

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)	
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The plantation house at Shirley is a large, almost square, two and-a-half story brick building with a mansard roof, dormers, and two interior chimneys. On both the land and river fronts of the house are nearly identical tetrastyle, two-story pedimented porticoes. It is thought that these porticoes are part of the original design of the house, but that they have either been altered or rebuilt in the early 19th century. The portion of the facades covered by the porticoes is stuccoed. Shirley's brickwork is of the finest quality, being laid in Flemish bond with rubbed brick dressings around the windows. Other architectural features on the exterior include a water table, belt course, and fine modillion cornice.

The outstanding feature of Shirley's notable interior is the superb three-story staircase with its walnut balustrade and scrolled soffits. All the first-floor rooms are fully paneled, the paneling being among the finest surviving from the colonial period. A wealth of rich architectural ornament is found in all the principal rooms, particularly the drawing room.

The complex of buildings making up the forecourt includes two L-shaped stables flanking the north entrance to the courtyard and the kitchen and overseer's house which enclose the south side of the court. The latter two buildings are two-story brick structures with steep gable roofs. An early brick dovecote stands to the north of the courtyard while the main house terminates the court at the south end.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Political	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric	Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Phi-		Other (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic	Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	losophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Agriculture	Invention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Art	Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Commerce	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Human-		_____	
Communications	Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	itarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Conservation	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theater	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The present Shirley Plantation is part of a 9,376 acre tract patented by Edward Hill in 1660. The name "Shirley" probably derived from Sir Thomas Sherley, the father-in-law of Lord Delaware who was one of the first owners of this property as early as 1613. The property descended to the heirs of Edward Hill, and finally to his great-granddaughter, Elizabeth Hill, who married John Carter of Corotoman in 1723. This marriage established the Hill-Carter line.

The present plantation house stood complete in 1770, and has remained the seat of the Carter family ever since. Anne Hill Carter, mother of Robert E. Lee, was born at Shirley in 1773, and Lee himself was a frequent visitor there.

Besides being one of Virginia's largest and finest colonial mansions, the Shirley plantation house offers a rare insight into the life of a distinguished colonial family. The main fabric of the house has remained virtually unchanged and has held the possessions of the family for over two centuries. Most of these possessions, including fine silver, china, furniture and portraits, are found in the house today.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

