

VLR - 8/21/84 NRHP- 10/4/84

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic BEDFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT (VHLC FILE #141-73)

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Intersection of U.S. Route 460, VA Routes 43 and 122 N/A not for publication

city, town Bedford N/A vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county (city) code 515

3. Classification

Table with 5 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use, and other. Includes checkboxes for district, building, site, occupied, unoccupied, work in progress, etc.

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Owners

street & number N/A

city, town Bedford N/A vicinity of state Virginia 24523

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bedford Municipal Building

street & number East Main Street

city, town Bedford state Virginia 24523

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

title Survey (File #141-73)

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1972-74; 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The city of Bedford is centrally located in Bedford County surrounded by the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Piedmont region of Virginia. With a population of about 6,000 residents, Bedford is a small city situated at the intersection of U.S. Route 460 and VA Routes 43 and 122. The Norfolk and Southern Railroad divides the city into two distinct regions, the commercial downtown area, known locally as Centertown, which extends basically along North and South Bridge streets and East and West Main streets to the south and the primary residential and industrial area to the north. The district includes two residential neighborhoods, known locally as the Old Avenel area and the Longwood Avenue area. The former centers on Bedford and Avenel avenues and on Peaks and College streets; the latter on Longwood Avenue and Lee, North, Grove, Baltimore, and Oak streets. Lying immediately north of the railroad in the northeastern section of the city, industrial buildings are located along Jackson and Grove streets and Railroad Avenue. Particularly interesting is the variety of 19th- and early 20th-century architectural styles that contribute to the picturesque nature of the city. The two hundred and forty buildings within the district exhibit such styles as the Greek Revival, Italianate, Carpenter Gothic, Gothic Revival, Stick Style, Shingle Style, Colonial Revival, Romanesque Revival, Bungalow, and Spanish Colonial Revival. Only thirty-two buildings within the district are considered noncontributing structures.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Although Bedford, originally known as Liberty, was founded in the mid-18th century, few buildings from the town's early development years have survived. The oldest extant structures within the historic district are mid-19th-century residences that reflect the general prosperity of the town during the antebellum years. Several similar Greek Revival brick houses are located on North Bridge Street, Peaks Street, and College Street. The earliest documented house in the district is a sophisticated brick dwelling known as Avenel. Built in 1836 for William H. Burwell, this Greek Revival house originally served as a country house outside the town limits, however, the land surrounding it was subsequently divided into small residential lots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and came to be known locally as the Old Avenel area. Outstanding features of the house include a classical cornice embellished with guttae and a delicate rope molding and a double-story veranda with paired Tuscan columns and a delicate turned balustrade.

Other refined Greek Revival houses of the mid-19th century include Chestnut Hill on Peaks Street, Winthrop on College Street, and the Thomas L. Leftwich House on North Bridge Street. All three houses were built during the 1840s and are similar in design. They are two-story, central-passage-plan, Flemish bond-brick structures with shallow-pitched hipped roofs and broad window and door lintels.

The finest Greek Revival structure in Bedford, however, is Liberty Presbyterian Church built in 1844 at the corner of West Main and South Bridge streets in Centertown. A superb example of its style, the temple-front brick church features a Doric portico in antis with a well-proportioned entablature and pediment, a square louvered belfry adorned with paired Doric pilasters and surmounted by a thin spire, and an entrance frontispiece composed of details derived from plates in carpentery handbooks of the period.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates	Late 18th century- Present	Builder/Architect	N/A
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Bedford, originally called Liberty, has served as the courthouse seat and economic hub of Bedford County since 1782. Situated in the foothills of the Blue Ridge on an early turnpike highway between Lynchburg and Salem and on the principal line of the old Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, Bedford prospered throughout most of the 19th century as a major Piedmont center of tobacco manufacturing, ranking in 1881 as the fifth largest producer of tobacco in the state. In the wake of a disasterous fire which ravaged the commercial area of the town in 1884, Bedford experienced a boom in commercial and residential construction that issued in a major rebuilding of its historic core as well as the subdivision of vacant town lots and surrounding farm tracts for residential development. During the first three decades of the 20th century, as Bedford gradually recovered from the loss of its local tobacco industry, the built environment of the city came to assume much of its general appearance today. The Bedford Historic District includes two hundred and forty buildings which, taken as a whole, reflect the major events and developments that have shaped Bedford's social, economic, political, and cultural life over two centuries. Distributed over the city's primary commercial, residential, and industrial areas, the structures exhibit a rich diversity of 19th- and 20th-century architectural styles and building practices.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like many other counties Bedford County was formed out of necessity. The immense county of Lunenburg, formed in 1746, was rapidly being populated and the western settlements needed a closer seat of government. In November 1753 the Colonial legislature created a new county by dividing Lunenburg County and part of Albemarle County. The name chosen was Bedford, in honor of John Russell, Fourth Duke of Bedford and Secretary of State of Great Britain.

The new county held court at a series of temporary seats before establishing a permanent one. The first court was held on May 17, 1754 in the home of Mathew Talbot. On November 25, 1754 the county court was moved to a crudely built courthouse on the property of William Callaway that served Bedford until 1766, when a new courthouse was erected in the new town of New London. In 1782, however, Bedford County was divided to form Campbell County, placing New London outside limits of the county. Once again Bedford was in search of a new county seat.

To deal with this situation, the Bedford County Court commissioned William Callaway to survey the county in order to establish its new geographical center, and a committee was created to view and select a site suitable for a courthouse and public buildings. On July 22, 1782 the committee chose a tract of land of one hundred acres located on

9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #41)

Arnold, B.W., Jr. History of the Tobacco Industry in Virginia: 1860-1894. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1897).

Bedford County Bicentennial, Inc. Bedford County Bicentennial: 1754-1954. Bedford, VA: Bedford County Bicentennial, Inc., 1954.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 105 acres

Quadrangle name Bedford, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References (See Continuation Sheet #41)

A	<u>17</u>	<u>631480</u>	<u>4133410</u>	B	<u>17</u>	<u>631570</u>	<u>4133230</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>17</u>	<u>631520</u>	<u>4133200</u>	D	<u>17</u>	<u>631400</u>	<u>4133120</u>
E	<u>17</u>	<u>631450</u>	<u>4132880</u>	F	<u>17</u>	<u>631430</u>	<u>4132830</u>
G	<u>17</u>	<u>631330</u>	<u>4132810</u>	H	<u>17</u>	<u>631280</u>	<u>4132820</u>

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point (A) located on the N side of Washington St.; thence approximately 700' N to a point (B) on the N side of W. Depot St.; thence approximately 100' W along N side of Depot St. to a point (C);

(See Continuation Sheet #42)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION STAFF

organization VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION date August 1984

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

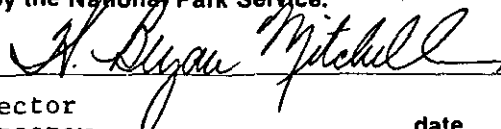
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
title VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

date August 21, 1984

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

EXP. 10/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

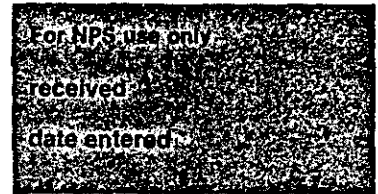
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

BEDFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT, BEDFORD, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1



7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

Among the more eclectic houses built during the mid-19th century, the J.M. Plunkett House on Plunkett Street is one of the best examples. This brick house combines Greek Revival with Italianate details. Buildings exhibiting elements of such romantic styles as the Carpenter Gothic style are rare in western Virginia, however, the John Wharton House at 309 North Bridge Street is a representative example of the style. Built around 1848, the 1½-story frame structure possesses a cross gable roof with an ornamental bargeboard and a porch with curvilinear brackets and decorative sawnwork.

The Italianate style in Bedford is best represented by four dwellings built during the last decades of the 19th century: the Orville P. Bell House at 206 East Main Street, the Charles W. Wharton House (now the Bedford Children's Library) at 319 North Bridge Street, Kingston at 512 Peaks Street, and the Martin P. Burks House (Guy House) in the 500 block of Peaks Street. The Bell House, built in the 1860s, is a distinctive brick house with segmental-arched windows and an unusually decorative corbeled brick cornice. A fanciful wrought-iron porch accents the facade. The Wharton House, built in 1883, is a much simpler brick house with a projecting front ell and segmental-arched windows, but with no exterior ornamentation. Kingston, built soon after 1865, is a frame structure which features such typical Italianate features as a shallow-pitched hipped roof, wide overhanging bracketed eaves, and heavy window molds. The Burks-Guy House, however, built in 1884, represents the height of maturity in the Italianate style with such features as the projecting front ell, gables partially supported by curvilinear brackets, heavy stone window molds, wide overhanging eaves, a wide front porch, and a three-story entrance tower capped by a hipped roof with flared eaves.

The Italianate style is also evident in several late 19th-century commercial properties along Main and North Bridge streets in Centertown. Due to a disastrous fire that destroyed much of the commercial area in 1884, most downtown buildings date from the late 19th century with the Italianate style in commercial architecture was most popular. The best example in Bedford is a group of three stores at 112 through 116 North Bridge Street. Built as a single building around 1887, the structure is divided into three equal sections. Heavy window molds supported by ancons or embellished with raised swags top the second-floor fenestration of each section while a heavy cast-iron bracketed modillion cornice extends across the entire facade.

Other notable late 19th-century commercial structures with Italianate influenced details include several brick buildings with decorative corbeled brick cornices, blind arcades, and upper story segmental-arched windows with raised brick molds. Examples include the Harrison Building, originally built in 1878 as E.H. Myler's Store, at 118 East Main Street and two structures at 119 and 121 North Bridge Street.

The majority of late 19th-century residences in Bedford are vernacular frame dwellings ranging from simple company houses located near the industrial area to stylish upper middle class houses situated along Peaks Street, Longwood Avenue, and Bedford Avenue. Houses built for employees of the various manufactories were located along the blocks of North and Grove streets nearest the factories. The lowest income

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

