

The Company House
Virginia Rte. 719
Alberene
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1032

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE COMPANY HOUSE

HABS No. VA-1032

Location: Virginia Route 719, Alberene, Albemarle County, Virginia.

Present Owner: James Cox Joyner.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Significance: This house, which once was the dominant structure of the small company town of Alberene, is a good example of the American Queen Anne style. It is a somewhat uncommonly styled building for the area of Virginia in which it is located.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the house is located. All deeds and legal documents are from the records of the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Albemarle County.

1863 Deed dated May 29, 1863: Helen Coles, as excutorix for her deceased husband, Tucker Coles, sells to Henry F. Bocock and William Parrish 1955 acres of land "lying on Beaver Dam Creek", for the sum of \$50,000.

Deed Book 60, p. 253.

1871 By decree of the Circuit Court of Lynchburg, Virginia, in chancery cause, said 1955 acres of land are sold to Archibald Harris and W. D. Schurtz.

Deed Book 81, p. 482.

1883 Deed dated January 31, 1883: Archibald Harris and W. D. Schurtz sell to John G. Porter, James H. Serene and Mrs. Selina A. Carroll, the same 1955 acres for the sum of \$30,000.

Deed Book 81, p. 482.

1883: Deed dated March 19, 1883: Selina A. Carroll and Daniel L. Carroll (her husband), John G. Porter and Sarah Porter (his wife), and James H. Serene and Clara A. Serene (his wife) sell to the Albemarle Soapstone Company the same 1955 acres for the consideration of 2400 shares of the capital stock of the company.

Deed Book 83, p. 192.

1916 Deed dated March 10, 1916: The Virginia Soapstone Company (believed to have formerly been the Albemarle Soapstone Company) sells to the Virginia Alberene Corporation, the land for the consideration of 9,997 shares of the capital stock of the Virginia Alberene Corporation and the sum of \$900,000.

Deed Book 162, p. 95.

1935 Deed dated April 30, 1935: John S. Graves, trustee of the Virginia Alberene Corporation, sells to the Alberene Stone Corporation of Virginia, the land, to secure the debt of the Virginia Alberene Corporation.

Deed Book 222, p. 313.

1962 Deed dated February 1, 1962: Alberene Stone, a division of Georgia Marble Company, (formerly the Alberene Stone Corporation of Virginia) gives to the trustees of the Alberene Cemetary Association a parcel of the land "with improvements thereon...containing 1.38 acres, more or less, fronting 175.05 feet on the south side of Virginia State Highway No. 719" as a gift.

Deed Book 376, p. 560.

1965 Deed dated February 1, 1965: The trustees of the Alberene Cemetary Association sell to Fulton F. Mullins and Edith C. Mullins the same 1.38 acres for the sum of \$3,000.

Deed Book 406, p. 97.

1972 Deed dated October 13, 1972: Fulton F. Mullins and Edith C. Mullins sell to James Cox Joyner the same 1.38 acre parcel for the sum of \$9,000.

Deed Book 516, p. 393.

2. Date of erection: 1899.
 3. Architect: Drawings done by C. Wellesley Smith, Architect, 32 Park Place, New York City, August, 1899.
 4. Builders: Walters and Vandergrift, Contractors and Builders, Charlottesville, Virginia.
 5. Accepted bid for general contract: \$5250.
 6. Alterations and additions: The building is presently undergoing renovation by the owner with only minor alterations to the original construction.
- B. Historical Events and Person Connected with the Building:
1. The building was originally designed to be intermittantly occupied by the president of the Albemarle Soapstone Company and guests of the company on visits to Alberene.
- C. Sources of Information:
1. Bibliography:
 - a. Albemarle Soapstone Company correspondence, in the possession of James Cox Joyner, Alberene, Virginia.
 - b. The Avery Obituary Index of Architects and Artists, G. K. Hall and Co., Boston, Mass. 1963.
 - c. Sanborn Insurance Company Maps of Alberene, in the rare books room of the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1920.
 2. Interviews:
 - a. James Cox Joyner, Alberene, Virginia.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Company House is a three story Victorian residence clad with soapstone on the first floor and staggered wooden shakes on the upper floors. It has a steep, multiply-pitched slate roof and a prominent eight sided turret. Columned porches with low pitched standing seam metal roofs stretch the length of the northwest and northeast facades.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: With the two major porches, the house measures fifty-two feet, nine inches on the sides by thirty-eight feet, eight inches on the front and rear.
2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The first floor walls are constructed of brick with rusticated soapstone facing on the exterior. The second and third floor and turret walls are wood frame constructed with staggered natural finish wooden shakes on the exterior.
4. Structural system and framing: The floors are constructed of wood joists spaced approximately sixteen inches on center. The first and second floors rest on twelve inch brick walls on the exterior and wood frame walls on the interior. The third floor and roof structure rest on wood stud walls only. Structural loads are carried through bearing walls to the foundations.
5. Porches: An L-shaped porch stretches the lengths of the northwest and northeast sides of the residence. The decks and ceilings are made of wood and the steps are constructed of soapstone. The porch roof is supported by a series of white painted, wooden doric columns.

In addition, there is a minor porch built off of the southeast side of the same construction as the main porches.

6. Chimneys: There are two brick chimneys at the top of opposing roof pitches, on either side of the "widow's walk". The facing and wind caps of both chimneys are of soapstone. Both chimneys are in use.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways: There are two major entrances on the first floor: the main entrance opening on to the main vestibule on the northwest side and a secondary entrance opens on to a hallway on the northeast side. Both doors are composed of a large, upper panel of molded glass and a lower wooden panel. The doors are set in wooden frames between two tall thin stained glass windows. The door hardware appears to be of brass.

In addition to the major entrances, there are two minor entrances on the southeast facade. Both of these have solid wood panel doors set in simple wood frames. One opens on to a pantry built off the southeast face of the building and the other opens on to the kitchen.

b. Windows and blinds: The windows are predominantly double hung, sliding sashes, with one pane of glass per sash set in wooden frames. The third floor windows, with the exception of the two dormer windows (one on the southeast side and one on the southwest side), and the turret windows, are composed of two sashes. The top sash is semicircular and the bottom sash is rectangular. Each of the sashes contains a single pane of glass. In addition, the arch window on the northwest facade is adjoined by shorter fixed-sash windows. On the second floor, northeast hallway, there are a series of three wide, short windows, one on top of the other, and each containing a single pane of glass.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main roof consists of a hip roof surmounted by a "widow's walk" with gable roofs built off of the hips at the east, south and west corners and an eight sided turret built at the north corner. In addition there are two simple gabled dormers, one on the southeast side and one on the southwest side. The "widow's walk" is decked with flat metal and was originally

surrounded by a slatted wooden handrail. All other parts of the main roof are steeply pitched and covered with slate with metal valley flashing. A hidden metal gutte is used around the main roof and minor southeast porch roof.

The porch roofs are low pitched and covered with standing seam metal roofing.

- b. Turret: There is a prominent eight sided turret protruding from the north corner of the building. The turret roof is steeply pitched and covered with slate. At the peak is an ornamental metal pinnacle.
 - c. Cornices: The cornices are of boxed wood construction with a molded face board. There is also a molded wooden frieze around the top of the house.
9. Decorative trim: Soapstone lintels and bands are used around the first floor as well as on the chimneys. Milled wooden trim is used on the upper floors. Wooden doric pilasters are used on either side of the third floor arch windows and stone fluted ionic pilasters are used on either side of the main entrance door.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The cellar extends to the full dimensios of the house and is divided into three rooms. Basically, it is divided in half by a wall connecting the two chimneys. The southeastern half is then divided approximately in half again by a flight of stairs oriented perpendicularly to the chimney wall. The cellar is presently unused and appears to have once been used for a furnace and storage.
- b. First floor: Entry to the first floor is gained through a long vestibule dividing the northwest half of the house into two roughly equal parts. Two pairs of sliding doors on either side of the vestibule connect the entranceway with a large rectangular room on the southwest side of an approximately square, smaller room on the northeast side.

These two rooms were probably used as living rooms or studies. In the north corner of the smaller room is a five sided bay forming the base of the turret.

A stairway-hall with a secondary entrance divides the northeast half of the house into two sections. On the southeast side is a wall connecting the two chimneys. This wall is broken by three doorways, two of which provide access to a rectangular dining room. The third doorway provides entry from the vestibule to either a stairway on axis with the main entry or the rectangular kitchen to the southeast perpendicular to the entrance axis. A doorway along the northeast side of the hallway provides access to the north room on the first floor.

The dining room, located at the east corner of the first floor, has a three sided bay stretching the width of the room and facing northeast.

Along the southeast wall of the kitchen, there are two doorways. One, at the eastern corner of the kitchen, opens on to the long side of a long, narrow pantry. The other doorway, located somewhat centrally on the wall opens on to the small rear porch. In addition there are two doorways along the northeast wall of the kitchen, one opening on to a stairway and the other opening on to a small closet.

The pantry opens on its long side to the kitchen and dining room and on its short side to the rear porch.

- c. Second floor: The second floor is divided into four different major bedrooms by a northeast-south-west axis formed by a central hallway adjoined by a double back stairway on the northeast side and a bathroom on the southwest side, and by a northwest-southeast axis formed by a row of three closets joined end to end at the northwest end and a straight flight of stairs at the southeast end. The north room on the second floor is of the same configurations as the north room on the first floor and the east and south rooms are of the same configurations as the dining room. The west room on the second floor is rectangular with a three sided bay stretching along the long side and facing northwest. All second floor rooms open at a corner on to the central hallway.

- d. Third floor: The third floor is divided in the same manner as the second floor except that there is no bathroom. At the end of the hall adjoining the main stairway is an enclosed flight of stairs leading to the attic. The north room has the same configuration as the north rooms on the first and second floors and the east, south and west rooms are rectangular. All rooms open near a corner on to the central hall.
 - e. Attic: The attic is unfinished and is accessed through an enclosed stairway from the third floor hallway. The "widow's walk" is reached through the attic by means of a steep flight of wooden stairs.
2. Stairways: There is a doubled back main stairway joining the entrance hall on the first floor to the central hallways on the second floor and third floors. In addition to the main stairway, there is a straight single flight stairway joining the third floor hallway to the attic.
 3. Flooring: The cellar floor is of poured concrete. All other floors are hardwood.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The cellar walls are of brick and the cellar ceiling is unfinished. The kitchen walls have a slated wood wainscot and the other first floor rooms have wood panelling beneath the windows. The other walls and ceilings of the house are finished with plaster.
 5. Doorways and doors: On the first floor, door openings are trimmed in ornate, stained woodwork and the door hardware is of brass. On the upper floors, door openings are framed in simpler wooden trim and are fitted with wooden doorknobs.
 6. Windows: On the first floor the wide window stools rest over stained wood panelling. On the upper floors, windows are framed with simple wood trim and narrow sills.
 7. Trim and details: The first floor rooms are trimmed with an ornate plaster crown molding and a wood chair rail molding. In

the kitchen soapstone is used for sinks and a stove base. Throughout the house there are a number of ornate carved wood and carved soapstone fireplace mantels.

8. Lighting and heat: The Company House was one of the first in the area to be constructed with both electrical service and a steam heating system.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of a project undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Associate Professor of Architecture. This project was researched and drawn in the Spring semester, 1976, by Tom Dubuisson, Richard Hekimian, and Kenneth C. Magalis, architectural students. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.