

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 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 McKenney, William, House

Other names/site number McKenney-Dunlop-Totty House DHI 123-102

2. Location

Street & number 250 South Sycamore Street

City, town Petersburg

State Virginia

code VA

county N/A

code 730

zip code 23803

N/A not for publication

N/A vicinity

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

0

0

0

1

Noncontributing

0 buildings

0 sites

0 structures

0 objects

0 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 VA 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

Heath C. Miller
Director, VA Department of Historic Resources

Date

1 Nov 1990

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)
Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne-Eastlake

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick

roof Slate
other Wood
Terra Cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The McKenney House, an eight thousand square foot town house, is the finest example of Queen Anne-Eastlake architecture in Petersburg, Virginia. The two and one half story house is located on the corner of South Sycamore Street and Liberty Street in the Poplar Lawn Historic District. Designed by Major Harrison Waite, Petersburg's leading postbellum architect, the house is located directly across from Poplar Lawn Park, the focal point of the postbellum mansion district. Many well-kept nineteenth-century houses remain in the district today, but many others have been destroyed and replaced with modern office buildings. The house was built in 1890 to reflect the new wealth brought to the city by the Industrial Age. Its rich details include the extensive use of stained and leaded glass, elaborate pressed brickwork, terra-cotta roof trim, and a circular corner tower with a conical roof. The exterior has been virtually unchanged since its construction. The interior is distinguished by the elaborate use of carved woodwork including a built-in china press and sideboard. Six of the ten fireplaces are flanked by Italian tiles in floral designs. The house was built with indoor plumbing, steam heat, and both gas and electricity.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The McKenney House's facade (east elevation) is asymmetrical with a circular corner tower with a conical roof. The main block rises two and one half stories. Its parapeted gable end fronts the street and is topped with a terra-cotta urn centered over a floral terra-cotta panel. The gable's sandstone coping is supported by sandstone brackets. This design is repeated on the north and south elevations on a smaller scale. A round stained-glass window ornaments the gable at the attic level. Three one-over-one double-hung sash windows are situated at the second level. A 5' x 6' window topped by three stained-glass panels is centered on the first level. The house is built of pressed red brick with tight mortar joints. The mortar is stained to match the bricks. The front elevation features elaborate designs using darker bricks, molded terra cotta, and sandstone. Each window on this elevation and the south elevation is capped with an elaborate brick segmental arch with sandstone keystones. All sills are sandstone.

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)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1890-92

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Waite, Major Harrison

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McKenney House is a rare surviving example of Queen Anne-Eastlake architecture in Petersburg, Virginia. It was designed by Major Harrison Waite, Petersburg's leading postbellum architect, and has been the home of three of the city's leading businessmen. Built in 1890 on Poplar Lawn Park, its exterior remains virtually unchanged. Because of its massive size, elaborate roof, tall tower, and stained glass, it continues to dominate the first block of Liberty Street. The first owner, William McKenney, was considered the leading lawyer of Southside Virginia. The second owner, David Dunlop III, owned one of the largest tobacco manufacturing plants in the city. The third owner, William Totty, owned Totty Trunk and Baggage Factory. The house reflects the philosophy of the wealthy during the late Victorian Age that "too much is just enough." After fifty years as an apartment building, the house has been returned to a single family dwelling.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

The McKenney House is eligible for registration as a historic landmark under Criterion C because it is the most distinguished example of Queen Anne-Eastlake architecture in Petersburg, Virginia. It represents the style of building desired by the men who made their fortunes in the South after the Civil War.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, Petersburg was the second-largest city in the state and the fiftieth-largest city in the nation.¹ Aided by the city's railroads, canal, and location on the Appomattox River, industry flourished and the future looked bright.² Water and gas had come to the city in the 1850s.³ The town began to spread out from the river, and elegant mansions were built by the well-to-do on South Market, Franklin, and South Sycamore streets.⁴ High society flourished,

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Bailey, James H. Old Petersburg. Richmond: Hale Publishing, 1976.
The City of Petersburg, Virginia: The Book of Its Chamber of Commerce.
 Petersburg: George Englehardt, 1894.
- Henderson, William. Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1980.
- Lykes, Richard. Campaign for Petersburg. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1970.
- Scott, James G. and Edward Wyatt IV. Petersburg's Story: A History. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1960.
- Wyatt, Edward IV. Along Petersburg Streets. Richmond: The Dietz Printing Company, 1943.

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:

William McKenney Public Library
Petersburg, Virginia

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 18 286045 4122320
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that certain lot or parcel of land, with the improvements thereon and the appurtenances thereto belonging, lying at the northwest corner of Sycamore and Liberty Streets, in the City of Petersburg, Virginia, fronting on the west side of Sycamore Street sixty-four feet, and running back

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The bounds have been drawn to include the house and land upon which it stands as recorded in Deed Book 392, pp. 796-7. **This is the area historically associated with the nominated property.**

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kay Carwile

organization N/A date 20 July 1989

street & number 250 South Sycamore Street telephone 804-732-5666

city or town Petersburg state Virginia zip code 23803

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A raised porch extends across the entire front of the house. It is reached by sandstone steps from either the east or the south elevations. One story high, its tin roof is supported by eight turned posts. A spindle frieze and balustrade of turned spindles wrap around the porch. The main entrance is on the north end of the porch through a pair of $9\frac{1}{2}'$ x $2\frac{1}{2}'$ oak exterior doors that lead to interior doors of the same size with leaded glass panels. Patterned tile covers the floor of the vestibule. The south end of the porch has a smaller entrance through the tower; this door is also oak and has a leaded glass transom. A two level porch of similar design extends along the rear of the south elevation.

The circular tower is three stories tall. Each level contains two windows with one-over-one rounded glass panes. Although the walls of the first two floors are brick, those of the third level are red slate in a fish scale pattern. The conical roof is covered with gray slate and is topped with an iron finial. Boxed gutters are concealed by a simple metal cornice and frieze on the north, south, and west elevations of the house.

The roof of the house is steeply pitched and capped with ornate terra cotta along its entire ridge. Clad in gray slate, the roof is pierced by five two-over-two dormer windows in various locations, each with a hipped roof. Three tall narrow chimneys with terra-cotta chimney pots and one tall rectangular chimney are each decorated with pressed brickwork.

The original single-story kitchen extends from the rear of the house. It has a plain tin roof and a simple door leading to a new garden. A very small room with a toilet is attached to the original kitchen. It may be entered only from the garden and was apparently for use by the outside staff. The current kitchen is entered through a door leading from a small porch set under a brick archway on the north elevation. The house has a partial basement reached through a bulkhead on the south elevation or by interior stairs from the rear of the house in what was originally the servants' quarters.

Almost all of the windows are one-over-one double-hung sash windows. The windows of the side elevations are vertically aligned, giving order to the design. Four stained-glass panels are centered under the gable at the attic level on the north elevation, and a stained-glass panel is centered over the bulkhead on the south elevation.

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The interior of the McKenney house contains twenty-three rooms on two floors as well as a full attic and a partial basement. The entrance hall contains a massive stairway which turns twice as it rises and has elaborately carved newel posts and heavy balusters, each with a floral motif. This floral motif is repeated throughout the house on the lintels of all doors and windows. All woodwork in the stair hall is oak. When the house was converted into three apartments in 1936, the stairway was altered and some woodwork was lost. It originally extended into the front parlor. The large front parlor is located to the left of the stair hall. It contains a mahogany Eastlake overmantle, ornate fireplace tiles and fireback, and its original interior shutters and chandelier that was made for both gas and electricity. A door on the north side of the west wall leads to a short hall which leads to two small rooms currently used as a bedroom and utility room on the left and a bathroom at the end. The bathroom retains its original footed tub. A door on the south side of the west wall leads to the side parlor; very similar to the front parlor, it has cherry woodwork. The round tower room is entered from the side parlor. This room contains a fireplace and oak woodwork. Large sliding doors open from the second parlor to the dining room which contains an Eastlake overmantel, a built-in twelve foot china press, and a built-in sideboard with a stained glass window. Oak wainscoting surrounds the room. A door in the north wall leads to the current kitchen which was originally the butler's pantry. A narrow set of interior stairs leads from the kitchen porch on the north side of the house to the upstairs porch on the south side, and an unusually elaborate set of stairs is in the servants' wing. The upstairs plan is very similar to the downstairs. The woodwork is almost as elaborate, but it is painted. Floors are pine instead of oak. All doors throughout the house are seven paneled with a cross design, and all hardware is brass.

When the house was converted into three apartments in 1936, the rear portion which was originally the servants' quarters was sealed off from the rest of the house. Originally entered through a door in the west wall of the current kitchen, this section must now be entered through an exterior door opening on the side porch. As yet unrestored, the downstairs contains a hallway opening into two rooms to the left. The second room leads to the original kitchen. The upstairs contains two bedrooms with fireplaces and a bath with its original footed tub. A door leads to the upstairs porch.

After being converted into apartments in 1936, the McKenney House suffered years of neglect. The current owners began a careful renovation in 1983, and have completed work on the main part of the house.

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causing the Richmond Dispatch to write in 1856:

We suppose there is no place in Virginia where there is more true refinement, more genial, social warmth, and less of the starched and stiff pretension which sometimes follows prosperity and wealth, and is always the mark of weak and vulgar minds, than in the city of Petersburg.⁵

During the Civil War, however, the very railroads and waterways that had made Petersburg a manufacturing center also made it a target for the Union Army. In June 1864 General Ulysses S. Grant began a devastating siege of the city that lasted ten months.⁶ During Reconstruction Petersburg's citizens struggled unsuccessfully to recover from the economic disaster the war had brought. Between 1860 and 1870 the capital value of Petersburg's businesses declined 63 percent.⁷

By the 1880s, however, Petersburg was on the road to recovery.⁸ In 1863 the streetcar came to town, and the city began to spread farther south.⁹ Men whose families had lost everything in the war found new prominence. One such man was William McKenney. McKenney worked his way through law school by teaching school. He became the leading lawyer in the city and president of the city council. He was active in Democratic politics and served on the State Executive Committee.¹⁰ When he chose an architect for his home, however, he picked Major Harrison Waite, leader of the opposing Readjuster party.¹¹ Waite had moved to Petersburg in 1876, and remained the city's leading architect until his death in 1911.¹² He designed churches, factories, and public buildings, but, as the Chamber of Commerce noted in 1894, "it is in its homes, especially those of its wealthy residents, along Sycamore and Market streets, that Petersburg exhibits its taste and pride, and luxury most."¹³ In 1890 he began the McKenney House which took two years to complete at a cost of \$19,000.¹⁴ This was at a time when a family of four could live on \$300 a year.¹⁵

McKenney built his home facing Poplar Lawn Park, some of the most historic land in Petersburg. It was used as a resort as early as 1806 Lafayette was honored there in 1824, and soldiers for both the War of 1812 and the Civil War drilled there.¹⁶ The city purchased the land in 1849, and in the 1880s it was turned into a typical Victorian park with fountains and walkways, much as it remains today.¹⁷ Unfortunately few of Major Waite's mansions are extant. In the early 1950s Petersburg General Hospital built a new facility on Sycamore Street.¹⁸

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After that, stately old homes gave way to one-story modern buildings. In 1967 the Historic Petersburg Foundation was incorporated to stop this trend.¹⁹ In the early 1970s the city created the Historic Poplar Lawn District and the Petersburg Architectural Review Board. Although it was too late for many of Waite's grand old mansions, three of them remain to guard the edges of the park. Of these three, only the McKenney House is strictly a single-family dwelling, as well as the only Queen Anne-Eastlake brick mansion left in the city. It remains a monument to the Gilded Age.

1. William D. Henderson, Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889 (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), p.4.

2. James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt IV, Petersburg's Story: A History (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1960), p. 157.

3. Ibid., p. 158.

4. Ibid., p. 159.

5. Ibid., p. 164.

6. Richard Lykes, Campaign for Petersburg (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1970), p. 9.

7. Henderson, p. 7.

8. James H. Bailey, Old Petersburg (Richmond: Hale Publishing, 1976), p. 20.

9. Henderson, p. 131.

10. The City of Petersburg, Virginia: The Book of Its Chamber of Commerce (Petersburg: George W. Englehardt, 1894), p. 104.

11. Henderson, p. 131.

12. Bailey, p. 85.

13. The City of Petersburg, p. 52.

14. Bailey, p. 85.

15. Henderson, p. 7.

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16. Edward A. Wyatt IV, Along Petersburg Streets (Richmond: The Dietz Printing Company, 1943), p. 52.

17. Bailey, p. 125.

18. Wyatt, p. 54.

19. "Historic Petersburg Foundation Annual Report 1981-82," (Petersburg: Plummer Printing, 1982), p. 2.

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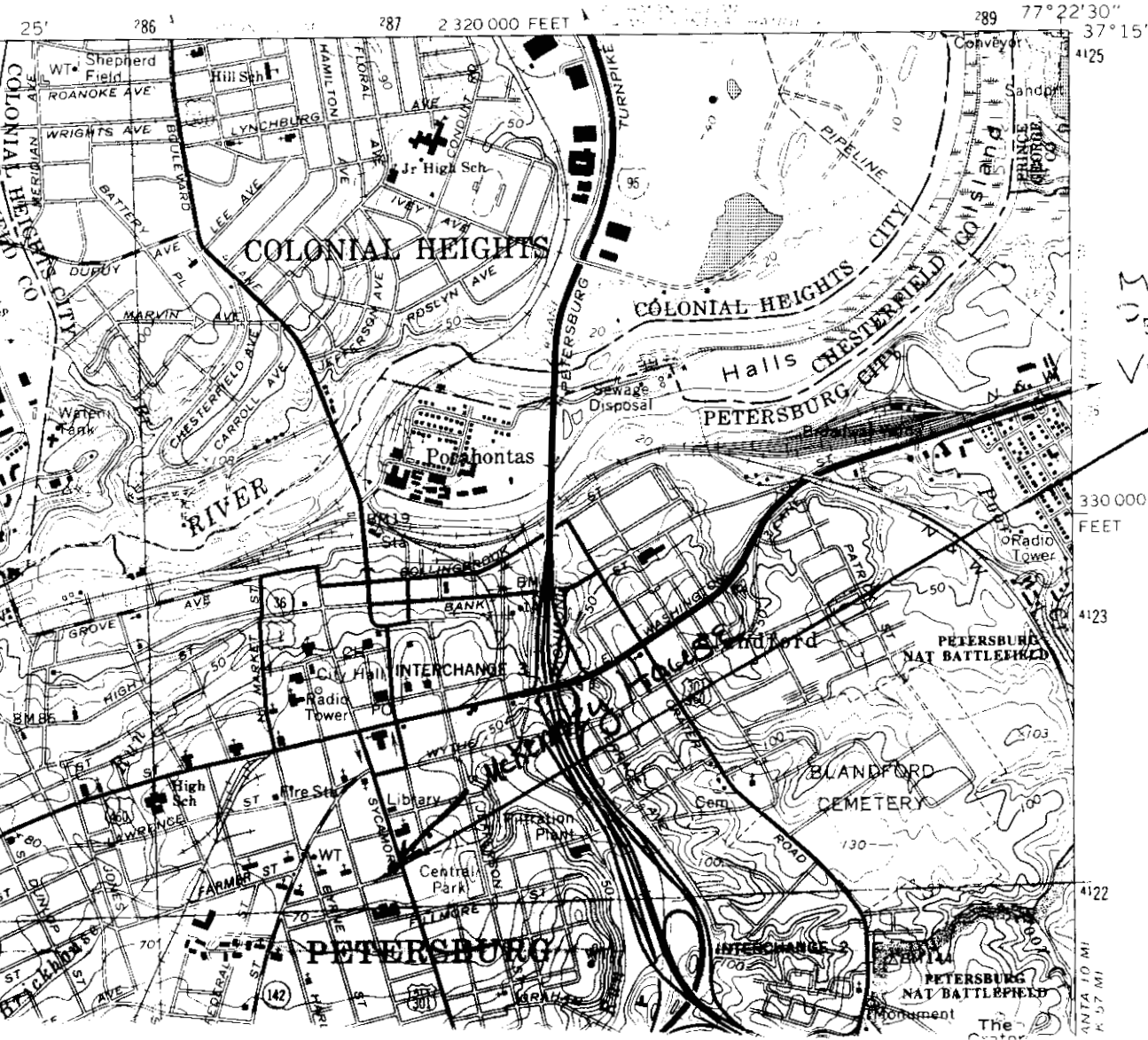
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therefrom westwardly between parallel lines parallel to the north side of Liberty Street two hundred thirty-two feet eight inches; it is the same property in all respects which was devised to T. Taylor Cralle and Joseph B. Hollaway as Executors, under the seventh paragraph of the Last Will and Testament of Laura T. Wells as set forth above; and being the same property which was conveyed to Laura T. Wells by deed dated January 31, 1944, from R.G. Spratley, J.J. Temple and William Earle White, Executors and Trustees under the last will and testament of S.D. DeShazor, deceased, and others of record in the Clerk's office of the Circuit Court of the City of Petersburg, Virginia in Deed Book 149, at page 9; the aforesaid property being designated by current City Street No. 250 South Sycamore Street, Petersburg, Virginia.

PETERSBURG QUADRANGLE
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7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

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