

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Tauxemont Historic District
Fairfax County, Virginia

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 Tauxemont Historic District
other names/site number VDHR File No. 029-5199

2. Location

street & number Area between Ft. Hunt Road and Accotink Place, including Shenandoah, Tauxemont, Namassin, Westmoreland, and Gahant Roads and Bolling Drive not for publication N/A
city or town south of Alexandria vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Fairfax code 059 Zip 22308

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] 12/21/05
Signature of certifying official Date
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

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

VLR 12/7/5
NPHR 2/9/6

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Tauxemont¹ was begun in the early 1940s. Its original 100 houses, built sequentially in three subdivisions that were completed at the end of that decade, were a planned community to be situated in the woods with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. The first subdivision, Tauxemont I, was planned as a cooperative venture by a group of government employees, and was laid out in eastern Fairfax County, about three miles south of the city of Alexandria. The houses were basic cinderblock one-story, side-gable-roofed rectangular starter houses, of no particular style, but certainly an expression of the Modern Movement in architecture. The two following subdivisions were developed by one of the original cooperative venture residents, Robert Davenport, who kept a similar theme to the first section with only minor changes in interior layouts and construction material selections. Facilities at completion included three deep wells, a preschool/community center, two tennis courts, and a ball field/park. At the end of World War II, an effort was made to find peacetime uses for the great factories that had been turning out aircraft and munitions. Tauxemont contains ten aluminum houses, and thus exemplifies this national endeavor.

Tauxemont's significance lies in its conscious effort to blend in with the natural setting, which remains its outstanding characteristic today. In the late 1940s, several owners asked architect Charles Goodman to design additions to their basic Tauxemont houses.² These additions, with large glass areas, are very much in keeping with the style of his award-winning houses in Hollin Hills and illustrate the continuity and similarity in architecture and land use between the two developments.

Overview of Community

The first section of Tauxemont was laid out along the loop of Tauxemont Road, on top of a hill off Alexandria Avenue, between the ceremonial route to Mount Vernon, the George Washington Parkway, and Fort Hunt Road. At the time, a large dairy farm bordered Fort Hunt on the west. Woods surrounded the new site. Section II of Tauxemont followed the hills to the south, along Accotink Place and Shenandoah Road. Section III includes a hilly section at the top of Bolling Drive which quickly becomes flat at its southern end and along Westmoreland Road. The southern end of Shenandoah, where it joins Fort Hunt, is also quite flat. Gahant and Namassin Roads ascend the hill again from Fort Hunt Road, and one discovers they are steeper than they look during an ice storm!

Tauxemonters love the country feel of their community, and it has never had sidewalks or curbs and gutters, and has rejected streetlights. The utility poles are hidden in the middle of the blocks,

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an aesthetically pleasing solution which leads to frequent power outages during storms when branches and entire trees knock down the wires. The houses share a water system serviced by community wells, with each house originally having its own septic system. Although the septic system was replaced by a municipal sewage system, the deep wells remain functional and highly prized by the residents for high quality and delicious tasting water. The water pipes also follow the easements in the middle of the block. These easements have always been used as pathways for visiting and accessing Wellemeyer Field, the tennis courts, and the preschool/community building. The major physical characteristics of the community are tall trees and privacy provided by bushes and hedges along the property lines. Often there are minimal lawn areas, and gardens consist of shade and native plants. The houses are one-story and sited to maximize privacy. Many houses, especially in Sections II and III, are sited with their gable ends towards the street and front doors on the side. With their low pitched roofs, the houses blend in with their natural setting, rather than dominating it.³

Tauxemont is different from most other developments of the 1940s in that it was built with careful regard for the topography of the land. The original residents thought siting should disturb natural contours of the land as little as possible, unlike most subdivision developers of the period, and today, who plow down all trees and line up the structures like dominos.⁴ The pioneering landscape firm of Olmsted and Vaux had set a precedent for following the land contours with curving roads to create a picturesque landscape in Riverside, Ohio, in the 1870s, and their vision of elegant houses on large lots was admired and emulated in subdivisions for the wealthy. However, it was little followed by developers of economical projects who were trying to provide affordable housing quickly. The philosophy of building "with the land" influenced Robert Davenport, one of the original settlers, who went on to develop Tauxemont II and III, and later Hollin Hills, his renowned development built with the collaboration of the prominent architect Charles Goodman. There, as in Tauxemont, Davenport sited houses so their views of each other were obscured by plantings or land contours, and windows generally did not look directly into neighbors' windows. The original twenty families, with major contributions by one of the group, the architect, Alec Knowlton, came up with the basic one-story "ranch" design consisting of three bedrooms, one bathroom, kitchen, and living /dining "L" space.⁵ The original footprint of the house was only 1,200 square feet, but with its L-shaped room and large windows, the main space is light and airy and seems much larger than it is. The generously sized windows in the living and dining spaces bring the woods inside. In Hollin Hills, Goodman went even farther, designing entire walls of glass for the living and dining areas.

As each section of Tauxemont was built, the basic floor plan remained the same, though it might be flipped. Features that changed were items such as the style and type of windows, the exterior wall material, and the location of the fireplace.

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Windows in the bedrooms of the original Tauxemont I houses did not extend as low as those in Tauxemont II. Windows are metal and double-hung in Section II houses, but tend to be metal casements in Section III. Chimneys are placed differently in each section. In Tauxemont I, they are interior chimneys perched on the ridge of the roof but perpendicular to the ridgeline. In Tauxemont II, the chimneys also tend to be interior but were placed parallel to the ridgeline. In Tauxemont III, they tend to be exterior chimneys on the gable end, except for the ten aluminum houses that have two large square enclosures, housing the chimney and other vents, again perched on the ridgeline.

Tauxemont I houses originally cost \$5,000.00, but with cost overruns during the construction phase, the price escalated to \$5,500.00. They were built of concrete block and had a unique plank roofing system with trusses five feet on center. They were built over a crawl space.

Tauxemont II houses were the first houses sold as speculative houses, and this is probably why the block houses were often faced with brick. The houses in this section originally sold for \$8,000.00, but had a \$500.00 option to create a half basement, possible on the hilly lots. The basements allowed the utilities to be moved downstairs, thus freeing up valuable floor space upstairs. When World War II began, the supply of materials became uncertain. Davenport agreed to charge purchasers “whatever the house cost (not to exceed \$7,500) plus a \$750 fee. If the cost was higher, he would absorb the difference. He finished those houses during the war and lost \$2,000 in the process. Nevertheless, he got an option for the balance of the Tauxemont land in 1945 and completed the process.”⁶

Tauxemont III houses were the first houses built after World War II and originally sold for between \$12,000 and \$14,000 and included automatic washers. Tauxemont III North & South are the sections with the greatest variety of design. Though the houses were built on a slab, some were aluminum inside and out, and some were built of block. There were different fireplace locations, and there was an option for a four-foot extension to the length of the house.

The United States had developed steel and aluminum fabricating plants for the defense effort during World War II. Directly after the war, the factories that had produced these war materials tried to switch to homeland production to help with the demand for housing. The fabricators promised that houses could be provided rapidly and constructed in as few as three days, once materials were delivered to the site, with three days more for utilities to be installed. According to a newspaper article saved by a long-time Tauxemont resident,⁷ the Reconstruction Finance Corporation loaned \$225,000 to General Homes, under a sublease from Lustron Corporation, to

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build fifty-four aluminum “modernistic” homes in Tauxemont. The article quotes Robert Davenport as saying, “All homes will be completed by July.”

Plans were drawn and 20’ by 40’ concrete slabs were laid to build aluminum prefabricated houses in Tauxemont Section III, each with three bedrooms and 1,088 square feet of useable floor space. The gas and water pipes were originally embedded in the concrete, but they tended to corrode. Alcoa produced the houses for a builder called General Homes, which had a subcontract with Lustron Corporation. At the Curtis-Wright B-29 Bomber plant in Columbus, Ohio, Alcoa developed a structural system with aluminum skin glued to insulated frames shaped in section like the letter I. Each panel was either two or four inches thick. Windows and doors were shop fabricated and shop installed. While windows were aluminum, doors were to be wooden, with two four-light wood French doors for the side door, and wood panels with one to four lights for the front and rear doors. The houses sent to Tauxemont were General Homes Series 400.⁸

The aluminum house at 1400 Namassin Road has been covered with vertical wood panels, but retains the original aluminum interior. The pressed wall surface simulates tongue-and-groove construction. To turn the exterior corner from the living room into the hall, the aluminum was formed into a faceted colonnette, complete with capital and base. In addition to adding a nice design touch, this strengthens and protects a corner highly vulnerable to being bumped and dented by passersby.

According to Al Manola,⁹ who lived in one of the aluminum houses at 7907 Fort Hunt Road for thirty years, the material looked like the inside of an airplane, but it was “so dense it was harder to drill than steel,” and “so strong that when a tree fell on it, it bent but did not break.” There were down sides to the aluminum construction too. The roofs were flat sheets of aluminum, and when they expanded due to temperature changes they tended to leak. This is probably why these roofs have been replaced with standing-seam metal roofs over time. Another dramatic effect is that rain and acorns falling on the roofs made a big racket, sometimes sounding like gunfire in the fall. These roofs were designed with a big overhang on the front, and were supposed to be sited so that they provided solar protection in the summer and allowed the sun to enter in the winter. The overhang was emulated on the non-aluminum houses in Section III as well. The two large aluminum boxes sited on the peak of the roof are giveaways to the houses that are of aluminum construction. The boxes contain chimney and other vents.

The house parts were fabricated with copper electric wire inside a sandwich of insulation board that had softer aluminum on the inside walls. Because the wiring was enclosed in the sandwich,

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Fairfax County's electrical inspectors insisted on making holes in the aluminum with ice picks to check it. Then there was the problem of how to mend the holes! The aluminum had to be primed with a clear coating before painting.

Because of post-war shortages of copper wiring, the Manola family had to live in a trailer on-site for a year before their house panels could be completed. However, they had it relatively easy. Another long-time Tauxemonger shared the following story:

The aluminum houses were fabricated in Ohio and shipped on two flatbed trucks, half on each truck, much as prefabricated houses are to this day. A whole house is too wide to travel on the roads. The first few houses went along nicely, with only the usual few good whacks with a sledge to encourage the two halves (sic.) to go together properly. Then a truck with a half arrived, but the other truck was a non-show. So an inquiry was mounted. As it happened, the company in Ohio had gone bankrupt, the factory and warehouse sealed and locked, order of the court. That was back in Tauxemont's heroic age, before the place became infested with lawyers. So someone rented a truck, another found a sturdy bolt cutter, and a half a house found itself on a truck, on its way to Tauxemont. Where, with a few good whacks, it became a whole house. There were a lot of aluminum houses, more than one factory making them. But I say without fear of contradiction, that there is only one community that has half an aluminum house that was stole fair and square!¹⁰

With the end of the aluminum experiment, the remaining Tauxemont III houses were built with cinderblocks. Many had brick embellishments, such as a brick-faced insert between the two bedroom windows on the main façade.

The basic Tauxemont house has been the building block for many a varied addition. Most of the additions have kept the one-story theme and have spread out instead of up, thereby keeping nature and the tree canopy as the prevailing design element of the neighborhood. The landscape was paramount to the early Tauxemongers and became a major contributing factor when siting each house. Although each of the original houses was nearly identical to the others, the varied placements on the lots made each one unique. Each addition has also been unique, but the Tauxemont community and its dwellings have continued to blend in with the natural surroundings and have created a rich and diversified refuge in the area.

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Tauxemont Historic District Inventory

Accotink Place

- 7800 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0112
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other, ca 1941**
Original one-story brick house, double-hung windows arranged with one towards the end, then a pair, front door, and Chicago light with double-hung windows on sides.
Individual Resource Status: **House** **Contributing**
- 7801 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0099
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other,**
This is an original Tauxemont house with the windows grouped in 3-2-1 combinations across the facade. Non functional shutters have been added, even to the front door. The chimney is interior, parallel to the roof line.
Individual Resource Status: **House** **Contributing**
- 7804 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0097
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other,**
The original house remains though the front door was moved to a new entry addition with a modern glass wall with a wide end chimney. The original living room window was altered from three double-hung sashes to two. These alterations were by Charles Goodman, and is Case Study Number 2 in the "House and Home" article of August, 1952.
Individual Resource Status: **House** **Contributing**
- 7805 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0100
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other,**
Original Section 2 Tauxemont house with double hung windows grouped in 3, 2 and 1 clusters. Front door is in original position. Eave is extended to provide shelter from sun and rain. Interior chimney is oriented parallel to roof line. A small shed roofed addition has been set back on the south gable end.
Individual Resource Status: **House** **Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Garage** **Non-Contributing**
- 7808 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0028
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other,**
Original Tauxemont Section 2 house with double-hung windows grouped in 3, 2, 1 and original front door. A shed-roofed room has been added to the north gable end with casement windows. The interior chimney is parallel to the roof ridge.
Individual Resource Status: **House** **Contributing**
- 7809 **Accotink Place** 029-5199-0091
Primary Resource Information: **House, Stories 1, Style: Other,**
This is an original Tauxemont Section 2 house with a few alterations. Low one-

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room sized additions have been added to both gable ends of the house. These have flat roofs and large six light windows. The original living room window has been replaced with a bow window, and a small enclosed cross gable entry has been placed at the front door.

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Individual Resource Status: House

7812 Accotink Place 029-5199-0092

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

Original Section 2 house with double hung windows in groups of three, two and one. Original door is protected by small shed roof supported by two posts. An addition which is under an extension of the gable roof on the south contains a room with a door and a carport.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

7813 Accotink Place 029-5199-0093

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

Original house set diagonally to road; A Goodman-designed addition including a shed roof carport, storage building and an additional living room/study area with a brick chimney and new entry has been built across the south end. This is Case Study No. 4 in the "House & Home" article from 1952.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

7816 Accotink Place 029-5199-0094

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

One story, side gable, original houses with windows in sets of one, two and three. Small pedimented cross-gable porch roof supported by posts. Small extension on south gable end.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

7817 Accotink Place 029-5199-0103

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

The original house remains, but with a large addition on the southwest gable end. It is differentiated from the original house by a small offset in the wall and roof. The windows in the original house retain their original shape, size and configuration, though they appear to have been replaced with vinyl and faux muntins. An imaginative and beautiful glass entry has been built out from the front door. Roofed with a barrel vaulted copper roof, it is clearly differentiated from the original house.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

7820 Accotink Place 029-5199-0098

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 2, Style: Other,

The original house is intact except for a skylight added to the living room. A 2-story addition has been added on the north, with a small attached garage down the hill. A shed roofed porch has been added to the south gable. A flat roofed cover supported on posts protects the front door.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

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7824 Accotink Place 029-5199-0101

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

This original house has had an addition by Charles Goodman (Case study No. 1 in "House & Home" article of August, 1952) on the south and a covered porch extends from the original house over the front door, the living room window, and the addition, wrapping around to the rear of the house. A master bedroom was added as part of this addition.

Individual Resource Status: House

Contributing

7825 Accotink Place 029-5199-0095

Primary Resource Information: House, Stories 1, Style: Other,

Original Tauxemont Section 2 house with windows in groups of three, two and one.

