

VLR-5/15/84 NRHP-8/16/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Reuben Clark House (Preferred)

VHLC File #114-50

and/or common Willow Dell

2. Location

street & number 125 South Willard Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Hampton

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia

code 51

county City of Hampton

code 650

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Charles Sigler, IV

street & number 125 South Willard Avenue

city, town Hampton

N/A vicinity of

state VA 23669

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hampton Courthouse

street & number 136 Kings Way

city, town Hampton

state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Comm. File #114-50

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983

federal state county local

depository for survey records 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond

state VA 23219

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The Reuben Clark House, Willow Dell, is located at 125 South Willard Avenue on a 1.8-acre tract of land near Hampton's Mill Creek. Built in 1854 as a two-story, wood-frame dwelling, a kitchen wing was added to the main block between 1901-04, and the dining room enlarged. Further additions were made to the house in the 1920s. The additions are all of wood-frame construction, and in no way compromise the integrity of the original structure.

DETAILED ANALYSIS:

The original facade of the Reuben Clark House faced northeast. This former entrance contains a one-story wooden porch which wraps around the corner of the house and also shelters five bays of the northwest elevation. The porch is supported by lattice-work posts and has an accordion-pattern, sawn-wood balustrade. A smaller, one-bay one-story porch also with lattice posts is found on the southwest elevation. It now serves as the main entrance. The southwest entry has a narrow transomlight doorway. The original entrance on the northeast elevation has a single door with a transom and sidelight surround. A similar entrance is found on the northwest elevation. The principal fenestration on both the first and second stories consists of 6/6 hung-sash windows that are flanked by louvered shutters. Brackets run along the eaves of the roof. The house is covered by a shallow hip roof, pierced on the northwest elevation by two chimneys. The chimney caps are corbeled brick.

Originally, the Reuben Clark House had a side-hall plan; however, with the addition of 1901-04 and the 1920s, the interior arrangement was changed to a central-hall plan. The hall remains virtually unaltered. It contains the original stair that has a heavily turned newel, turned balusters and a molded handrail. A niche is found on the hall's southwest wall. The windows and doors have molded architrave trim that is duplicated on the house's principal doors and windows. The front and rear parlor were meant to be the most elaborate rooms in the house. Both rooms retain their original mantels and molded architrave trim around the doors and windows.

The dining room, expanded in 1901-04, is the largest single room in the house; its western wall terminates in a bay window. Both the downstairs and the upstairs bedrooms are plain in finish and have molded architrave trim around the doors and windows.

The grounds surrounding the Reuben Clark House retain a 19th-century ambience. One of the more significant features of the property, in addition to the architecture, is the large expanse of land on which the house sits. The size of the tract, 1.8 acres, is unusual for the city of Hampton, whose houses tend to be built on lots of less than one acre. Many of the trees were planted in the 19th century. None of the original outbuildings survive. The original wooden fence was replaced in the present century by a wire fence.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1854 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Reuben Clark House is significant not only as one of Hampton's oldest surviving residences, but also as its sole example of the Picturesque style. The house was built in 1854 by the prosperous merchant and steamboat captain, Reuben Clark, and shows particularly in its exterior detailing, the influence of architectural pattern books of the mid-19th century, most likely A.J. Downing's Cottage Residences. Clark came to Tidewater, Virginia from New York state where Downing's work was extremely popular, and Downing's book, as well as examples in the north may have influenced Clark's choice of the Picturesque for his new residence. The property achieved considerable attention during the Civil War for its large well which was used by the Union Navy to supply large quantities of water for the boilers of the steamship Minnesota. While the 19th-century outbuildings are no longer standing, the house still occupies its original tract of 1.8 acres with the now-covered well possessing considerable potential for archaeology.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Reuben Clark was born in New York state in 1805. By 1850 Clark moved to Tidewater, Virginia where he worked as a James River steamboat captain. As a direct consequence of this occupation, the name "Captain Clark" remained with him throughout his life. In 1853 Clark retired from the steamboat business and settled in what was then Mill Creek, a small village located on the body of water by the same name. He most likely lived at first in a tavern owned by Joseph and Mary E. Segar. In July 1854, Clark purchased from the Segars the tavern and adjacent property and according to the deed, Clark was permitted the use of a wharf and was allowed to add, "to said wharf, bathing houses, or other buildings and attachments, that shall not obstruct or injure the said wharf."¹ Clark also ran a store selling groceries and dry goods. The store was located on the west bank of Mill Creek on the south side of Water Street. A photograph of the Clark Store is preserved in the Larrabee Collection at the Casement Museum, Fort Monroe.

In the same year in which he purchased the Segar property, Clark erected for himself a new residence that is one of the oldest remaining in the city of Hampton. For inspiration in designing his dwelling, Clark presumably turned to architectural pattern books of the day, most likely A.J. Downing's Cottage Residences. While the book was extremely popular in the north, it was apparently not well received in Tidewater, Virginia where few examples are known to have been built. Working with an unknown builder, Clark borrowed details for his side-hall plan residence such as his lattice-post porch and ornamental roof brackets. These architectural elements served to distinguish the Clark House from other Hampton houses of the period. Although the landscape around the house has not been preserved, descriptions of the house by Hampton's older residents suggest that Clark followed Downing's advise as to landscape: the residence was surrounded

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Askew, Richard B.M. "The Reuben Clark House." Typewritten manuscript on file, VHLC, Richmond, VA.
 Elizabeth City County. Will Book, Deed Books, Tax Records.
Souvenir of Phoebus, 1900. Copy at Casemate Museum, Fort Monroe, VA.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.8 acres

Quadrangle name Hampton, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	3	8	2	5	7	0	4	0	9	7	0	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

Zone		Easting						Northing					

C

Zone		Easting						Northing					

D

Zone		Easting						Northing					

E

Zone		Easting						Northing					

F

Zone		Easting						Northing					

G

Zone		Easting						Northing					

H

Zone		Easting						Northing					

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point at NW corner of western proper line located on S side of Willard Ave at the intersection of Howard St. and said ave.; th extending approximately 340' SSE following western property line; thence approximately 240' NE following rear property line; thence approximately 280' NW following eastern property l.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (See Continuation Shee

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff and Hampton Heritage Foundation, Inc.

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date 1983

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date May 15, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

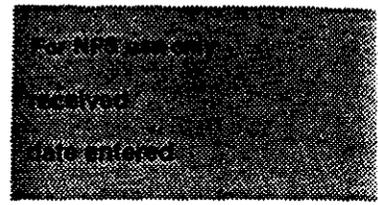
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

REUBEN CLARK HOUSE, HAMPTON, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 8

Page 1



8. SIGNIFICANCE - Historical Background

by trees, shrubs, and ornamental flower gardens.

While no outbuildings survive from the 19th century, early plans indicate that Clark erected a number of such structures. On a map of 1877 one structure is identified as a store. Clark's other store and tavern were both located a short distance from the main house, the three structures all reflecting Clark's commercial prosperity.

One of the more noteworthy items on Clark's property was a large well, about twenty-five feet southwest of the main house. Soldiers from Fortress Monroe used the well, as the water at the fort was poor for drinking. During the Civil War, U.S. troops from the fort took possession of the village and continued to make use of the well on Reuben Clark's property. The well proved to be especially valuable, as indicated in the correspondence of General Butler stationed at Fortress Monroe to General Scott in Washington, D.C. A letter of May 24, 1861, read, in part:

"I found that the Minnesota (U.S.S. Minnesota, screw steamer, frigate, wood, tonnage 3,307, 47 guns) was supplying herself from a well or spring on land of Mr. Clark near the end of Mill Creek bridge, about a mile from the fort, and that after pumping 800 gallons the well was exhausted, but refilled itself during the night, and from personal examinations of its surroundings I think it may be trusted to supply 700 to 1,000 gallons daily with a little enlargement of the reservoir. The water is of the best quality."²

The water was used to fill the ship's boilers to the displeasure of the local Confederates. According to one source, the local Confederate militia attempted to prevent the Federal troops from withdrawing the water, only to be thwarted by the Union army. It is not known if Clark remained in the house after the well was confiscated. It has been suggested that since Clark was originally a northern sympathizer, he was allowed to remain in his house during the entire war. Civil War period lithographs of Camp Hamilton, which stood on the adjacent Segar property, depict the Clark House. The house was called "Willow Dell" by 1877, appearing by that name on a map of what was then Chesapeake City, later Hampton.

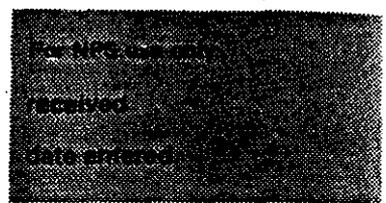
Reuben Clark died at his home on May 1st, 1895 at the age of 89. His wife, Amanda Clark, died in 1903. Both are buried in Oak Lawn Cemetery in East Hampton. Clark's adopted son, Reuben O. Clark inherited the house as well as Clark's surrounding property. The property ultimately passed out of the Clark family during the 1920s, when it was purchased by the Newcomb family. The house is presently owned by Charles Sigler, IV who purchased it in 1977.

¹Elizabeth City County, Deed Book 5, pp. 241-242.

²Richard B.M. Askew, "The Reuben Clark House." Typewritten manuscript on file, VHLC, Richmond, VA.

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REUBEN CLARK HOUSE, Hampton, VA

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 10

Page 1

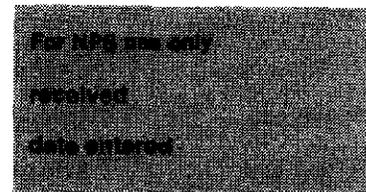
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA -- Verbal boundary description

to S side of Willard Ave.; thence approximately 220' SW along S side of Willard Ave. following northern property line to point of origin.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property of 1.8 acres is the original lot on which Reuben Clark built his house in 1854. The nominated acreage includes the main house, the sites of the original outbuildings, and trees that were part of the original landscape plan. The nominated acreage is surrounded by a fence that continues to define the original property lines.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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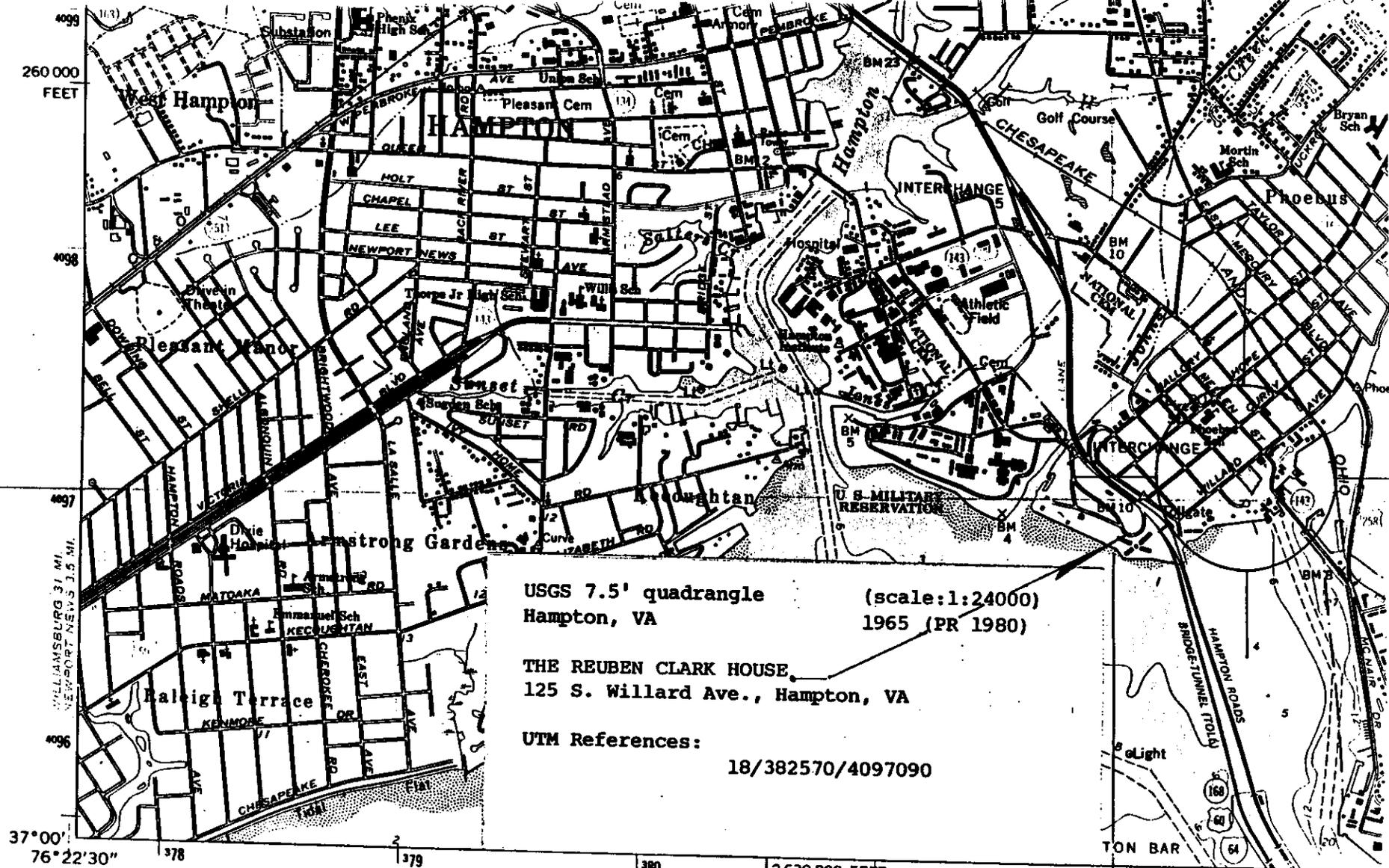
Continuation sheet #1

Item number 10

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (Cont'd)

located extending in a southerly direction 84 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe, thence in an easterly direction 43 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe; thence in a southerly direction 187.2 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe; thence in a westerly direction 78.5 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe; thence in a continuation of the westerly line 172.3 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe, thence in a northerly direction 266 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe, thence in an easterly direction 60 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe; thence in a northerly direction 85 feet to a point marked by an iron pipe on the property line of Willard Avenue, thence in an easterly direction along Willard Avenue 111.5 feet to the point or place of beginning.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
 Hampton, VA 1965 (PR 1980)

THE REUBEN CLARK HOUSE,
 125 S. Willard Ave., Hampton, VA

UTM References:
 18/382570/4097090

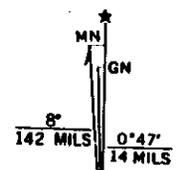
5757 IV NW
 (NEWPORT NEWS
 SOUTH)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

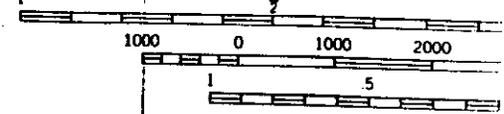
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
 photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1965
 Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 400
 (1965) and 562 (1964). This information is not
 intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid based on
 Virginia coordinate system, south zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
 zone 18, shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
 move the projection lines 11 meters south and
 30 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
 generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



UTM GRID AND 1980 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR 11
 NATIONAL GEODETIC
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
 SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH N.
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGIC
 AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL R