

WLR - 1/15/74

NRHP - 7/13/74

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia
COUNTY: Charles City
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Belle Air

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
.4 miles North of Route 5, .4 miles East of intersection with Route 155

CITY OR TOWN:  
Charles City vicinity

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
(First) Thomas N. Downing

STATE: Virginia	CODE: 51	COUNTY: Charles City	CODE: 039
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	house museum	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Walter O. Major

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Belle Air

CITY OR TOWN:  
Charles City

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Charles City County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Charles City

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D. C.

CODE:  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia

COUNTY: Charles City

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

I. General Statement:

A. Architectural character: Belle Air is a rare and well-preserved example of a William and Mary period vernacular farmhouse and shows the beginnings of a more formalized eighteenth century design, while retaining earlier features including the distinctive exposed framing of the interior. The late-eighteenth century additions detract very little from the fine interior character of the older section.

B. Condition of the fabric: Good.

II. Description of the Exterior:

A. Overall dimensions: Belle Air originally possessed a symmetrical facade five bays long. Around 1800, three bays were added to the west end with a door in the western-most bay, giving the house its present unsymmetrical appearance. The ell is also an addition.

B. Foundations: Brick in English bond.

C. Wall Construction: White painted weatherboard, probably circa 1800 replacement, of the original material.

D. Porches: Each of the two front entrances is approached by a low modern brick stoop and a square platform. A shed porch shelters the end of the ell.

E. Chimneys: The original chimneys were interior-end chimneys with exposed brick in Flemish bond in the gables, square stacks and corbelled caps. The west chimney was enclosed in the addition and now appears as a center chimney. The east chimney has been altered.

F. Openings:

1. Doorways and doors: The two south doorways date from the time of the additions and consist of a rectangular transom with a double row of square lights over the six-panel door. The door is flanked by engaged piers with inset panels and molded caps and bases; the transom is flanked by similar stubby piers set on the longer ones below. The doorway at the rear of the western addition has architrave trim.
2. Windows: The nine-over-nine sash windows have square sills, and a band of plain trim with a slight molding at the edge.

G. Roof: Originally covered with wood shingles, the steeply pitched gable roof now has asbestos shingles. The irregularly spaced dormers have gable roofs with pedimented ends, six-over-six sash, and probably date from the 1800 period, although there may have been dormers on the house originally. There is evidence that the earliest portion had a jerkin-headroof.

III. Description of the Interior:

A. Floor Plan: The original section of Belle Air features a typical eighteenth century Virginia plan, a center passage with a room on either side. A single room has been added to the west, and the ell is made up of two additional rooms.

B. Stairway: The important stair is original, and ascends in the center passage. The two-run, closed-string stair features heavy turned balusters, a simple square newel, and a molded rail.

C. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings have been recently plastered, and are either painted or left natural.

D. Doors and Doorways: The raised six-panel doors are surrounded by architrave trim.

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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STATE	
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Charles City	
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(Number all entries)

7.

E. Trim: The exposed framing in the old section of the house constitutes the significant part of the interior woodwork. The corner and intermediate posts, the plates and the girts are all partially exposed about two inches and exhibit chamfers with lamb's tongue terminals. The summer beams are similarly exposed, are beaded on the edges and have recessed panels on the soffits. The baseboards are beaded. The chair rail consists of a symmetrically molded strip applied to a beaded board.

F. Heating: Although the house was originally heated only by fireplaces, central heating was added during the 1950's renovations. The present mantels are of the Federal type with projecting central frieze blocks, pilasters framing the opening, and reeded decoration. The hearths have been rebuilt.

IV. Site:

A. General Setting: Belle Air is set on a gentle rise near Charles City Court House, faces east and is approached by a country lane from Route 5. Another rise between the highway and the house screens the house from the road and enhances the rural quality of the setting. The grounds feature well-kept lawns and huge shade trees south of the house, and a formal herb garden to the north.

B. Outbuildings: Outbuildings include a frame smokehouse with a pyramidal roof, and a frame kitchen with a gable roof and a central chimney.

G.P.H.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Cary Carson, "Settlement Patterns and Vernacular Architecture in Seventeenth-Century Tidewater Virginia", unpublished Master's thesis, University of Delaware, June, 1969.  
 House and Garden, September, 1964, pp. 180, 223-225.  
 "Living with Antiques", Antiques Magazine, February, 1965, pp.208-211.  
 Time, July 10, 1964, pp. 56-59.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	37° 21' 07"	77° 04' 02"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	37° 21' 07"	77° 03' 19"				
SE	37° 20' 30"	77° 03' 19"				
SW	37° 20' 30"	77° 04' 02"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 135 acres.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE: January, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 221 Governor Street

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>    State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>    Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____                  Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Director                  Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission                  Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____                  Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____                  Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**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)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

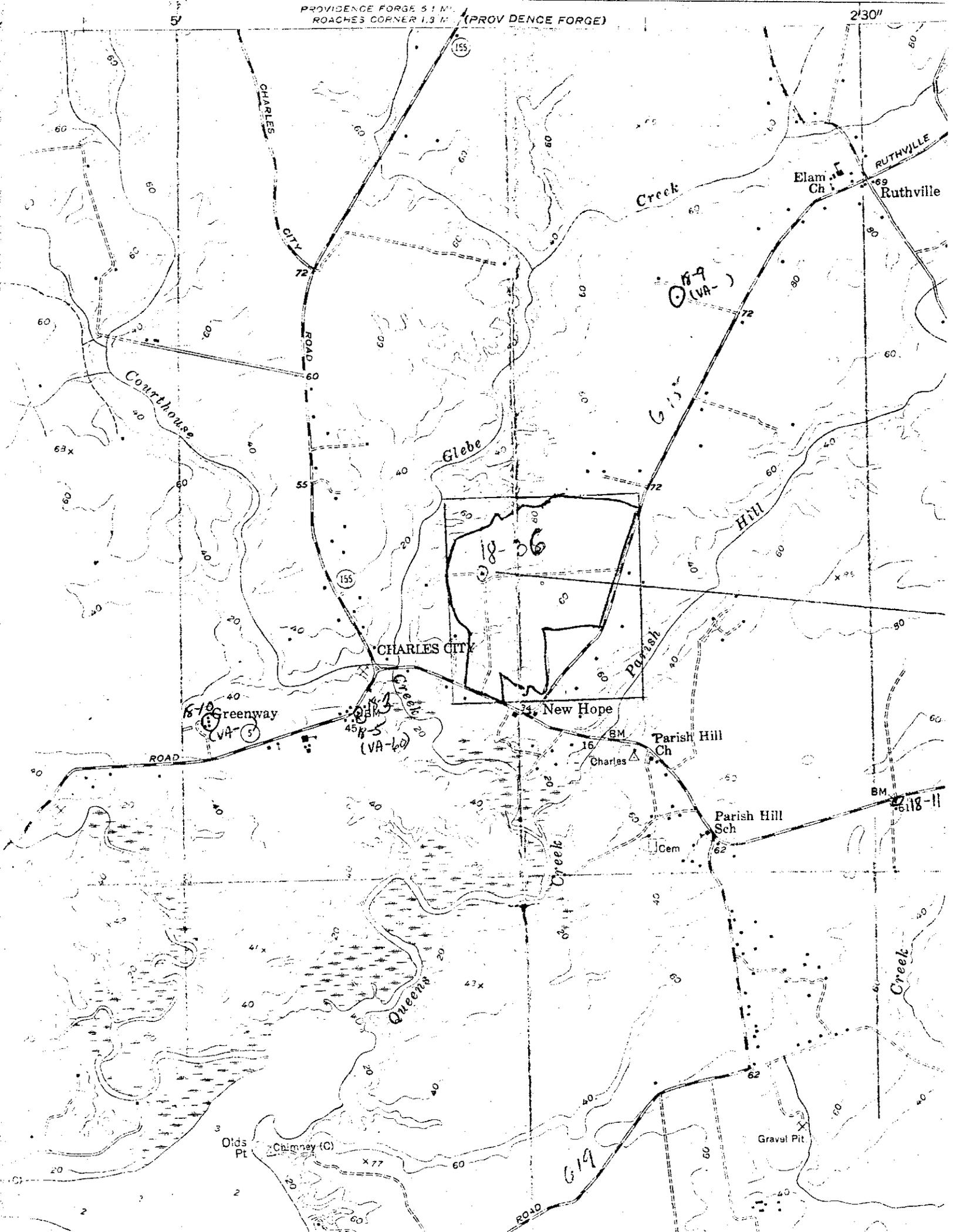
Belle Air is a rare surviving example of William and Mary period vernacular architecture. In its structural system and details the house well illustrates the transition from seventeenth century Virginia building methods to eighteenth century ones. Reminiscent of the earlier period is the rare exposed framing on the interior and the heavy Jacobean style closed string stair. On the other hand, the (originally) symmetrical facade, center-passage plan, and double-hung sash windows are features more closely associated with eighteenth century building. In addition to its architectural distinction, Belle Air is the oldest remaining dwelling on historic Route 5, the scenic plantation road connecting Williamsburg and Richmond.

The origins of the Belle Air property are traced back to Colonel Thomas Stegge II, William Byrd I's uncle, who inherited his father's Virginia mercantile enterprise and James River plantation in 1653. He settled on the 1700 acre plantation, and constructed a house there by 1655. Lieutenant Colonel David Clarke purchased a part of Stegge's land in 1662, and had his dwelling, sometimes referred to as 'Windsor', completed by 1665. Clarke, or his descendants, probably built the present house at the turn of the century and later named it Belle Air. Because of the destruction of the colonial records of Charles City County, the exact construction date has not been determined.

Hamlin Willcox acquired the property in 1800, and it was probably at this time that the house was renovated and the west room added. Belle Air remained in the Willcox family until 1945. In the 1950's each section of the house was restored under the ownership of Mr. and Mrs. Walter O. Major. Belle Air now serves as Mrs. Major's home and as an historic house museum.

CL

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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155

RUTHVILLE  
Ruthville

Elam Ch

Creek

CHARLES CITY

CITY

ROAD

Courthouse

Glebe

18-9 (VA-)

613

Hill

18-36

CHARLES CITY

New Hope

Parish

18-10 (VA-5)  
Greenway

18-5 (VA-6)

Parish Hill Ch

Charles

ROAD

18-118-11

Parish Hill Sch

Cem

Creek

Queen

Creek

Olds Pt

Chimney (C)

Gravel Pit

619

ROAD