

VLR-12/6/00

NRHP-2/16/01

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16-A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Otterburn**
other names/site number **DHR file no. 009-0024**

2. Location

street & number **Big Island Road (VA 122 North)** N/A not for publication
city or town **Bedford** X vicinity
state **Virginia** code **VA** county **Bedford** code **019** zip code **24523**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

H. Alexander Wise, Jr.
Signature of certifying official/Title
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

12/29/00
Date

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
___ entered in the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined eligible for the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
___ removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
___ other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing		Noncontributing	
2	1	1	buildings
1	0	0	sites
0	0	0	structures
0	0	0	objects
3	1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
AGRICULTURE	pasture
LANDSCAPE	garden

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
VACANT	
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
HEALTH CARE	sanitarium
AGRICULTURE	pasture
LANDSCAPE	garden

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Early Classical Revival/Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation **brick**
- walls **brick**
- roof **asphalt**
- other **wood**
- stone**
- metal**
- stucco**
- brick**
- concrete**

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past fifty years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
GOVERNMENT/LAW/POLITICS

Period of Significance

1828-1871

Significant Dates

1828; 1843; 1852

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Donald, Benjamin Andrew

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **15.31 acres**

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	632940	4136750	3	17	633210	4136390
2	17	633210	4136750	4	17	632890	4136380

— See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Leslie A. Giles, Architectural Historian	date	September 21, 2000
organization	Landmark Preservation Associates	telephone	(540) 464-5315
street & number	6 Houston Street	zip code	24450
city or town	Lexington state VA		

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Guy Hopkins		
street & number	1070 Homeward Drive	telephone	(540) 586-1854
city or town	Bedford state VA	zip code	24523

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Otterburn
Bedford Co., Va.

DESCRIPTION

Summary

Located in Bedford County, Virginia, on VA 122 (Big Island Highway) about two miles north of the city of Bedford, Otterburn is the seemingly modest seat of a former plantation established during the antebellum period on prime agricultural lands along Little Otter Creek. At its largest, the plantation included over 2,800 acres of well-watered fields, timberlands, and milling property, in addition to the principal dwelling's landscaped residential yard. While the land conveyed with the house has been reduced over the years to fewer than sixteen acres, the property's generally rural and agricultural setting remains relatively intact. Otterburn is prominently sited on a hilltop overlooking the Little Otter Creek drainage, and is a highly visible landmark along Big Island Highway. The house, initially constructed 1828 as the Early Classical Revival-style home of Benjamin and Sally Donald, was gutted by fire in 1841 and remodeled by 1843 into one of the region's most distinctive Greek Revival dwellings of the antebellum period. The house as completed in 1843 exhibits a sophisticated and skillful combination of unusual architectural features: a rare transverse-hall plan and slightly projecting center pavilion, set beneath a cross-gabled roof with integral front and rear porches and pedimented gable ends; paired columns; tripartite, triple-hung sash; exterior curving double stairs; a *piano nobile* main floor over a raised basement; and exterior and interior detailing copied from published pattern book sources.

The house's immediate setting is a residential yard reached at the end of a lane that extends from Big Island Highway past hayfields and pastures. Historic designed landscape features in the yard area include a large rectangular maze and two circular beds defined by very old English boxwoods, an oval or teardrop-shaped drive that accesses the front entry steps, and a larger oval drive that leads behind the house and past a nineteenth-century one-story frame washhouse and a modern concrete block dormitory (now used as an adult care residence or rest home).

Inventory

1. Otterburn (1828; 1843). Contributing building.
2. Wash house (mid-19th century). Contributing building.
3. Garden (mid-19th century). Contributing site.
4. Dormitory (1950s). Non-contributing building.

House: Exterior

The property's principal historic resource is the Early Classical Revival-form, Greek Revival-detailed house known as Otterburn. The three-bay, painted-over Flemish-bond brick dwelling with glazed headers and pencilled mortar joints is arranged with a ground- or basement-level floor below a main

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Otterburn
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Description (continued)

floor or *piano nobile*, which includes the principal entrance, and an uppermost half-story level that contains bedrooms. The façade's emphasis on the *piano nobile* creates an impression of the house as a cozy one-and-a-half stories, while in actuality it stands two-and-a-half stories tall. The main floor, sheltered by a full-length front porch, is reached by a centered pair of curved stairs with carved granite steps and hand-wrought iron balustrades with spiral terminations. An immense rectangular granite block, serving as the topmost step up to the porch, spans between the two stone staircases and above the three steps that access the below-grade ground-floor loggia and secondary entry. Six brick squared columns with connecting pipe railings (circa 1960 replacements of the original unfluted Doric column pairs and turned wood balusters) define the porch, which is engaged beneath the main gable roof and the center-front gable end. The porch's replacement columns rest on tall rectangular brick piers, intended to support the original twelve wood columns, that have façade-side recesses creating the appearance of paired piers.

Otterburn's symmetrical cross-gabled roof allows for a centered gable end on each elevation. Atypically, each of the four gable ends is treated as a classical pediment, with a recessed-panel stucco tympanum and basal and raking wooden modillion cornices. The façade's pedimented center-front gable with a tripartite double-hung window is underscored by the porch entablature, a band-like Doric frieze employing triglyphs and guttae. Interior end chimneys flanked by attic-level square windows rise on the side and rear-facing pedimented gable ends. Smaller integral/recessed back porches on the main and ground floors are detailed like that of the front, with Doric entablatures including triglyph friezes and modillion cornices, and ceilings of plaster on lath. The main floor's northeast corner porch also retains original paired unfluted Doric columns carved from solid wood, Doric pilasters, and turned balusters -- exact matches to those that were removed from the façade in the 1960s.

Symmetrical moldings and eared surrounds, adapted from designs published in Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter* (1830) and *Practice of Architecture* (1833), adorn nearly all the doors and windows of the house. The principal decorative motif used for the surrounds is a tripartite Greek key or fret design copied from Plate 31, "Design for a Window" (following page 68) of the *The Practical House Carpenter*, which is layered over symmetrical moldings and corner blocks apparently copied from Plate 27 in the same book. The overall composition resembles several frontispieces illustrated in both pattern books, but does not replicate a particular design. On the main floor, the central entry has an eight-panel door, two-light transom, and sidelights, with raised panels above and below. The tripartite windows are comprised of triple-hung (six-over-six-over-six) sash with operable triple-hung sidelights. Original shutter hardware remains in place at the doorway and windows. The ground floor, serving as an English basement, is mostly above grade and has a central entry and tripartite double-hung windows. Simpler six-over-six sash with ornamental surrounds

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Description (continued)

flank the chimney on the ground and main levels of the rear elevation; several louvered blinds, with faded green paint and original hardware, remain in place on the rear elevation. At the attic level on the rear and sides of the house, six-light hinged windows flank each of the interior end chimneys. The cross-gabled roof is presently clad in asphalt shingles; an early-twentieth-century photograph shows the roofing at that time to have been wooden shingles.

Mid-twentieth-century exterior alterations to Otterburn include removal of the front porch columns and balustrade, installation of modern brick square columns, removal of an ornate roof-level cast- or wrought-iron railing, partial enclosure of rear porches, addition of a ground-floor mechanical room and fire escape stairs, and painting of the brick walls with textured paint or thin parging. Necessary repairs to deteriorated elements are being undertaken at present, to help preserve the building until a full-scale restoration or rehabilitation project takes place.

House: Interior

The interior of Otterburn features three living levels, each with three rooms arranged around the stairhall that links all three levels. On the ground and first floors, the façade's slightly projecting center bay hints at the division of interior spaces. Apportioned on the façade into approximately equal thirds, the plan features a transverse hall at the front center, leading into a square room behind. Two large rectangular rooms extending the depth of the house (excepting the porches, onto which they open) flank the center rooms. Each of the house's nine rooms includes a fireplace, many of which have had their openings infilled with brick except for a round flue opening. Throughout the house, numerous original materials survive: plaster walls and ceilings; random-width wood plank flooring; molded wood wall, door, and window trim; and paneled doors. In some instances, original or historic finishes survive as well, including grain-painting and polychrome paint effects.

The ground floor, with full-height ceilings (approximately eight feet tall), is entered through the secondary entry directly into the transverse hall. In the hall, a straight-run staircase with rectangular balusters, a molded handrail, and a slender turned newel post ascends from left to right in front of a raised-panel wall. Tongue-and-groove beaded boards sheath the underside of the staircase and form the door of a small under-stair closet-cabinet. Simple quirk-beaded architrave surrounds fitted with six-panel wood doors open from the hall into the three rooms on this floor and provide access to built-in closets in several places. Transitional Federal/Greek Revival fireplaces feature wood mantels with wide frieze boards, simple mantel shelves, recessed-panel pilasters and two-color paint schemes. The northeast porch doorway now accesses a small bricked-walled pantry/buttery, while the northwest porch doorway opens into a twentieth-century institutional bathroom. Tripartite windows with double-hung sash light the front and rear walls of the two larger rooms, which feature plaster walls and ceilings, and tongue-and-groove beaded board wainscoting above wide baseboards.

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Description (continued)

Several of these ground-floor spaces have had modern paneling affixed to the walls, although the plaster ceilings and random-width plank flooring are relatively intact.

The main floor's rooms, though identical in plan to those on the ground floor, seem much more spacious due to the tall (approximately twelve feet high) ceilings. Plastered walls and ceilings, random-width wood flooring, symmetrical moldings at door and window surrounds, wooden Greek Revival mantels, and ornate plaster cornices typify the interior finishes on this floor. In addition, the stairhall features a circular ceiling medallion of applied plaster moldings, incorporating a wide border of anthemium (stylized honeysuckle blossoms) and a centered cast-iron hook from which a light fixture once hung. The L-shaped stair, though presently enclosed, retains its original walnut railing, rectangular balusters, and turned newels. A repaired section of the handrail was reputedly damaged during the Civil War by the actions of Union soldiers who confiscated barrels of flour from the house by tossing them carelessly down the stairs. Doorways on the left and right sides of the hall open into two large rooms, each having tall tripartite windows with triple-hung sash on the front and rear walls.

The main parlor, located on the right-hand side of the stairhall, is further adorned with applied plaster ornaments. The ceiling features a medallion consisting of a rosette encircled by anthemium and projecting bands; additional moldings enrich the ceiling with a simple paneled pattern. While not an exact copy, the medallion closely resembles a "centerpiece" shown in Plate 37 (following page 80) of *Practice of Architecture*. A bold entablature incorporates cabling and a deep cove in the cornice, above a simple frieze that alternates stylized floral panels of daffodils and anthemium with plain recessed panels. Early-twentieth-century descriptions of the house indicate that the room's walls and ceilings were further enlivened with decorative fresco paintings; remnants of these may remain beneath subsequent paint layers. The fireplace surround, centered on the east wall, consists of a horizontal frieze flanked by tablet-topped pilasters; subtle recessed panels adorn each element of the surround.

In the other large room, to the left of the hall, two built-in cabinets/presses with raised-panel upper and lower doors flank the mantel. The built-ins, which are lined with shelves, suggest the room originally functioned as a formal dining room. Surrounds with peaked symmetrical moldings and corner blocks enframe the cabinets and the room's other door and window openings. An elaborate cornice composed of plaster moldings calls attention to the room's high ceilings. The fireplace, centered on the west wall, features a surround with a tripartite frieze incorporating a central raised tablet and terminal Greek key patterning above fluted pilasters. The surround's design is copied from Plate 50 (following page 76) of the *The Practical House Carpenter*.

The *piano nobile's* third room, located beyond the stairhall, may have been used as a study or

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Bedford Co., Va.**Description (continued)**

bedroom. Isolated from both of the larger rooms and their rear porches, it was certainly a more private space and probably not used for entertaining guests. Lit by six-over-six double-hung sash that flank the fireplace centered on the rear (north) wall, the space is nonetheless outfitted with high-quality details such as an elaborate plaster cornice and wood moldings for door and window surrounds. A fireplace surround copied from Plate 49 (following page 74) of *The Practical House Carpenter*, features a horizontal frieze and vertical end panels with mitered layered recessed panels.

The attic level's four finished rooms -- three chambers and the hall -- while occupying similar locations as the rooms below, have smaller dimensions due to the slope of the cross-gabled roof. Several built-in closets occupy the floor space beneath those portions of the roofline that are too low for comfortably standing upright. Interior finishes, comparable to those found on the main level, include random-width pine flooring and plaster walls and ceilings. The hall, which has a tripartite window with double-hung sash in its south-facing exterior wall, has been slightly modified with the flooring-over of a space that was formerly an open well around which the stair rose; as part of this modification, a portion of the railing was moved and augmented by two square newel posts. Door and window surrounds in the hall feature symmetrical moldings and corner blocks detailed as raised beading centered within flanking concave recesses. Several doors on this level retain grain-painted finishes and evidence of early hardware, such as lock boxes, that were subsequently removed. The three chambers on this floor have matching fireplace surrounds; the relatively conservative design, exhibiting residual Georgian influence, includes architrave moldings around the opening, with an austere frieze flanked by slightly projecting tablets supporting the plain mantel shelf. Architrave moldings define the door and window surrounds inside the three chamber rooms. The north-facing chamber retains some plumbing fixtures, no longer functional, dating from the late-nineteenth-century conversion of a portion of the space into a bathroom.

Outbuildings and Landscape Features

One antebellum outbuilding, presumably once used as a wash house and storage building, is located to the rear of the main dwelling. The one-and-a-half-story braced frame building, approximately twelve feet square, is clad in horizontal flush boards covered early on with board-and-batten siding. A narrow interior stair leads to the half-story, an unfinished storage space above which is a roof structure of pegged rafters, covered now with wide sheathing boards and standing seam metal roofing. An exterior end stone chimney, with a brick stack, exhausts a fireplace that on the interior incorporates an unusual narrow, peaked opening in the parged stone surround. To the east of the house is a modern one-story brick-veneered concrete-block building, constructed in the 1950s as a dormitory and now used as an adult care residence.

Most of the property's acreage is occupied by a large hayfield that separates the house from the road.

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Otterburn
Bedford Co., Va.

Description (continued)

The entry drive leads past this field to a large rectangular garden laid out in the form of a maze and planted with very old English boxwood hedges. East of the maze, the entry drive turns north, between two circular beds of English boxwood, and divides into two roughly concentric oval driveways, one of which provides access to the front of the house and another that leads past the rear service areas. The property also has numerous large specimen trees, most of which date from the early twentieth century and later.

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Otterburn
Bedford Co., Va.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary and Applicable Criteria

Otterburn, located in Bedford County, Virginia, was initially completed in 1828 for Benjamin A. and Sally Camm Donald. Following a destructive 1841 fire, the Donalds rebuilt Otterburn within the shell of the original structure, completing the reconstruction by 1843. Benjamin Andrew Donald, a plantation and gristmill owner with extensive real estate and personal property holdings, was also politically and socially one of the county's most prominent citizens during his lifetime. For over forty years, Donald served Bedford County in numerous appointed and elected leadership positions, most notably those related to his service as a county justice beginning in 1832. The county's first elected Presiding Justice, Donald held that position for three consecutive four-year terms (1852-1864). For its historic association with Benjamin A. Donald, Otterburn is eligible for the National Register under Criterion B in the area of Government/Law/Politics at the local level of significance.

In addition, Otterburn is eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the state level of significance as one of the Commonwealth's chief domestic examples of antebellum architecture illustrating the transition from the Early Classical Revival or Jeffersonian style to the Greek Revival style. Otterburn is an architecturally refined dwelling of unusual form for the period and region, and though subjected to changes over the years, nonetheless retains good integrity. In plan, Otterburn recalls the Palladian-influenced tripartite form employed for some of Virginia's finest houses during the eighteenth century. In elevation, the Jeffersonian influence is evident in the adoption of features such as the *piano nobile* that reduce the apparent size of the house, and in the use of triple-hung sash. The house's exterior and interior feature architectural details derived from pattern books available during the first half of the nineteenth century. While the name of the building's designer has not come to light, presumably its British-educated owner had much to do with the planning and architectural detailing of the house in both phases of its construction. An intriguing watercolored pen-and-ink presentation drawing of the house's front elevation, entitled "House of B. A. Donald, Bedford, Va.," implies the involvement of an architect or master builder in the 1841-1843 reconstruction of the house. Otterburn is one of Bedford County's most distinctive rural dwellings of the antebellum period, and remained the seat of the Donald estate for several years after Benjamin's death in 1871.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance with research or for reviewing the nomination report: property owners Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Guy Hopkins; Robin Reynolds; staff of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; staff and volunteers of the Bedford City/County Museum; Thomas Hehman, Director, and Steve Preston, Assistant Director, Bedford Public Library System; architectural historians Anne Carter Lee, Al Chambers, and Dan Pezzoni; Clara Lambeth, Bedford Historical Society; staff of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Bedford County; staff of the Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library; and staff of Special Collections of the Library of Virginia and of Leyburn Library, Washington & Lee University.

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Bedford Co., Va.

Statement of Significance (continued)

Historic Background

Benjamin A. Donald (1797-1871) was the only son of prominent Scottish-born merchant and entrepreneur Andrew Donald and his wife Sally Moore Donald, who resided at Bedford County's Fancy Farm. Born in the county in 1797, Benjamin was, upon his father's death in 1806, sent with his younger sister Geils to be raised and educated by family in Scotland (Sally Moore Donald's death predated her husband's). Upon attaining his majority, Benjamin Donald returned to Virginia to reclaim his rightful share to the Donald estate. In 1821, with his sister's power of attorney, Donald sold to Isaac Otey and others (executors of the Andrew Donald estate) 1,034 acres of the Fancy Farm property. A year later Donald signed a purchase agreement with James C. Mooreman to obtain the Mennis and Quarles tracts of the "Little Otter Estate" on Fancy Farm Road, and in 1823 his purchase of the two tracts was finalized. The property consisted of a 1,651-acre parcel that cost \$16,510 -- the tract subsequently known as Otterburn -- and a 182-acre parcel on Stott's Branch that cost \$795.75. On March 31, 1824, Donald married Sarah (Sally) Camm (1808-1881), a daughter of John Camm II of Lynchburg and Cloverdale Plantation in Amherst County. Benjamin and Sally's only child, a daughter, died before the age of one.¹

Benjamin A. Donald first appears in the Bedford County land books in 1825 as owner of a 1,651-acre tract on Little Otter River three miles north of the courthouse; the tract includes improvements valued at \$2,000 (with no further description). Presumably this \$2,000 figure represents a mill and miller's house, eventually known as Donald's Mill, located on the Little Otter River a half-mile to the southwest of the Otterburn site. The property undoubtedly included other buildings, including the dwelling that the Donalds and their household would have occupied during the first years of their marriage, while Otterburn was under construction. In 1826 Donald's petition to the county court to establish a mill, possibly a second one at this location, was approved. An 1872 advertisement described the mill property after nearly fifty years of Donald ownership as including a two-and-a-half-story stone mill, a three-and-a-half-story brick mill, a miller's house and "garden well enclosed," a cottage dwelling house "with all necessary outhouses," and a saw mill "with large Circular Saw."²

In addition to his milling business, Benjamin Donald was regularly listed in census records as a farmer; agricultural production was a mainstay of the Donald family income. Personal property tax records from the 1820s through the 1840s indicate that Benjamin Donald owned, on average, over twenty slaves and more than a dozen horses each year during this period. By 1840, Donald was considered to be one of the county's most affluent citizens and counted nearly 30 slaves among his property. The

¹ "Otterburn," vertical file, Bedford City/County Museum; Bedford County Will Book 3:115; Bedford County Deed books 16:496, 18:236.

² Bedford County Land books; Bedford County Court Order Book 21:20, 39; *Bedford Sentinel* 22 March 1872.

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Otterburn
Bedford Co., Va.

Statement of Significance (continued)

1850 census records Benjamin A. Donald, farmer, as the owner of real estate valued at \$40,000. Adjoining households headed by a plantation overseer (Clabon Ballard) and a miller (James T. Elliot) probably reflect the proximity of Donald's principal white employees. While Donald is variously credited with the introduction to Virginia of Scotch broom and thoroughbred sheep (both claims unsubstantiated), his plantation did include -- besides the milling operations and dwelling houses -- a stable, barn, overseer's house, granary, and other outbuildings. The land was "well adapted to the growth of wheat, corn, oats, tobacco, and hay, and [was] specially suited for a grazing farm." Donald raised horses, mules, cattle, hogs, and sheep on the Otterburn plantation, in addition to the grain crops (principally wheat and corn) that he grew.³

The wealth obtained by Donald through inheritance and agricultural and manufacturing ventures allowed him to erect a fine dwelling on his plantation by 1828. Land books note in 1828 that \$2,000 was added to the 1,651-acre tract "for N buildings," bringing the total valuation for the buildings on the property to \$4,000. This figure undoubtedly represents the initial construction of the house known as Otterburn -- a tripartite-form, transverse-hall-plan house with brick walls laid in Flemish bond, similar to other tripartite houses erected in the Virginia Piedmont during the period, yet unusual for its adoption of a *piano nobile*. This house was apparently gutted by fire in 1841, as the land books for that year record a \$2,000 deduction in the value of buildings on the property, "taken off for fire." By 1843, \$2,000 had been added back to the property value "for improvements," reflecting the reconstruction of the house. While employing the surviving brick walls and retaining the transverse-hall plan of the original Otterburn, the rebuilding effort did incorporate several important changes to the house, most notably the addition of a full-length front porch atop a ground-level loggia, the adoption of a cross-gabled roof with pedimented ends, attic-level chambers, a delicate ornamental wrought-iron roof balustrade, and the application of Greek Revival detail derived from at least two pattern books, Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter* (1830) and *Practice of Architecture* (1833).⁴

Donald was active in local politics first as a Whig and later as a delegate to the 1856 American (Know-Nothing) Party convention. Like most political and social leaders of the time, he promoted regional development by serving on the Board of Directors of the Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike Company in the 1840s and by soliciting subscriptions for the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Company. But his principal significance on the local scene is as a public official. Donald's first public appointment was that of county surveyor of roads in 1825. Appointed a county magistrate (one of thirty-three acting justices of the peace) in 1832, Donald also served as a School Commissioner and as Overseer of the Poor, and was often tapped for committees that oversaw road, bridge, and other construction activities for the

³ Bedford County Land books; Bedford County Personal Property Tax books; *Lynchburg Virginian*, 8 September 1884; Neighbors 1988: 48; Bedford County Will Book 22:269-271.

⁴ Bedford County Land books; Benjamin 1830; Benjamin 1833.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

county. His interest in architecture led to his appointment to the committee that oversaw the design and construction of the new county courthouse in the early 1830s. This committee, of which Donald was a leading member, was appointed to make suitable plans for the courthouse construction, to contract for the work, and to superintend the building process. Under their guidance the county selected local builder Lindsey Shoemaker, in concert with contractors Jordan & Murrell, to undertake the project, one of Virginia's several antebellum temple-front tripartite brick courthouses to be built with a raised main level. Following the revision of the state constitution in 1850-1851 mandating that county justices or magistrates be elected to four-year terms rather than be appointed and commissioned to serve. Bedford County was divided into nine magisterial districts, each of which could elect four justices, bringing the countywide total to thirty-six. The justices thus elected were required to elect a presiding justice, who was obligated to attend every session of court. In 1852, the first year elections were held, only ten men who had previously served as appointed justices were elected; Donald was one of them. Having been on the court since 1832, Donald held the respect of his peers, who elected him the county's first presiding justice (1852-1856). Serving as an elected county justice from 1852 through 1871, Donald was re-elected to the position of presiding justice in 1856, 1860, and 1864.⁵

The characters of Benjamin and Sally Donald, and parties given by the Donalds at Otterburn, were remembered with great fondness by Bedford County author Letitia Burwell in her *A Girl's Life in Virginia Before the War*. Of Donald she wrote

This gentleman, Benjamin Donald, was a man of high character, -- his accomplishments, manner and appearance marking him 'rare,' -- 'one in a century.' Above his fellow men in greatness of soul, he could comprehend nothing mean . . . Truth and lofty character were so unmistakably stamped upon him that a day's acquaintance convinced one he could be trusted forever. Brought up in Scotland, the home of his ancestors, in him were blended the best points of Scotch and Virginia Character, -- strict integrity and whole-souled generosity and hospitality.

Benjamin Donald died December 31, 1871 at the age of 74. An area newspaper noted the event with an obituary describing Donald as "a pure and honorable man, and a valuable and worthy citizen. For many years he was the Presiding Magistrate of the county, and no judge ever held the scales of justice more evenly . . . The death of such a man is a public calamity." While leaving the bulk of his estate to his widow, Donald's will included a provision giving cash or land valued at \$10,000 to his sister's two children; as a result, in early 1872 Sally sold the mill property with 120 acres to John H. Booth. Upon

⁵ Daniel 1985: 21-24, 60, 106, 109; Bedford County Court Order books 20, 22-25, 27, 29-34.

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Sally Donald's death in 1881, her three sisters inherited the estate.⁶

In 1885, Joseph Banks Sladen, a retired Major of the British army, purchased Otterburn with 472 acres of land from the heirs of Sally Donald. John D. Ballard and J. Parker Lambeth jointly acquired the property from Sladen's estate in 1908. Ballard bought out Lambeth in 1909, and in 1931 conveyed the property to his son Garrett G. Ballard, clerk of the county court. Ballard and his in-laws operated the place as a dairy farm. Lands adjoining the nominated parcel retain several of the barns and outbuildings associated with this farming operation. Garrett Ballard conveyed the property to B.M. and N.W. Phelps, who in 1938 sold the property to W. M. and A.T. Bradley. The Bradleys sold the property to Jesse C. Saunders in 1944, and in 1950 the Saunders estate sold the property to the Hines Memorial Pythian Home, Inc., which operated an orphanage in the house. The Pythians, a fraternal service organization, made most of the changes to the building's interior and exterior during this period, and added the detached dormitory building, which they named "Titus Hall," to the property. By the early 1960s, the Pythians had ceased to operate the orphanage and the house was essentially unused. For two years in the late 1960s, the house was occupied by "Otterburn Academy," one of several private schools for white children created during the early years of Supreme Court-ordered desegregation of Virginia's public school system. In 1981, the Pythians sold the property to J.J. Morgan, Jr., who in 1985 sold the house and 18.308 acres to Jimmy Guy and Isabell Hopkins, the present owners. The Hopkins have since then sold a small three-acre tract at the north end of the property, leaving the parcel at its current size of 15.31 acres.⁷

Architectural Analysis

Otterburn stands out in the context of Bedford County and the Commonwealth as an unusually refined example of a transitional antebellum period design, featuring an Early Classical Revival form and plan, and an imaginative Greek Revival rebuilding. While local tradition long held that the house dated to about 1837 (a date contemporaneous with that of several other significant Greek Revival buildings in the area), new research indicates that the building was originally constructed by 1828 and was rebuilt in 1841-1843 following a major fire.

The domestic architectural landscape of antebellum Bedford County was characterized by wide variations in housing, which ranged from diminutive one- and two-room log or frame cabins to expansive brick plantation seats, including a handful of sophisticated architectural essays such as Thomas Jefferson's octagonal retreat at Poplar Forest. As in other parts of Virginia's Piedmont region, certain agricultural enterprises -- especially the raising of tobacco -- brought great wealth to

⁶ Burwell 1895: 122-129; *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, 3 January 1872; Bedford County Will Book 22:269-271; Bedford County Deed books 46:182, 54:533, 55:197; 55:229; 57:29.

⁷ Bedford County Deed books 55:229, 58:370, 96:541; 168:407; 181:460; 204:205; 234:364; 526:45; 584:401.

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the small segment of the rural population that owned large acreages and slave labor forces in the decades preceding the Civil War. To express their financial success and perhaps enhance their prestige, many antebellum-era plantation owners built fine two-story brick or frame houses that incorporated formal center-passage plans, were either one or two rooms deep, and often featured refined ornamental woodwork and plasterwork derived from published pattern book sources. In Bedford County, an early precedent for such domestic sophistication was Benjamin Donald's father's home, Fancy Farm, arguably "one of the finest Late Georgian houses in Virginia," according to the National Register nomination for the property. Built in the 1790s, Fancy Farm is a "gracefully proportioned" two-story double-pile brick dwelling with pedimented gable ends, a slight projection centered on each façade, and exterior and interior woodwork employing forms and detailing copied from classical sources as published in architectural pattern books of the period, including William Pain's *Practical Builder*. Fancy Farm, and the classical tradition to which it relates, undoubtedly influenced the design of Benjamin Donald's Otterburn, which also incorporates pedimented gable ends, a slightly projecting central section, and woodwork derived from pattern books.⁸

A select group of Piedmont plantation houses dating to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries also employed grand pedimented facades. More commonly used for public buildings such as courthouses and churches, the classical pediment was adopted for residential construction largely through the influence of sophisticated designers such as Thomas Jefferson. Palladian tripartite schemes in particular favored the use of a pedimented temple front; Old Rectory, The Cedars, and the Old West House in Bedford County were among the Palladian tripartite houses that fell into this category. Woodbourne, eventually assuming a tripartite form via two additions, acquired a stuccoed classical pediment during the circa 1810 construction of its subtly projecting two-story pavilion. Otterburn's three-bay façade (set behind a five-bay porch), while not the typical Jeffersonian/Palladian tripartite form, reflects a room arrangement -- including a T-shaped plan with an unusual transverse hall -- closely associated with the Palladian tripartite form. The house's original 1828 design, pre-dating the 1841 fire, may have more closely resembled the typical tripartite house.⁹

Otterburn, with four stuccoed pediments -- one centered on each façade -- reflects Jefferson's influence as seen elsewhere in the Piedmont region. Otterburn's front façade pediment is unusual, though, in that it rises above the three central bays of a full-length, five-bay recessed porch. The porch, as originally built in 1841-1843, was further distinguished by the use of paired, unfluted Doric columns along its length at the *piano nobile* level and corresponding rectangular brick piers at ground level. Throughout antebellum Virginia, paired columns were typically used only to support single-bay

⁸ DHR file number 009-0007

⁹ DHR file numbers 009-0033, 009-0027, 015-0003, 117-0006, 009-0056; HABS Inventory sites "The Cedars," "Old West House," "Woodbourne," and "Otterburn."

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entry porticos, while unpaired columns were employed for multi-bay porches. Otterburn's paired-column porch design is therefore distinctive and rare.

Additionally, Otterburn incorporates certain features that further distinguish it from the preferred regional idioms. Foremost among these is the adoption of the *piano nobile* form, which places secondary spaces on the ground level and the principal entry and public spaces on an upper floor. This form effectively produces the appearance of a one-story building, in keeping with the European fashion for "elegant, one-story pavilions, the emphasis being on comfort and privacy rather than magnificence." The *piano nobile* also happens to be well-suited to the Southern climate, offering the house's principal rooms the opportunity to capture any available breezes, while providing the ground floor with space, light, and ventilation not typically obtained in a basement. The form was more commonly used in coastal sections of the Deep South than it was in Virginia during the antebellum period. Otterburn's recessed front and rear porches (or verandas) are also unusual for the region, and are probably derived from Deep South or Caribbean sources. Few non-coastal examples of recessed full-length verandas appear this far north, with the exception of Monterey, built in 1846 in adjoining Roanoke County; and examples of cottages and cottage rows at springs resorts such as Sweet Chalybeate and Yellow Sulphur). Otterburn's design also employs large tripartite, triple-hung sash on the front and rear elevations that were both stylish -- tripartite windows were regularly used for fine Federal houses, and Thomas Jefferson used triple-hung sash at Poplar Forest and Monticello -- and functional, another concession to the Piedmont's warm summer temperatures.¹⁰

Another aspect of Otterburn that merits discussion in this analysis is the use of pattern book sources for the design of specific architectural details. As previously mentioned, pattern books were a ready source of inspiration for builders in the Virginia Piedmont and elsewhere as early as the eighteenth century. Asher Benjamin, one of the most prolific authors of pattern books during the early nineteenth century, was especially popular among the region's builders. *The Practical House Carpenter*, published in 1830, was a principal resource for the architectural detailing on many of Bedford County's finest buildings completed in the 1830s and 1840s, including Avenel, Three Otters, Thomas Chapel, and Bellevue. As previously described, Otterburn also features exterior and interior architectural elements copied or derived from drawings illustrated in this volume. Undoubtedly several local builders had access to the book, and their clients favored its use for its economically executed yet stylish Grecian ornaments. Otterburn also seems to have elements inspired by illustrations in another of Benjamin's popular books, *Practice of Architecture*, published in 1833. Completed by 1843, Otterburn is a relatively early domestic example of the fashionable Greek Revival style in the Virginia Piedmont; the style's greatest popularity was from the late 1840s through

¹⁰ Nichols 1960: 6; DHR file numbers 128-0035, 003-0007, 060-0013.

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the 1850s. This complex house, with layers of classical Roman, Greek, Palladian, and Jeffersonian features, manages to convey in its somewhat-altered form the rich palette of influences available to the sophisticated builders and owners of the antebellum era.¹¹

¹¹ DHR file numbers 141-0001, 009-0031, 009-0178, 009-0003; Benjamin 1830; Benjamin 1833.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (continued)

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of the 15.31-acre tract, shown on the accompanying map derived from Bedford County tax maps, and described in local records as tax parcel number 111-4-B.

Boundary Justification

The 15.31-acre tract being nominated encompasses the house known as Otterburn, the surrounding residential yard, outbuildings, and ornamental garden, and the last portion of agricultural land historically associated with the Donald plantation that has not been subdivided off from the main dwelling.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

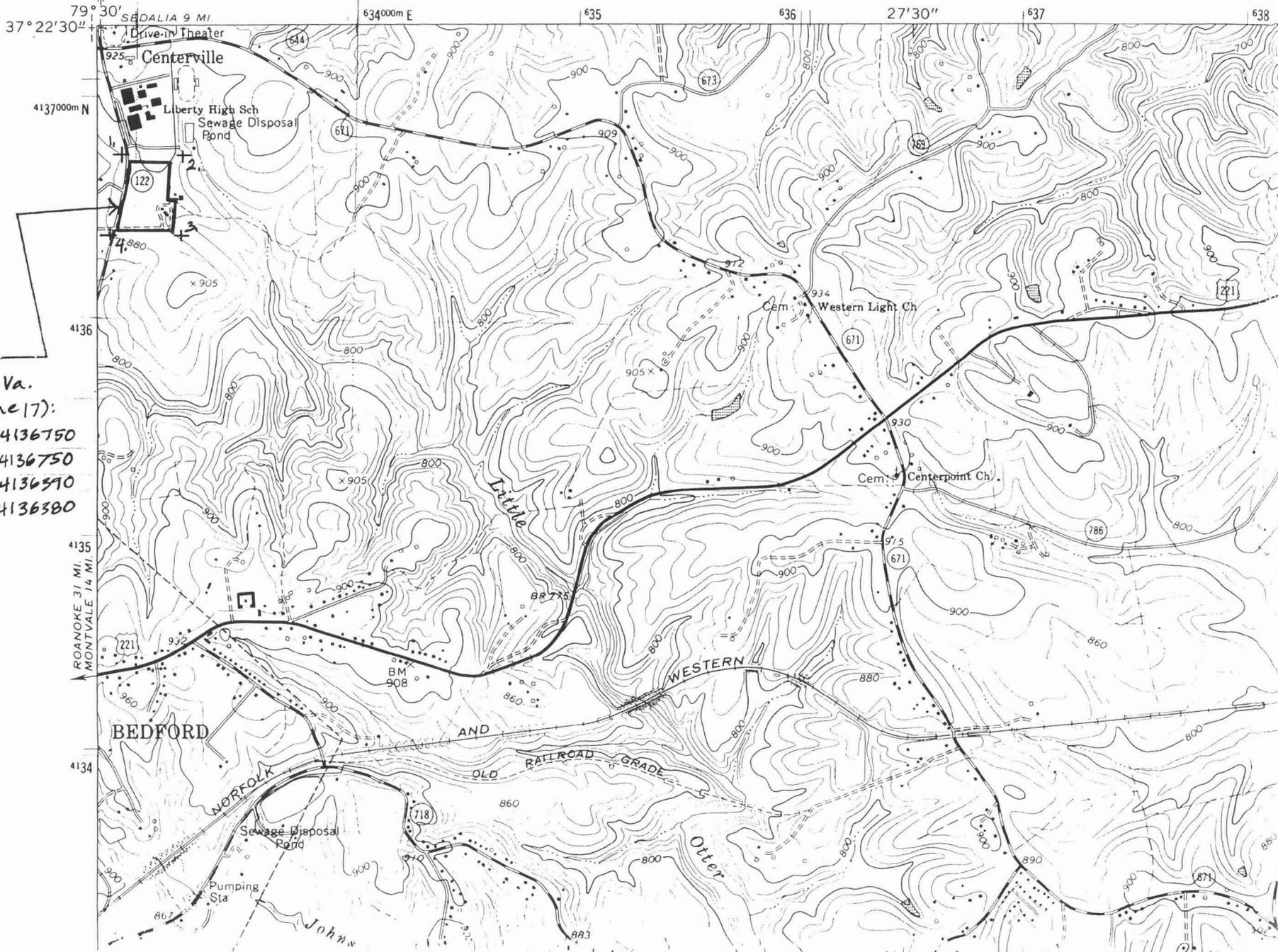
All photographs are of: Otterburn, Big Island Road (VA), Bedford County, Virginia.
DHR File No.: 009-0024
DHR Negative No.: 18707
Credit for all photos: Leslie A. Giles
Date of all photos: April 1998
All negatives filed at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

1. VIEW OF: Front of house, view facing north.
PHOTO 1 of 8
2. VIEW OF: Side and rear of house, view facing southeast.
PHOTO 2 of 8
3. VIEW OF: Detail of rear porch (*original columns and balusters*).
PHOTO 3 of 8
4. VIEW OF: Ground-story stairhall.
PHOTO 4 of 8
5. VIEW OF: Ceiling medallion, stairhall.
PHOTO 5 of 8
6. VIEW OF: Main level east room (parlor), view of ceiling.
PHOTO 6 of 8
7. VIEW OF: Main level west room (dining room); mantel flanked by built-in cabinets.
PHOTO 7 of 8
8. VIEW OF: Outbuilding exterior, view facing northwest
PHOTO 8 of 8

UNITED STATES
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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES

5058 1 NE
(PEAKS OF OTTER)



Otterburn
Bedford Co., Va.
UTM ref.s (zone 17):
1. E632940 N4136750
2. E633210 N4136750
3. E633210 N4136590
4. E632890 N4136380

GOOGLE
USGS