chinn Reisinger, 1935

Painting hangs in the Supreme Court of Virginia, rear courtroom

Locally, he gave much of his time and attention to various business and social enterprises. He was a founder and the first president of the Northern Neck State Bank, located in Warsaw, a position he held until his death in 1936. Around 1919 he became President and Director of the Northern Neck Telegraph and Telephone Company. He also served on the Board of Directors for Munford Bank and as Superintendent of Schools for Richmond County. Chinn was a Freemason, establishing the Warsaw Lodge, No. 332 and appointed Master June 17, 1920.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Northern Neck News. *Montross*. Volume 52, Number 48. April 17, 1931. Page 1.

<sup>12</sup> In the instance of a vacancy due to death or other circumstance, the governor has the authority to nominate a justice to fill the vacancy until the end of the term. The justice selected to fill the next term is elected by the Virginia legislature.

<sup>13</sup> Northern Neck News. *No Fight on Judge Chinn*. Volume 53, Number 35. January 15, 1932. Page 6.

<sup>14</sup> <https://books.google.com/books?id=s5NIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA57&lpg=PA57&dq=joseph+william+chinn+freemason&source=bl&ots=NdbiNtQVJ4&sig=ACfU3U01awSU3yi0iZpB52Sp3JjY2A1IfQ&hl=en&sa=X&v>

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Additionally, Joseph Chinn served on the Board of Visitors at the University of Virginia from 1914–1916<sup>15</sup> and the Vestry of St. John’s Episcopal Church.<sup>16</sup> On August 16, 1936, at age 70, Judge Chinn died in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he had gone for treatment for his emphysema. He is buried in the Saint John’s Episcopal Church Cemetery in Warsaw, Richmond County, Virginia.

Following his death in 1936, the house was closed, but maintained by caretaker Walter Richardson. In 1938, Judge Chinn’s daughter Sarah “Sally” Fairfax moved into the house with her husband. In 1954 the house was converted into a tourist home named Walnut Lodge. In 1969, two of the Chinn children, in memory of their parents, donated the property to the Virginia Community College System for the purpose of establishing the Warsaw campus of the Rappahannock Community College. The building currently serves as the college administrative offices and in past years served as college classroom space and a space for social functions. Over the years, the Chinn family has generously contributed to purchasing period appropriate furnishings and establishing a fund to assist the College with cosmetic improvements.

The Chinn House was the center of professional, social and family activity during the formative years of Judge Chinn, who devoted his entire career and gave much of his time to the political, economic and educational growth of the Northern Neck and the Commonwealth of Virginia. His carefully preserved house is significant as a representation of his importance to the history of politics and government in this region of Virginia.

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ed=2ahUKEwiXzLfblobxAhVIEFkFHZKwC4kQ6AEwEHoECAcQA#w=onpage&q=joseph%20william%20chinn%20freemason&f=false

<sup>15</sup> <https://bov.virginia.edu/sites/bov.virginia.edu/files/2016-documents/FINAL-WEB-BOV%20MANUAL-Oct2016-sgh.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://scvahistory.org/scv/c-2/joseph-chinn-1931-1936/>

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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[Ryland, Elizabeth Lowell, editor. Richmond County, Virginia: A Review Commemorating the Bicentennial, 1776-1976. Richmond County Board of Supervisors: Warsaw, Virginia. Printed by Whittet and Shepperson, Richmond, Virginia. 1976.](#)

Saison, Dianne. The Chinn House. The House and Home Magazine. December 19, 2018.  
[http://thehouseandhomemagazine.com/culture/tradition\\_1/?fbclid=IwAR1B9QspgEuxuGZKqJfZTx57fLGwLp42RQMxHnty9GpwBSLJ-zdPghDgYRU](http://thehouseandhomemagazine.com/culture/tradition_1/?fbclid=IwAR1B9QspgEuxuGZKqJfZTx57fLGwLp42RQMxHnty9GpwBSLJ-zdPghDgYRU)

<https://scvahistory.org/scv/c-2/joseph-chinn-1931-1936/>

\*All newspapers accessed digitally through The Virginia Chronicle Archive of the Library of Virginia

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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
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR #321-0010

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** approximately 1.5 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Chinn House  
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**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.958220 | Longitude: -76.762810 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The historic boundary is coterminous with the perimeter lines of tax parcel 16A3(A)28 as recorded by the assessor's office of Richmond County, Virginia. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Tax Parcel Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary is drawn to include the immediate setting of the Chinn House and the remaining land area that continues to be associated with the building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Mae Tilley, intern and Elizabeth Hoge Lipford, staff  
organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue  
city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23221  
email: gwendolyn.tilley@dhr.virginia.gov; Elizabeth.lipford@dhr.virginia.gov  
telephone: (804)482-6454  
date: September, 2021

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### 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

Name of Property: Chinn House

City or Vicinity: Town of Warsaw

County: Richmond

State: Virginia

Photographer: Mae Tilley

Date Photographed: June 2021

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

Photo 1 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0001

View: North elevation, camera facing south

Photo 2 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0002

View: Northeast elevation, camera facing southwest



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Photo 3 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0003

View: Northwest elevation, camera facing southeast

Photo 4 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0004

View: North elevation, primary entrance detail, camera facing south

Photo 5 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0005

View: West elevation, semi-circular bow window detail, camera facing east

Photo 6 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0006

View: Southwest elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo 7 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0007

View: Southeast elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo 8 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0008

View: First floor, central passage, camera facing southeast

Photo 9 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0009

View: First floor, central passage, camera facing northeast

Photo 10 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0010

View: First floor, northwest parlor, camera facing southwest

Photo 11 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0011

View: First floor, northwest parlor, mantel detail, camera facing south

Photo 12 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0012

View: First floor, dining room (northeast room), camera facing southwest

Photo 13 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0013

View: First floor, dining room (northeast room), ceiling medallion, camera facing southeast

Photo 14 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0014

View: First floor, central passage, concave lead window in door to rear hall, camera facing south

Photo 15 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0015

View: First floor, kitchen in rear ell, original cabinetry, camera facing south

Photo 16 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0016

View: First floor, rear hall, back stair, camera facing northeast

Photo 17 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0017

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View: First floor, southeast room, mantel detail, camera facing southwest

Photo 18 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0018

View: Second floor, central passage, camera facing southeast

Photo 19 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0019

View: Second floor, central passage, camera facing northeast

Photo 20 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0020

View: Second floor, southeast bedroom, camera facing southwest

Photo 21 of 21: VA\_RichmondCounty\_ChinnHouse\_0021

View: Second floor, northeast bedroom, camera facing southwest

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

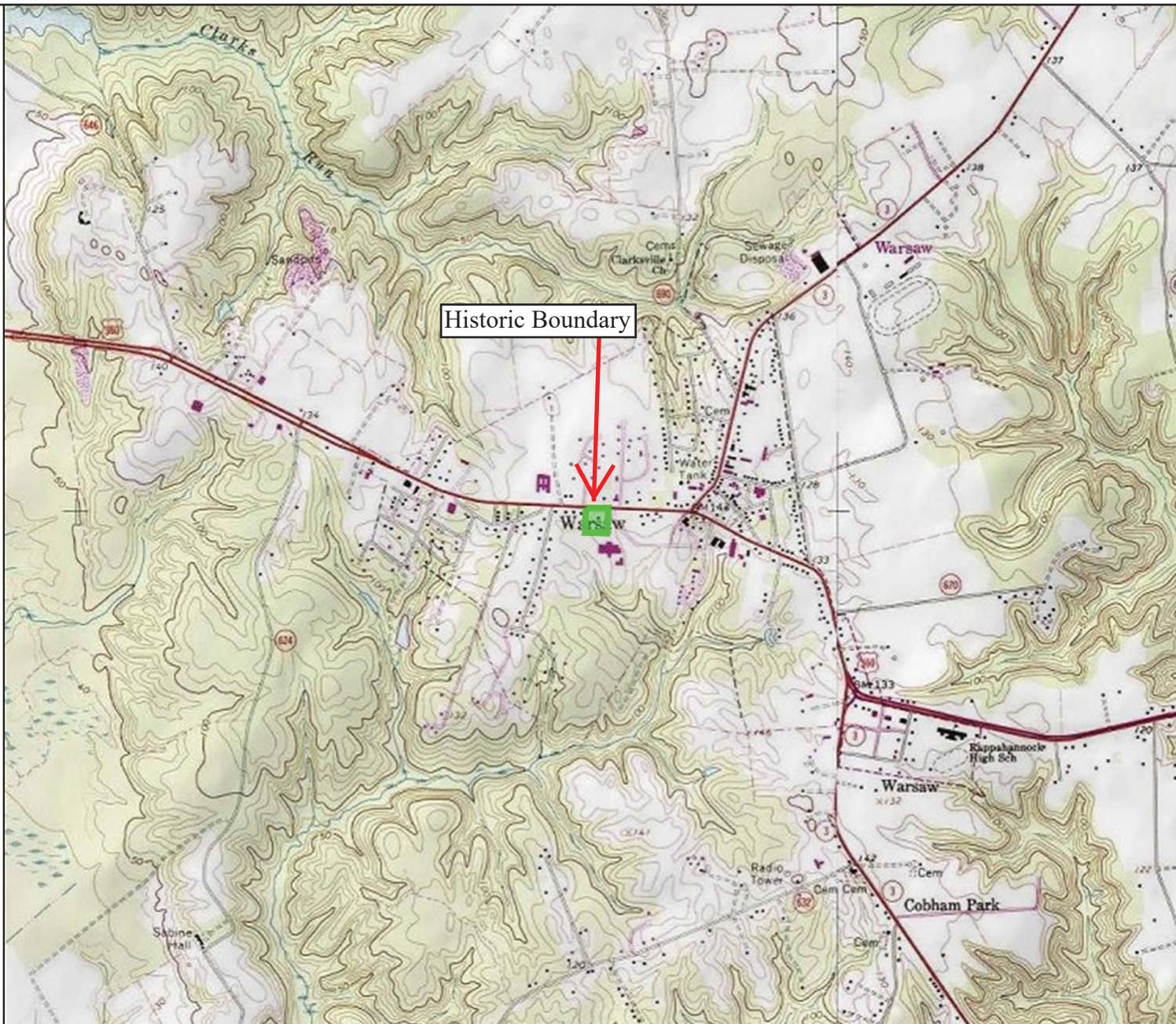


**TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

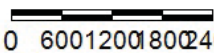
Chinn House

Richmond County, VA

DHR No. 321-0010



Feet



1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 7/19/2021**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to 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.*





**AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY**

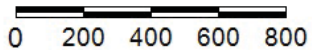
Chinn House  
Richmond County, VA  
DHR No. 321-0010



Historic Boundary



Feet



1:9,028 / 1"=752 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 7/19/2021**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

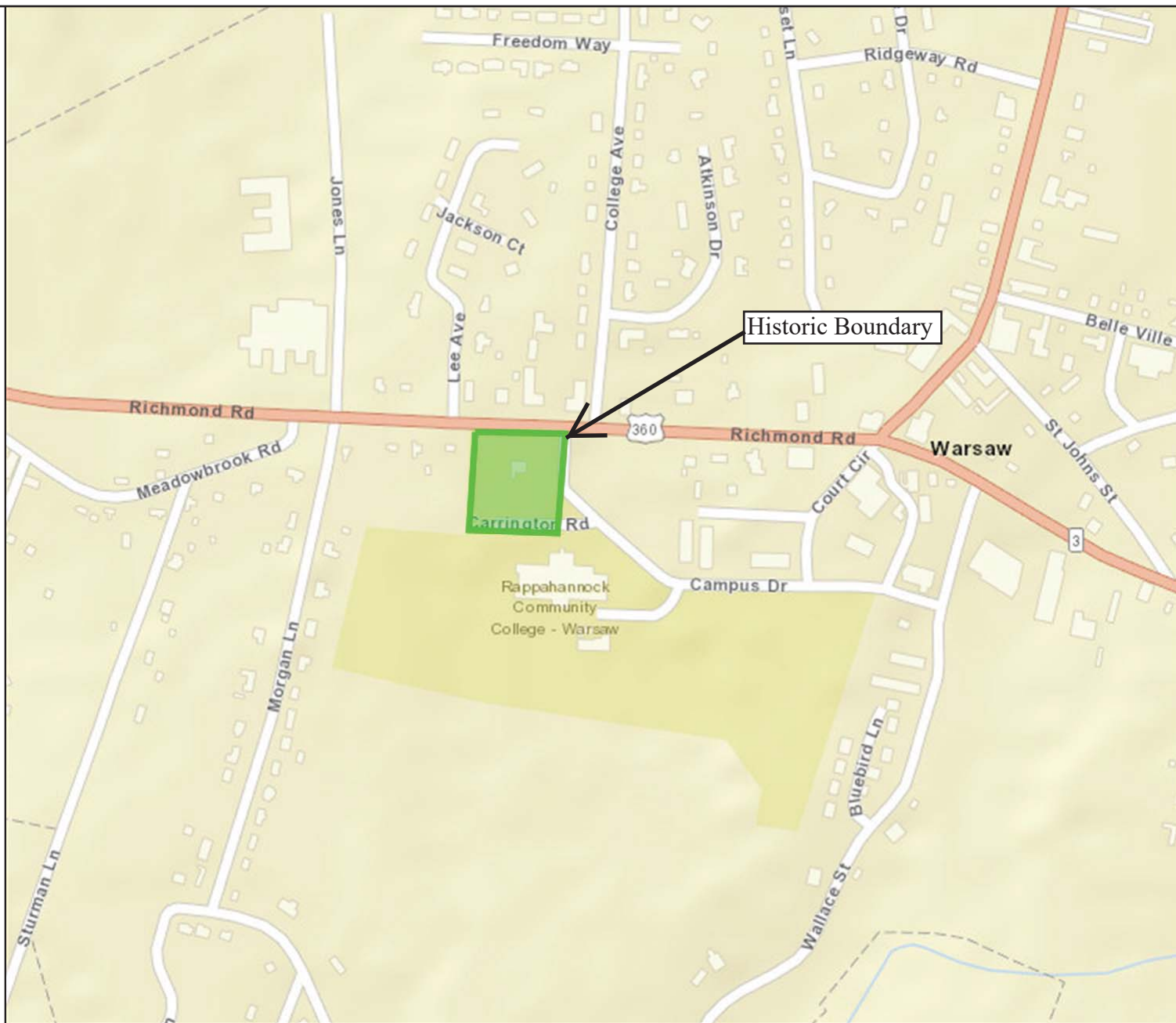
*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*





**LOCATION MAP**

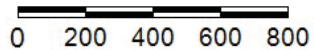
Chinn House  
Richmond County, VA  
DHR No. 321-0010



LOCATION COORDINATES:  
Latitude: 37.958220  
Longitude: -76.762810



Feet



1:9,028 / 1"=752 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 7/19/2021**

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## SKETCH MAP/ PHOTO KEY

(exterior views)

Chinn House

Richmond County, VA

DHR No. 321-0010



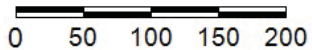
A. Chinn House - Contributing building



Photo Locations



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 7/19/2021**

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