

VLR 12/4/02
NR 5122/03

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

**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 16A). 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 William Gunnell House
other names/site number Gunnell's Run/VDHR File No. 029-109

2. Location

street & number 600 Insbruck Avenue not for publication
city or town _____ vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA county Fairfax code 059 zip code 22066

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.)

[Signature] _____ Date 4/4/03

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
State or Federal agency and bureau

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 Date

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State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>8</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

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

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of a multiple property listing.) **N/A**

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE

Sub: single dwelling

secondary structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC

COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: single dwelling

professional/designer's

studio/secondary structure

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL / Postmedieval English

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS / Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

roof ASBESTOS

walls WOOD/Weatherboard

other/chimneys/STONE/Sandstone

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

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8. Statement of Significance
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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.)

- 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 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance ca.1750-1935

Significant Dates ca.1750

1791

1933

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) William Gunnell III

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning
Fairfax County Library, Virginia Room
Fairfax & Loudoun County Circuit Courts Archives
Virginia State Library, Colonial Records Project

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 10.0 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	18	302040	4319520	3	18	302260	4319450
2	18	302150	4319620	4	18	302100	4319400

See continuation sheet.

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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.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Tanya Edwards Beauchamp/architectural historian & Karen Washburn/
historian
organization Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Associates date 07/09/02
street & number 930 Leigh Mill Road telephone 703-759-3796
city or town Great Falls state VA zip code 22066

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Additional Documentation
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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 John C. Beyer and Geraldine E. Beyer

street & number 600 Innsbruck Avenue telephone 703-759-6657
city or town Great Falls state VA zip code 22066

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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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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The William Gunnell House is located on a gently rolling ten-acre parcel at 600 Innsbruck Avenue in Great Falls, Virginia. This is a semi-rural area between the Grange Park on Georgetown Pike (VA Route 193) and the Potomac River in the area immediately above the Great Falls of the Potomac River. Agricultural land during the entire approximately 185-year period of significance (ca. 1750-1935), the area was zoned for five-acre single-family residential use and subdivided in the 1970s. It is now a rapidly-developing neighborhood of up-scale residences. Innsbruck Avenue, a paved private road, was originally the entrance road to the Gunnell property and now serves these residences. The Gunnell House itself is located on a tree-lined, crushed stone pipestem off Innsbruck Avenue. It curves discreetly behind the house. Sited on high ground amidst diverse and meticulously maintained gardens, it is sequestered from encroaching development by distance and mature boxwood plantings.

The William Gunnell House, as it exists today, includes an eighteenth-century frame dwelling built in two stages, together with its compatible and unobtrusive twentieth-century additions. The eighteenth-century section, representing both Colonial and post-Revolution styles of building, dominates. It is rectangular in plan, 1½ stories high with irregular bays and three entrances reflecting its long history. Rescued in gravely deteriorated condition in 1933, it was carefully restored and rehabilitated in the preservation manner of the Colonial Revival. The roof was raised by extending the facades slightly somewhat upward, preserving the original pitch of the roof, and providing headroom in the second story acceptable by twentieth-century standards. Broad twentieth-century wood weatherboarding, painted white, disguises these changes. Five Colonial Revival-style dormers were added in the 1930s, replacing three Victorianized dormers that existed at the time of purchase in 1933. Similar dormers were added at the rear. Metal roofing was replaced with asbestos shingles which now, with age, approximate the appearance of the probable original chestnut or oak shakes typical of the region. Stone end and center chimneys were reworked or rebuilt as necessary. Original 6/6 light double-hung window sash and pegged, paneled entrance doors were retained. Shutters were added to the windows, but the only new opening added to the front facade was a high, clerestory-like window in the late-eighteenth-century section reflecting the earlier entrance door transoms. Shutters were added to the windows in the Colonial Revival style. A compatible low, gable-roofed stone addition was erected at the east end. It was sited on-grade, below the level of the original house, and is visually distinct from the eighteenth-century structure.

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At the rear of the original house, low-scale twentieth-century additions were constructed designed to unobtrusively complement and enhance the house while meeting the requirements of twentieth-century living patterns. A long entrance hall was added at the rear of the original house, approached from a crushed stone automobile court. For practical purposes, this became the main entrance to the twentieth-century house, allowing preservation of the eighteenth-century interiors. A log cabin, which had been a mail-stop tavern, was moved here from Ruby, Virginia, and re-erected at the north side of the new entrance hall. With its massive end fireplace and murky light, it provides an impressive dining room. Moving and reconstructing log cabins has historically been common practice in Fairfax County. Two houses were allotted without land to daughters in the estate partition of William Gunnell III. These were intended probably as dower with the intention of moving them to the new homes of the daughters. A kitchen addition at the rear of this reconstructed building was the final element in the 1930s addition. Later additions include a 1 ½-story garage and laundry constructed ca. 1955 along the automobile court at the rear of the kitchen, a 1990 kitchen bay window, and a ca. 1955 expansion of the new hall to provide a family room with an expansive view of the gardens.

The oldest section, an approximately 18' x 25' hall-and-parlor-plan dwelling, was probably built during Lord Fairfax's ownership, possibly as early as 1750. The design is consistent with Fairfax's description, in a letter to a cousin in England, of an appropriate residence for himself "When I find and fix upon a proper Tract of Land for the Proprietor, a Plan for a House well be very acceptable, in which I shall beg your Assistance....They build their houses here very low, their best bed chambers being below stairs: overhead is little better than garrets. They have a large Porch before the Door and generally another behind the House, in on of which, or Hall or passage they always sit & frequently dine & sup: but the Musquitoes [sic] here are very troublesome." ¹ The structure is half-timbered with sun-dried brick noggin in-fill. The timbers are hand-hewn, mortised and tenoned with whittled pegs. The original beveled and beaded weatherboarding still exists under the broader plain weatherboards of the 1930s restoration. Weathered and worn, it had been turned at some point to extend its life, as was the local practice. A chimney of undressed local stone, including the characteristically red Seneca Creek sandstone, is located on the west side of this section. It has been heavily repaired and perhaps rebuilt. A second stone chimney on the east side has been completely rebuilt, reportedly on the foundation of an original chimney. The timber-framed structure rests upon a full stone basement, originally with packed earth floor. The first-floor joists, seen from this basement, are pit-sawn. The high ceiling and appearance of the

¹ Typescript, University of Virginia Library. B.M.Add. MSS.30, 306, f. 144.

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chimney here suggest a use other than storage--perhaps an early kitchen. The first floor consisted of two rooms--hall and parlor. These rooms were of equal size with extraordinarily high nine-foot ceilings. Entrance doors front and rear are located in the hall, providing cross-ventilation during hot weather. These appear to be the original pegged and paneled doors. The original 6/6 light double-hung sash are retained. Access to the second floor was by an enclosed staircase in the corner of the hall. This staircase is simple in design, with a small square newel, probably built on the site. The second story was a single room with a very low six-foot-high ceiling. There were fireplaces in both of the first-floor rooms, but none in the second-story room. A cast-iron Victorian coal fireplace has replaced the original in the hall. The interior walls were plastered.

The property with 676 acres was sold by Bryan Fairfax to William Gunnell III and his wife Sara Coleman Gunnell in 1791. The Gunnells may have already been living there. Because they owned adjacent land, the house became the center of a large self-sufficient plantation of more than 1,000 acres. In addition to the dwelling, there were barns, a stable, a smokehouse, a kitchen, a weaving house, a dairy, and numerous other small storage buildings necessary to a working plantation. Included in this inventory was housing for the slave labor that worked the plantation. The Gunnells owned about forty slaves and they lived in cabins some distance from the main house. There are indications that they were located on land that is now in the Deerfield Pond subdivision. The Gunnells had nine children, eight of whom survived to adulthood. The house was expanded to accommodate this large family and in accordance with William Gunnell's increasing prosperity and stature in the affairs of Fairfax County. The addition extends the original hall-and-parlor-plan dwelling to the west, more than doubling its size while retaining the same exterior style. The interior includes a new hall, approximately 14' x 18,' which becomes a center entrance. A new parlor, approximately 22' x 18,' was added to the west. As in the original house, there is a full stone basement with a high ceiling and packed earth floor. The structure here employs hand-hewn beams, pit-sawn floor boards, and rose-head nails. A single second-story room, though larger and including a fireplace, was similar to that in the original section. A fine milled corner staircase now accessed the upstairs from the new center hall. Mantels here are appropriate for the period and may be original. Here also, the hall and parlor had front and rear entrances and retain original doors and sash. New doors were cut between the two sections on all floors. That on the first floor has now been closed.

A 16' x 20' log cabin behind the kitchen is the only surviving original outbuilding. The logs appear to be chestnut. Testing suggests that it dates from ca. 1770. An original stone chimney survives. The fireplace has been reduced in

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size by filling and repointing to meet twentieth-century requirements. There is a steep gabled roof, now covered in copper which has weathered gray. A small lean-to addition extends the usable space in this building which may have been the original weaving house and which now functions as a studio for its present fabric-designer owner. There is an old well, now sealed, outside the cabin on the house side.

A newspaper advertisement in the April 27, 1844, edition of the Leesburg *Genius of Liberty* offering the property for sale describes it as follows-

It is situated on the Leesburg & Georgetown Turnpike, 3 miles east of Dranesville, and 12 from Georgetown. It contains 159 ½ acres, eighty of which are as good as any upland in Fairfax county- "About one third is finely timbered. There are 15 or 20 acres of prime meadow ground. On it is a large frame HOUSE containing six rooms, which at a small expence [sic] could be made one of the most comfortable in the county; also Kitchen, Stable, Corn-house, Meat house and Dairy. In the Orchard and adjoining fields there are 289 Trees of choice Apples, 100 of Peaches of different kinds, Quinces, Pears, Plums, & every variety of Cherries. From the sale of fruit in the markets of the District of Columbia, the subscriber has made more than 12 per cent on the price he is willing to take for the land. There are never failing springs of fine water in each of the 5 fields." The stock included horses, cows, sheep, and hogs.

In 1918 a writer known as The Rambler wrote in the *Washington Sunday Star* of a visit to the William Gunnell House, describing it as "a wide-fronted house with a low, deep-slanting roof and dormer windows." A photograph published with the article is the only known view of the William Gunnell House prior to the 1930s Rixey Smith renovation. It shows a house in extreme disrepair but otherwise little-changed from its 1791 appearance. Cresting on the long roof-line and on the three evenly-spaced dormers nods to Victorian fashion. The original weatherboarding appears to be in fair condition. There is a simple entrance porch and an exterior cellar door which have both been removed. There is no garden visible as the property is clearly being farmed right up to the entrance door. The Rambler describes the family graveyard in detail, carefully noting each inscription. The graveyard has now disappeared, the stones taken and broken to use as guttering. Rixey Smith rescued some of these, incorporating them into the rebuilt chimney at the east end of the house. One of the stones, apparently buried and thrown up by a growing tree, has been left in place. Two additional stones are stored in the garage.

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springhouse, probably built by Rixey Smith, feeds a nearby swimming pool. The springhouse is square, built with old, hand-made bricks that may have been salvaged from the site. The door is finely crafted and may have been salvaged here or elsewhere. A pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt tiles. The pool is concrete, flanked by a utilitarian concrete pool house. Both were built by Rixey Smith. The property includes a weathered frame stable behind the house which was built by John and Lucy Hanes in the 1950s. It is a simple frame three-stall and shelter building typical of those found on farms in the region. The Haneses also added a large farm pond. An eighteenth century barn used by Smith as a stable was demolished after the property was subdivided. The Beyers have added a formally designed 'quilt' garden in the style of an eighteenth century herb garden.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Gunnell House is a fine and rare surviving example of an eighteenth-century up-country Potomac River Valley manor house that may have been constructed as early as the mid-eighteenth century. The dwelling was sensitively enlarged first in the late eighteenth century and again in the twentieth century to accommodate changing life styles and circumstances and become a Colonial Revival showplace and country estate. Its history encompasses the broad spectrum of rural life in Fairfax County, Virginia, from the time of Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, to the early twentieth century. A log house ca. 1770 remains on its original site at the rear of the house and is the only surviving original outbuilding. Two early wells remain—one between this outbuilding and the main house and one in front of the late eighteenth-century addition. Members of the Gunnell family, living here and farming from Colonial times to the pre-World War I era, were prominent in Fairfax County affairs, serving in various public offices, including the militia. William Gunnell III served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates for Loudoun County 1789-98. He was also justice for Fairfax County in 1798 and sheriff in 1802. He was also overseer for the poor and a trustee for the town of Matildaville. The eventual rescue of the property from imminent collapse and its restoration/rehabilitation by Grace and Rixey Smith in the 1930s exemplifies the preservation philosophy of the Colonial Revival in that period. The eighteenth-century house was treated with respect and preserved where possible. The main entrance was moved to a motor court at the rear of the house, sheltering the eighteenth-century house from twentieth century intrusions. An early nineteenth-century log tavern was moved from Ruby, Virginia, to become the new dining room. A series of small-scale additions in the Colonial Revival style were discreetly added at the rear of this addition to provide functional spaces such as kitchen, pantry, office, and garage. Although the property had been farmed up to the foundations of the house, the Smiths designed fine Colonial Revival style gardens which included many fine specimen boxwoods, perennial borders, ornamental ponds, and a spring-fed swimming pool with pool house. A springhouse near the pool may have been rebuilt using original materials found on the site. There are two small ornamental ponds. One at the rear of the house was built by Smith and includes a finely carved marble Victorian statue of a female figure. Later residents have carefully maintained and expanded the gardens, adding most notably a formal 'quilt' garden, a rose garden, and a large farm pond. Gravestones from the family burial place have been preserved on the property although the exact location of the graveyard is unknown.

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THE GREAT FALLS MANOR

In 1719 Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, became Proprietor of the Northern Neck in the Colony of Virginia. After the death in 1732 of his father's land agent, Robert Carter of Corotoman Plantation in Lancaster County, Thomas arranged for his cousin William Fairfax to move from Salem, Massachusetts to the Northern Neck to manage his interests there and become his new land agent. William established a plantation on the Potomac, next to Lawrence Washington's Mount Vernon, which he called Belvoir. In spite of this family management program, long-standing disputes with the government of Virginia over the boundaries of the Northern Neck Proprietary persisted. The whole area had never been properly mapped or surveyed. In 1735, Lord Fairfax came to Virginia to supervise the establishment of his boundary lines. Once there, he engaged John Warner to survey and map all of his holdings.

In 1736, Fairfax set out to explore his land to see what he should retain for himself. While the southern part of his holdings had been fairly well settled by this time, the northern and western regions were still sparsely populated. That included the area of Great Falls and what was later to be McLean. These areas were remote and difficult to traverse. Because of the falls in the river, overland travel was the only option. Cross-country roads were rudimentary, often following trails that had been developed by the native Americans. But the most compelling reason was that, while patents could be acquired on large grants, their purchase was beyond the means of ordinary farmers. The latter could only hope to lease the land they worked and therefore those who were willing to brave the rigors of frontier settlement did not often stay in the area. Many migrated beyond the Blue Ridge where they could own the land they settled.

Neither the lack of population nor the difficulties of travel seemed to deter Fairfax, who intended to establish a permanent residence for himself in this wilderness. Using the English system that he was familiar with, he established his personal holdings into several manors, two of which were in what is now Fairfax County. One was the Great Falls Manor, which consisted of 12,588 acres. This area covered much of what is now Great Falls and Reston. The other was Towlston, a tract of 5,568 acres which roughly encompassed parts of what is now McLean and Vienna. In addition, he set aside two other great tracts in the Shenandoah of 122,852 acres and 26,535 acres.

It was Fairfax's idea that he would build a home for himself in one of his various manors. He was a great sportsman

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and an avid fox hunter. When he planned his trip to Virginia, he had shipped ahead a pack of foxhounds so that he could try out the sport in that country. He was anxious to locate in the area that best suited his life-style. In 1735, Fairfax wrote to his cousin in England regarding plans for a house. In that letter, he described what would be appropriate for the area: "When I find and fix upon a proper Tract of Land for the Proprietor, a Plan for a House well be very acceptable, in which I shall beg your Assistance....They build their houses here very low, their best bed chambers being below stairs: overhead is little better than garrets. They have a large Porch before the Door and generally another behind the House, in on of which, or Hall or passage they always sit & frequently dine & sup: but the Musquitoes [sic] here are very troublesome."² In 1737 Fairfax returned to England to attend to his affairs there. Originally he thought it would be a brief stay, but it extended to ten years. During his absence, in 1742, a new county was formed and named in his honor. Ultimately, Fairfax chose to build his residence, which he called Greenway Court, in his Manor of Leeds in the Shenandoah Valley. He remained a bachelor and continued to foxhunt for the rest of his life. He died at Greenway in 1781.

Fairfax had set aside his 12,588-acre Great Falls Manor for his own use because among other things, it was believed to contain valuable minerals. After exploration showed insufficient minerals for a profitable venture, Fairfax decided to give this manor to his young cousin Bryan Fairfax, son of his land agent William Fairfax.³ On paper, this appeared to be a most valuable gift. In reality it was hard to make the land pay. Lord Fairfax employed the English system of entailment, preventing Bryan, who was always short of money, from selling any part of it. In order to profit from his holdings, Bryan leased the land in parcels of 100 to 200 acres to farmers for a usually three-life lease term. The rent was low, but the lessee had to improve the property within three years. Very specific improvements were enumerated in the farm leases. Bryan usually required that a log house be built either 16 feet by 16 feet or 16 feet by 20 feet in dimension. It was also required that orchards and a crop be planted. Tobacco and Indian corn were forbidden. If the lease was not renewed by another family member, all the improvements would revert to the landowner.

² Typescript, University of Virginia Library. B.M.Add. MSS.30, 306, f. 144.

³ Northern Neck Land Grants. 1:124 (Feb. 7,1765).

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THE WILLIAM GUNNELL HOUSE

On the far northeastern section of the Great Falls Manor, there remained an unleased parcel surrounded by farm leases. In the middle of that parcel, which is now some distance behind the Grange Park, stands the William Gunnell House. Named for the first person known to have lived there, the house appears to predate his occupancy. The oldest section was probably built during Lord Fairfax's ownership, possibly as early as 1750. While greatly expanded over the course of two and a half centuries, the original house started as a hall-and-parlor-plan structure. It matches very well Lord Fairfax's description in the letter previously quoted of a typical house of the area. While it was not a large house, the quality of construction and very fine craftsmanship certainly lends credence to the theory that it was built for the use of Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax. It was a typical example of a Potomac River Valley manor house of that era. Even though by modern standards the houses seem small, they were regarded in their time as important residences. During that period, most people in the area were living in one-room log cabins or worse.

It is not known who occupied the house during its ownership first by William and then by Bryan Fairfax, but it may well have been William Gunnell or his father or older brother. In 1791 Bryan Fairfax was successful in breaking the entail established by Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, and he sold the property with 676 acres to William Gunnell III and his wife Sara Coleman Gunnell.⁴ Because the Gunnells already owned adjacent land, the house became the center of a large self-sufficient plantation of more than 1,000 acres including about forty slaves. Plotting the location of the Fairfax farm leases, dated 1762-1795, on a map of the area shows they were distributed around the Gunnell property. The latter was not a farm lease. This and the social connection with the Fairfaxes suggests that the Gunnells may have managed the farm leases for the Fairfaxes. The boundaries of the farm leases were still clearly visible on a 1937 USGS aerial photograph. Aside from being a prosperous plantation owner, William Gunnell was also very active in politics and civic affairs. Some of the offices he held were captain in the local militia, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, a justice for Fairfax County, a trustee for the town of Matildaville, and an overseer of the poor. He was acquainted with the Fairfaxes, the Lees, and George Washington. The members of Gunnell's militia company lived on the farm leases surrounding his residence. Although a captain of the militia before and after the Revolutionary War, Gunnell did not fight in that war, and his father's membership in the Fairfax Committee of Safety was short-lived.

⁴ Loudoun Deed Book U:259 (Aug. 16, 1791).

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Probably this was because of the family's close association with Thomas and Bryan Fairfax. Because they had been life-long close friends, Bryan Fairfax was under George Washington's protection during the war.

Gunnell was the grandson William Gunnell of Westmoreland County who, in 1729, received three Northern Neck land grants totaling 1616 acres in what was then Stafford and later Fairfax County.⁵ Records show that he was in residence by 1733.⁶ William Gunnell and his two sons, William and Henry, appear on the 1744 poll list for the election of burgess from Fairfax County.⁷ He died in 1760, a wealthy man by the standards of the day.⁸ His son William, who died in 1794, was also a man of substantial property including real estate, slaves and furniture.⁹ His son Henry (-1792) was the father of William Gunnell III (1750-1820) the first known resident of the William Gunnell House. Evidently Henry was the first of his family to be able to read and write.¹⁰ He was active in the affairs of the church where he was elected churchwarden, 1761-63, and Vestryman, 1756-65, of Truro Parish. From 1757 to 1764 he was a justice of the court of Fairfax County. Henry was a member of the Fairfax Committee of Safety in 1774,¹¹ and was sheriff in 1772.

William Gunnell III and Sara Coleman were married ca. 1780 and had eight children who survived to adulthood—four

⁵ Northern Neck Grant C:87, C:8, & C:9.

⁶ Rev. Philip Slaughter, D. D. The History of Truro Parish in Virginia, Philadelphia: 1907, p.5.

⁷ William Fletcher Boogher, Gleanings of Virginia History, Baltimore: Geneological Publishing Co., 1965, p.5.

⁸ Will of William Gunnell, Fairfax County Will Book B1:218.

⁹ Will of William Gunnell, Fairfax County Will Book F1:339.

¹⁰ Fairfax County Deed Book A:26, William Gunnell made his mark and Henry signed his name.

¹¹ Fairfax County Historical Society Year Book, Vol 11, 1971, "Fairfax County Resolution" p.19.

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daughters and four sons.¹² After purchase of the house in 1791, this large family may have been accommodated with the construction of a large addition which more than doubled the size of the house, extending the original design beyond a central hall. The house was one of the area's grandest manor houses for that period and truly reflected the Gunnells' position in the community. William served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates for Loudoun County 1789-98.¹³ He was also a justice for Fairfax County in 1798 and sheriff in 1802. He changed from Loudoun to Fairfax because the county boundary changed in 1798. However, it does seem to be a reflection of his degree of influence that he was able to assume an office immediately in Fairfax. He was also overseer for the poor and a trustee for the town of Matildaville.¹⁴ Sons John and George had some business interests, but were mainly planters. Their brothers both went to medical school in Philadelphia and became doctors.¹⁵ Dr. William H. Gunnell divided his time between the plantation and his office in Fairfax. Dr. James S. Gunnell was a dentist and moved to Washington, D. C. Daughters Sara, Elizabeth, and Catherine all married and moved away. Their sister Ann remained at home. Although it is not known exactly when they began their residence at the plantation, once they were there they stayed forever. Sara Coleman Gunnell died in 1812 and William Gunnell III followed her in 1820. They are buried in the family cemetery near their home along with their children Ann Gunnell, Elizabeth Gunnell Mix and her husband Lewis Mix, infant daughter Jane, and Dr. William H. Gunnell.

Gunnell's estate included forty slaves and 2000 acres of land to be divided among his children. His daughter Ann received the portion with the house and 159 acres.¹⁶ It was unusual for a daughter to inherit the house property, but

¹² William Gunnell estate partition, Fairfax Deed Z2:51 (Oct. 17, 1820).

¹³ Loudoun County Minute Book 1785-1786 p.195.

¹⁴ Fairfax County Minute Book 1797 (June 21, 1798); Fairfax County Minute Book 1799 p.226 (Fall of 1799); Fairfax County Minute Book 1800c (June 16, 1800; Fairfax County Minute Book 1802 p. 2 (November 15, 1802). Trustee for Matildaville: *Henings Statutes At Large*, Vol. 13, p.171.

¹⁵ Archives of the Medical School of Pennsylvania.

¹⁶ William Gunnell estate partition, Fairfax Deed Z2:51 (Oct. 17, 1820).

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perhaps it was because of her poor health. Her will, dated 1822, states that she was "very much afflicted in body, but of sound mind." Ann Gunnell died three months after writing this will at the age of twenty-six. Upon her death, her brother George Gunnell was named as her executor and inherited the house. There then began a long slide downward in the condition and value of the property. The house that had once been the nucleus of a large, prosperous plantation was falling into disrepair and had little more land than neighboring farms. In spite of the apparent prosperity of William Gunnell and the size of his estate, there was evidently very little cash in the family. Shortly after Ann's death, George began to have financial problems, as did many area farmers.

By the 1830s, residents of this area were suffering from a serious economic depression. There was very little cash and too much land that no one seemed to have a good use for. It became common practice for debtors to substitute personal notes or bonds for cash. The problem with this method was that the creditors usually had little hope of actually receiving any cash from the person who had issued the bond. So creditors would discount the bonds and sell them to someone who did have cash. Sometimes the bonds would be sold several times over with ever increasing discounts until the final holders would go to court and seek a judgment. When this happened, it was up to the sheriff to collect from the debtor. Needless to say, this system became very unwieldy and caused great problems. In George's case, he had issued too many bonds. He couldn't begin to raise the cash that he had planned to receive from bonds that others had issued to him.

To make things worse, with the death of his siblings George had also inherited their slaves, and the care of the slaves left to underage relatives for whom he was guardian. By 1834 all of the surviving family members had too many slaves. There was not enough work for them, and the land did not produce enough to support them. In 1834 George took his slaves and those of his other siblings to Mississippi where they could be hired out to work on the cotton plantations.¹⁷ He remained in Mississippi for four years. In his absence several judgments were filed against him, and the court ordered that his properties be sold to satisfy his debts. George also had a mill and like his father was involved in county government, serving as a justice for Fairfax County from 1817 to 1827 and again when he returned

¹⁷ Fairfax County Chancery Final 36n George Gunnell vs Samuel Coleman.

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from Mississippi in 1839-49.¹⁸

In 1842 the William Gunnell house and one hundred and fifty-nine acres were auctioned off on the steps of the Fairfax County Court House.¹⁹ The highest bidder was Charles Binns, of the well-known Binns family who advocated improvement of soil in Loudoun County by the addition of lime. He evidently was able to rehabilitate the land and made a profit from farming. One of his primary crops was fruit. He had extensive orchards that included 289 apple trees and 100 peach trees, as well as pear, plum and cherry trees. Most of this produce was sold in the District of Columbia markets. In 1844, Binns decided to sell the property. In a local newspaper he advertised 159 ½ acres with "A large frame house containing six rooms, which at a small expense could be made one of the most comfortable in the county."²⁰

The property was purchased by George W. Gunnell, a nephew of the previous owner, William Gunnell. This George, not to be confused with his cousin who lost the property, was a prosperous planter and influential citizen in Fairfax County. He lived on a large plantation near Lewinsville, in the vicinity of the present Tysons Corner, and owned numerous other large parcels of land. Not only did he buy land for investment purposes, but he also wanted to provide each of his children with their own home. It appears that he intended for his son John Ratcliffe Gunnell to have the William Gunnell property.²¹ John, however, seems to have preferred soldiering to farming. First, he joined the Fairfax Volunteers and went to fight in the Mexican War. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted in the 8th Virginia Infantry (09-14-61). He was wounded in the left side at Sharpsburg, captured at Winchester (12-05-62), exchanged (03-63), elected lieutenant (06-07-64), wounded in the stomach at Hatcher Run (03-31-65), captured at Petersburg Hospital and discharged on oath (06-29-65). He was described then as 40 years old, 5' 11" with gray eyes and dark

¹⁸ Fairfax County Minute Book 1829 p. 177; February 16, 1830.

¹⁹ Fairfax Deed F3:12 (June 15, 1840).

²⁰ *The Genius of Liberty* (April 27, 1844). A Leesburg newspaper.

²¹ George West Gunnell to son, John R. Gunnell, Fairfax Will C2-506 (October 1869)

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hair.²²

While John was absent, his brother James and his wife Catherine Swink Gunnell were in residence at the farm. James also enlisted in the Confederate army and left Catherine and their six-year-old son George at home to run the farm. The war brought on very difficult times for all the residents of the Great Falls area. The Gunnell farm suffered from many visits by foraging parties from both armies. Perhaps the worst was when the Union army stopped at the farm and loaded forty-three wagons with provisions. Family legend tells of Catherine barring the way to the cellar of the house when the Yankees tried to take her last ham. She told them that it was all she had left and for some reason they let her keep it. James returned home when the war was over, but died the following spring. Later his brother John married James's widow and moved to the William Gunnell property. Catherine and James' only surviving child, George West Gunnell, became John's stepson and heir.²³ For the next forty years, the property declined in value and condition as did many other farms in Great Falls. It was a long time before the damage done by the war years could be reversed. There was very little money and not enough available labor to repair the damage done by passing troops and the general decay brought on by neglect. Many of the young men who had gone to fight never returned, or if they did, were too badly injured or ill to provide the hard labor needed to repair their farms. The Gunnells barely managed to earn a living from the farm. After purchasing necessities, there was not much left for upkeep or repair of the many buildings that were left from the days when it was a great plantation. When John's stepson George came of age, John and Catherine deeded the property to him but retained the right to live in the original hall and parlor rooms in the east end of the house. George lived there with his wife and four children. After the death of his first wife in 1888, George married Alice Hicks. They had one son, Gilbert. George died in 1909, and the property was divided among his five children. His son Charles inherited the house.²⁴ Unfortunately, he only lived two years after his father's death, dying from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-six. Upon his death, his widow lost no time in selling the property, and it again passed out of the Gunnell

²² _____ *Muster Roll of 8th Virginia Infantry*, compiled by John E. Divine, Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1983.

²³ John R. Gunnell to nephew who is also his step-son, G. W. Gunnell, Fairfax deed C5:259

²⁴ G. W. Gunnell estate partition Fairfax Deed C7:432 lot # 3, house lot to his son Charles.

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family, this time for good.²⁵

TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHANGES

In the next twenty years, the old house changed hands numerous times and became more and more derelict, but the strong timber framing and general construction of the building enabled it to survive the years of neglect when the owners did not have the money for upkeep or modernization. Fortunately, in the 1930s it became fashionable for people who lived in Washington to buy and renovate old houses for their country homes. In 1933, the William Gunnell house was purchased for that purpose by Rixey Smith, a native Virginian and history buff who also had experience renovating historic houses.²⁶ Even though it was during the Great Depression, Smith had a very good job as secretary to Virginia's U. S. Senator Carter Glass. Rixey and his wife Grace had the money to restore the house to and beyond its former grandeur, a major undertaking for the time.

The Smiths spent the next year and a half renovating the old house, adding modern conveniences and building the first addition since the eighteenth century. He moved a nineteenth-century log tavern from Ruby, Virginia, and added it to the house. Rixey and Grace also planted boxwood and rose gardens and installed a spring-fed swimming pool complete with a pool house. Besides working on the house, they purchased back most of the 159-acre tract that had previously belonged to the house. During their years of residence, the Smiths entertained lavishly. Much of Washington society as well as many neighbors were invited to their garden parties. During the winter, the Fairfax Hunt met at the house to start the day off fox-hunting, and ended it there with a party. Unfortunately this gilded era was not to last much more than a decade. The Smiths parted company in a divorce and the house was sold. Over the next ten years, the property again had several owners. In 1954, the property was purchased by John and Lucy Hanes as a home for their family. During their ownership the pond was built and Lucy added much to the gardens. She planted many different varieties of specimen trees and shrubs. The Haneses carefully maintained the historic portion of the house and

²⁵ Mary V. Gunnell to Carl Blaubock Fairfax Deed Q7:181 mmMay 16, 1913 14.18 acres.

²⁶ Christian & Maria C. Seitz to J. W. Rixey Smith, Fairfax Deed J11:544 June 30, 1933.

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reworked Rixey Smith's additions to accommodate their needs. It was their home for almost thirty years.

The current owners, John and Jinny Beyer, bought the property together with ten acres of land in 1984. In the years since, they have continued the painstaking labor of maintaining the property. They also renovated an eighteenth-century log cabin near the house that is the only other surviving building from the original plantation. Jinny has continued to care for the beautiful gardens planted and developed by Grace Smith and Lucy Hanes. She has added another of her own design. Because she is a world-renowned quilter and fabric designer, it is fitting that the new garden is designed to resemble a quilt. Every year many people have the opportunity to tour these lovely gardens. Jinny opens them to the public twice a year to benefit the Virginia Quilting Museum in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESENCE

The Gunnell family farmed their lands with the labor of African American slaves acquired largely through inheritance and dower. In Fairfax County, after the Revolutionary War, it was popular for slave holders to leave wills that freed their slaves. Because there was such a large slave population in the county and elsewhere in Virginia, State laws were enacted to prevent the freed slaves from staying in Virginia. So for people like George Gunnell, the slaves became a huge burden. They had too many, but the law would not allow manumission, unless they had enough money to travel to a free state. The slave holders had to house, feed, and dress these slaves and, more important, keep track of them. They could not just let them go, and they had to make sure that they did not wander the roads without permission or employment. Newspaper advertisements in local papers give a good picture of the problems of runaways and hires. Depositions in a chancery suit also demonstrate the need for blacks to have passes, and the enforcement of the laws by the use of patrollers.

Slave owners were anxious to hire out their surplus laborers, but so many were in the same situation, that there were many more slaves than could be hired. For the same reason, they could not be sold, even if they wanted to, which, it appears, the Gunnells did not. For example, when William died, George's brothers advertised 70 slaves for hire in the December 1820 issue of the *Genius of Liberty* newspaper. When William's brother John died in 1800 he provided money for the education of one of his slaves together with specific instructions for his care. When William's brother

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Henry died in 1822, he recommended in his will that his children "use those negroes given to them in a human manner, for I think slavery a cruel thing in the reached (sic) world, who can account for it?" In addition to that instruction, he left provisions for his slave London to have his freedom and seventeen acres if the law would allow him to own it. He also phrased the will in such words that if London wanted to be free he would be free, and if he for some reason didn't want to be free, then he would be cared for. Giving London his *choice* of where he wanted to live and in what circumstances was an unusual and interesting idea. William's son, Dr. William H. Gunnell, at his death in 1834, freed his slaves to go to Liberia.

ARCHEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Archival evidence establishes the existence of a large farm with many outbuildings and slaves. Both slave and family cemeteries existed on the property. There are two known wells—one near the log cabin and one in the front of the house. After excavation of a leaking oil tank in 2001, Fairfax County archaeologist Michael Johnson discovered surface debris in the vicinity of the log cabin which included the neck and shoulder of an eighteenth-century wine bottle and numerous early-nineteenth-century pottery shards. The property owner has requested that Fairfax County carry out a Phase I survey.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION.

The William Gunnell House is located at 600 Innsbruck Avenue, Great Falls, VA 22066. The property includes the entire ten-acre parcel. Fairfax County Deed Book 05977 / page 1589, Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, Virginia.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION.

The boundaries of the nominated property are the legal recorded boundaries of the historic site and contain all historic resources associated with the property.

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Additional Documentation

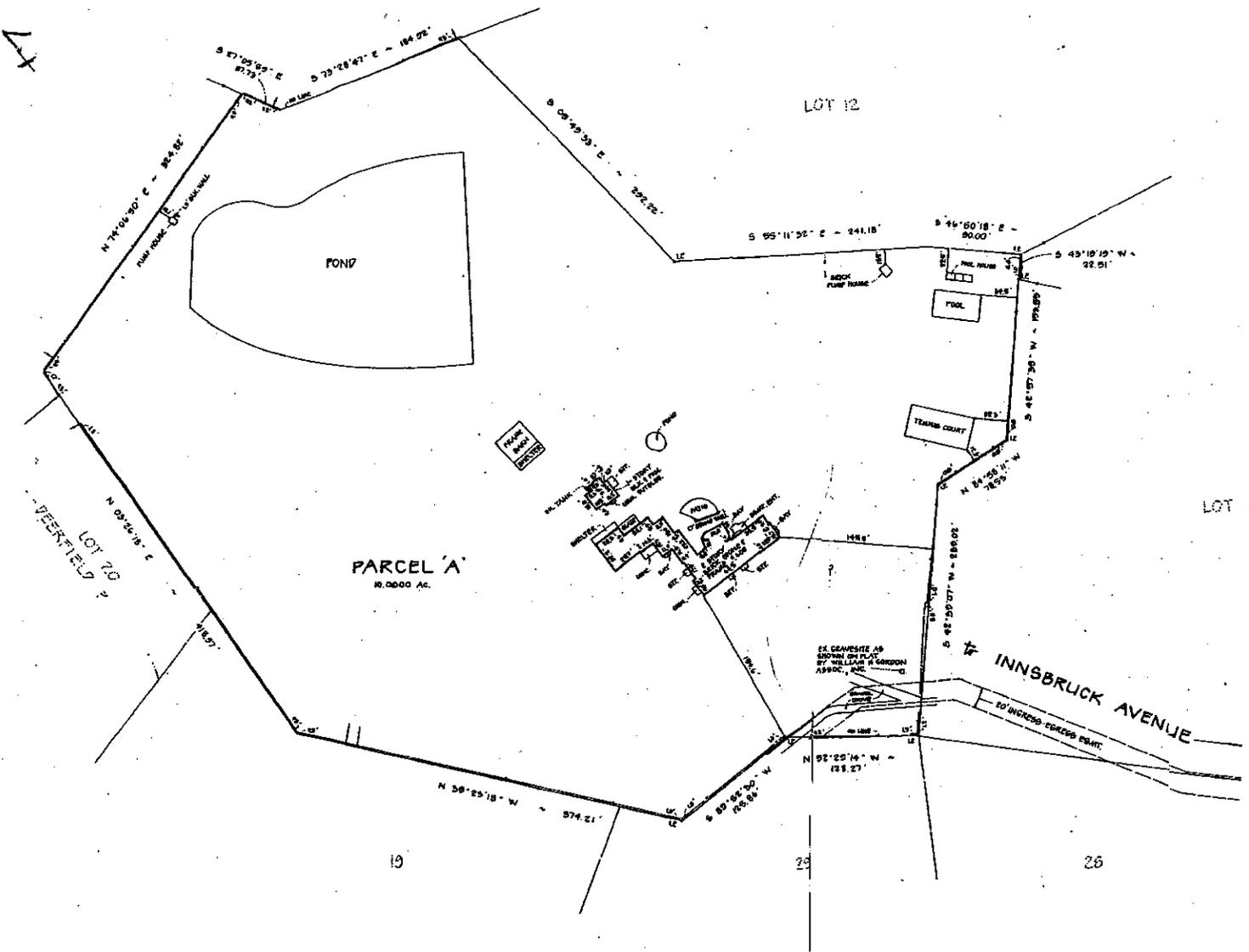
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REPRESENTATIVE BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

William Gunnell House, Fairfax County, Virginia
Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, photographer
July 2002
Negatives at Virginia Department of Historic Resources

1. Perspective view, front facade. Late eighteenth-century addition at left, mid-eighteenth century house at right. Looking northeast. Negative # 20094:9
2. Entrance door, original house. Looking north. Negative # 20094:11
3. Interior, original house hall. Entrance door at left. Looking southeast. Negative # 20094:30
4. Interior, original house hall. Original stair. Looking northeast. Negative # 20094:29
5. Interior, late eighteenth-century addition. Entrance hall, door to parlor at left, original stair, with original basement door, center. Looking north. Negative # 20094:26
6. Interior, late eighteenth-century addition, view of parlor. Entrance door at left. Looking southwest. Negative # 20094:27
7. Colonial Revival motor court entrance with functional and compatible low-scale additions at left of new entrance. 18th century house at right, not seen. Looking east. Negative # 20094:17
8. Perspective view, eighteenth-century log cabin at rear of house. Looking northwest. Negative # 20094:6



JOHN W. HANES GUNNELL RUN PARSA

NOTES: 1. FRAME & WIRE FENCES.
2. UTILITIES UNDER.

PLAT
SHOWING HOUSE LOCATION ON
PARCEL 'A'
DIVISION OF LAND OF THE PROPERTY OF
JOHN W. HANES, JR. &
GUNNELL'S RUN FARM, INC.
OUTLOT OF ARNON LAKE
FAIRFAX COUNTY VIRGINIA
SCALE: 1" = 50'

<p>THIS PROPERTY IS NOT LOCATED IN A SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREA. PLAT SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS OF RECORD. TITLE REPORT NOT FURNISHED.</p> <p>OWNER CERTIFY THAT THE RECORDS OF ALL THE PUBLIC AGENCIES TO WHOM THIS PLAT IS REFERRED HAVE BEEN CHECKED AND THAT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS TRUE AND CORRECT.</p> <p><i>Kenneth W. White</i> Surveyor</p>	<p>COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA KENNETH W. WHITE LICENSE NO. 13774 LAND SURVEYOR</p>	<p>CASE NAME: BOYER PETERSON, POSER & BRYAN, P.C.</p> <p>ALABAMA SURVEYS, INC. 2043 SOUTH BRIDGE HIGHWAY ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22304 703-460-8818 FAX 703-788-1750</p>
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