

Virginia Department of Historic Resources PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the district for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the district could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 284-0044
District Name(s): <u>Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District</u>	
District or Selected Building Date(s): <u>1608 to 1958</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post Open to the Public? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Main District Streets and/or Routes: <u>Rappahannock River, U. S. Route 301, U.S. Route 17</u> City: _____ Zip: _____	
County or Ind. City: <u>Caroline, Essex, & King George</u> USGS Quad(s): <u>Port Royal, Rappahannock Academy, Loretto, Rollins Fork</u>	

Physical Character of General Surroundings	
Acreage: <u>6000+/-</u> Setting (choose one): <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor	
Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features/Streetscapes: <u>The potential Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District is a land and water district that includes a linear grouping of historic plantations and farms that developed on the north and south banks of this navigable portion of the Rappahannock River.</u>	
Ownership Categories: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	

General District Information	
What were the historical uses of the resources within the proposed district? Examples include: Dwelling, Store, Barn, etc... <u>farm, dwelling, store, port, church</u>	
What are the current uses? (if other than the historical use) _____	
Architectural styles or elements of buildings within the proposed district:	<u>Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, Ranch, Vernacular</u>
Architects, builders, or original owners of buildings within the proposed district:	<u>Norman Starkweather, Richard and Yelverton Stern</u>
Are there any known threats to this district? <u>sand and gravel extraction, demolition, neglect, development</u>	

General Description of District: (Please describe building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district and a general setting and/or streetscape description.)

This *Preliminary Information Form* incorporates and expands upon an earlier *Preliminary Information Form (PIF)* developed by Land and Community Associates (LCA) for a Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District that the Virginia State Review Board approved in 1990. LCA, at the request of local property owners, has resumed its investigations of a potential district. Virginia Department of Historic Resources staff has recommended submission of a revised PIF to reflect the current potential for a rural historic district based on updated information and current conditions.

The potential district is adjacent to and includes the Rappahannock River in the Port Royal vicinity of Virginia's Northern Neck. The potential Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District is a linear grouping of historic plantations and farms that developed on the north and south banks of this navigable portion of the Rappahannock River for approximately five miles beginning in the west near Berry Plain and Gay Mont and continuing approximately five miles east to Nanzatico and Portobago. The district encompasses parts of Caroline, King George, and Essex Counties, and also includes ports that served the historic agricultural community along the river: Port Royal, which was established as a port in 1652 and which survives today as an incorporated town in Caroline County, as well as the site of Port Conway. U. S. Route 301 extends through the potential district and crosses the Rappahannock River at Port Royal via the James Madison Bridge. U. S. Route 17 intersects with U. S. 301 near the bridge and the Town of Port Royal in Caroline County. This rural district lies within the fertile farmland of the lower basin of the Rappahannock River. The current proposed boundaries reflect the primary interest area of the project sponsors and supporters who live and own property adjacent to the Rappahannock River and its tidal creek tributaries in King George County. This district could be expanded to incorporate a larger or smaller area when a nomination to the National Register is submitted for review and approval.

The original plantations relied on the rich soils of this river valley to produce tobacco as their major agricultural product as well as other crops for their own consumption and some sales and trade. The district includes several notable properties that already are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Individually registered properties include Emmanuel Church, Gay Mont, Woodlawn Historic and Archeological District, Millbank, Nanzatico, Port Royal (Town established 1744), Belle Grove (ca. 1790), and Nanzattico Indian Town Archeological Site (ca. 1650) as well as a National Historic Landmark Camden (1857). Taken together the potential district's properties constitute a significant concentration of agrarian and rural sites, buildings, and structures that are united by a continuity of agricultural and forestall land uses and their physical contributions to the development and evolution of a riverine plantation environment, community, and economy.

Although wharves, docks, and landings punctuate this combination of rural cropland, pastures, and forests, the murky tidal river, and its riverfront and adjacent wetlands and marshes still reflect much of the character observed by Captain John Smith in 1608. Smith's observations provide the first known recorded descriptions of the area, which included Native American settlements that predated Euro-American exploration, settlement, and development. The potential district is located within the boundaries of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail that was established in 2006 as the nation's first water trail. The area still possesses extremely high potential for archaeological yields for both the prehistoric and historic time periods. Two of the twenty silver medallions that the English explorers presented to Native American chiefs were discovered at Camden. Nanzatico, Woodlawn, and Millbank also have yielded significant information in both prehistory and history. Although archaeological investigations have not been conducted within the proposed district as part of the PIF, the potential district has yielded and can be expected to continue to yield archaeological information relating to the material culture related to both prehistoric and historic domestic and agricultural life during the period of significance.

Protective Easements

Conservation or preservation easements protect several properties in the potential district from incompatible development. It is likely that conservation-minded agencies and organizations will acquire additional easements since the potential district is also included within the Army Compatible Use Buffer Partnership's area of interest for Fort A. P. Hill. The partnership is a coalition of agencies and conservation organizations such as the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Conservation Fund, the Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the Northern Neck Land Conservancy and the Virginia Council on Indians that are cooperating with Fort A. P. Hill to prevent incompatible development from occurring on adjacent and nearby lands. The fort is located in Caroline County, near but outside the potential district, and works with the partnership to encourage easement acquisition as a way of avoiding encroaching development that would impede or harm military operations at Fort A. P. Hill. Recently the owners of Camden protected 682 acres with easements initiated through use of this program. The owners of Woodlawn, Gay Mont, Oaken Brow, ClaraDan, and other properties on their own initiatives have also chosen to protect their properties with protective easements. Conservation easements protect a significant portion of the potential district's productive cropland as well as wetland forests, marshland, and the vegetated buffers along the Rappahannock River and its creeks.

Natural and Recreational Values

Vegetation is a mix of native and introduced species, and some landowners are working to eliminate introduced and invasive species to restore native species to their properties. Many historic tree species do survive, notably two ancient cypress trees near the Cleve Wharf that may predate Euro-American exploration. The usual mammal species of the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States exist in this area: deer, fox, raccoons, and other small mammals are readily observed along the river. Bald eagle, osprey, herons, and terns are abundant as are owl species and wild turkey. There are few commercial uses of the river today, but its environs remain important for outdoor recreation, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and hunting. According to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Rappahannock River supports a variety of fish species including alewife, largemouth bass, channel and blue catfish, and white and yellow perch as well as ocean fish such as American shad, blueback herring, and striped bass that return to the Rappahannock's freshwater areas to spawn.

As a result of protective easements and other landowner commitments to land protection, expansive water views still exist both to and from the river. Moreover, views to and from the Rappahannock River are largely unspoiled by non-contributing development. Most significantly, the potential district retains much of its original development pattern of large agricultural holdings, many of which still exist as parcels of several hundred acres. Woodlawn, for example, has essentially the same boundaries as it did historically when Colonel Thomas Turner II acquired and consolidated a plantation of more than 800 acres, and most of the historic houses continue to occupy large parcels in agricultural land uses.

Buildings, Structures, and Clusters

Historic architectural and landscape resources in the potential district are already well known and include Camden, the wooden Italian Villa style house designed by Norris Starkweather of Baltimore; Gay Mont with its documented French-influenced historic garden; Woodlawn with its combination of Georgian, Greek Revival, and Colonial Revival features, Belle Grove and Nanzatico with their wide, elliptical, interior arches and projecting entrance halls; the mid-nineteenth century, Gothic Revival-style, brick Emmanuel Church in Port Conway; the extremely rare and elongated, wood-frame antebellum barn at Port Tobago; and the 1920's Colonial Revival houses at Oaken Brow, Cleve, and Millbank that were rebuilt on the sites of earlier houses that burned. The likelihood of fires started by lightening in this storm-prone area along the river contributed to the rebuilding and renovation of several houses, resulting in a layered landscape where original or earlier foundations may still survive and have been incorporated into a twentieth-century house. Some wooden timbers and other original fabric often have survived and been used in such reconstructions. Nanzatico is an early eighteenth-century house with a distinctive engaged portico that still represents its early design and construction. Originally Belle Grove and Gay Mont were built with style, detail, plan, and finishes

similar to Nanzatico but the early houses on those plantations did not survive. Nanzatico, which was possibly built by Richard and Yelverton Stern, the builders of Gay Mont, is a rare surviving Federal-era house in the potential district. The Nanzatico house and a 13.5 acre curtilage are protected by an easement.

Most houses in the potential district have been enlarged over the years as new owners have added modern conveniences such as bathrooms and interior kitchens as well as enlarged living and sleeping space. Over time some of the properties have decreased in acreage, and some new residences have been built. Canning, for example, which was the original county seat, was divided to create smaller farms. One of those, ClaraDan, was developed as a retirement farm following World War II with a rustic ranch-style house primarily built using salvaged military structures to create a mid-twentieth-century house that reflects the tastes of its post-war owners who had lived in Latin America and California; it is now being managed as a private wildlife preserve and sustainable residence with its easement limiting the extent of human occupation. Other newer houses on smaller parcels have been developed with a more suburban or waterfront recreational attitude. Such development does not occur frequently but does occur along some roads and waterfront areas. Several properties are owned and managed as second homes or retirement homes although a number of properties such as Canning and Oaken Brow remain working and productive farms. A few post-1960 houses that occur within the district have been developed to support rural and agricultural life and occupations.

Most historic properties retain some clusters of agricultural and domestic use outbuildings or have discernible and documented or potential archaeological sites where outbuildings are known to have existed. The National Register nominations for Woodlawn and Millbank both document these characteristic historic clusters of outbuildings and evidence of them survive at both properties and at many others in the potential district. Surviving plantation properties still demonstrate the way that plantations were organized and developed around a principal domestic cluster of main house with associated outbuildings. Historically, such a cluster included kitchen, laundry, slave dwellings, a springhouse, an icehouse, a smokehouse or meathouse; today the cluster has often evolved to include a garage for multiple vehicles, a swimming pool or pond, pool house, and possibly a tennis court. Farm roads and lanes connect domestic building clusters with agricultural fields, the river and possibly creeks, and the woodlands that generally provide property edges. Barns, implement sheds, and tenant or manager residences usually occur at some distance from the central domestic cluster, but are accessible by farm roads or lanes.

Many of the district houses, such as Camden and Millbank, were sited to provide views of the Rappahannock River, which was an important commercial corridor for the potential district's historic plantations. These houses as well as other historic houses still are quite visible from the river. Riverfront plantations developed their own wharves and landings, several of which still exist, and also depended on the river's commercial ports, particularly Port Royal and Port Conway. Today there are also modern recreational docks, duck blinds, post-1960 buildings and structures, and sand and gravel extraction facilities that would be considered non-contributing features within a historic district. Traveling along the Rappahannock today, active farming operations, retirement farms, weekend farms, and estate farms as well as substantial areas of forest and recreational fishing and camping uses are evident. In general, the potential district retains substantial integrity for its period of significance.

The historic town of Port Royal, an impressive collection of approximately thirty-five eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings laid out in a linear, grid pattern along town streets, still forms an important edge along the Rappahannock River although its wharves are no longer visible at low tide. Port Royal and Port Conway developed because of their excellent natural harbors with Port Royal developing with all the characteristics of a small port town and still quite visible from the river today. Port Conway, which has almost disappeared from view, was a secondary port that never developed into a town as large as Port Royal although it was laid out in lots and continued to function as a community into the 1920s. A ferry provided the only reliable way to traverse the Rappahannock River between Port Conway and Port Royal until the twentieth century when vehicular traffic increased to such an extent that constructing a bridge over the Rappahannock River became essential.

Response to Natural Features

Natural and human-influenced landscape practices in agriculture and forestry as well as the outstanding collection of buildings of local, state, and national significance combine to create a rural built environment with few parallels in Virginia. The Rappahannock River is the most pristine and undeveloped large tidal river in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. To a large extent, the present land use pattern along the river is the result of the area's early land use history with the potential district's natural features—rivers, fertile agricultural land, forests, wetlands—and historic architectural resources representing three full centuries of Euro-American occupation and adaptation in an area where Native American occupation and use were previously well established. The existing rural landscape includes known prehistoric occupation sites, historic domestic sites of houses destroyed by fire, wind, time, and neglect, historic field systems and natural and constructed boundaries, and irrigation and drainage ditch networks, and farm roads and lanes.

Response to natural features, particularly use of the river for transportation, development of plantation and farm wharves, and the use of the district's fertile land for agriculture influenced the linear development of river-oriented plantations and its agrarian land use pattern of large agricultural holdings and dispersed but substantial residences. Major riverfront houses orient with their earliest facades facing the river, traditionally the major circulation network. Virginia planters developed their plantations on land above the river banks and planned architecturally significant houses to be sited on land with naturally flowing water springs and on higher elevations safe from flooding. Agriculture and forestry remain the district's major land uses today, and the characteristic land use pattern that persists is the legacy of the historic land ownership patterns that are still quite evident. The use of wetlands for agriculture influenced land use and the development pattern of the district. In fact, much of the land that was cultivated historically was very wet much of the time. To increase the amount of agriculturally productive land, wetlands were drained by creating ditches that were developed primarily with the labor of enslaved individuals. Water drained from cropped fields into the ditches, a process that resulted in eliminating standing water from productive fields, and then directing the ditch water toward the creek tributaries of the Rappahannock River. The ditch systems were quite substantial with the ditches at Woodlawn, for example, ranging in depth from approximately one foot to three feet and in width from three feet to six feet. With the end of slavery and changing technologies and increased use of machinery, land use evolved with some areas that were once cultivated reverting to wetland forests. The original drainage ditches are still visible in wooded areas of Woodlawn and some other properties.

Land Use, Vegetation, and Spatial Organization

Despite the decline of river commerce, an outstanding assemblage of nineteenth-century plantation houses and early twentieth-century estate houses still survive today and enjoy a scenic and mostly unspoiled agrarian setting. Centuries-old land use patterns are still evident and agriculture remains the major land use. Ownership patterns in the potential district have been stable with large land holdings remaining intact through subsequent generations, and traditional fences or tree line boundaries still occur in many places. In some places, red cedars have grown along fallen or vanished fence lines and maintain historic field subdivisions. Aerial photographic investigations and comparisons with historic imagery reveal that some fields have endured with much the same configuration for almost a century. Today's crops are not the historic tobacco, but primarily soybeans, corn, and wheat, and at Oakenbrow—spinach. The result is that the historic agrarian landscape remains visually apparent, retaining a considerable degree of integrity.

Orchards, however, appear to have been more predominant historically, at least in the early twentieth century and were an important vegetative feature of most properties. An early twentieth-century letter quoted by Beverly C. Pratt mentions an orchard of five hundred trees at Camden. Woodlawn also had extensive orchards, and some remnants still survive. Most properties historically grazed a variety of livestock on pastureland, including cattle, horses, mules, sheep, and pigs. Some properties still have active pastures although most do not, perhaps out of concern for water quality in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Although the area's river and area creeks provided the best opportunities for travel within and to and from plantations and ports, a series of farm roads and lanes developed to provide a means of land-based transportation. Roads between properties also developed on the elevations safest from flooding except where providing access to riverside wharves. Most properties retain roads and lanes or at least traces of them that extend from fields and barn sites to water landing areas and farm wharves where tobacco and other agricultural products could be loaded on to cargo vessels. The locations of some of these farm wharves are still quite evident today.

Conclusion

Recent investigations of both the Rappahannock River and its adjacencies within the potential district reveal a riverscape and landscape that both retain integrity for the period 1608-1958. The canopy of primarily indigenous vegetation overhanging the river banks, the intersecting creeks that flow into the Rappahannock, and the abundance of waterfowl and other wildlife visible from the river and its edges provide a timeless quality to the riverscape that evoke the kinds of images, sounds, and feelings that existed during the 1608 exploration of John Smith, in the plantation era, and throughout the twentieth century.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the proposed district. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Please list all sources of information. Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

The Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District possesses significance in both history and prehistory and has the ability to represent several of the ten thematic areas established by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. These thematic areas of significance could include but not be limited necessarily to transportation, commerce, agriculture, and residential architecture. At present, the project does not include an archaeology component, but existing information has led to the assumption that the district is also likely to possess significance in prehistory.

Criterion A. The potential Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District is significant in state and local history under National Register Criterion A because it is representative of the agrarian economy that has characterized life in this portion of the Lower Rappahannock River Basin and is associated with the following:

- Native American occupation and settlement in the vicinity of the Rappahannock River,
- the explorations of Captain John Smith and other early explorers and settlers,
- the development of a plantation economy and culture in the Rappahannock River Basin in the seventeenth century and its evolution during the subsequent three centuries,
- the role of river transportation in establishing and supporting agriculture by providing access to major markets based on tobacco and international trade,
- international commercial ports in the pre-canal and railroad era,
- Civil War engagements and local effects in the lower Rappahannock River Basin,
- the escape attempt of President Lincoln's assassin John Wilkes Booth who crossed the Rappahannock River using the ferry at Port Conway, and
- several significant and prominent historic Northern Neck Virginia families including the Carter, Strother, Turner, Conway, Fitzhugh, Pratt, Skinker, and other families that produced prominent citizens and landowners for more than three centuries, creating an interrelated kinship network significant in local politics, commerce, and society.

Furthermore, the potential district represents not only the beginnings of exploration, agrarian life, commerce, and domestic occupation in the Port Royal vicinity from 1608 but also the continuum of Northern Neck agricultural life and culture that represents the persistence and adaptation of its early plantation development pattern and its subsequent subdivision and evolution into smaller agricultural and residential parcels that reflect changes in rural life and agricultural and forestry practices. This potential district represents the historical influence and interrelationship of agriculture and transportation on the settlement and economy of the Northern Neck of Virginia. Further analysis may reveal national significance for the district because of its association with early exploration.

Criterion C. The potential district is also significant under Criterion C because of its outstanding collection of historic Rappahannock River houses and associated structures in a largely intact agrarian setting that retains the distinctive characteristics of a rural historic district because of the integrity of its continuous agricultural land use, agricultural clusters, and spatial organization.

- The potential district embodies the distinctive characteristics of several periods of construction, several architectural styles, possesses high artistic values, and also represents significant and distinguishable buildings and landscapes, which although they individually may lack distinction, assume significance as a group.
- More specifically, architecturally significant houses such as Camden, Nanzatico, Woodlawn, and others exemplify the contributions of the distinguished landowner families that established an important architectural legacy in the potential district. The potential district's architectural traditions reflect the social and cultural values, tastes, and attitudes of the planter class living along the Rappahannock River in the Northern Neck.
- These traditions persisted and endured well into the twentieth century as smaller farms and less embellished houses developed using the same or similar historic principles and practices.

- The district retains historic land uses, land use patterns, vegetation, boundary demarcations, and circulation networks that represent the potential district's landscape from the seventeenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

Criterion D. Finally, while archaeology is not the focus of these investigations, the potential district is likely to possess significance under Criterion D as a district likely to continue to reveal important information about prehistoric and historic life and culture in this vicinity. Future investigations could reveal significant information about wharves, landings, rolling roads, and other commercial and agricultural features related to agricultural commerce and trade. Specifically, the potential district includes

- known archaeological sites associated with riverine/estuarine areas by later prehistoric Native American peoples,
- sites that may correspond with settlements depicted on Captain John Smith's map of 1612,
- known historic archaeological sites that reveal information concerning all aspects of antebellum domestic and agricultural life, and
- the potential to continue to yield significant information related to prehistoric and historic material culture.

Significance Summary. The area has yielded and is expected to continue to yield archeological evidence that supports the John Smith accounts and the existence of prehistoric life and culture along the Rappahannock. The potential district possesses extremely high potential for archaeological yields for both the prehistoric and historic time periods. As work progresses towards the goal of nomination, a historical period of significance of 1608 to 1958 will be explored, analyzed, and evaluated. This period would cover the historical period that begins with Captain John Smith's river travel in this vicinity and concludes with the completion of ClaraDan, a twentieth-century Rappahannock River house and farm that represents the continuity and evolution of agrarian life in the potential district.

Brief Historical Background.

The district's natural features and historic architectural resources represent more than four centuries of human occupation and adaptation. The district's Rappahannock River, creeks, springs, wetlands, fertile land, and forests supported human life and activity, first for native Americans and later for the Europeans who took advantage of the navigable river and fertile agricultural land to establish plantations that produced marketable crops, primarily tobacco, that could be transported by ship to other markets. Captain John Smith traveled along this stretch of the Rappahannock in 1608, exploring it and recording Native American settlements he encountered in the area.

When Captain John Smith traveled through this potential historic district, it was well known to Native Americans who lived and visited the area, often relying on the abundance of the lower Rappahannock for fishing, hunting, wild rice, cattails, and water lilies. Included within the John Smith National Historic Trail, the potential district's history is intertwined with the early exploration of Virginia. Local names such as Dogue and Port Tobago continue to reflect the rich heritage of the district's first occupants who are well represented in the archaeological record. The 1612 Captain John Smith map of Native American settlements shows settlements in the proposed district. As documented through the DHR archaeological site inventory files and in particular through the Camden National Register nomination archaeological addendum, the district possesses extremely high potential for both the prehistoric and historic time periods. A great number of sites are listed in the inventory although only Camden has been intensively surveyed.

With the availability of transportation along the river corridor, the Rappahannock valley developed early in colonial history according to the land grant system, primarily as large plantations punctuated by ports where goods were warehoused and shipped. Much of this colonial land pattern still exists with both large plantation houses and remnants of once-dynamic ports, wharves, and landings still apparent along this portion of the lower Rappahannock River. Ferry crossings such as the one between Woodlawn and Port Conway on the King George County side of the river and at Camden and Port Royal on the Caroline County side allowed interaction and commerce between both the north and south sides of the river. Despite its width and depth, the Rappahannock did not divide the agrarian valley but rather provided the basis for its economy

and provided the incentive for ferry crossings to early warehouses that developed into a thriving river port economy.

Early settlers were drawn to the Rappahannock's rich soils, and excellent natural harbors for the sailing ships that could transport planters' tobacco to England and the Caribbean. In addition, the area provided non-agricultural entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in the sawmills, carpentry, and shipwright operations that developed in association with developing trade opportunities based on river transportation. A number of ships used Port Royal as their homeport, and the town with its excellent harbor enjoyed a prosperous tobacco trade with strong commercial ties to Glasgow, London, and Bristol by providing goods from Europe, the West Indies, and North Africa to local merchants and their clients who prospered from the tobacco trade. Port Royal, which was once the only chartered town in Caroline County was settled in 1652 by John Catlett and his half brother, Ralph Rowzee who patented 400 acres. The later inclusion of the owners of Walsingham, Woodlawn, Belle Grove, Nanzatico, Camden, Oaken Brow, Portobago, Blandfield, and Cleve plantations as original trustees of the town of Port Royal underscores the importance of the interrelationship between the port town and nearby plantations. The town grew in prominence and prosperity with the establishment of a ferry to cross the Rappahannock and development of tobacco warehouses.

The historic familial associations for this potential district are as wide and deep as the river itself, and just as central to its significance. The prominent Turner family, for example, has been associated for more than three centuries with at least six properties, including Nanzatico, Woodlawn, Walsingham, and Camden, in the potential district. The Turners, like many district families, were linked with other district families by kinship and/or marriage. Colonel Thomas Turner II of Woodlawn Plantation was a typically prominent Northern Neck planter in the early eighteenth century. He served in the House of Burgesses and as King George County clerk of the court and justice of the peace. The Turner family retained ownership of Woodlawn for several generations, and Camden was built for a Turner bride. William Carter Pratt had Camden built for his young wife Eliza Hooe Turner, who had grown up at Woodlawn opposite the Camden property and reportedly did not "want to live in someone else's old house."³ *Places I Have Known Along the Rappahannock River* by Caroline County native Beverly Crump Pratt who grew up at Camden illuminates the complicated familial relationships of kinship and marriage of the potential district's traditional Northern Neck families. Pratt covers an area along the Rappahannock that is only slightly larger than this proposed district. Pratt's own genealogy and anecdotal approach to history illustrate the complex and persistent familial links with virtually all of the historic places within these boundaries. Other families with significant associations with this potential district include the Carter, Conway, Fitzhugh, Page, Randolph, Skinker, Strother, and Wormeley families who developed, enlarged, and lived at the potential district's plantations and farms. President James Madison was born in 1751 in a house that is no longer extant but that was located at the current Belle Grove, a property that was once owned by Madison's mother's family, the Conways.

These families and the plantations and plantation economy they created depended on the labor of the original system of indentured servitude that allowed free passage to Europeans willing to work for a set period of years with the opportunity to start new lives in Virginia as farmers or trades people and eventually on the permanent enslavement of Africans brought to Virginia. All of the prominent planters of this district were slave owners and it is assumed that future research in support of a nomination will reveal significant information related to the African American experience in the lower Rappahannock.

Although this potential district was not directly affected by large-scale fighting during the Civil War, there were frequent skirmishes in this area near Fredericksburg, which figured prominently in the war and shelling of Union gunboats resulted in the destruction of the original Italianate tower of the house at Camden. During the Civil War, Union Army engineers built a floating wharf for gunboats in the middle of the Rappahannock River. An 1864 Timothy H. O'Sullivan photograph depicts transports being loaded from a pontoon bridge as part of the Grant's Wilderness Campaign.⁴ King George County's significant Confederate spy network has been implicated in aiding John Wilkes Booth on his escape from Washington, D. C following the shooting of Abraham Lincoln. Booth, in his escape attempt, took the ferry from Port Conway to Port Royal, associating

this rural district with Lincoln's notorious assassin. The Civil War marked a turning point in the lives and fortunes of the lower Rappahannock vicinity, ending the potential district's system of slavery, but not its rural agrarian way of life.

Even after the Civil War and with the increasing state and national dependence on railroads to transport both passengers and cargo, the lower Rappahannock's population, farms, and businesses continued to depend on river transportation. The area's extensive wetlands, marshes and low elevations made land transportation less dependable than traveling by river and creek. It was not until well into the twentieth century that land transportation became the preferred transportation mode in this area. As opportunities for land transportation increased in other areas of the state following the Civil War, the district and, indeed its region, declined in commercial and transportation significance while major industrial cities with rail connections developed and rose to prominence elsewhere in the state. Without the financial and technological capacity to create bridges to cross the wide expanses of the Rappahannock River in the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution bypassed the lower Rappahannock, leaving the potential district with an economy and way of life based on local agriculture, fishing, and forestry. With the era of highly connected international trade ended, the area became much more physically isolated than it had been historically. Port Conway all but disappeared and Port Royal, survived largely intact, but gradually became primarily a residential community. Area families continued to depend on the river for essential goods through the early twentieth century. Steamboats transported commercial goods from Baltimore to Fredericksburg, making stops at local wharves and docks on the Rappahannock along the way to provide furniture, china, salt, sugar, and other goods not produced or available locally.ⁱⁱⁱ The river also provided entertainment opportunities in the early twentieth century when the James Adams Floating Theatre began to travel the Rappahannock each summer stopping at Port Royal to provide three-to-six nights of theatrical productions that became the highlight of summer activities. Some area residents still fondly recall the summer repertoire theatre events.

The area gradually made the transition to automotive transportation although residents still frequently travel by water to visit friends and relatives and even to travel to Fredericksburg for dinner or other activities. The completion of the first James Madison Bridge on U. S. 301 in 1934 ended the ferry service between King George County at Port Conway and Caroline County at Port Royal; with anticipated completion of the bridge, schooner service to Baltimore and Norfolk ceased in 1932, ending a traditional transportation link that had existed since 1828. When U.S. 301 was upgraded in the 1950s, a small commercial strip of motels, restaurants, and service stations developed along its route through Port Royal, but the strip declined with the opening of Interstate 95, which diverted most of the north-south through-travel away from U.S. 301. The original James Madison Bridge was replaced with the current bridge in 1980.

Family ties still endure within the district. At least six generations of the same family have lived continuously at Camden, which remains in Pratt family ownership, but many new landowners have invested in the district over the years. The Sursock family, relatives of the Aga Khan, the current owners of Woodlawn and Walsingham, like the Pratt family on the opposite side of the river at Camden, have ensured the preservation of those historic properties through historic rehabilitations, protective easements, land conservation practices, preservation of endangered species, and agricultural management. U. S. Senator Mark Warner and Lisa Coulis spend substantial amounts of time at their Rappahannock Bend farm in the King George portion of the potential district and the site of the Senator's annual fall pig roast, which is a popular political and social event. Gail Wertz and Andrew Ball have purchased and rehabilitated Millbank, the historic family seat of the Strother family, which was owned by Admiral John J. Ballentine, one of several military officers who retired to the area following World War II. Elena Ellis, who owns ClaraDan her childhood home of the 1950s and 1960s, manages her riverfront property with protective easements, wildlife conservation efforts, and native species reforestation, and reinitiated this project with the goal of eventually nominating this district to the National Register. She exemplifies the continuity of life in the district with her detailed knowledge of the river, the land, and their value as both natural and cultural resources.

Today in 2009, this potential Greater Port Royal Rural Historic District remains an excellent example of a rural landscape with a heritage of Native American and colonial European settlement, outstanding

historic architecture, largely unspoiled natural beauty, associations with historic river commerce, and the potential to yield even more significant information in the future related to the this portion of the Rappahannock River's history and prehistory.

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APPENDICES

- 1) List of Government Officials
- 2) Map of Potential Historic District
- 3) USGS Map of Potential Historic District Boundaries
- 4) Photograph List
- 5) Digital Photographs
- 6) Black and White Photographs

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)			
Mr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>		
Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	Genevieve P. Keller	Land and Community Associates
		(Name)	(Firm)
P.O. Box 92	Charlottesville	VA	22902
(Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)
Genevieve.keller@gmail.com		434 825-2973	
(Email Address)		(Daytime telephone including area code)	
Applicant's Signature:		Date: 7/14/2009	

Notification			
In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the department to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.			
See Appendix 1			
Mr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>	
		(Name)	(Position)
		(Locality)	(Address)
(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this district.
 Landowners were interested in reviving and pursuing a path toward National Register nomination for this district. Their intention is to support local planning and zoning efforts to keep this area rural. In addition, they were becoming concerned by the possibility of additional sand and gravel permitting and the potential for new residential and commercial development that would be incompatible with the rural character of the area.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes No x
 Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes No x

Notification (Cont'd)
 Mr. Travis Quesenberry, County Administrator
 County of King George
 10459 Courthouse Drive Suite 200
 King George, VA 22485
 (540) 775-9181

Mr. David Whitlow
 County Administrator
 County of Essex
 P.O. Box 1079
 8/4/2009

Tappahannock, VA 22560
(804) 443-4331

Mr. Percy C. Ashcroft, County Administrator
County of Caroline
P.O. Box 447
Bowling Green, Virginia 22427
(804) 633-5380

Endnotes

- ⁱ Beverly C. Pratt, *Places I Have Known along the Rappahannock River*. (2005) vii.
- ⁱⁱ www.shorpy.com/files/images/01810u.preview.jpg. March 2009.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Beverly C. Pratt, *Places I Have Known along the Rappahannock River*. (2005) iv.