VLR - 7/21/81 MRHP - 7/8/88

United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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### 7. Description

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#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Carrsbrook was once part of a thousand-acre tract of land. Sited high on a bluff, the house was provided with sweeping vistas of the Rivanna River Valley and Southwest Mountains. Although the farm was subdivided into one-acre lots in 1960, the main house remains visually separated from its neighbors to the east and west and maintains an open vista to the river valley to the north.

Palladian in form, the long, five-part house was constructed between 1780 and 1790. Built on a foundation of coursed fieldstone, the frame structure is covered with beaded weatherboards, some of which are original. The gable roofs originally had wooden shingles but are now covered in standing-seam sheet metal; all are outlined with heavy modillion-block, molded cornices.

The proportions of the house, including its verticality and steep roof pitches, its asymmetry, and the unique plan of the interior, prove Carrsbrook to be a provincial interpretation of the five-part plan popularized in Robert Morris's Select Architecture (1757). The central core of the dwelling house is a projecting three-bay, 2½-story structure with an entrance in the center bay. The entrance facade (south) is distinguished by a pedimented gable end, the tympanum composed of flush boarding pierced by a lunette. The pediment is echoed in the single-story dwarf portico, supported by Doric columns, which shelters the paneled door of the main entrance.

Flanking the central block are 1½-story, single-bay wings having pedimented ends lighted by bull's-eye windows. Each wing is connected to the main block by a one-story, one-bay hyphen, the bays serving as secondary entrances to the house. Old photographs show that single-story, open porches with squared posts at one time extended across the hyphens and wings.

An interior ridge chimney rises above the main block, while exterior end chimneys of Flemish-bond brick are located on the rear elevations of the wings. These chimneys are partially covered by the single-story and 1½-story extensions added to the wings in 1960. Only the north elevation of the central block is left exposed. Originally a porch protected its center-bay entrance. The single door with multi-light transom now opens onto a flagstone terrace ornamented by a Chinese-lattice railing. A 6/6 double-hung sash window lights the attic space.

Fenestration throughout the original portion of the house consists mainly of 9/9 double-hung sash windows flanked by louvred shutters. Some of the sash and glass appear to be original.

The plan of Carrsbrook forms a "T" with a lateral hall at the rear of the center section connecting the two wings. Corresponding with a Mutual Assurance Society policy of 1812, the main section measures 30' x 22' with 13½-foot covered "wings" joining the asymmetrical wings; the east 16' x 16' and the west 22' x 16'. Although the house underwent an extensive restoration in 1960, the original rooms have been little altered.

Original cyma moldings, molded chair rails, wainscot, and deep baseboards decorate the first-floor rooms. The heart-pine floors as well as many of the original six-panel doors with box locks remain intact.

### 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications		landscape architectur law literature military music t philosophy _X politics/government	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	ca. 1780-1790	Builder/Architect	Unknown	

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Carrsbrook in Albemarle County is a provincial adaptation of the Palladian five-part house. Characterized by a central pavilion with perpendicular-set wings connected by hyphens, the design was introduced to Tidewater Virginia in the 1760s through Robert Morris's influential handbook Select Architecture (1757). Along with Brandon in Prince George County and Battersea in Petersburg, Carrsbrook represents a notable departure from the rectangular structures characteristic of Virginia's early Georgian architecture. Carrsbrook was built between 1780 and 1790 for Capt. Thomas Carr, a wealthy county planter and soldier who inherited the land from his father, John Carr of Louisa County, in 1778. From 1798 to 1815 the house served as the residence and school of Thomas Jefferson's ward and nephew, Peter Carr, with whom it is traditionally associated. Because of Jefferson's close relationship with the Carr family and his familiarity with the Morris handbook, it is thought that Jefferson may have influenced the design of the house, although its proportions stray too far from classical standards to suggest that he was the architect.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Local tradition maintains that Carrsbrook was built in 1794 by Peter Carr on land inherited from his grandmother, Barbara Overton Carr, of Louisa. There is no evidence to substantiate this claim, however. Barbara Overton Carr owned no property in Albemarle, and her will, proved in Louisa County on January 17, 1795, bequeathed only small personal possessions to her heirs. During the 1790s until as late as August 1796, Peter Carr lived intermittently at Monticello and that summer took rooms in Charlottesville while Jefferson was remodeling and enlarging Monticello. The earliest letter written by Peter Carr to Jefferson from Carrsbrook is dated May 7, 1798. While Carr appears to have taken residence at Carrsbrook soon after his marriage to Hetty Smith Stevenson of Baltimore in 1797, the relevant county records of Albemarle, Goochland, Louisa, and Caroline, together with manuscript sources, support the conclusion that Carrsbrook was built before 1790 and not by Peter Carr.

The land on which Carrsbrook is situated once formed part of a larger tract consisting of several thousand acres on both sides of the South Fork of the Rivanna River patented in 1730 by Thomas Carr of Caroline. Over the next several years Carr acquired three additional tracts in the vicinity of his original patent, accumulating nearly ten thousand acres in Albemarle County before his death in 1737. Thomas Carr's will is no longer extant, but a deed recorded in Louisa County in 1750 indicates that his son, John Carr, inherited the Albemarle property in 1743.

A prominent citizen of Louisa County who lived at "Bear Castle," John Carr served as one of the first justices of Louisa when it was formed in 1742 and later as county sheriff in 1753. His first wife was the mother of Thomas Carr, his oldest son, born in 1736. His second wife, Barbara Overton Carr, was the mother of Dabney Carr, Thomas Jefferson's good friend and Peter Carr's father, who died in 1772. John Carr's will, proved in 1778, devised

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9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #5)

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Carrsbrook, Albemarle County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6,7



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### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey 1967, 1978, 1981 State Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission 221 Governor Street Richmond, Virginia 23219

#### 7. DESCRIPTION

The principal stair, located in the hall at the rear of the main block, is open string with decorative scroll brackets. The stair makes a quarter turn and has vase and column balusters supporting a molded rail terminated by square newels. A segmental-arched vault added during recent years to support the stair provides access to the west wing.

Projecting in front of the hall is the parlor, the most formal room in the house. The focal point of the room is the Federal-style mantel in a projecting chimney breast. The mantel has paneled pilasters below reeded endblocks and a central reeded tablet. The molded shelf is treated with dentil blocks. Encircling the room is a molded cornice also embellished with dentil blocks. Centered on the south wall is the principal entrance door.

The rooms of the two wings are simplified versions of the parlor. Both mantels are Federal in design; the east mantel is distinguished by its Wall-of-Troy fretwork. Simple molded cornices further decorate the rooms. The west wing was at one time partitioned with a six-foot-deep passage along its south end.

The upper rooms of the main block and wings are reached by separate stairs in the rear additions and main hall. Located in the second-story central section are two chambers. The treatment of the center core front room is identical to the parlor below with the exception of a simple molded cornice. Opening off the room is a small chamber with a corner fireplace, which may have served as a nursery but has been converted into a modern bath. The stair continues to climb to the attic; however, rectangular balusters set on a diagonal replace the turned balusters of the first floor. The third-floor chamber is finished with a simple Federal mantel and molded chair rail. Small chambers are located above each wing. The 1960 renovation altered access to these second-floor rooms by incorporating the stairways in the new additions, which also house the present kitchen, bedrooms, and various service rooms. A guest cottage, well house, and garden house ca. 1960 have been incorporated into a formal boxwood garden. In contrast with this formality is the sweeping front yard with scattered shade trees and circular drive, all bordered by a plank fence.

MPM

#### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property consists of four acres which include the house and surrounding grounds and constitute all the land remaining a part of the Carrsbrook estate.

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Carrsbrook, Albemarle County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8



Page 1

#### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

the Albemarle tracts to his three surviving sons, Thomas, Overton, and Garland. Thomas received the largest portion, one thousand acres of which became the tract on which he later built Carrsbrook.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Carr had settled in Albemarle County two decades earlier on land which he also received as a gift from his father. He made his first home just east of the present Carrsbrook, probably building the house which today forms the nucleus of Glen Echo. Vestry records reveal that he was among the first vestrymen of Fredericksville Parish, serving from 1762 until 1776. A veteran of the French and Indian War and a local militia captain, Carr served in the Revolution as a commissary agent, providing in 1780 and 1781 the "necessarys" of beef, bacon, and fodder to the Virginia troops. 6

The first Albemarle land tax book, 1782, records the tracts inherited by Thomas Carr and his brothers: Carr, Capt. Thomas 2200 acres; Carr, Garland 1874 acres; and Carr, Overton 1874 acres. Capt. Thomas Carr's property was taxed one-third higher than Garland Carr's and two-thirds higher than Overton's, indicating that his improvements were more valuable than those of either of his brothers. Since Thomas Carr's personal property was also substantial in 1782 (he was charged with twenty slaves, twenty-seven cattle, and ten slaves), one may infer that construction of Carrsbrook began just as the Revolution ended. In 1790 Thomas Carr's tax rate doubled, while his brothers' tax rate remained unchanged. This change would indicate completion of the house. 7

In 1794 Thomas Carr and his wife, Lucy, sold Carrsbrook to Col. Wilson Cary Nicholas. An officer in the Revolution and magistrate of Albemarle, Nicholas would later serve the Commonwealth as Governor and U.S. Senator. The Carrsbrook property, valued at 3,500 pounds sterling, was identified in the deed as "...whereon said Thomas Carr now resides."8 Nicholas's reasons for purchasing the house are unclear, but it is conceivable that he may have bought the property with the view of selling or giving it to Peter Carr. Nicholas was a close friend of Thomas Jefferson and Peter Carr's late father, Dabney Carr. He had little need of a house since he had already established his residence at Warren on the James near Scottsville. Nicholas, moreover, was married to the sister of Carr's future wife and was closely involved in the transactions by which she sold her property in Baltimore and invested the proceeds in Carrsbrook soon after her marriage. It is also interesting to note that Nicholas would continue to pay the land tax on the property for several years after Peter and Hetty made Carrsbrook their home. 9 Why Thomas Carr was willing to sell the property to Nicholas is also unclear. Whatever the motives for the sale, it is certain that by 1796 Capt. Thomas Carr was managing a plantation of four hundred acres in the North Garden district of Albemarle County and the 1,050-acre Carrsbrook estate had been entered in the land tax book beside the name of Wilson Cary Nicholas. 10

In June 1797 Peter Carr married Hetty Smith Stevenson, a young widow from a prominent Baltimore merchant family with close political ties to Thomas Jefferson. That he and his bride had established themselves at Carrsbrook by 1798 is evident not only from the change of address in Carr's correspondence but also in the sharp increase in his property in that year. Charged in the preceding year with three slaves and one horse, he was charged in 1798 with eleven slaves and four horses, a tax evaluation which thenceforth remained fairly constant throughout his life. A later deed giving clear title of the property to Carr's wife, recorded in August 1817, corroborates other evidence that the Carrs lived at Carrsbrook from

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Carrsbrook, Albemarle County, Virginia

Continuation sheet

#3

Item number 8



age 2

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

1798 until Peter Carr's premature death at the age of forty five in 1815. 12

Peter Carr, with whom Carrsbrook is usually identified, was the oldest son and third child of Dabney Carr and Martha Jefferson, the sister of Thomas Jefferson. He was educated personally by Jefferson at Monticello from the ages of three to twelve. Thereafter his uncle took a continual interest in his development, so much so that Carr can be regarded as a kind of mannequin on which Jefferson draped and fitted his various ideas on the education of the statesmen who succeeded the Revolutionary generation. Some of Jefferson's most famous dicta —on religion, on travel, as well as on education— were addressed to Carr, who is chiefly remembered as the recipient of the famous letter of September 1814 in which Jefferson outlined his plan for a comprehensive system of public education for Virginia. Despite his unusual preparation (his teachers also included James Madison and George Wythe), Carr served the Commonwealth, in the words of his biographer, "on a very modest scale." 13

Following his admission to the bar in 1793, Carr's first political act was a letter he wrote to George Washington under the assumed name of John Langhorn in 1797. Offering sympathy and comfort for the "unmerited calumnies and villainous machinations" of the aging General's political enemies, Carr probably wrote the letter in an effort to draw from Washington a statement that could be used against him. Although there is no evidence that Jefferson had any part in the stratagem, John Nicholas, county clerk of Albemarle and an ardent Federalist, persuaded Washington that Jefferson through Carr had written the letter "to cloak some infamous design." Carr's essay in political gamesmanship embarrassed Jefferson and so offended Washington that it occasioned a complete breach between him and his former Secretary of State. 14

While residing at Carrsbrook, Carr served in the House of Delegates for five terms. As Albemarle's representative from 1801-1804, Carr stood squarely in the reform tradition of Jefferson in calling for a revision of the state constitution and serving on a committee that reported a bill vesting title of all of the colonial property of the Anglican Church in the state at large. Carr chose not to run for office in 1805 and 1806 but was reelected for another term in 1807. Concurrently with his legislative work, Carr served as a county justice. Defeated for reelection in 1808 in a campaign that drew attention to the failure of his uncle's commercial policies, he ran unsuccessfully for the state senate in the following year. 15

Besides venturing into politics, Carr also managed the Carrsbrook plantation, but the estate did not provide enough to support his family. Soon after his political defeat in 1809, Carr turned his classical education to practical advantage by running a private school at Carrsbrook. The school, which opened in 1811, accommodated seventeen boys, besides a score of day students, until it closed several years later. <sup>16</sup> His establishment of the school probably explains why he contracted with the Mutual Assurance Society to insure Carrsbrook in 1812. <sup>17</sup>

Carr's experience as both an educator and legislator made him a logical candidate for appointment in 1814 as a trustee of the infant Albemarle Academy, the forerunner of the University of Virginia. Elected president of the trustees, Carr assisted Jefferson in drafting plans for the government of the school and for financing its erection and support. He and Jefferson also drafted a petition asking for an appropriation from the General Assembly for

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Carrsbrook, Albemarle County, Virginia

Continuation sheet

#4

Item number 8



**ige** 3

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

the institution. It was his involvement with Jefferson on this project which occasioned the oft-cited letter in which Jefferson outlined his educational plans for the Commonwealth. Among a group of Albemarle militia who marched to Richmond in order to meet a threatened British invasion in the summer of 1814, Carr returned to Carrsbrook in ill health and died several months later in 1815. Had he lived it is likely that he would have assisted Jefferson in completing plans for the University of Virginia. 18

Carr's residency at Carrsbrook coincided with the period in which Albemarle society reached its zenith. Carr's circle included not only Jefferson but also Thomas Mann Randolph, William Wirt, Francis Walker Gilmer, and Wilson Cary Nicholas, all of whom would have known Carrsbrook's hospitable table. It was his friend Wirt who left the most flattering picture of Carr, in an obituary written on February 17, 1815:

He was naturally eloquent. His voice was melody itself. He had the advantage of a large and commanding figure, a countenance like his soul, open and noble, and a gesture full of majesty and force. No man was dearer to his friends; and there has never been a man to whom his friends were more dear. 19

Carr was buried at Monticello graveyard.

Peter Carr's will, recorded in December 1815, gave "to my excellent and beloved wife all my estate whatsoever and wherever during her life..." and "full power to sell the land if in her opinion such sale shall be necessary..." After clearing title to the property with Wilson Cary Nicholas in 1817, she sold Carrsbrook to her late husband's cousin and neighbor, Dabney Minor, in 1819. 21

Carrsbrook continued as part of the Minor estate until 1832, when it was sold at public auction to John N. C. Stockton of Albemarle, whose descendants long made it their home. It remained a working farm until 1959, when it was completely restored under the direction of Dr. Wilmer Paine. Carrsbrook is presently owned by Dr. and Mrs. James McClellan.

VDS/RAC

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Louisa County Will Book 3. p. 580.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Dumas Malone, <u>Jefferson and His Time</u>, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1948-1981), vol. III, p. 237.

<sup>3&</sup>quot;The Papers of Thomas Jefferson in the Library of Congress." 1785-1798. Virginia State Library Archives Branch, Richmond, Va.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Albemarle County Patent Book 13, p. 447; Louisa County Deed Book A.

<sup>5</sup>Louisa County Will Book 2., p. 436.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Albemarle County <u>Patent</u> <u>Book</u> 28, p. 290; Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives, Glen Echo, Albemarle Co., 02-10; Fredericksville Parish Vestry Book, 1762, Va. State Library.

Albemarle County Land Tax Books 1782, 1790; Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Book 1782.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Albemarle County Deed Book 11, p. 332.

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Carrsbrook, Albemarle County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #5

Item number

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#### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

9Albemarle County Land Tax Books 1794-1801.

10Albemarle County Land Tax Book 1796.

11 Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Books 1798-1815. Carr acquired a carriage in 1803.

12 Albemarle County Deed Book 20, p. 409. The deed read, in part:

"Whereas during the lifetime of the said Peter Carr, to wit in the year (a blank space) it was agreed between the said Peter and his wife that a certain real property in the Town of Baltimore which Hetty held in her own right prior to her marriage to Peter Carr, should be sold and the proceeds be invested in land in Virginia, a deed for which should be taken to their use during their joint lives, then to the use of the survivor for life, then to their children.

The said sale was made and the proceeds invested in a tract of land lying in the County of Albemarle on the Rivanna River purchased by said Peter and Hetty of the said Wilson Cary Nicholas, whereof immediate possession was given to them and which is still retained by Hetty....This indenture witnesseth that the said Wilson C. Nicholas and Margaret his wife, for the sum of £2000. paid by said Peter Carr and Hetty during the lifetime of said Peter the receipt is hereby acknowledged, now sell unto said Hetty Carr that tract on the Southside of the Rivanna River purchased of Capt. Thomas Carr and which was in the occupancy of Peter Carr..."

13 Elizabeth Dabney Coleman, "The Carrs of Albemarle," chap. III: "Peter Carr of Carrs-Brook" (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1944), pp. 19-44.

<sup>14</sup>Malone, pp. 309-311; Coleman, pp. 34-36.

<sup>15</sup>Coleman, pp. 36-39.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-41.

17 Mutual Assurance Society Records, Policy R5/V46/N507 (July 17, 1812). Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives, Richmond, Va.

<sup>18</sup>Coleman, pp. 41-43.

19 Quoted in Coleman, p. 34.

20 Albemarle County Will Book 6, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup>Albemarle County Deed Book 21, p. 397.

### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Books 1782-1818.

Will Book 6.

Coleman, Elizabeth Dabney. "The Carrs of Albemarle." Chap. III: "Peter Carr of Carrs-Brook."

M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1944, pp. 19-44.

Louisa County Deed Books A, D.

Will Books 2, 3.

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Continuation sheet # 6

item number



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### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Cont.)

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Virginia Historical Society. The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Richmond Volume 2, 1894-1895. p. 221 ff.

Richmond, Virginia. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives. Glen Echo, Albemarle County. File No. 02-10; Mutual Assurance Society Records. Policy R5/V46/N507 (July 17, 1812).

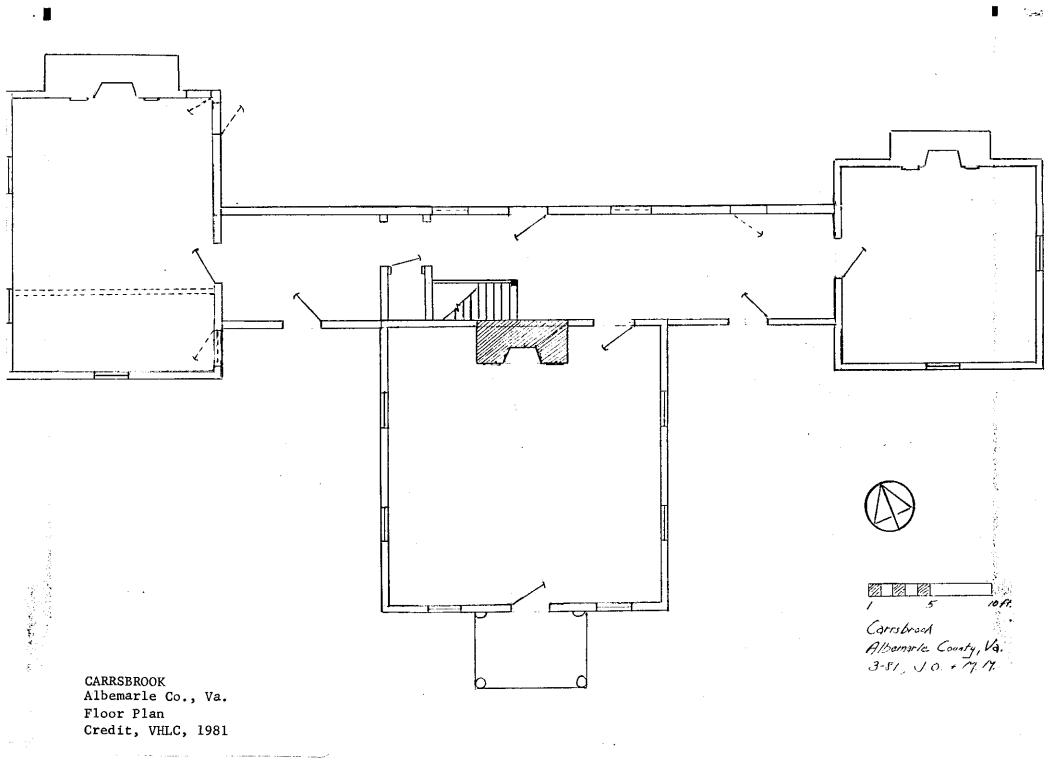
Richmond, Virginia. Virginia State Library Archives Branch. "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson in the Library of Congress." 1785-1798; Church Records Collection. Fredericksville Parish Vestry Book. 1742-1787. Accession 1976a.; Public Service Claims. Certificates, Albemarle County, pp. 21-1,2,3; 22-1,2,3.

Boyd, Julian Parks, ed. <u>Thomas Jefferson Papers.</u> Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.

### 10: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (Cont.)

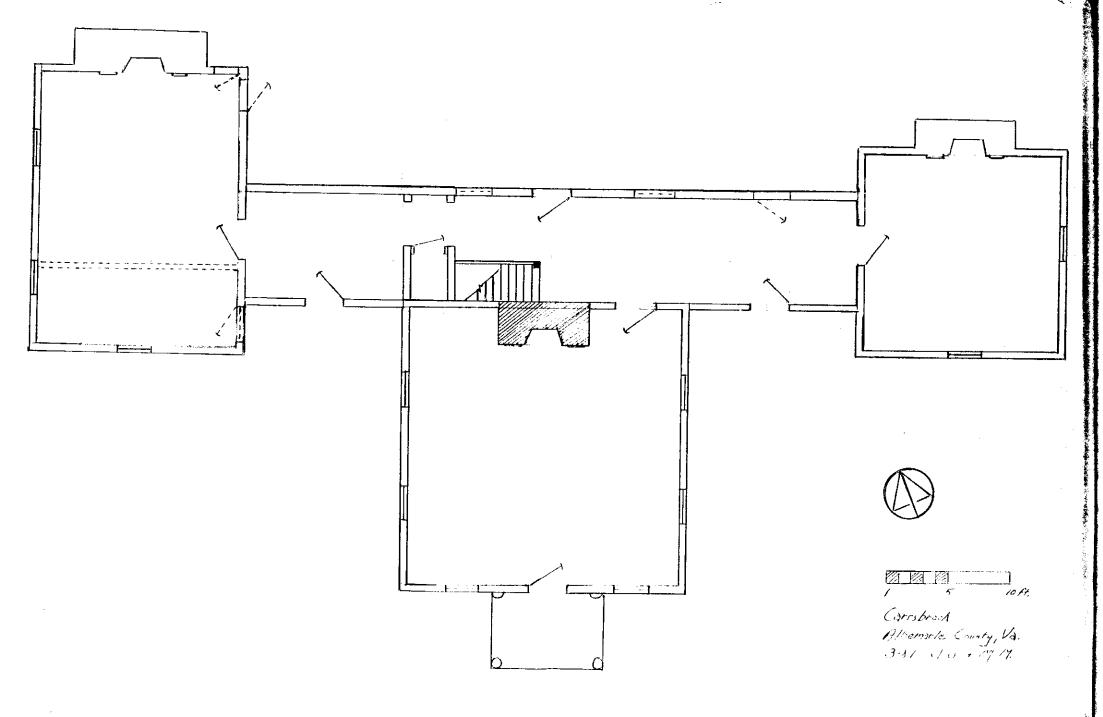
### Verbal boundary description

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Floor Plan

Credit, VHLC, 1981



T.

