

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

"The Beeches"

AND/OR COMMON

Huntington - Skinner House (Woman's Club of St. Albans)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

805 Kanawha Terrace

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

St. Albans

VICINITY OF

Third

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Kanawha

CODE

039

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Woman's Club House

NAME

St. Alban's Woman's Club

STREET & NUMBER

805 Kanawha Terrace

CITY, TOWN

St. Albans

VICINITY OF

West Virginia

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kanawha County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Virginia and Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

West Virginia

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The "Beeches" is a formally sited and carefully designed residence that retains basic elements of its 1874 Italianate style beneath a turn-of-the-century neo-classical mask. Mr. Huntington's builder erected a simple but stately two-story, shallow hipped roof house, tall in proportion, with deep eaves that were probably bracketed. The double front door with its arched panels of glass and the parlor's mid-nineteenth century fireplace with arched opening are surviving features of the original fabric. The finely hewn sandstone ashlar block foundation defines for the most part the generally rectangular plan of the building.

Soon after the purchase of the property in 1903 by local magnate, J.V.R. Skinner, an architect of unknown identity transformed the house with formal interior and exterior details and additions.\* Principal among the changes was the construction at the northeast corner of a classical style porte cochere with a triangular pediment (a festoon applique has disappeared from its tympanum). The fluted metal Ionic columns are painted white, are paired, and match the paired columns of the front porch that encircles the corner of the building and continues across the front.

Attendant with this change is the small room above the porte cochere with its ornate arched vestibule that provides pleasing visual continuity with the upper corner of the house, and with the porte cochere and veranda at ground level.

The original narrow wooden siding was neatly covered with 10 inch wide flush-siding on all surfaces of the house with the exception of the frieze where plain surfaces were embellished with panel outlines formed with wooden moldings. Paired brackets in the eaves are carryover Victorian elements of the house.

Two five-sided, one-story bays may have been built at the time of Mr. Skinner's remodelings. Both bays are notable for their fine interior finish, including window seats. The smaller eastern bay is especially interesting with its opening framed with fluted Ionic columns and a plain entablature. The bays form a delightful visual east-west axis between the dining room and sitting room.

The parlor and sitting rooms adaptively used now for meetings, retain their formal appearance with period furnishings, the original Skinner chandelier, and decorative moldings. The sitting room features a shoulder-high vertical panel wainscot. Off the parlor

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is the openwell stairhall with its single-flight stair that curves at the top to meet the second floor hallway. The ornate open string stair is decorated with brackets on the exposed outer string and under the return nosing of the treads.

The Beeches commands an excellent view of Kanawha Terrace, a principal street of St. Albans, atop a hill that descends in a gentle slope shaded with trees and shrubbery.

\*A list of commissions (on file in the Historic Preservation Unit, W.V. Department of Culture and History) of the architectural firm of the noted West Virginia architect Walter F. Martens, F.A.I.A., includes entries for unspecified alterations on the home of J.V.R. Skinner for 1923 and 1927. It seems reasonable to assume that the changes evident in the house during the Skinner residency after 1903 were from the plans of Mr. Martens.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
14-499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1874, c.1903

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"The Beeches", or Henry Edwards Huntington-J.V.R. Skinner House, located along picturesque Kanawha Terrace in St. Albans, Kanawha County, West Virginia, stands as an excellent representative of an elegant home constructed for a prominent businessman of the so-called "Gilded Age." Huntington's nephew, for whom the house was constructed, later became nationally renowned as a financier.

"The Beeches", (so named for the many beech trees on the estate) was constructed in 1873-74 on the instructions of Collis P. Huntington, the well-known financier and railroad tycoon. Huntington came to the Cabell County, West Virginia area in the 1860's. His railroad company, the Central Pacific, had just completed, with the Union Pacific, the first trans-continental railroad, and he was now concentrating his energies on his C & O line, which was pushing west through West Virginia. The line had reached the point where the Guyandotte and Big Sandy Rivers flow into the Ohio. Here, in 1871, he decided to build a city to house his workers and company. Huntington provided the architect's plans, money, and materials to develop what was incorporated that same year as the City of Huntington, now West Virginia's largest city. In order to supply railroad ties for his line at a cheaper rate than local mills had agreed to, Huntington acquired a sawmill in St. Albans (then known as Kanawha City) approximately 50 miles away. It was to manage this sawmill that C. P. Huntington brought his nephew, Henry Edwards Huntington, from New York, where he had been working as an obscure clerk in a hardware firm. "The Beeches" was constructed at the order of C. P. Huntington to serve as a home for his nephew.

Henry Edwards Huntington was born in Oneida, New York in 1850. As already stated, he worked as a clerk for a New York City hardware firm, until 1874, when he was brought to St. Albans, (Kanawha County), West Virginia, to manage his uncle's sawmill. One consideration the elder Huntington probably had in building such a fine home as "The Beeches" for his young nephew was the fact that Henry Edwards had just married Mary Alice Prentiss, sister to the adopted daughter of Collis P. Huntington. The newlywed couple married into "The Beeches" early in 1874 as its first occupants.

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Within two years time Henry Edwards Huntington had proved his financial abilities. He acquired title to the lucrative sawmill as well as to the house, and here moved along the financial path that was eventually to lead to his status as one of America's select few billionaires.

By 1876, having proved his ability, Henry Edwards Huntington was called upon by C. P. Huntington to go to New York and play a larger role in the Huntington financial empire. Henry Edwards Huntington sold "The Beeches" to the C & O Railroad and left for New York, to return to West Virginia only infrequently.

The C & O Railroad sold "The Beeches" to the Montague Manufacturing Company soon after Huntington's departure. The Montague Manufacturing Company, which also owned the sawmill, owned the house for over a quarter-century, during which time it was used as the place of residence of the sawmill's superintendent. When Montague got into financial trouble and had to file bankruptcy in 1903, both the house and the sawmill were put up for auction. "The Beeches" was purchased for the sum of \$3,750.00 by John V. R. Skinner.

John Van Rensselaer Skinner (1863-1949) was a native of Clarion County, Pennsylvania and, on his mother's side, a member of a prominent New York family. Skinner's brother Robert served as U. S. Consul-General to Hamburg, Germany, Special Commissioner to the Emperor of Ethiopia, and was a personal friend of President William McKinley. J.V.R. Skinner came to Kanawha County in 1901 in connection with the Coal River and Western Railroad, and on December 1, 1903 bought the "The Beeches" as his home, making a number of improvements upon the house during the time he and his wife lived there. Skinner supervised and later was an owner of, the Coal River Railroad, which opened up an important coal mining and timbering region of Southern West Virginia. Skinner also invested heavily in coal, timber and real estate interests and became one of Kanawha County's wealthiest citizens. A prominent civic leader, J.V.R. Skinner was involved in many noted civic projects, among them being chairman of the Commission that built the Nitro-St. Albans Bridge in 1934 which still serves as the main link between those two thriving cities.

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Upon his death in 1949, his wife having predeceased him, John Van Rensalear Skinner left "The Beeches" to the Woman's Club of St. Albans for their use as a "cultural and educational center" for the community. "The Beeches" has and does serve the community of St. Albans, West Virginia in this capacity, up to the present time.

### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Laidley, W. S., History of Charleston and Kanawha County, West Virginia, 1911.

Lavender, David, The Great Persuader, 1970.

Wallace, George Seldon, Huntington Through Seventy-Five Years, 1947.

### 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3

QUADRANGLE NAME St. Albans

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 42,748,0 1,218,30,0

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The "Beeches" stands on lot No. 94, Kanawha Terrace, St. Albans, WV, at the top of a hill, the front of which descends flanking Skinner Drive to meet Kanawha Terrace. A parking space belonging to the Woman's Club, city lot No. 101, is at the rear of the house. The

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

### 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael Pauley, Rodney Collins

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Preservation Unit, West Virginia Department of Culture and History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex

304 348-0244

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Charleston

West Virginia

### 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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

*Carroll Moran*

1-16-79

TITLE

DATE

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

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Ellis, Dart, "A Glimpse of the Past," St. Albans, West Virginia,  
Advertiser, June 1, 1972.

Ibid., February 8, 1973.

Index of Commissions, the firm of Walter F. Martens (Martens Associated-  
Architects and Engineers, 1533 Virginia Street, East, Charleston,  
West Virginia) on file in Historic Preservation Unit, W.V. Department  
of Culture and History, n.d.



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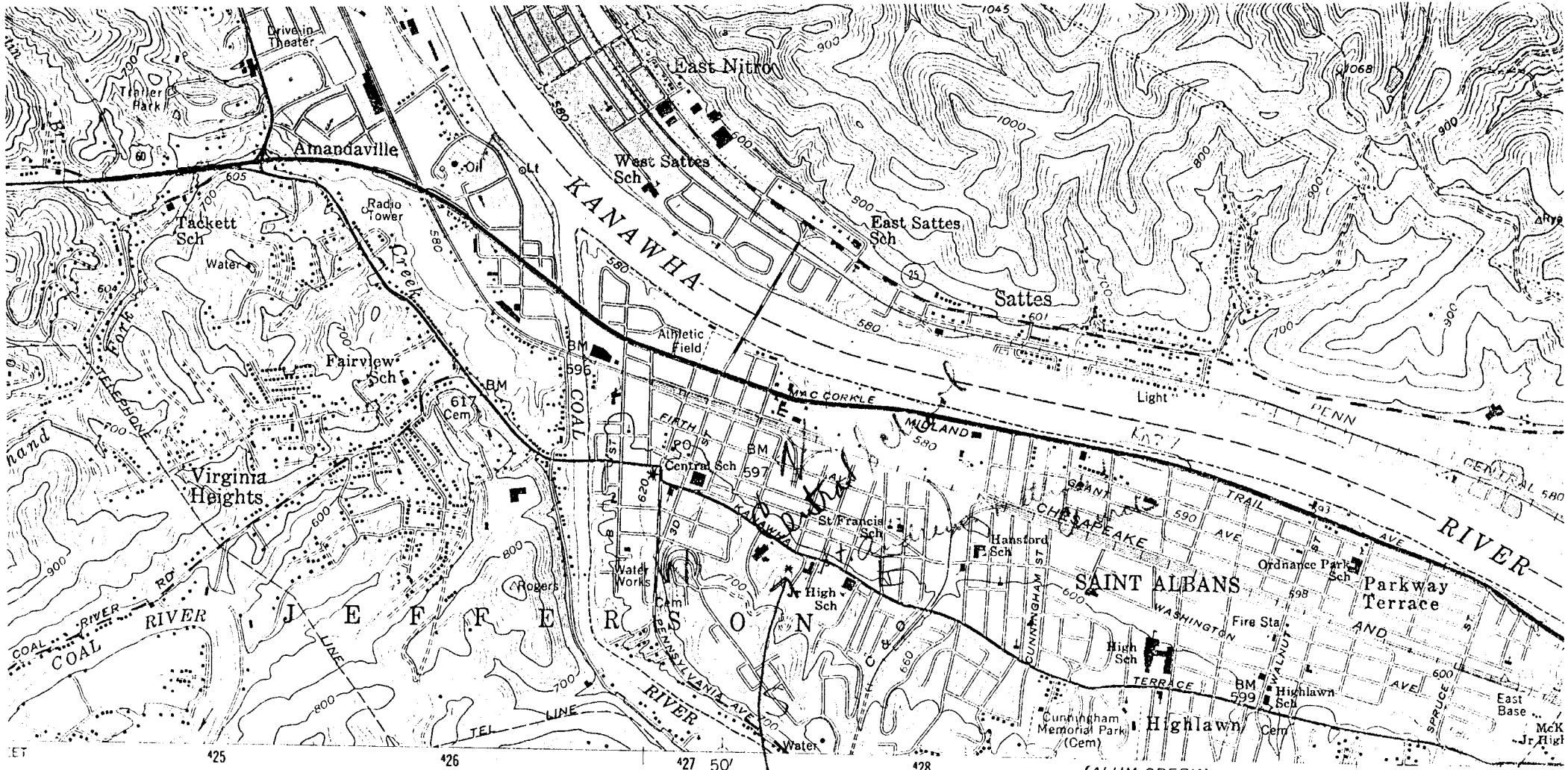
"The Beeches", Huntington, West Virginia, Cabell County

CONTINUATION SHEET

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"Beeches" stands approximately 50' west of Skinner Drive, and approximately 450' south of Kanawha Terrace. Lot No. 94, is bound by city lot No. 93 on the west, Kanawha Terrace on the north, and Skinner Drive on the east. Lot No. 101 is bound by lot No. 102 on the west, lot No. 100 on the south, and Skinner Drive on the east. The nominated area thus includes the "Beeches" and its three acre site inclusive of lots No. 94 and 101.



and published by the Geological Survey  
US&GS

erial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
aken 1956 and 1957. Field check 1958

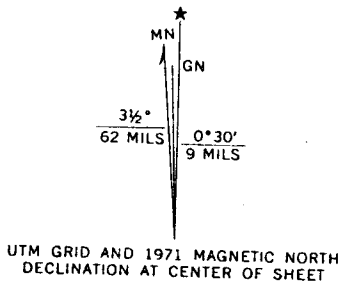
1927 North American datum  
ed on West Virginia coordinate system,

Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
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indicate selected fence and field lines  
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as in which only landmark buildings are shown  
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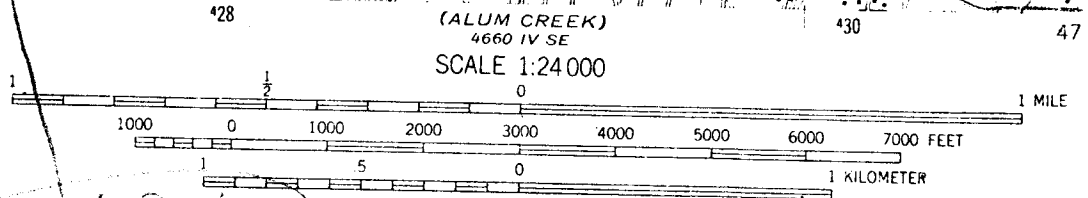
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ation not field checked

ension of urban areas.



UTM GRID AND 1971 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

*W. M. ...*



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

*St. Albans*

*100 ft. W. of R.R.  
500 ft. R.R.*

