

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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 Merrill and Ford (1879--ca.1890)  
The Akron Smoking Pipe Company  
The Pamplin Smoking Pipe and Manufacturing Company (1919--1951)  
AND/OR COMMON Pamplin Pipe Factory (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Business Route 460  
CITY, TOWN Pamplin  
STATE Virginia  
VICINITY OF Fifth (W.C. Daniel)  
CODE 51  
COUNTY Appomattox  
CODE 11

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Raymond G. and Nancy Dickerson  
STREET & NUMBER Route 1, Box 250  
CITY, TOWN Pamplin  
STATE Virginia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Appomattox County  
STREET & NUMBER Box 672  
CITY, TOWN Appomattox  
STATE Virginia 24522

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Virginia Research Center for Archaeology Site Survey Form (44Ap1)  
DATE April 3, 1977  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Virginia Research Center for Archaeology  
CITY, TOWN Williamsburg, Virginia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The Pamplin Pipe Factory (44Ap1) is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Business Route 460 and State Route 1103 in Pamplin, a small town in south-central Virginia. The 2.96 acres nominated are currently owned by Raymond and Nancy Dickerson and, according to deed research, comprise most of the land originally utilized by the pipe factory. The property consists of two and one-eighth acres acquired as a parcel in 1879, to which the additional fraction of an acre was added in 1931. Although the physical plant of the Pamplin Pipe Factory has undergone modifications over the years, the archaeological remains of earlier factory buildings survive intact below ground.

In 1980 three major structures are standing on the factory property: a wooden-framed factory building sheathed with corrugated sheet-metal siding and roofing, a deteriorated brick kiln, and a collapsed brick chimney associated with the kiln (Photos 1 and 2). A 1915 photograph taken by the Virginia Geological Survey (Photo 3) shows a factory building with a more steeply pitched roof and higher ridge line at the site of the present building. Although it is not known precisely when this newer structure was built, according to oral tradition the earlier factory building was destroyed by fire ca. 1928-1930, requiring the construction of a replacement. A series of photographs taken between 1940 and 1979 document the claim that the recent building was in use during the final phases of the factory's operation.

Study of the 1915 photograph and comparison between the 1938 plat of the property and the present factory layout reveal that the present building is constructed over a portion of the earlier factory site (Map 1). From 1915 until at least 1976 a shed-like structure connected the factory building to the kiln, which in turn, was surrounded by a shed. This kiln shed was removed by 1968, although the one connecting the factory with the kiln remained until it, too, was removed by the present owner in order to install a parking facility and a septic field. The condition of the factory building has been stabilized by the present owners.

The other two above-ground features at the site, the kiln and kiln chimney, have remained unmodified since at least 1915 when they were photographed. The condition of the brick fabric of the kiln has deteriorated, however, and in 1975 vandals collapsed a portion of the kiln chimney. By their presence on the property the present owners protect the kiln and chimney from further disturbance.

An archaeological survey was conducted at the Pamplin Pipe Factory by the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology in 1979. The archaeological remains of a brick foundation, designated Structure A on a 1938 plat of the property, were located. This building is shown on Map 1. A second in situ brick foundation (Photo 5), designated Structure D, was located to the east of Structure A. Further investigation located the site of Structure E, adjacent to State Route 1103. The site of Structure C, according to the 1938 plat, should lie between the present factory building (Structure B) and Structure D. This area was not examined. Three walled springs, shown on the 1938 plat, are situated to the north of Structure C and are believed to have been used to provide water for a steam engine housed in Structure C.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 18 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1879-1951

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pamplin Pipe Factory property in Pamplin, Virginia contains the archaeological remains of several consecutive periods of clay pipe manufacture. Proclaimed by its 1935 owners to be the largest facility of its kind in the United States and possibly the world, the Pamplin Pipe Factory was purported to produce one million pipes a month. Excavation of the Pamplin Pipe Factory, a facility known to have been in operation since at least 1879, would reveal unique information about the evolution of pipe manufacturing technology during the last one hundred years. Because the remains of a still-earlier pipe manufacturing site are probably present on the property, the opportunity exists for additional primary research.

Local tradition alleges that pipemaking as a cottage industry occurred in the Pamplin area as early as 1739, although there is no documentary evidence to support this claim. Early census records ca. 1800-1860 record pipemakers in other localities but list none for Pamplin. There is some evidence that John Taber, a New Englander, introduced handmade pipe technology to the Pamplin area between 1850 and 1860, thereby establishing pipemaking as a home industry. The Pamplin Pipe Factory, however, is the first site in Virginia where pipe manufacture is known to have been undertaken on a mass-production basis.

The earliest documented owners of the Pamplin Pipe Factory property were J.R. Franklin and his wife, who sold it to W.G. Merrill and a Mr. Ford on September 2, 1879. Although it is not known whether Franklin had previously manufactured pipes at the site or had distributed handmade/homemade local pipes, his name is linked with the pipemaking industry. An archaeological investigation of the Sternwheeler Bertrand, which sank in the Missouri River on April 1, 1865, yielded a shipment of so-called Pamplin pipes, cargo for which J.R. Franklin and Company is listed as sole agent.

Whether or not pipes were made or sold on the Pamplin site prior to Merrill and Ford's 1879 purchase, a Schedule of Virginia Manufacturers for 1880 compiled by the United States Bureau of Census indicates that between June 1879 and June 1880 those two men made a capital outlay of \$12,000 and began operating a clay pipe factory in Pamplin City. They employed thirty persons in their operation, fifteen men, ten women and five children. The workers were paid an average daily wage of sixty cents each. Reed-stemmed clay tobacco pipes were produced by hand and foot-powered machinery; steam power was also used in the process, although its role has not yet been defined. The raw material used in pipe manufacture was valued at \$500 a year, whereas the finished products were worth \$1,700.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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(See Continuation Sheet #4)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.9 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

7	7	0	5	7	0	0
ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING		

B 

ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING		

C 

ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING		

D 

ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Pamplin Pipe Factory lot is bound by Route 460 on the southwest, State Route 1103 on the southeast, and follows the survey lines depicted on the 1976 plat of the property (represented by Map 2).

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

Keith Bott, Archaeologist and VRCA staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology

DATE

May 1980

STREET & NUMBER

Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary

TELEPHONE

804-253-4836

CITY OR TOWN

Williamsburg,

STATE

Virginia 23186

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE X

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

Tucker Hill, Executive Director

TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE JUN 17 1980

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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Although the continuous operation of the Pamplin Pipe Factory since 1879 is well documented, archaeological excavations would reveal much about the layout and operation of the pipe factory in its earliest days. It would also be possible to trace the evolution of pipe manufacturing technology at the most productive facility of its type in the nation.

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Research conducted by Byron Sudbury has revealed that W.G. Merrill was the son of E.H. Merrill of Akron, Ohio, a pipe and stoneware manufacturer and inventor of pipemaking machinery. The younger Merrill had been employed in 1877 in his father's factory, E.H. Merrill and Sons, and came to Pamplin with a knowledge of stoneware technology and of the mass production of clay pipes.

In 1890 the Pamplin Pipe Factory was purchased by the Akron Smoking Pipe Company. This company operated the pipe manufactory until 1919. Due to an 1892 fire which destroyed the Appomattox Courthouse records, there is no extant deed documenting the transfer of the manufactory property from Merrill and Ford to the Akron Smoking Pipe Company. The factory continued to be run by W.G. Merrill, who was included in the Company's Board of Directors. The Akron Smoking Pipe Company also owned a pipe manufacturing plant in Mogadore, Ohio, but concentrated its pipemaking efforts at Pamplin, eventually converting its Mogadore plant to the manufacture of electrical insulators.

By 1919 commercial clay pipe manufacture had peaked. The Akron Smoking Pipe Company sold out and then dissolved. Three local businessmen, C.F. Harvey, J.W. Franklin and S.P. Loving, purchased the pipe factory property and called it the Pamplin Smoking Pipe and Manufacturing Company. Recognizing the decline of the clay pipe industry, they attempted product diversification, manufacturing building materials as well as clay pipes. Their endeavor was unsuccessful and on July 27, 1929 the Pamplin Pipe Manufacturing Company was sold at public auction to J.F. Connally.

Connally retained the property only for two months. He sold it in September 1929 to a newly chartered firm, the Pamplin Smoking Pipe and Manufacturing Company, Inc., whose charter stated that it would deal in wood and timbering, real estate, construction work, building material sales and clay pipe and earthenware manufacture. This corporation acquired one and one-fourth acres of adjacent land from the estate of C.F. Harvey in 1931. By 1935 the factory was reportedly producing one million pipes a month and claimed to be the largest clay pipe manufacturer in the world. Even so, the factory was sold at public auction in September 1938, at which time it was purchased by Ralph Dombrowner and Morton Wallerstein. (Photos 7,8,9,10)

During the years of Dombrowner-Wallerstein ownership the Company failed to make a profit despite extensive advertising. Emphasis was placed on novelty and souvenir pipes and the retailing of local handmade pipes. A Company trademark was developed during this period, a stereotypical Hollywood Indian with a Powhatan-style pipe. In February 1952 the Pamplin Smoking Pipe and Manufacturing Company was dissolved. Ralph Dombrowner claimed that local handmade pipes were no longer available nor were reed stems readily obtained. Most likely, however, it was the rising cost of labor, specifically the enactment of the Minimum Wage law in 1938, which sealed its fate.

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After Wallerstein and Dombrowner closed their factory the Pamplin factory lot was sold in succession to W. B. and Thelma P. Bruce in 1951 and Charlie and Mary E. Ranson in 1961. On December 6, 1976 the Pamplin Pipe Factory property was sold to the present owners, Raymond and Nancy Dickerson. Dickerson currently produces a small number of Robert E. Lee pipe facsimilies which he sells as souvenirs. He uses a portion of the extant factory building as a small museum and operates an auction house in the rear of the building.

The Pamplin Pipe Factory warrants inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places because it was at one time the largest clay pipe factory in America, supplying a national and international market. Clay pipes produced at Pamplin have been recovered from archaeological sites throughout the United States.

A folk tradition which traces the origin of Pamplin pipes to the European-Aboriginal contact period has perpetuated interest in the factory. Pipe manufacturing machinery from the Pamplin Pipe Factory is on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C. and the Williamsburg Pottery Factory in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Many researchers have studied the Pamplin Pipe Factory, but their work has focused upon documents and artifacts instead of the archaeological record. Although a small portion of the site has been disturbed by construction, most of it remains in situ. An archaeological excavation could yield valuable data on the sequence of the pipe factory's physical evolution and the evolution of pipe manufacturing technology. It could also determine whether pipe making occurred on the site prior to 1879.

Archaeological research also could yield insight into the lives of the nineteenth century factory workers in Virginia and the conditions under which they worked. Such research would be likely to produce new data on an industry which was highly significant to the development of the economy of the Pamplin area. These data could be juxtaposed against parallel data derived from the excavation of a cottage industry pipemaking site.

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(See Continuation Sheet #5)



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PAMPLIN PIPE FACTORY, Appomattox County, VA

UTM References:  
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