

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION OF VIRGINIA  
HISTORICAL INVENTORY

224

COUNTY: Page

CLASS: Home

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C H A R L E S   K E Y S E R   H O M E

This write-up is a part of the Virginia W. P. A. Historical Inventory Project sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Commission under the direction of its Division of History. Credit to both the Commission and W. P. A. is requested for publication, in whole or in part. Unless otherwise stated, this information has not been checked for accuracy by the sponsor.

Research made by  
Vivian Black,  
Luray, Va.

August 21, 1936.

1. SUBJECT:

Charles Keyser Home.

2. LOCATION:

On state road #615, eight miles northwest of Luray, and just below a long bend in the river known as Long's Bend.

3. DATE:

1765.

4. OWNERS:

Frederick County, by deed of April 6, 1765, recorded in D. B. 10, page 248, Lewis Rinehart and Mathias Rinehart, of Frederick County, convey unto Charles Keyser of the same place, a parcel of land on the south bank of the Shenandoah River, being the lower end of two tracts of land granted to Mathias Rinehart by deed of February 8, 1764, from the Proprietor's Office of the Northern Neck of Virginia.

Shenandoah County, May 28, 1778, W. B. A, page 179, appraisement of Charles Keyser's estate, Charles Keyser, Sr. was appointed administrator and gave bond in the sum of \$1,000.

D. B. P., page 47, September 23, 1805, David Keyser conveyed unto Joseph Keyser all his interest in the lands of which their father, Charles Keyser, Jr., died seized.

W. B. E, page 160, September 12, 1796, appraisement of Charles Keyser, Junior's estate.

W. B. F, page 366, a partial settlement of Charles Keyser estate. Elizabeth Keyser, widow and relict of Charles Keyser, deceased, Joseph Keyser, one of the sons and heirs of the said Charles Keyser, deceased, and Katy, his wife, Peggy Keyser and Mary Keyser, daughters and heirs of Charles Keyser, deceased, deeded to Andrew Keyser, two tracts (50 acres and 25 acres) on the south fork of the Shenandoah River, formerly patented to Joseph Keyser and David Keyser.

Page County, W. B. A., page 99, March 18, 1826, Andrew Keyser, Sr. (Major) willed to Andrew Keyser, Jr. (Col.). Will probated November 26, 1833.

D. B. F, page 174, December 3, 1877, Peter B. Keyser to Peter Long.

D. B. 2, page 67, August 11, 1882, Andrew Keyser to Peter Keyser, it being the same tract of land sold by John Ashby and J. Y. Menfee (Special Commissioners of the Circuit Court of Page County, in a chancery suit of Peter B. Keyser and Andrew Keyser, Jr., to the said Peter B. Keyser).

D. B. 59, page 290, April 13, 1908, Peter Long to D. C. Spitler and C. M. Spitler.

D. B. 67, page 119, February 4, 1913, D. C. Spitler and Maude, his wife, and C. M. Spitler, to McKendria Strickler.

W. B. 13, page 93, McKendria Strickler to Raymond Strickler.

5. DESCRIPTION:

This home was built in 1765 by Charles Keyser and is in a fair state of preservation and could, with little cost, be restored to what it once was.

It is an oblong house built of walnut logs cut from the banks of the river. The logs are large, varying from ten to twenty two inches thick. These are fastened together in dovetail fashion and sealed with red clay and cut straw. It would be most interesting to analyze this mortar and find what makes it hold together so many years. On the front is a low porch. At one time it extended the full length of the house. Some years later the house was weatherboarded.

The house consists of three rooms on the first floor and two on the second. As one enters he sees one long narrow room, with an immense chimney in the center and a stairway on the north wall. The fireplace opening is four and one-half feet deep, seven and one half feet wide and five and one quarter feet high. The log beam over the fireplace is fifteen inches thick, eighteen inches wide and twelve feet long. In the fireplace are two iron cranes, one on either side. These swing back and forth. On these, large iron pots were hung and most delicious food cooked in them. From this room one enters another room fourteen by sixteen feet. This has a small fireplace. In the walls about two feet from the ceiling is a row of hand wrought hooks. These are slightly curved and look as though used for coat hooks. From this one enters another room, probably used as a bed room. The front door is divided. It hangs on long narrow hinges and fastens with iron latches.

To go upstairs one climbs a very steep stairway. The first thing that impresses one is the large chimney almost in the center of the first room. The chimney at this

point measures three and one half feet square. The next thing one notices is the high ceiling. In the center it is fifteen feet high. The roof is "Y" shaped and tapers to the log walls which extend three and one half feet above the floor. Until recent years, this was sealed with boards cut with a broad axe, hand finished and hand tongued and grooved. Part of the partition, finished in like manner, is still standing and in a good state of preservation. The rafters are very interesting. All these are numbered in Roman numerals. The rafters were made one at a time and numbered, then put in place.

Just at the head of the stairs is a crude drying rack. This suspends from the ceiling on four poles.

The shingles were hand split and put on with homemade nails.

#### FORT OR VAULTED CELLAR,

In the west end of the main room and about six feet from the front door is a trap door opening to a stairway that leads to the vaulted cellar below. This cellar, like all through that section is built of blue limestone, laid in keystone style. The spaces between the stones are filled with mortar, so as to present a smooth surface. The mortar is in excellent condition and as smooth as if it had been put on by an expert present day plasterer. The ceiling is arched and measures eight and one half feet high in the center. The vault is twelve feet wide by eighteen feet long. In the south and east walls are openings called port holes. These are narrow at the outside and widen inwardly, allowing the pioneer in the vault ample room for shooting. At one time there was a door at the foot of the stairs to make it more secure from attacking enemies. Just outside this door in the west wall is a niche, used for a pine torch. Also inside the cellar on the south wall is another niche, larger than the outside one. In the southwest corner is a clear spring.

See form 3686 attached.

#### 6. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Charles Keyser, Sr. came to this country from Germany and fought in the French and Indian War under Braddock. I copied the following from "Fore Runners", written by Harry M. Strickler, on page 120:

"Charles came to America from Germany as a hired soldier in the services of Great Britain to fight against the French and Indians".

Charles Keyser was born in Germany in 1702, and came to

America under the British Government in 1751 or 1752. He was a butcher by trade. He was a soldier in Braddock's unfortunate campaign in 1735, but returned unharmed. He married a Miss Shelly in Philadelphia, and came to this valley and lived on Mill Creek. He bought land from Lewis and Mathias Pinehart and built the house described above. He was the father of ten children. He died in 1774 at the age of 72, and is buried in the family graveyard just south of the house. On October 9, 1876, the grave was opened by Peter and Harry Keyser, one of the grandsons, and I. C. Dovel, Captain Joseph Keyser, son of Noah Keyser, Joseph W. Keyser, son of Peter Keyser, and Uphemia Richardson, daughter of Andrew Keyser, Jr. The skull, teeth and hair were found to be in wonderful state of preservation after having been buried 102 years. Peter J. Keyser, who is now (1936) 89 years old, recollects when the grave was opened.

Charles Keyser, Sr., dying intestate, the land descended to his oldest son, Charles, Jr., who had two sons, David and Joseph. These sold out to Andrew Keyser, Sr., and went west.

Andrew Keyser who at that time owned the home place, was born December 16, 1758, and died November 25, 1833. He married Sarah Pinehart, daughter of Mathias Pinehart, the original owner of the land. He was the father of seven boys and six girls and step-father of Adam Strickler. He enlisted in the Continental Army in 1780, served under Captain Conway Oldham in Lieutenant Robert Jouett's Company, Colonel Richard Campbell's Virginia Regiment, in the battles of Guilford Court House, Camden, Ninety Six, and Eutaw Springs. He was raised to the rank of a Major. He was a member of the Big Spring Old School Baptist Church. Major Andrew Keyser also informed (Kercheval) the author that an Indian once called at his father's in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, appeared to be much agitated, and asked for something to eat. After he had been refreshed, he was asked what disturbed him. He replied, "The Southern Indians have killed my whole nation." This clearly indicates that Charles Keyser, Sr. lived in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, before he settled in what is now Page County, Virginia."

Major Keyser also served under General Green. He was not a wealthy man, but a good liver and a good provider for his family. He owned quite a few slaves. Besides farming, he ran a distillery.

Tradition says that prisoners when being taken to Woodstock County jail were kept overnight at the old Keyser home. In the wall of one of the upstairs rooms can be seen places where iron hooks were fastened in the walls.

7. ART:

8. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Informants: Peter Keyser, Rileysville, Virginia.

Court Records of Frederick, Shenandoah and Page Counties.

"The Keyser Family", by A. M. Prichard.

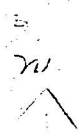


# VIRGINIA EMERGENCY RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

District: PA-224 - P. 50

DISTRICT:

AREA:



3686

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING CALLED FOR IN  
5-A. of BULLETIN 3400

Name of Building CHARLES KEYSER HOME.

EXTERIOR

- 1. Building Plan Oblong Cellar ( )
- 2. No. of stories: ( 2 ) Attic classed as 1/2 story.
- 3. Material: Brick ( ) Frame ( ) Stone ( ) Log (X)  
None.
- 4. If brick, state what bond: Flemish ( ) English ( ) Common ( ) Other ( )
- 5. Kind of roof: Hip ( ) Gabled (X) Gambrel ( ) Lean-to ( ) Deck ( )
- 6. If church, describe or draw sketch of roof on reverse side.
- 7. Roof Material: Slate ( ) Shingle (X) Metal ( ) Tile ( )
- 8. Chimneys: Number (1) Brick (X) Stone (X) Location Omitted.
- 9. Weatherboarding: Pine, very wide. Beaded (X) Plain ( )
- 10. Cornices: Plain or Elaborate Plain Material Pine
- 11. Windows: Number (10) Size and number of panes 8 X 12 panes.
- 12. Shutters: Describe: None.
- 13. Dormers: Number, and Shape of roof \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. Porch: 1 single porch.
- 15. Type of Entrance: Plain
- 16. Columns: Doric ( ) Ionic ( ) Corinthian ( ) Square (X)

INTERIOR

- 17. No. of Rooms: ( 5 ) Large (X) Small ( ) Approximate ceiling height 8 ft.
- 18. Stairway: Open String (X) Closed String ( ) Describe: One flight
- 19. Cellars: Describe None.
- 20. Doors: Style and type of wood Omitted.
- 21. Walls: Panelled, papered or painted Painted.
- 22. Interior Cornices None.
- 23. Hardware: Locks and hinges Old iron locks, common hinges.
- 24. Floors: Pine, very wide.
- 25. Mantels: Handmade pine.
- 26. Misc: None.
- 27. Present condition, and state if spoiled architecturally by remodelling: No.
- 28. Does occupant seem to appreciate old architectural features? Yes.

Your Name G. C. Morris.