

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Virginia	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Education subtheme, Theme XX, The Arts and Sciences
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Virginia Military Institute	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 420 acres
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) U. S. Highway 11, on north edge of Lexington	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Commonwealth of Virginia	

7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)
Formally organized in 1839, the "West Point of the South" was the earliest and has become the best-known of the State-supported military institutions. Its resemblance to the United States Military Academy at West Point is not fortuitous.

Col. Claude Crozet, a brilliant French military engineer who began his military career in the service of Napoleon Bonaparte, is justly known as the father of VMI, for he, more than any other individual, moulded the character of the school. Forced out of the French military service by the downfall of Napoleon, Crozet came to the United States in 1816. On the recommendation of Lafayette and Albert Gallatin, he was appointed assistant professor of engineering at West Point on October 1 of that year, and within six months he was head of the department. Under his influence, engineering instruction became much more systematized and greater emphasis was placed on a thorough groundwork in mathematics.

Leaving West Point in 1823, Crozet served for nine years as State engineer of Virginia, returning again in 1839 after five years of work in Louisiana. Under Crozet's direction, Virginia made great strides in the field of internal improvements.

About the time of Crozet's return to Virginia, the plans for opening a State-supported military school had reached maturity. The site chosen was the State arsenal at Lexington, and there on November 11, 1839, the doors were opened for the first class. As its opening, VMI had a faculty of two men and a corps of 23 cadets. The statute authorizing creation of the institution provided for a military school to give instruction in military science and in other branches of knowledge as well, and further provided that the cadet corps should form the "public guard" of the State arsenal. Aside from those general regulations, the General Assembly left the character and the curriculum of the school in the hands of its board of visitors, of whom Crozet was chosen president. - cont'd.-

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)
Thomas M. Spaulding, "Claude Crozet," in Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. IV, pp. 580-81; Jennings C. Wise, The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute from 1839 to 1865 (Lynchburg, 1915); "Guide to Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia" (pamphlet, Lexington, n. d.).

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, I-IABS, etc.)

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Very good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Education institution	13. DATE OF VISIT May 18, 1959
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Frank B. Seely, Jr.</i>	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE Sept. 16, 1960	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE
Virginia

NAME(S) OF SITE
Virginia Military Institute

Item #7 - cont'd. -

Under his six-year regime, VMI was moulded closely after the pattern of West Point. The regulations of the earlier institution were adopted almost in toto and the uniform regulations were nearly identical. Because VMI was not primarily designed to train men for professional military careers, the curriculum was not identical with that of West Point; however, military science and mathematics were strongly emphasized at VMI as at the earlier school.

During the next 20 years, as the shadow of civil war grew more threatening, VMI continued to grow and to graduate men destined to win fame in the bloody struggle which lay ahead. The Confederacy was to gain immeasurably in military strength from the support of VMI graduates and faculty, of which latter the immortal "Stonewall" Jackson was one.

During the war the institution continued in operation, though with reduced faculty and cadet corps. As the successive classes were graduated, they marched away to join the Confederate armies. At New Market, on May 15, 1864, the cadets added a glorious chapter to the VMI tradition with a charge which materially aided in the defeat of Franz Sigel's invading Union army. The following month, David Hunter's Union troops entered Lexington and burned VMI to the ground.

Reopened after the war, the school continued to grow and to graduate men who have upheld its traditions in peace and in war. Approximately one-tenth of each graduating class receives regular commissions in the Army, Air Force or Marine Corps. In World War I, VMI gave 1,830 trained men to the armed forces, including five general officers. In the Second World War, the number was 4,100, including 62 officers of general or flag rank. Among the illustrious graduates was General of the Army George C. Marshall.

The Virginia Military Institute comprises some 40 major buildings surrounding a large parade ground. As a result of the destruction of the institute in 1864, little remains of the original physical plant. Among the notable buildings are the Barracks, a Gothic-style building consisting of two connecting quadrangles, extending some 500 feet along the east side of the parade ground; Jackson Memorial Hall, an assembly hall for students, which contains a huge painting of the cadet charge at New Market, by Benjamin West Clinedinst; Preston Library, completed in 1939, which contains the VMI museum; Mallory Hall, the Physics building, completed in 1952; Nichols Engineering Hall (1931); William H. Coker Hall, the gymnasium; Scott Shipp Hall, a general academic building, named for the first commandant and second superintendent, who was associated with VMI for 61 years; Maury-Brooke Hall, occupied by the Chemistry Department; and Crozet Hall, the cadet mess hall. A part of the original barracks building is incorporated in the present barracks, and a small building which served as a hospital and as a tailor shop still remains from the period of the institute's beginnings.