



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY NOTIFICATION

National Register of Historic Places National Park Service

Project Name: Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery

Location: 1975 Lambs Road, Charlottesville, Albemarle County **State:** Virginia

Request submitted by: Irene Rico, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Virginia Division.

Date received: 06/14/2013

Additional information received: 6/14-17/2013

Eligibility

SHPO Opinion

**Secretary of the
Interior's opinion**

Criteria

Deferred

Eligible

B, D, and Criteria
Consideration D

Comment:

See Attached Comments

Carol D. Shull

Keeper of the National Register

Date: *August 27, 2013*

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY NOTIFICATION

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In her letter of June 12, 2013, requesting the determination of eligibility, the Virginia Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requested that the National Register of Historic Places provide a detailed explanation describing the basis for the eligibility determination on the Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery. During the consideration of the determination of eligibility request, the National Register received additional documentation from FHWA, VDOT, consulting parties, and interested individuals and organizations, and participated in an onsite visit to the property on 8/15/2013, all of which contributed to the evaluation of the property.

Determination of Eligibility Summary

The Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, as a single property, for historic significance under National Register Criterion B for its association with the lives of persons significant in our past (Jesse Scott Sammons and Dr. George Rutherford Ferguson), and under Criterion D for its potential to yield important information related to the physical extent of the cemetery and the identity of the people buried in unmarked graves there, and for its ability to add to our understanding of African American burial customs in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. The property also meets the National Register Criteria Consideration for Cemeteries (Criteria Consideration D) for its inclusion of the graves of persons of local transcendent importance (Jesse Scott Sammons and Dr. George Rutherford Ferguson).

One Property or Two?

The FHWA has requested that the Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery be evaluated as separate properties based on the following: the location of the house close to the road and its orientation away from the cemetery, the location of the cemetery approximately 600 feet from the house on a parcel subdivided from the house in 1958, the placement of the cemetery on a landform separated from the house by a ravine, and the growth of trees between the house and cemetery. None of these reasons justify treating the house and cemetery as separate properties for purposes of evaluating their eligibility. The house and cemetery were constructed on a ca. 27.8 acre parcel of land purchased by Jesse Sammons in 1881. (The exact date of construction of the house has not been determined and there is evidence that it might contain components of an earlier building). Historically these were one property. The placement of the cemetery to the rear of the property was a conscious and deliberate decision made by the Sammons family, and the cemetery was clearly part of the property during the Sammons family ownership. The lack of a visual connection between the house and cemetery because of the growth of trees has not destroyed the historic relationship between the house and cemetery. A comparison of a 1937 aerial photograph with current photographs indicates that there was considerable tree coverage on the land during the Sammons family ownership of the property. A path appears to have connected the house and cemetery. For these reasons, the Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson cemetery are evaluated and determined eligible for the National Register as a single property.

Boundary of the Eligible Property

The National Register has determined that the boundary of the eligible property is the extent of the ca. 27.8-acre parcel of land owned by the Sammons family that retains historic integrity. Within this boundary are the Sammons house, the cemetery and the land that has remained mostly undeveloped since the Sammons family sold the property. Within the boundary are one noncontributing building constructed in 1994, and two small outbuildings postdating the Sammons ownership of the property. We have defined the boundary of the determined eligible property with a solid green line superimposed on the enclosed map provided by VDOT entitled "Sammons Parcel and Surroundings – 2012." That map depicts the full extent of the historic Sammons property as a solid red line.

Historic Context within Which the Property is Evaluated

The State's initial evaluation of the property only considered the potential architectural significance of the residence under National Register Criterion C. This evaluation concluded that the house was not architecturally significant. The National Register concurs that the house does not meet Criterion C. Since that time, significant information has become available about the lives of the individuals associated with the property. This information is relevant to whether the property is significant under National Register Criteria B and D and Criteria Consideration D.

The importance of Jesse Scott Sammons (1853-1901), a prosperous landowner, prominent educator, active politician, leading congregant of his church and a descendant of the Hemings family of Monticello, and his son-in-law Doctor George Rutherford Ferguson (1878-1932), a graduate of Fisk University and Howard University Medical School, and the property with which they are associated, can only be understood within the context of the history of post-Civil War Virginia. With the Union victory this country moved to extend equality to African Americans with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1865) which abolished slavery, the 14th Amendment (1868) which made citizens of all persons born in this country and afforded equal protection of the laws to all citizens, and the 15th Amendment (1870) which provided the right to vote to all citizens regardless of race (in 1920, the 19th Amendment extended the right to vote to women). The promise of Reconstruction (1865-1877), as the victorious North sought to fashion society so that African Americans could fully participate in this country as equal citizens, soon faltered. This reform impulse was abandoned by the Federal government, and the fate of African Americans was turned over to the individual states and the forces of reaction. Through discriminatory laws enforced by the courts, the police, mob violence and intimidation, African Americans in Virginia (and throughout the South) were relegated to second-class status.

The racially segregated society that developed in Virginia after Reconstruction was designed to deny political, economic, educational, and social equality to African Americans and to minimize and thwart the opportunities of men such as Mr. Sammons and Dr. Ferguson. Rigid racial separation was mandated by Jim Crow laws which led to the segregation of public schools, public places (restaurants, theaters, libraries, parks, etc), and public transportation. Chronic underfunding of the African American schools led to them being unequal in every measure to the schools provided for white students. Housing was segregated, and this separation of the races was enforced by restrictive covenants and bank lending practices.

A determined and effective effort was made to drive African Americans out of the political process by denying them the right to vote, to sit on juries, or to run for political

office. In 1867, 105,832 African Americans were registered to vote in Virginia, and 93,145 participated in state elections in that year. To disenfranchise African Americans, the State imposed poll taxes (1876) and literacy tests as a requirement to vote. Enforcing these requirements were the all-white electoral officials. In 1901-02, these onerous requirements were enshrined in the Virginia State Constitution and 125,000 African Americans in the State lost their right to vote. The Virginia poll tax remained in force until 1966, when the United States Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional (*Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections*). From 1890 to 1968, no African American sat in the Virginia General Assembly, the oldest continuous legislative body in the Western Hemisphere.

Despite the second-class status imposed on African Americans, Jesse Scott Sammons and Doctor George Rutherford Ferguson achieved professional careers and provided distinguished leadership and service to their communities.

Local Geographic Context

The Sammons property was part of a once thriving African American rural community of farmers, tradesmen, and professionals in the Hydraulic Mills-Union Ridge area. Here, both free African Americans before the Civil War and formerly enslaved African Americans after the war made their home, bought land, established farms, ran businesses, and built schools and churches. As described and depicted on a map submitted by the Central Virginia History Researchers to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (February 19, 2013), the community stretched for two miles from present day US Route 29 (Georgetown neighborhood) to the Hydraulic Mills (Hydraulic, Union Ridge, Webbland, and Allentown neighborhoods), and to Woodburn Road (Cartersburg neighborhood).

Much of the economic activity of the area centered around the 19th century Hydraulic Mills, a property partially owned and operated by Jesse Scott Sammons' father, Rollins Sammons. Jesse Scott Sammons taught as the first teacher at the nearby Ivy Creek School and then as the first principal of the Union Ridge Graded School. Between 1881 and 1885, Jesse Scott Sammons purchased two tracts of land totaling 73 acres about a mile southwest of the Hydraulic Mills; he built his family residence and cemetery on the 27.8 acre parcel of land. Jesse Sammons, and later his widow and sons, farmed the land into the 1930s. (This biographical information and that which follows below were provided by Lucia Stanton, Shannon Senior Historian Emerita, Monticello, in a communication to Carol Shull, 7/3/2013, and Erica Caple James, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, MIT, and a Sammons family descendant, in a communication to Carol Shull, June 17, 2013.)

This community thrived until the 1930s when African American families began to leave the area. The mill and surrounding area were submerged by a reservoir project in the 1960s. Today little remains to recall this historic community.

National Register Criterion B

The Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery is important under National Register Criterion B for its association with the lives of persons significant in our past. Jesse Scott Sammons was a leading figure in the educational, religious, and political life of Albemarle County in the last two decades of the 19th century. Dr. George Rutherford Ferguson was the first African American physician with a sustained practice in Albemarle County, and for much of the time he practiced as the only African American doctor in Charlottesville.

Jesse Scott Sammons (1853-1901) was the son of freeborn mulatto Rollins Walter Sammons and Sarah Bell Sammons (freed in 1838 and a descendant of the Hemings family of Monticello). Jesse Sammons grew up in the bustling local commercial and social center of the village of Hydraulic Mills, where his father was an owner and operator of the grain mill and managed the mill town (which reportedly included a wharf, dwellings, blacksmith and cooper shops, a country store and a post office). Rollins Walter Sammons died in 1893 and Sara Bell Sammons died in 1902. Their descendants believe that both Rollins and Sara Sammons are buried in unmarked graves in the Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery.

In the early 1870s, Jesse Sammons attended the Jefferson School (a Freedman's School) in Charlottesville. In the 1880 census he is recorded as a teacher, and he became the first instructor at the Ivy Creek School for African American children. In 1885, when this school merged with the Salem School, Jesse Sammons became the first principal of the new Union Ridge Graded School. (The Union Ridge Graded School later evolved into the Albemarle Training School). A number of students Jesse Sammons taught went on to careers in the field of education.

During this period Jesse Sammons was very active in local politics as a participant in the short-lived, biracial Readjuster Party. In 1880, he was nominated for a seat in the Virginia General Assembly, but his election reportedly was sabotaged by white members of his own party. In the 1883 U.S. Congressional hearings on a contested Virginia election case, Jesse Sammons is recorded as the Secretary of the Republican Coalition Club of the Earlysville Precinct, a political party of African American voters. In 1896, Sammons was selected as an Alternate-at-Large from Virginia for the Republican

National Convention held at St. Louis. In 1900, he was recommended as a candidate for senator.

Sammons was also active in his church and benevolent social institutions. He participated in the Order of True Reformers, a mutual aid and moral uplift society that developed banking and insurance programs for African Americans and provided death benefits for members. In 1890, he participated as a delegate from Albemarle County to the inaugural meeting of the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union, a national organization with political and economic goals for assisting the African American community. At this meeting, Sammons was chosen as the group's spokesperson. Jesse Sammons was also a member and served as Secretary of the Union Ridge Baptist Church. On August 21, 1890, he presided as vice president of the Virginia Baptist Convention held in Richmond. Jesse Sammons died in 1901 at age 48 and is buried in the Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery.

While less is known about the life of George Rutherford Ferguson (1877-1932), he was clearly an accomplished man. Dr. Ferguson was the first African American physician with a sustained practice in Albemarle County. He was a graduate of Fisk University and Howard University Medical School. In 1903, he passed the Virginia state medical examining board (described by the *Colored American* newspaper as "said to be the most rigid in the country"), and then opened an office in Charlottesville where he practiced medicine for nearly twenty years. For much of this time he was the only African American doctor practicing in Charlottesville. In 1929, Dr. Ferguson married Eva Sammons, daughter of Jesse and Lula Sammons. He held the position of Assistant Secretary of the Medical Section of the National Medical Association, the largest and oldest national organization in the United States representing African American physicians and their patients. Dr. Ferguson died in 1932 at age 55 and is buried in the Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery. An obituary in the *Journal of the National Medical Association* noted the high esteem in which Dr. Ferguson was held.

National Register Criterion D

The Sammons House and the Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery is eligible for the National Register under Criterion D for the property's potential to yield important information related to the physical extent of the cemetery and the identity of the people buried in unmarked graves, and to add to our understanding of African American burial customs in the late 19th/early 20th centuries.

The cemetery is described in a report prepared for the Virginia Department of Transportation (Cultural Resources, Inc., *Documentary Research for the Sammons*

Cemetery, Albemarle County, Virginia, Revised Draft, March 25, 2013), as measuring approximately 30-x-50-feet and includes four dressed stone monuments, three of which have associated footstones, at least four field stone monuments, as well as several depressions indicating additional burials. The cemetery area is partially outlined by stones. The four dressed stone monuments mark the graves of Jesse Scott Sammons (1853-1901); Lula Minor Sammons (1863-1928), his wife; Robert J. Sammons (1891-1924), son of Jesse Scott Sammons and Lula Minor Sammons; and the grave of George Rutherford Ferguson (1877-1932), husband of Eva Sammons Ferguson, daughter of Jesse Scott and Lula Sammons. In addition, graves labeled as #s 5, 6, 7, and 8 are unmarked; it is not known who is buried there. There also are indications of an additional nine graves (Cultural Resources, Inc. report, page 4, figures 2: Cemetery Sketch Map Provided by VDOT).

Historic records and an onsite visual inspection indicate that the cemetery may be larger than the 30-x-50-feet area defined by the stones. A 1940 deed describes the cemetery as "a family burial ground ... estimated to contain from one-quarter to one-half of an acre," which is larger than the area defined by the stones. In addition, reports indicate there may be burial sites found outside of the area partially outlined by the stones (FHWA submission, Attachment 9: Charlottesville/Albemarle Transportation Coalition, Inc. to Virginia Department of Historic Resources, April 2, 2013; Piedmont Environmental Council to FHWA, April 5, 2013).

Study of the cemetery may also reveal the identity of the unknown burials. Of particular interest would be determining if the cemetery contains the graves of the parents of Jesse Scott Sammons, Rollins Sammons (approximately 1815-1893) and Sarah Bell Scott Sammons (1827-1909), prominent members of the Hydraulic Mills community. While their deaths were reported in local newspapers, details of their burials have not been discovered. There is no evidence of any other property as the site of Sammons family burials.

Other significant questions can be asked of the cemetery by using non-intrusive methods. Burials are a hallmark of human culture. The visible data sets at the cemetery appear to retain a high degree of integrity. For instance, headstone and footstone placement, the location of and types of plantings, and/or the grave goods and offerings that may be found there could all be studied. The cemetery has the potential to yield significant information about this family and their burial practices, and to compare the family and their burial practices to the larger community. This could be a significant addition to the growing archeological and historical literature on African American cemeteries in Virginia and the South. See for instance, the work being done by Dr. Lynn Rainville (http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/cem/About_Rainville.shtml), and

the Chicora Foundation Inc. (<http://www.chicora.org/projects.html>). We note that these projects include both family and community cemeteries.

It appears from the reports that only the cemetery was evaluated for archeological significance under National Register Criterion D. The onsite visit identified a number of visible features and artifacts that indicated the archeological presence of outbuildings and artifact dumps or scatters that may be worthy of study. Archeology of the late 19th and early 20th centuries can be significant. Compelling studies regarding prominent African Americans and those investigations that examine class consciousness and racial uplift during this era are a growing and important part of the subdiscipline of African American historical archeology (see, for instance, *Race and Affluence, An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture*, by Paul Mullins 1999; or *The Materiality of Freedom: Archaeologies of Postemancipation*, edited by Jodi Barnes, 2011; or the archeology done by the University of Massachusetts at the W.E.B. DuBois Homestead (http://scholarworks.umass.edu/du_bois_boyhood_survey/)). Examining this family through the archeological resources at the property in light of these themes could be important.

National Register Criteria Consideration D

A cemetery can qualify for the National Register of Historic Places if it derives its primary significance from the graves of persons of transcendent importance or those whose activities were especially important in reflecting significant cultural currents of the time (see National Register Bulletin, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, pp. 16-17). The Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery meets the requirements established for Criteria Consideration D.

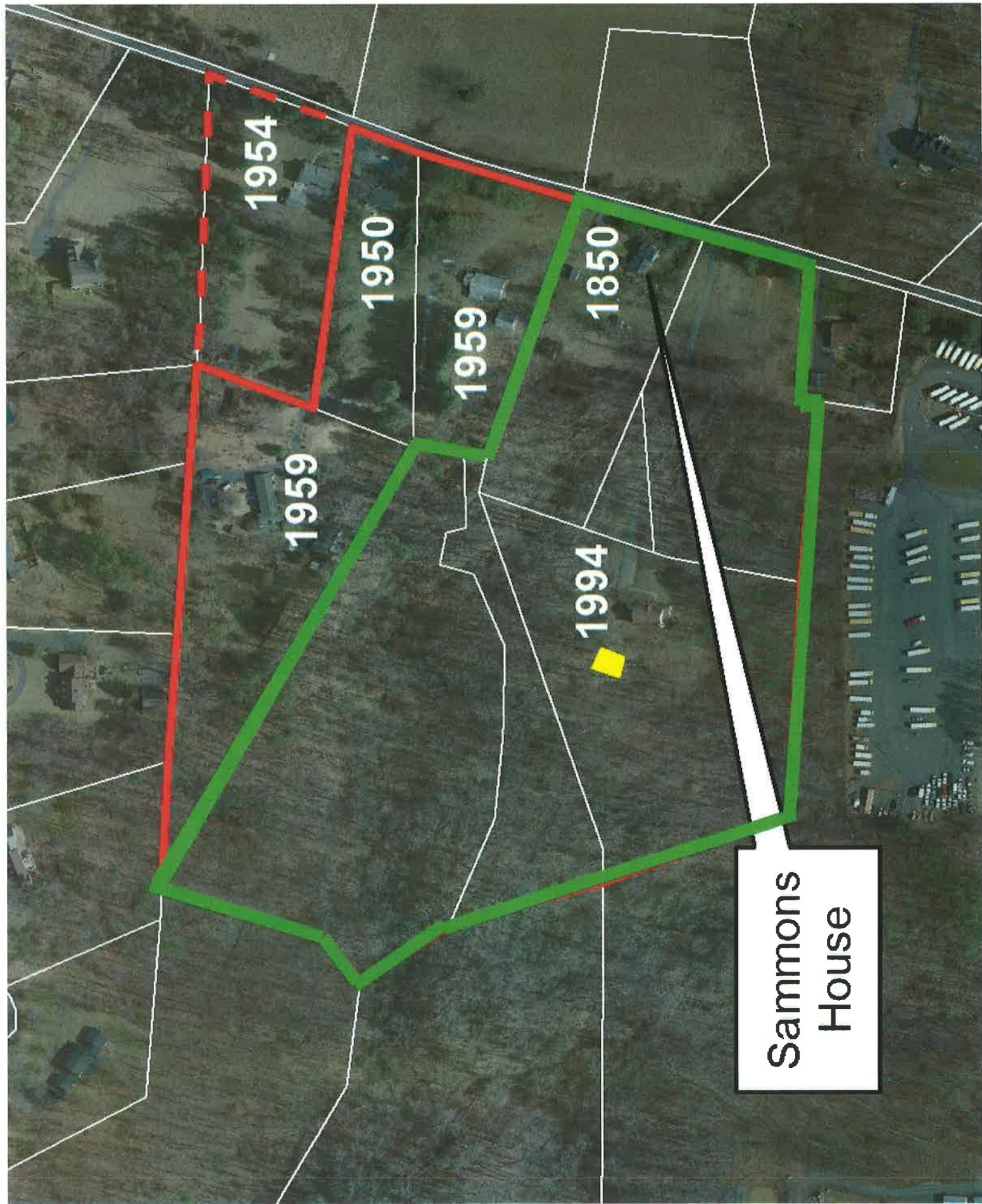
The lives and accomplishments of Jesse Scott Sammons and Dr. George Rutherford Ferguson were of local transcendent importance and reflect significant cultural trends of the era. Page 11 of the National Register Bulletin cited above defines transcendent as requiring the person to be of outstanding importance to the community. By any measure, the accomplishments of Jesse Scott Sammons and Dr. George Rutherford Ferguson, when considered in the light of the institutional, social, legal, and economic barriers placed in their way, were extraordinary. For African Americans in that time in the Jim Crow South to acquire land, to engage in the political process, to run for office, to acquire professional degrees, to teach, and to maintain a medical practice, were exceptional and inspirational achievements that were acknowledged as such by their contemporaries as they are by scholars today.

Evaluation of Integrity

While the 19th century Sammons House has been altered, and the property contains some noncontributing buildings (two small outbuildings located near the Sammons House and a modern residence constructed near the cemetery), overall the Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery retains historic integrity and its ability to recall the time during which the Sammons family resided there.

The alterations to the Sammons House (replacement of some windows and doors, the covering of the original siding with stucco, and the construction or possible enlargement of the rear addition), and the secondary growth of trees on the land have not destroyed the ability of the property to convey its late 19th /early 20th century appearance. The information and photographs of the property provided by FHWA have been supplemented by additional photographs submitted by interested parties, and by an onsite visit to the property by National Register staff. The form of the main block of the house, its fenestration pattern, the room configuration, and interior features such as doors, fireplaces and the staircase are substantially intact from the time when the Sammons owned the property. Moreover, preliminary investigation has revealed historic fabric that has survived under the c. 1940 alterations. Even with the application of stucco and a rear addition to the house, the Sammons family would still recognize their home. They would also recognize the larger acreage, including the family cemetery. While there is still more to be learned about the property, the Sammons House and Sammons/Ferguson Cemetery retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to qualify for National Register listing under Criteria B and D, and Criteria Consideration D.

See enclosed map for the boundary of the determined eligible property.



1954

1950

1959

1850

1959

1994

Sammons House

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY
DISTRIBUTION LIST

Property Name: Route 29 Bypass

County/State: Albemarle/Virginia

A copy of the EO11593 Notification Sheet was sent to each of the following on _____

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