

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

VLR-2/20/90 NRHP-12/28/90

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name WALKER HOUSE  
other names/site number DHR File No. 02-197

2. Location

street & number East side Route 627  not for publication  
city, town Warren  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Albemarle code 003 zip code 24590

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

Dept. of Historic Resources, 221 Governor Street, Richmond, Virginia

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic -- Single DwellingDomestic -- Single Dwelling**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic - Early Classical  
Revivalfoundation Brick; stonewalls Brickroof Slate

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

## SUMMARY ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The William Walker House (circa 1803) is situated on the east side of Route 627 in the village of Warren in southern Albemarle County. The one-story, three-bay hipped-roof brick house is built on a high English basement. There are entrances on the north and south facades and a pedimented portico on the south. There is also a one-story, one-bay 1978 addition on the east that contains baths and utility rooms. The interior plan consists of a center hall flanked by a bedroom on each side and a large full-width salon on the north end. The basement level contains two bedrooms, a kitchen/sitting room, and utility rooms. Much of the original woodwork remains, including six mantles, chair rail and window and door trim. Both the interior and exterior are in excellent condition.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The William Walker House (circa 1803) is situated on a knoll on the east side of Route 627 in the village of Warren, near the James River in southern Albemarle County. Although it was once a thriving river town, very little physical evidence of Warren remains, and the Walker House is now in a largely rural setting. The house is oriented south towards the James River.

Built by James Walker, a long time employee of Thomas Jefferson, the Walker House is essentially Jeffersonian in style and massing. The one-story, three-bay, hipped-roof brick house is built on a high English basement. Three-course American bond with etched mortar joints and some glazed brickwork is used on all four facades. A molded water table runs between the first and basement levels.

There are entrances with double doors at the center of the north and south facades. Each is topped by a four-light transom and a plaster jack arch. Windows on the first story have nine-over-nine sash, many with the original louvered shutters and shutter ties, and are topped by plaster jack arches. The cellar casement windows on the north and south are original and are still covered by wooden slats. The six-over-six sash windows on the east and west facades of the cellar are mid-nineteenth century in date.

A one-story, one-bay, wooden pedimented portico on the south is supported by four tapered brick piers with molded brick bases and capitals. A flight of steps with a balustrade railing (probably not original) leads to the portico. The gable roof of the portico is supported by simple Doric piers and there is a lunette window with keystone at the center

 See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1803-1805

1803

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Walker, James

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Walker House is significant as a well-preserved example of Jeffersonian residential architecture in southern Albemarle County. The house was built between 1803 and 1805 by William Walker, a prominent merchant in Warren during its brief heyday as a James River trading port. The builder was William's brother James Walker, who was employed by Thomas Jefferson as a millwright and carpenter. Although there is no proof that Thomas Jefferson actually had a hand in the design of the Walker House, the stylistic influences of Jefferson and his Palladian architectural theories are strong and unmistakable.

**HISTORY:**

The land on which the Walker House stands was part of the extensive holdings of the Nicholas family and was first owned by Dr. George Nicholas as early as 1729.<sup>1</sup> His grandson, Wilson C. Nicholas built a house on part of this plantation (named Mt. Warren) and thereafter established a warehouse and landing for shipping at the mouth of Ballenger Creek on the James River. Nicholas's Landing was further enhanced by the construction of a mill and tavern and in 1799 the Virginia legislature established the "town of Warren Ferry . . . in Albemarle . . . on lands of Wilson Cary Nicholas."<sup>2</sup> Its importance was greatly increased by the location of the ferry at Warren and, later, by its link to Richmond by the Kanawha Canal. Warren's importance as a trading center was brief, however, and by 1820 it had been eclipsed by Scott's Landing (now Scottsville).

One of the most important and enterprising residents of Warren during its heyday was the merchant William Walker, who moved there shortly after his marriage in 1793.<sup>3</sup> Between 1797 and 1799 he was in partnership with James Alberson and Clifton Garland, with whom he purchased several town lots for speculation. In 1802 he joined with Samuel Shelton and John Staples in the purchase of the Warren Mill and Distillery. In 1803 he took out an insurance policy for his "retail Store" with the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Albemarle County Land Records, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.  
McLaughlin, Jack. Jefferson and Monticello: The Biography of a Builder. New York: H. Ho  
1988.

Mutual Assurance Company of Virginia. Fire Insurance Policies. (Special Collections,  
Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia).

Swofford, Donald A. The William Walker House, Warren, Virginia: A Study for Adaptive  
Restoration. Masters Thesis: University of Virginia, 1976.

See continuation sheet

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources  
221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 9 acres

UTM References

A 

1	7
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7	1	4	9	7	0
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4	1	8	2	9	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Walker House property is shown as the heavy black line on the accompanying map dated 19 December 1975, recorded in Deed Book 598, Page 557, Albemarle County Clerk of the Court's Office.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the land and structures historically with William Walker.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Geoffrey B. Henry  
 organization \_\_\_\_\_ date January 25, 1990  
 street & number 1515 Rutledge Avenue telephone 804-293-8006  
 city or town Charlottesville, Virginia state VA zip code 22903

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of the pediment. A brick stairway with iron railings (both features not original) leads to the north entrance.

The exterior woodwork is typically Jeffersonian in its boldness and well-articulated simplicity. There is a cornice below the wide overhanging eaves and the rounded window ledges are particularly prominent. Door and window frames are pegged and have either half- or quarter-round molding.

The one-story, one-bay, shed-roofed brick addition on the east is modern and is not visible from the road. There is an entrance on the basement level that opens out on a small enclosed terrace. The wing contains a stair, two bathrooms, closets, and utility rooms.

The interior is largely intact and shows Jeffersonian influences in its plan and disposition of living spaces. The first floor contains a center hall flanked by a bedroom on either side, and a full-width salon at the north end. The hall has a paneled wainscot and double chair rail molding. There is also a wood molding, beaded at top and bottom, that runs on three sides of the hall at the level of the door heads.

The left bedroom features a fireplace with Federal-style mantel on the north wall flanked by tall, narrow closets with paneled doors. The hearth is framed by flat pilasters with an inset panel. Above is a frieze with fluted center panel flanked by short fluted pilasters. This is topped by a wide mantel shelf with wall-of-Troy molding. Other woodwork in the room includes a paneled wainscot, double chair rail, and a beaded molding like that found in the hall.

The right bedroom has similar woodwork but only one closet to the right of the fireplace. The fireplace is much simpler, with paneled pilasters, a plain frieze, and a similar mantel shelf. A door at the north-east corner leads to a small bathroom, a twentieth century addition.

The salon is the most impressive room and extends the full width of the house. A wide paneled door leads from the hall to the salon and there is direct egress to the outside through the double door at the north. Fireplaces flank the center hall door and have slightly different mantels; the one on the west has fluted pilasters with an inset colonette and plain frieze, while the other has fluted pilasters without the colonette. Panelled wainscot, double chair rail molding, and beaded wall molding repeat the pattern of the other rooms. The door on the east has a fluted architrave and bulls-eye corner blocks in the Greek Revival style and was part of a mid-nineteenth century remodeling.

The basement level is accessed by a narrow winder stair contained in the 1978 brick addition. This stair is entered through a door at the northeast end of the salon as well as from the outside patio entrance on the east. The basement contains four rooms: the kitchen, dining room, and two bedrooms with bath. Although the room configurations are original, the slate

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floors and much of the woodwork and brickwork are modern alterations. The dining room, at the northeast corner of the basement floor has retained its original hearth with a simple molding strip below the plain mantel shelf. The fireplace in the kitchen features reeded pilasters and a modillioned cornice. The two bedrooms, located at the south end of the basement possess little interior fabric and the fireplaces in each room have been boarded up. There is an outside entrance from the southeast bedroom.

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At nearly the same time, Walker bought two lots in Warren from Nicholas with the intention of building his residence. The early building history of the Walker House is documented in several sources, including an insurance policy taken out in 1803 and the records of a local blacksmith. The insurance policy describes a "brick dwelling, covered with wood, one story with kitchen, cellar, 34 feet by 32 feet with portico on brick pillars 12x7 feet." Among the items mentioned in the accounts of William Walker with the blacksmith in 1802 and 1803 are "54 iron pieces" (probably shutter backs and hinges) and "iron for your chimneys."

Walker entrusted his brother James with the construction of the house in Warren. James Walker was well known locally for his professional association with Thomas Jefferson, for whom he worked as both millwright and carpenter. In 1802 Jefferson had hired him to construct his mill works, and several pieces of correspondence between the two refer to the excavation of a canal, the design of the mill machinery, and the construction of a mill house. In October 1803 Walker wrote to Jefferson, asking to be relieved of his duties, because of "work load and extraordinary circumstances", a reference to his other building projects, including that for his brother William at Warren.

Unfortunately, William Walker did not live in his house for very long, as he died on March 1 1804, probably in Richmond. The house remained in the family and was rented for several years. In 1809 the house was re-insured by the Mutual Assurance Society and the accompanying physical description suggests that there had been no changes to the house since its completion.

The Walker House property passed through several owners throughout the nineteenth century, and the house suffered from neglect and some incompatible additions. Sometime after 1871 a large front porch was added, and some of the original decorative woodwork was removed. A lean-to shed addition was built on the east facade. The porches had the fortunate effect, however preserving the original portico and entrance. After its purchase by the present owners, the nineteenth century accretions were removed, a small brick service wing was added on the east and both the exterior and interior were brought back to their original early-nineteenth-century appearance.

Because of its stylistic features and its construction by one of his employees, the design of the Walker House has sometimes been attributed to Thomas Jefferson. No proof has ever been found to establish a definite link between Jefferson and the Walker House. Nonetheless, his influence is clearly seen--in the disposition of interior spaces, its simple classical lines and its vertical appearance--and through him to the Italian villas of Andrea Palladio. Jefferson was of course conversant with the architectural style of Palladio and owned a copy of the translations by Giacomo Leoni and Isaac Ware. Of Palladio's numerous designs, that for the Villa Emo near Venice most closely resembles the Walker House. The Villa Emo was the probable inspiration for two other houses in Albemarle County often attributed to Jefferson: Bentivar, built by Garland Carr, and Edgemont, built circa 1797 for James Powell Cocke. Of the three, the Walker House is the least altered and has preserved its compact yet strikingly vertical appearance. James Walker may have had access to this book through Jefferson and/or asked Jefferson to review and comment on his designs. In any event, the Walker House is one of the purest examples of the Jeffersonian residential ideal on a small scale in Albemarle County and its debt to Jefferson's strong architectural influence is unmistakable.

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References:

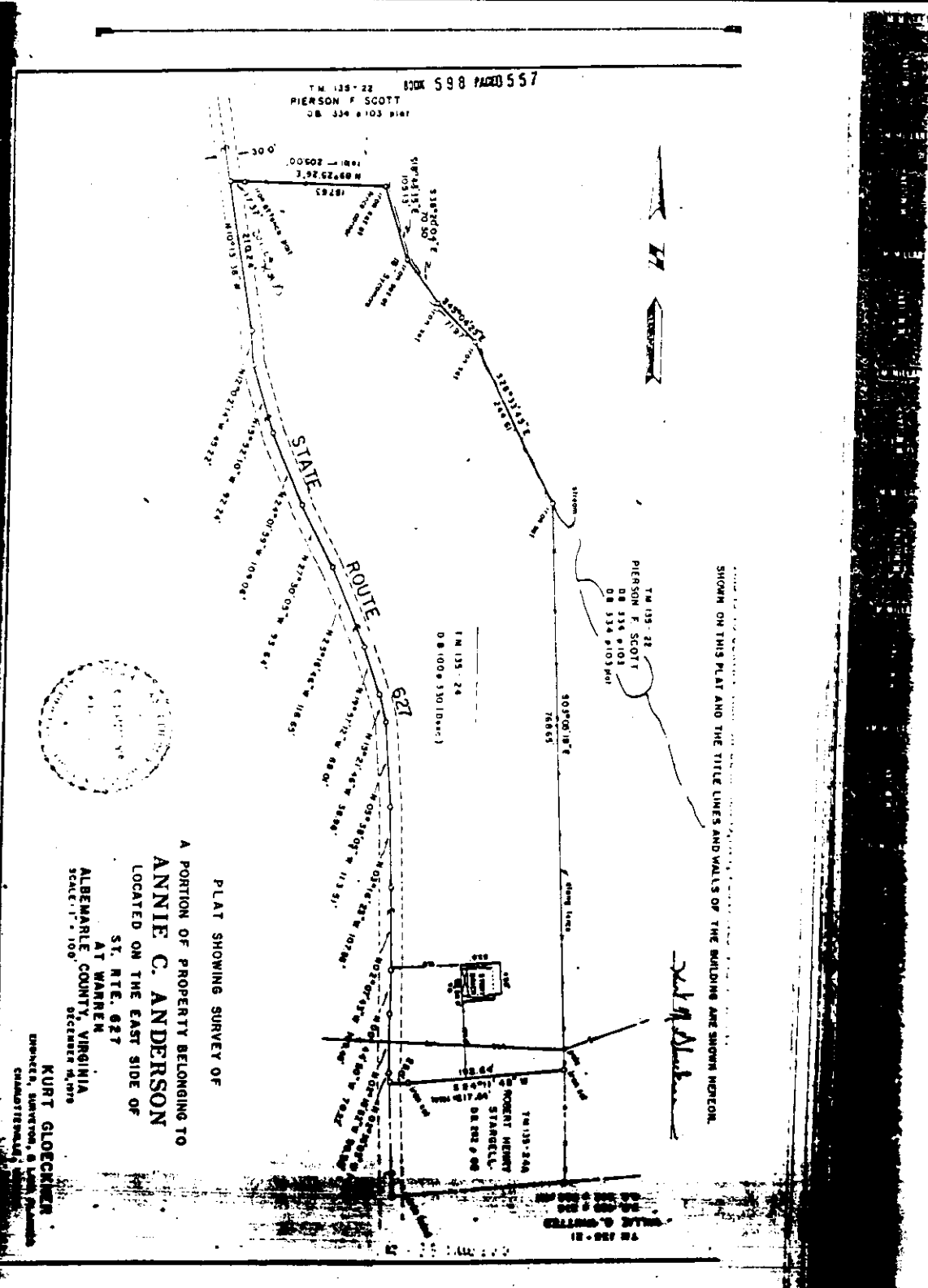
- 1- Donald A. Swofford, The William Walker House, Warren, Virginia--A Study for Adaptive Restoration (Masters Thesis: University of Virginia), 1976, page 1.
- 2- Ibid., page 2.
- 3- Ibid., page 5.
- 4- Ibid., page 6.
- 5- Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Policy No. 2003, volume 24.
- 6- Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Policy No. 2127, volume 24.
- 7- Swofford, op. cit. page 9.
- 8- Ibid., pages 7 and 8.
- 9- Ibid., pages 7-9.
- 10- Ibid., page 19.
- 11- Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia Policy No. 193, volume 34.

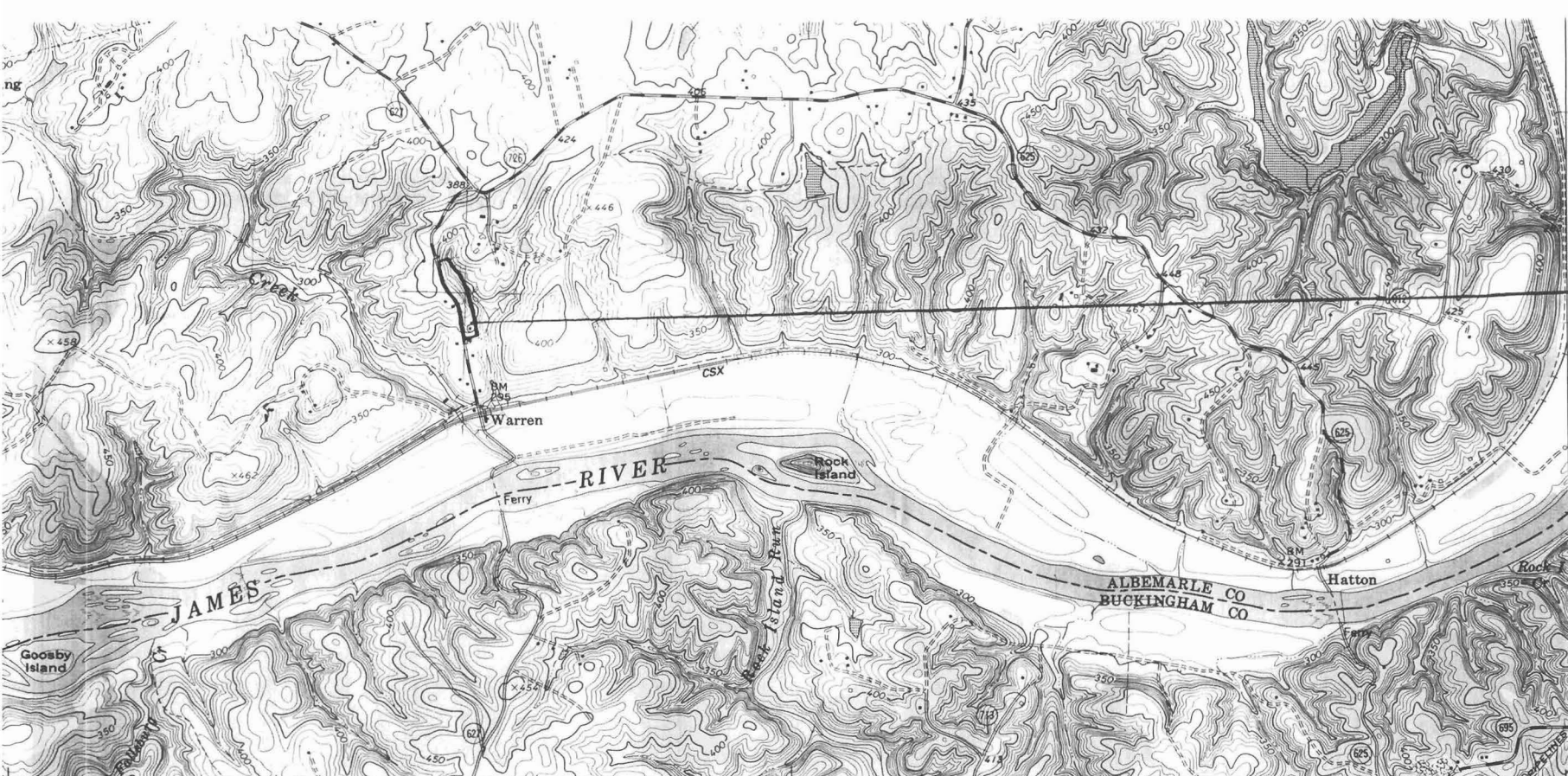


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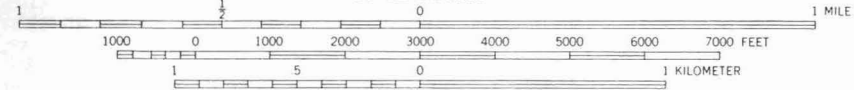




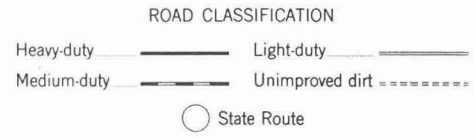
WALKER HOUSE  
ALBEMARLE CO.  
4183 17/714970/4182980

35' 13 714 (GLENMORE) 5259 II NE AXTELL (VA. 602) 4.2 MI. 716 32' 30" 717 718 4181000m N. 78° 30' 37° 45'

SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1984 and other sources. This information not field checked Map edited 1987

ESMONT, VA.

37078-G5-TF-024

1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1987  
DMA 5259 I SE-SERIES V834

