

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For HCERS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic General John McCausland House

and/or common "Grape Hill"

2. Location

street & number Route 35

not for publication

city, town Pliny ☒ vicinity of congressional district Third

state West Virginia code 054 county Mason code 053

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

name Mr. Smith McCausland

street & number Box 20

city, town Pliny vicinity of state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mason County Courthouse

street & number 6th Street

city, town Point Pleasant state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☒ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☒ fair	☐ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The General John McCausland House stands on a slight rise overlooking State Route 35 and the Kanawha River near Pliny, in Mason County, West Virginia.

The house was built between April and October of 1885 by former Confederate General John McCausland, himself a qualified engineer and builder, and reflects the vernacular tastes of the general - builder.

This two-story residence (with a basement and an attic) is constructed of undressed sandstone quarried nearby. The sandstone walls vary in thickness from 15" to 18" and the house has the overall appearance of massiveness, even to being referred to as "fortress-like."

A full length, one story five bay porch runs the length of the front of the house and gives it a late-Victorian flavor. The gracefulness of this porch, with its attenuated columns offsets, to some degree, the massiveness of the structure itself.

The house has a metal covered hip roof, containing two interior chimneys on each side. The roof is surmounted by an octagonal closed belvedere at the ridge which serves to provide light and ventilation for the second floor.

There are several outbuildings, including an ice house at the rear, all in dilapidated condition.

There is a small, two story stone and frame ell located at the rear of the main structure.

The McCausland House contains 19 rooms. Inside partitions are of stone construction running (and including) from the basement through to the second story. There is a fireplace in every room, and each has a black marble mantle of inlaid design.

An unusual feature of the house is that all of the fireplaces mentioned above are connected by a system whereby the ashes all run to a common collection point, or ash pit, in the basement. This feature, like the entirety of the house, was designed by McCausland, an experienced and competent engineer.

Another feature of the house is the elevator which McCausland caused to be installed in the house at the time of its construction. The elevator, which runs from the basement to the second floor, is operated by weights. There is also a dumbwaiter.

The paneling on the interior is generally of oil-finished black walnut. The lumber used in the floors and paneling was brought from Greenbrier County, West Virginia.

All ceilings in the house are twelve feet high. Metal hooks protrude from the ceilings of most rooms from which originally hung gas lights.

The wiring in the McCausland House is all open, or exposed. This is due to the fact that drilling through the 18" stone walls was considered by the electricians to be both impractical and cost prohibitive.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

General John McCausland House
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

There were once extensive flower gardens adjacent to the house, but these have been overgrown for some time.

In summation, the General John McCausland House, though somewhat run down due to neglect, is an extremely solid and well built residence that is reflective of the engineering talents of its builder.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1885 Builder/Architect John McCausland

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The General John McCausland House, located near Pliny in Mason County, West Virginia, is significant as the home of one of the more well known Confederate generals of the American Civil War ¹ and, somewhat less significantly, as an unusual example of vernacular architecture of the late 19th century.²

Explanatory Notes

1. John McCausland (1836-1927) was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1836 and, after the premature deaths of both his parents, came to live with his uncle at Henderson, Mason County, Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1849, age 13. He attended the famous Buffalo Academy in Putnam County and then the Virginia Military Institute, where he graduated in engineering at the head of his Class of 1857. In 1859 McCausland became an assistant professor of mathematics and assistant instructor in artillery tactics at VMI. McCausland, along with Col. Francis H. Smith and Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson, was one of three officers commanding the VMI cadets present at the execution of John Brown in 1859.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, John McCausland offered his services to Virginia and was assigned to the organization of a battery of artillery, with the initial rank of captain. Later in 1861 he was promoted to Colonel.

John McCausland served the Confederacy throughout the Civil War, earning the nickname "Tiger John" by his troops. His career in the Civil War is well documented elsewhere, but this statement will touch upon highlights of McCausland's career during that conflict.

As a brigade commander, Colonel McCausland served with distinction in the campaigns of West Virginia in 1861, then was at Fort Donelson in 1862, escaping just before its surrender by swimming the Cumberland River, was again in West Virginia in late 1862 and 1863, serving under Generals Loring, Echols, and Sam Jones. McCausland was second-in-command of the Confederate forces at the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain on May 9, 1864 and, after the mortal wounding of General Albert G. Jenkins, took command. He retreated on May 10 only after his ammunition had run out, after having inflicted losses on the Federal forces at a ratio of 3 to 1 for his own forces. On May 24, 1864 John McCausland was commissioned a Brigadier General by President Jefferson Davis.

General McCausland took part in the early stages of the Shenandoah campaign of 1864 and was conspicuous in the successful relief of Lynchburg, Virginia in June of 1864. For his part in this action McCausland was given a golden sword by the city of Lynchburg, upon which was inscribed "The City of Lynchburg to General John McCausland, July 18, 1864." This sword remains in the possession of the McCausland family.

General McCausland then took part in the "demonstrations" of General Jubal A. Early's army around Washington, D.C. in July, 1864, commanding the vanguard and came within sight

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

General John McCausland House
CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

of the capitol dome on July 12 before being forced to withdraw.

On July 28, 1864 General Early instructed General McCausland, along with General Bradley Johnson, to carry out what can best be described as a "punitive expedition" against Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Upon arriving at that city, McCausland was instructed to demand \$500,000 in greenbacks or \$100,000 in gold, in retaliation for Federal General David Hunter's damages done in the Valley of the Virginias, particularly the burning of the Virginia Military Institute and its valuable library. If the city refused, McCausland was instructed to burn it to the ground. McCausland reached Chambersburg on July 30, took the town, and presented his demands. The leading citizens of the city, some of whom refused payment while others either professed inability to pay or disbelief that McCausland would carry out his threat, were not forthcoming with the demanded sum. Accordingly, General McCausland ordered the burning of the city and his orders were carried out. By the evening of July 30, 1864, most of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania lay in ashes. According to Brown (see section 9) "For the burning of Chambersburg, McCausland's name was anathema above the Mason-Dixon Line for more than a generation." McCausland fought his way back to Virginia, during the progress of which he fought the Battle of Moorefield, where his force was defeated, and retreated.

During the remainder of the war General McCausland was in the thick of fighting, first with Early's command in opposing General Sheridan's Shenandoah campaign (where he was slightly wounded at Front Royal), then in Greenbrier and Monroe counties (West Virginia), and finally with Lee at Petersburg. McCausland fought gallantly at Five Forks and was at Appomattox on April 9, 1865 when he learned of General R. E. Lee's surrender from Lee's nephew General Fitzhugh Lee. General McCausland withdrew with what remained of his command to Lynchburg where he disbanded his men. McCausland then, by way of Wytheville, Virginia and McDowell County, West Virginia, returned to Henderson.

Due to the high degree of ill feeling felt toward him for the burning of Chambersburg, John McCausland found it impossible to remain at his Henderson home. Newspapers and individuals throughout the Northern states were demanding his trial and execution. McCausland then set out on his "wanderings." He went first to Charleston, W.Va. where he borrowed money from his brother, then made his way, via Cincinnati, Ohio and Canada, to England. Late in 1865 McCausland went to France where, like many former Confederates, he joined the French Foreign Legion and volunteered for service in Mexico to support the imperial regime there. McCausland saw much fighting in Mexico and was several times received at the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. When the French withdrew their forces late in 1866, McCausland remained, both to support the imperial cause and as a participant in the ill-fated Confederate Colony of Carlota. After the final collapse of the imperial cause and the execution of the emperor in June, 1867, McCausland returned to the United States, where General Ulysses S. Grant, an old family friend of the McCauslands, had been greatly influential in the quashing of several indictments for arson against

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

him. McCausland went to St. Louis, where he had inherited property, and then returned to Henderson, West Virginia where he purchased and developed large tracts of land and, in 1885, built his stone home down river near Pliny.

McCausland was as energetic a farmer as he had been a general. He converted hundreds of acres of march and swamp lands into productive farmland, primarily by the use of a drainage system that he devised himself. He also installed the first telephone system in the Lower Kanawha Valley in order to link various parts of his farms.

McCausland was married in 1878 and fathered four children. His wife, Charlotte, died in 1891. John McCausland lived on to become the "Patriarch of Pliny", a respected figure throughout the community and state, despite the fact that he never took the oath of allegiance to the United States and considered himself an "unreconstructed rebel", until his death on January 23, 1927, age nearly 91. At the time of his death he was one of only two surviving Confederate generals. General McCausland is buried at Henderson. His daughter Charlotte lived in the house until her death in 1971 and the property is still in the family.

² The McCausland House, sometimes referred to as "Grape Hill", was built in 1885 by John McCausland. The two story sandstone structure resembles a fortress in appearance, the stone blocks being generally 18" thick. The metal covered hip roof is surmounted by an octagonal closed belvedere at the ridge. Rumor had it that this belvedere, referred to locally as a "turret," was placed at the ridge of the roof so the general could watch for enemies and be able to defend the property. In truth, the belvedere serves a dual purpose in both providing light and ventilation for the second floor.

The massive appearance of the house led many to believe that it was built at great expense to McCausland, leading others to rumor that the general's wealth derived from "stolen Chambersburg gold", which was false. In fact, the sandstone was quarried from McCausland's own property and hauled by Jesse Lewis, a local Black teamster, and his oxen team for 50¢ a day. The construction of the house was done primarily by local Black labor, at the same rate of payment and thus the construction of the house was relatively inexpensive. The design of the house is vernacular in the extreme, many of its unusual features (see Section 7) representing the eccentricities of the builder.

Within a decade of the general's death an historic highway marker was erected in front of the house, and still stands to alert passersby that they are in the presence of an historic site.

In summary, the General John McCausland House stands as a monument to one

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

of West Virginia's most interesting and unique individuals, a man who played a highly significant role in America's greatest and most tragic conflict.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, James Earl, Life of Brigadier General John McCausland, a Thesis, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va., 1941.

Correspondence with Dr. William J. Artrip, President, Mason County Historical Society, December 8, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2 Acres

Quadrangle name Robertsburg

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7
---	---

4	1	5	5	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	2	7	8	9	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone

Easting

Northing

B

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone

Easting

Northing

C

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point on W.Va. Route 35 100 feet due south of the southern edge of the main structure, proceeding in a line north along W.Va. Route 35 200 feet, proceeding west in a line 400 feet, thence in a line 200 feet south, thence in a line 400 to the point of origin, encompassing a 2 acre rectangle.

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 J. Pauley, Historian

organization Historic Preservation Unit
W.Va. Dept. of Culture & History date May 1, 1980

street & number Science & Cultural Center
Capitol Complex telephone 304 / 348-0244

city or town Charleston state West Virginia

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Charles L. Moore

title Director, Historic Preservation Unit date May 7, 1980

For HCPRS 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
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE

2

"Man Ahead of His Time," The Huntington Herald-Advertiser, April 14, 1968.
Donnelly, Shirley, "General "Tiger John" McCausland," West Virginia History, XXIII,
January, 1962.
"Burning of Chambersburg is Live in General's Memory," interview with John McCausland
by Garnet L. Eskew, Huntington Advertiser, June 1, 1925.
"Civil War General Passes" Huntington Advertiser, January 24, 1927.
"Confederate General Who Has Not Joined Jackson and Lee," Charleston Gazette, July 16, 1922.
Siler, Pat, "The House the General Built", Huntington Herald-Advertiser, August 2, 1970.

GENERAL JOHN
MILCAI AND HOUSE
Pliny vicinity
Mason County
West Virginia

17/415 540/4278 990

Ruhentehung
Land.

38° 37' 30" 82° 00'

(MOUNT OLIVE)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods

Aerial photographs taken 1956-1957. Field check 1958

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

10,000-foot grid based on West Virginia coordinate system,

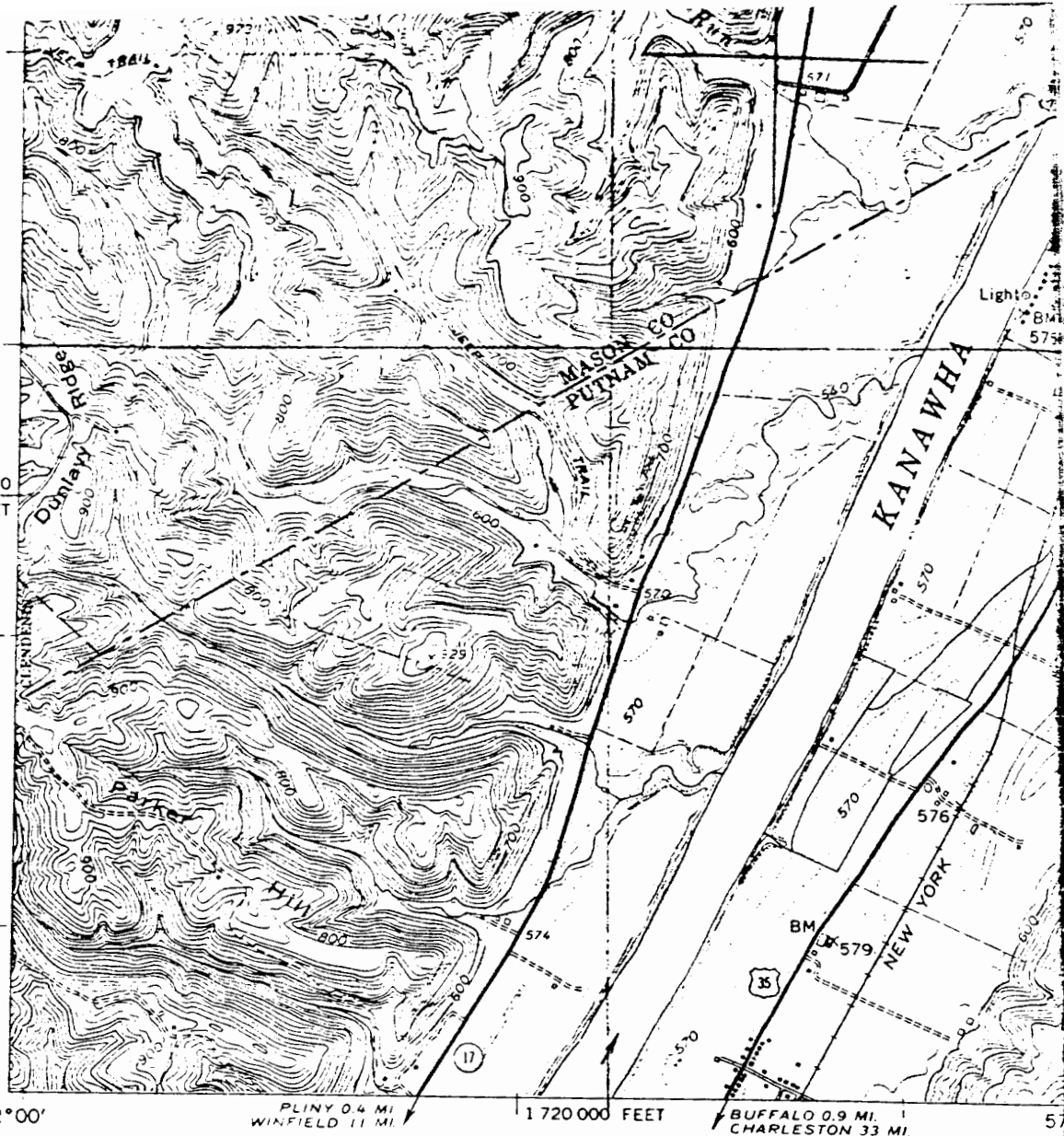
south zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,

zone 17, shown in blue

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

Unchecked elevations are shown in brown



24°
TRUE NORTH
MAGNETIC NORTH

APPROXIMATE MEAN
DECLINATION, 1958

