VLR 9/6/6
NRHP 11/27/6

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

John Gunnell House
Fairfax County, Virginia

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 in 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 John Gunnell House
other names/site number George Coleman House; DHR File No. 029-5525

2. Location

Street & number 489 Arnon Meadow Road Not for publication ___
city or town Great Falls vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Fairfax code 059 Zip 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 of certifying official Date 10/17/06
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 Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- X building(s)
- ___ district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	**0**	buildings
0	**0**	sites
0	**0**	structures
0	**0**	objects
2	**0**	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **0**
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) **N/A**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **DOMESTIC** Sub: **single dwelling**
DOMESTIC **secondary structure**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **DOMESTIC** Sub: **single dwelling**
DOMESTIC **secondary structure**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) **MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **BRICK**
roof **METAL: Tin**
walls **WOOD: Weatherboard**
other ___

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

__X__ 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.
__X__ 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)
AGRICULTURE; ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance **1851-1946**

Significant Dates **1852**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder **Unknown / John Gunnell**

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(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
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
_X_ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: **Fairfax County Office of Planning & Zoning**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **5.0 acres**

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	**18**	**301765**	**4320760**	2	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: **Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Architectural Historian**
Organization: **Tanya Edwards Beauchamp Associates** date **May 26, 2006**
street & number: **930 Leigh Mill Road** telephone **703-759-3796**
city or town **Great Falls** state **VA** zip code **22066**

Additional Documentation

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 **J. Douglas & Barbara Smith**
street & number **489 / Arnon Meadow Road** telephone **703-757-0267**
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.0. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The John Gunnell House (1851-52), commonly known as the George Coleman House, is located at 489 Arnon Meadow Road in Great Falls, Virginia. It is a vernacular frame Greek Revival-style residence, T-shaped in plan, two stories high with an English basement, attic, and intersecting gable roofs with brick chimneys at each of the three gable ends. Facing south, the front façade has five bays and is bilaterally symmetrical with an entry porch. The structure is timber-framed with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery and is clad in weatherboarding. The roofs are covered in standing-seam metal. The basement walls are brick, extending well below grade to a stone foundation. The interior is designed with one room at either side of a formal center entrance hall and an informal cross hall, with entrance to a rear room from exterior doors reached through porches on either side. A door is provided to shut off the rear wing from the more formal front rooms. The three-room plan is repeated on the second floor and in the basement. The stair is notable, with substantial newel post, attenuated turned balusters, and a graceful curving handrail, which extends in full detail to the attic floor. Most of the original interior detail remains including paneled doors, woodwork, heart-of-pine floors, and plaster. There is evidence of graining on the doors beneath the current paint. The John Gunnell House has one contributing building – a board-and-batten building, now used as a tool shed, that rests on top of a below-grade stone icehouse believed to date to the house.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Site—The John Gunnell House was sited near the center and at the high point of a gently rolling originally 216-acre parcel of farm land located at the intersection of the present Arnon Chapel and Walker Roads between the Georgetown Pike and the Potomac River just above the Great Falls of the Potomac. It was approached from Arnon Chapel Road by a long lane in the approximate position of the present Arnon Meadow Road. Now reduced to five acres through subdivision, it remains located at the end of this road. This is a very private semi-rural residential area with large, well-landscaped, two-to-ten-acre properties abutting the Gunnell property on three sides and the golf course of the River Bend Golf and Country Club on the remaining side. The property is screened by large trees and shrubbery on all sides, providing a sense of the original rural isolation. The grounds are kept as lawn with fenced garden areas and orchard. A curving gravel driveway approaches the house. Two large magnolias and boxwood hedges frame the front entrance. The only farm building remaining on the site is a below grade rectangular stone icehouse originally covered with a low octagonal roof. When this roof failed

circa 1930, it was replaced with a board-and-batten chicken house of excellent construction which is now used as a tool shed. There is a well with an iron hand pump in front of the house and a second well located under the enclosed east rear porch.

Front Facade—The high brick English basement raises the house to an imposing height. Seven broad steps are required to reach the entrance porch. A circa 1900 photo shows these steps were of wood and the same width as the entrance with risers, tread nosing detail, and without hand rails. Brick piers allow light to reach the windows in the basement below the porch. The porch is three bays wide, and its shed roof is supported by four columns. The ends of the roof rafters are visible and, at one time, may have had bracket detail. Frieze-like woodwork with turned vertical spindles extends from column to column. There is no balustrade. In recent years this porch, in deteriorated condition, was rebuilt and reduced to one bay, framing the entrance door. A hipped roof was provided together with columns echoing the original. A handrail was added to the stairs. The original entrance composition, evoking a classical ideal, remains. Four pilasters support entablature detail including an eleven-light frieze, and frame four-light sidelights and the entrance door. The pilaster detail, though boldly fluted, is attenuated and simple in the refined vernacular Greek Revival style promoted by the popular pattern books of Minard Lafever. The entrance door itself is pegged with mortise-and-tenon joinery with four raised panels. The window frames are simple with brief ogee-curve cornices and sills. The six-over-six light single-hung, wood window sashes have a mix of old and new glass panes. Shutters were present in the circa 1900 photo, removed in a 1930s photo, nailed back in place in the late twentieth century, and are now removed and stored. Exterior storm windows have been installed. There is a hatch in the roof—reportedly to facilitate repairs.

Gable Ends—A high and substantial brick chimney dominates each of the three gable ends, accommodating multiple flues. The unusual height of the chimneys adds to the perceived height of the house. There is a row of projecting bricks at the top of each and each is capped with slate. A small attic window occurs on either side of each chimney on the gable ends of the main block, with a single such window in the attic of the rear wing. The rear gable end has been modified to include an additional window on the first floor and a visually unobtrusive brick chimney for a twentieth-century furnace flue.

Rear Porches—Originally there were entrances to the rear cross-hall on either side of the rear wing with a shed-roofed porch at each. These features have been altered in recent years. A painting done in the 1950s shows the shed roof extending the length of the wing, supported by

tall posts. Stairs to a landing at the entrance are parallel to the house wall and completely under cover. This feature perhaps allowed food to be brought up from a basement kitchen in all weather. It has now been replaced by a dining terrace with entrance from both the living room—where a window has been replaced by a French door—and from the kitchen, now located in the rear wing. The rear wing facades, originally two windows on each floor, have both been altered on the first floor. On the west side the cross-hall exterior door was removed to accommodate a powder room. The original windows were removed and replaced by smaller, over-sink windows and a door. The terrace includes stairs to grade. On the east side an original porch has been extended and enclosed and the original first-floor east wing of the rear wing removed to expand the new kitchen into a breakfast room. The original exterior walls and windows of the main block have been retained, as has a cold pantry added here circa 1900. The stone steps to the original porch have been retained in place under the porch expansion.

Interior Plan—The original interior plan included one room on either side of a center entrance hall. Each of these rooms measures 15 feet and 2 ½ inches by 17 feet and 2 ½ inches. The entrance hall is 7 feet and 10 inches wide. This plan and these dimensions are repeated on the second story and in the basement. The cross-hall in the rear wing measures approximately 4 feet and 7 inches wide, and the room beyond measures14 feet and 6 inches by 15 feet and 5 ¼ inches wide at the gable end. These dimensions are also repeated on the second story and in the basement. With the exception of the functional changes mentioned above, the addition of a bathroom and closets at the landing of the second-story stair hall and another bathroom at the entrance of the second-story rear bedroom, there have been no substantive changes to the interiors of the John Gunnell House. Electricity, indoor plumbing, and central heating were added by the family in the 1930s. Central air conditioning was added by the present owner.

Fireplaces—There are eight shallow, coal-burning fireplaces, one in each room, including each room of the basement, with the exception of the second-story rear room. It is possible that there is also a fireplace here which has been concealed. No original mantels remain with the possible exception of that in the second story west bedroom. It has been reported that a disappointed heir removed the mantels and the interior door knobs. Rings which might have supported trammels are found in the fireplace in the west basement room, but this fireplace is too small to have been used as the main kitchen.

Finishes—The original horse hair-and-lime plaster on lath remains throughout the house and has been repaired as necessary and painted. There is no evidence that wallpaper was ever used.

There are no cornices. A broad original baseboard remains in all rooms, and reportedly is chestnut originally finished with oil, then stained and varnished before the house was sold to investors. All woodwork has now been painted white. There is, however, evidence of graining beneath the paint on the hall doors. The original heart of pine floors remain throughout and have been restored.

Entrance Hall—Doors, woodwork, and stair are original and remain intact with the exception of the removed interior door knobs. The entrance composition echoes that on the exterior and runs the full width of the hall. The staircase is paneled with an entrance to a basement stair at the rear. The stair string is embellished with simple scroll-work and other detail. The stair itself is an open-well dog-leg stair with half-pace landings. There is a substantial turned newel. The handrail is simple and light, curving gracefully upward and around the open well. Balusters are simply turned at the bottom and attenuated as they reach upward to the handrail. The stair extends in full detail to the attic floor.

Windows and Doors—Originally there were two large windows on each side of all rooms. Changes have been discussed above under ‘porches.’ Original interior window frames remain in good condition. All original doors with four raised panels with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery remain. A small-scale door occurs in the northwest corner of the dining room, giving direct access to the cross-hall and kitchen. Although the door here is not original, this opening may have existed from the beginning, facilitating service during dining. A cold pantry was constructed in the kitchen using an original door when the kitchen was moved upstairs, probably at the turn of the century.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Gunnell House is a substantial Greek Revival-style dwelling built in 1851-1852[1] in Fairfax County by planter John Gunnell (1793-1874) on land acquired by his father, William Gunnell III, from Bryan Fairfax in 1791. The property remained in the ownership of the descendents of William Gunnell III until 1946. The two-story frame house, clad in weatherboard, and built on a brick English basement in a T-shaped plan, is one of the last surviving dwellings of this form and style in Fairfax County. The house is a five-bay, single-pile dwelling with a central entrance topped by a gable standing-seam metal roof with three gable end exterior chimneys. The interior boasts a notable central dog-leg staircase, paneled doors, woodwork, heart-of-pine floors, and plaster, many of the materials being original to the house. One contributing building exists on the property– a board-and-batten building, now used as a tool shed, that was built in the 1920s on top of an icehouse believed to date to the house. The property possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. John Gunnell House meets the National Register criteria under Criterion A for agriculture and under Criterion C for architecture.

Justification of Criteria

Criterion A: The John Gunnell House remained in the ownership of descendents of William Gunnell III through four generations until sold to investors in 1946. It exemplifies, through this long tenure by a single prominent family, the transition of agriculture in the Upper Potomac area of Fairfax County from frontier subsistence to large plantations worked by slaves to small family farms. Gunnell's forebears were among the earliest settlers in what is now Fairfax County. The large family rose from indentured servitude to positions of wealth and power.

Criterion C: The John Gunnell House is believed to be the largest and one of the last-surviving residences of its kind built here in the mid-nineteenth century. Its design and construction are significant in the evolution of vernacular rural architecture and building practices in the Upper Potomac area of Fairfax County. The innovative personality, wealth, and social standing of its builder are evident in the strict formality of the symmetrical design, the separation of formal and informal areas, the lavish use of brick in the three chimneys and English basement, the eight coal-burning fireplaces, and the use of perhaps the first iron cook stove in the area in the basement kitchen. The weatherboard-clad, timber-framed building with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery was a traditional building method which persisted here from the mid-eighteenth century through the nineteenth century.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The John Gunnell House was built on land which was part of the original 676 acres purchased from Bryan Fairfax by William Gunnell III and his wife, Sara Coleman Gunnell, in 1791 when the entail established by Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, was finally broken.[2] Part of Fairfax's Great Falls Manor, the property was probably occupied by John Gunnell's grandfather earlier while managing Fairfax's farm leases. This land was added to an adjoining 450-acre parcel Gunnell purchased from John Harle in 1785, creating the plantation on which he and his family resided. William Gunnell III was active in Fairfax County politics, serving in many public offices. His surviving heirs included four sons and four daughters.[3] At his death in 1822, his daughter Elizabeth Gunnell Mix inherited the 216-acre parcel where the John Gunnell House would be built.[4] She died in 1824 "bearing an infant son Oscar."[5] Her husband Lewis Mix died soon after, leaving Oscar in the care of his uncles, John and George Gunnell. John married Sarah Ann Spencer in 1825 in the District of Columbia. Oscar conveyed his land to his uncle John in 1844.[6] He went to medical school, as had his uncles, Drs. James S. and William H. Gunnell, and became a respected doctor in Charlottesville.

John Gunnell inherited a part of William Gunnell III's plantation known as Hidden Springs. Here he enlarged a small existing timber-framed house. He was farming large tracts of land at this time and was listed on the Slave Schedule as owning twenty-two slaves—a very great number for this area. Like his father and other men in the family, he followed a tradition of public service. He was recommended for lieutenant in the 60th Regiment of Virginia Militia in 1816, and by his death in 1874, he had risen to the rank of colonel. He also served as a road surveyor, a magistrate, was a member of the School Commission from 1837 to 1845, sheriff from 1847 to 1850, and justice for Fairfax County from 1835 to 1856.[7]

George G. Coleman (1828-77) was the son of John Gunnell's sister, Sarah Gunnell Coleman. His family moved to Missouri during the 1830s. George eventually returned to Fairfax County and in the U.S. Census of 1860 is listed as living with John and Sarah Gunnell. In 1861, he and his uncle John were among the first to sign the Ordinances of Secession. By 1870, George had married Olivia Jackson and had probably moved into the house. George and Olivia had five children—Critcher Coleman Oliver (1870-[ ]), Susan known as Siti (1871-[ ]), Samuel (1873-1927), Gunnell (circa 1875-1941), and George W. (1876-1902). John Gunnell was childless, and, at his death in 1874, named his nephew George G. Coleman as his sole heir and executor. George died soon after in 1877. His widow married Philip Adams who was named the children's guardian in 1881.

In 1894 the estate was partitioned among the five children.[8] The home farm now consisted of 150 acres. The house and five acres went to George. His brother Samuel bought this parcel in 1901, [9]and, in addition, bought the barn lot from their brother Gunnell. Samuel and Elenorah Coleman had two children, Lida and Alvin. Lida married Grover Cleveland Jenkins, from an old Broad Run family, and had one child—Roland born in 1917. After Samuel's death in 1927, they moved into the old house.[10] In 1946, Lida Coleman Jenkins and Grover Cleveland Jenkins sold the property to investors, ending the Gunnell / Coleman family's long tenure there.[11]

Agricultural History—This land on which the John Gunnell House was built was once part of the 12,588-acre Great Falls Manor of Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax. Early settlers grew tobacco transported by rolling road to the tobacco houses at the Ports of Georgetown and Alexandria. In the second half of the eighteenth century, farmers on this isolated, up-country land leased small parcels of 100 to 200 acres from Bryan Fairfax, who would be Thomas's heir. Practicing agrarian reform, Bryan required each farmer to build a 16 foot x 16 foot or a 16 foot x 20 foot log house and plant orchards and a crop other than tobacco or corn. The latter were forbidden because of the devastating effect they had had on the fertility of the farm land to the south. In 1791, William Gunnell III and his wife Sara Coleman bought 676 acres of land from Bryan Fairfax, adding it to 450 acres bought from John Harle in 1785. This parcel became the center of a large, self-sufficient plantation of more than 1,000 acres, including more than forty slaves. Fruit, wheat, rye, tobacco, corn, and flax were grown here. At his death in 1820, the house and 159 acres went first to William's daughter Ann; and then, at her untimely death, to his son George. In 1842 the property was sold on the courthouse steps to Charles Binn who advocated the use of limestone to restore land impoverished by corn and tobacco crops. In 1844 Binn sold the property to William Gunnell III's nephew, George W. Gunnell. His advertisement of the sale in the *Alexandria Gazette*, April 27,1844, gives a good description of farming here:

> There are 15 or 20 acres of prime meadow ground. On it is a large frame HOUSE containing six rooms…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 streams and springs of fine water in each of the 5 fields.

Binn also referred to livestock, including horses, cows, sheep, and hogs. Since he owned the property for only two years, this description must be of the farm Gunnell had developed, and his sons, George and John, continued. Until recently, there was a barn at Gunnell's Run which was typical of early-nineteenth-century barns in this area. It was timber-framed with pegged mortise-

and-tenon joinery, tall windows, and a central entrance through the longitudinal sides. There was a similar barn on the property where the John Gunnell house was built. A 1950s oil painting by Nancy Stevenson shows the barn with additions. It may have been part of William Gunnell III's plantation, servicing farming activities on this parcel. Clearly very old and in very bad condition in the 1950s, it was subsequently demolished.

After the division of William Gunnell III's estate, only John and George remained farming the land. One sister died, the others married and moved away. The other two brothers chose medicine rather than farming as a career. Various parcels were sold out of the family. The large number of slaves—greater than the land could support—became a problem. George spent some years in Mississippi leasing the slaves. This extended absence contributed to his eventual bankruptcy and loss of the William Gunnell III home place. George died in 1850 with John acting as executor.

John was listed in the 1859 Fairfax County personal property tax records as having one male over sixteen (probably George Coleman), five slaves over sixteen, eight slaves over twelve, seven horses or mules valued at $350.00, twenty-five cattle or sheep valued at $300.00, two carriages or wagons valued at $300.00, 2 watches valued at $200.00, 2 clocks valued at $10.00, all gold & silver plate valued at $900.00, all household & kitchen furniture valued at $1,200.00, and cash on hand $750.00. By local standards he was very wealthy. In 1862, his horses were reduced to five, his cattle to seventeen, and his cash to $700.00. There were no slaves and no sheep or hogs. His other personal property remained more or less the same. In spite of heavy foraging by both armies in this area, John Gunnell remained a wealthy man. Coleman had been arrested and imprisoned briefly in the District of Columbia as a southern sympathizer. John, described by General McCall as "a noted leader of the oppressors of Union Men, and agent for the secessionist army" eluded arrest.[12] In the U. S. Census of 1870, John Gunnell was listed as a farmer, with real estate valued at $12,500.00 and personal property valued at $1,000.00. Seventy-seven years old, he lived with his neighbor, James O. Tucker. At his death in 1874, his estate inventory catalogs the kind of tools and equipment used by a farmer here at that time. It includes unusual items such as a road scraper, mill stones, and grain fan and lists the often elegant household furnishings room by room. [13]

The war took a heavy toll on farmers in this area as elsewhere in Virginia, as did economic conditions following the war. As large land holdings like those of the Gunnells were broken up into smaller and smaller parcels through inheritance and sale, the family farm with a subsistence economy became the rule. There had been an influx of northern farmers in the 1850s. After the war many more relocated here, attracted by the climate and cheap land prices brought on by the war and economic depression. Samuel Coleman tried to put the farm his father inherited from

John Gunnell back together again after it was partitioned in 1894. The Rambler, a columnist for the *Washington Evening Star*, described visiting the seemingly abandoned William Gunnell farm in 1918 and discussing the Gunnell family, including John Gunnell, with a neighbor. As he continued on to the Arnon Chapel, he noted the green fields of the Coleman, Jenkins, and Oliver families near the Chapel.[14]

When Samuel Coleman died in 1927, his daughter Lida and her husband, Grover Cleveland Jenkins, inherited the John Gunnell House. Cleve was a carpenter as well as a farmer. He kept a pack of foxhounds and enjoyed hunting with his neighbors. The farm was typical for that time. They raised chickens, cows, horses, and pigs for their own use, raised corn, wheat, and hay in the fields, and had a large vegetable garden. Oral histories recorded by the Great Falls Historical Society in the 1980s show that while there was little money here during the Great Depression, life on these small family farms was relatively comfortable. The area had experienced similar downturns throughout the nineteenth century and survived them. The Columbia Gas Transmission Company installed a gas line to the property in the 1930s. A gas boiler and radiators—manufactured by the American Radiator & Standard Sanitary Corporation between 1929 and 1947—were installed and still remain in use in the house. The kitchen had probably been moved upstairs at least by the turn of the century, and a cold pantry—typical for the area—built at one end. Indoor plumbing, electricity, and a modern kitchen with gas range, were installed, probably during the 1930s by Cleve and Lida Coleman Jenkins.

Architectural Significance—In the Colonial period settlers found that this up-country area of Fairfax County above the Great Falls of the Potomac River was rich in stone and timber—particularly chestnut, oak, pine, and poplar—but lacked the resources for making brick and mortar. Early buildings were constructed of logs or timber-framed with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery. The latter were clad in weatherboard. Both were typically one-and-one-half stories high with gable roofs clad in cedar shingles. End chimneys were stone and were often used for cooking. Interiors were at first one-room deep with corner stairs to a sleeping loft. As the owners prospered and their families grew, additional rooms were added, including entrance halls with stairs to expanded second-story bedrooms and lighter, more fashionable formal first floor living areas. Nothing was entirely demolished. Both Gunnell's Run and Hidden Springs generally followed this pattern of gradual development, as did other area houses, such as Four Stairs.

In 1851-52, John Gunnell built his house on a clear site at the center of farmland, somewhat removed from the Georgetown Pike and the county roads. He used construction methods indigenous to the area, but substituted brick for stone in the basement and chimneys. The use of brick, allowing a more vertical composition, was an expensive anomaly here as was the metal

standing-seam roof, thought to have been used originally, and the iron cooking stove in the basement kitchen. The high English basement and chimneys were also unusual. The plan of his house remained the one-room-deep plan which had prevailed here since first settlement. The T-shape allowed substantial additional living space to the rear without disturbing the composition of the front façade. It also allowed clear separation of formal and informal living areas. The fashionable entrance hall and stair set the tone for the interior. Four large windows in each room on each floor insured ample light and air with expansive views over the farmland. The ready availability of coal by shipment over the nearby Chesapeake & Ohio Canal enabled the placement of multiple fireplaces.

Archeological Potential—Archival evidence establishes the existence of a large farm which was owned by succeeding generations of a single prominent family from settlement to the mid-twentieth century. It was worked initially by African American slaves. A barn, probably dating from the early nineteenth century, was located on the site until the mid-twentieth century. An original below-grade stone icehouse, accessible now below a twentieth-century frame chicken house, still remains. The location of other original outbuildings including possible slave quarters is unknown. There are two wells—one inside the expanded rear porch addition at the rear of the house which is currently in use, and one, with iron hand pump, in front of the house. There are no known family or slave graveyards. The land, including the barn site, is undisturbed. There is potential for archeological discovery and a Phase I survey is recommended.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Fairfax County Personal Property Tax Records
Fairfax County Deed Books
Fairfax County Minute Books
Fairfax County Loose Birth Records
Fairfax County Will Books
Loudoun County Deed Books
Official Record of the War of the Rebellion
Oral histories of the Great Falls Historical Society

Secondary Sources

Canaan, Deborah. *Land Above the Falls.* Great Falls, Virginia: Great Falls Historical Society, 1992.

Cooke, Elizabeth Miles. *The History of the Old Georgetown Pike*. Annandale, Virginia: Charles Baptie Studios, 1977.

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"The Rambler Visits One of the Old Gunnell Homes Near Great Falls," *Washington Sunday Star*, v. 2, N. 145 (May 26, 1918).[1]

Tibbetts, Jean. *My land…your land…This Land At Cornwell Farm*. Great Falls, Virginia: The Great Falls Historical Society, 2003.

Washburn, Karen. "The Gunnell Family of Fairfax County." *Fairfax County Historical Society Yearbook.* v. 20 (1984-5).

Standing Files

Research Files of historian Karen Washburn
Great Falls Historical Society Archives

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The John Gunnell House is located at 489 Arnon Meadow Road, Great Falls, VA 22066. The property includes the entire 5.0-acre parcel described in Fairfax County Deed Book 08437, page 0234, located in the 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.

All photographs are common to:

PROPERTY: John Gunnell House
LOCATION: Fairfax County
DHR FILE NO: 029-5525
PHOTOGRAPHER: Tanya Edwards Beauchamp
DATE: June 2006
All negatives are stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

VIEW OF: Front facade, looking north.
NEG. NO: 22987:10A
PHOTO: 1 of 8

VIEW OF: Perspective view, looking northeast.
NEG. NO: 22987:4A
PHOTO: 2 of 8

VIEW OF: Perspective view, looking southeast
NEG. NO: 22987:7A
PHOTO: 3 of 8

VIEW OF: Perspective view, looking southwest; chicken house/icehouse at far right.
NEG. NO: 22987:18A
PHOTO: 4 of 8

VIEW OF: Interior, front entrance hall, looking north toward cross-hall..
NEG. NO: 22987:29A
PHOTO: 5 of 8

VIEW OF: Interior, front entrance hall, looking south toward entrance door.
NEG. NO: 22987:31A
PHOTO: 6 of 8

VIEW OF: Interior, 1st floor east room, looking northwest.
NEG. NO: 22987:26A
PHOTO: 7 of 8

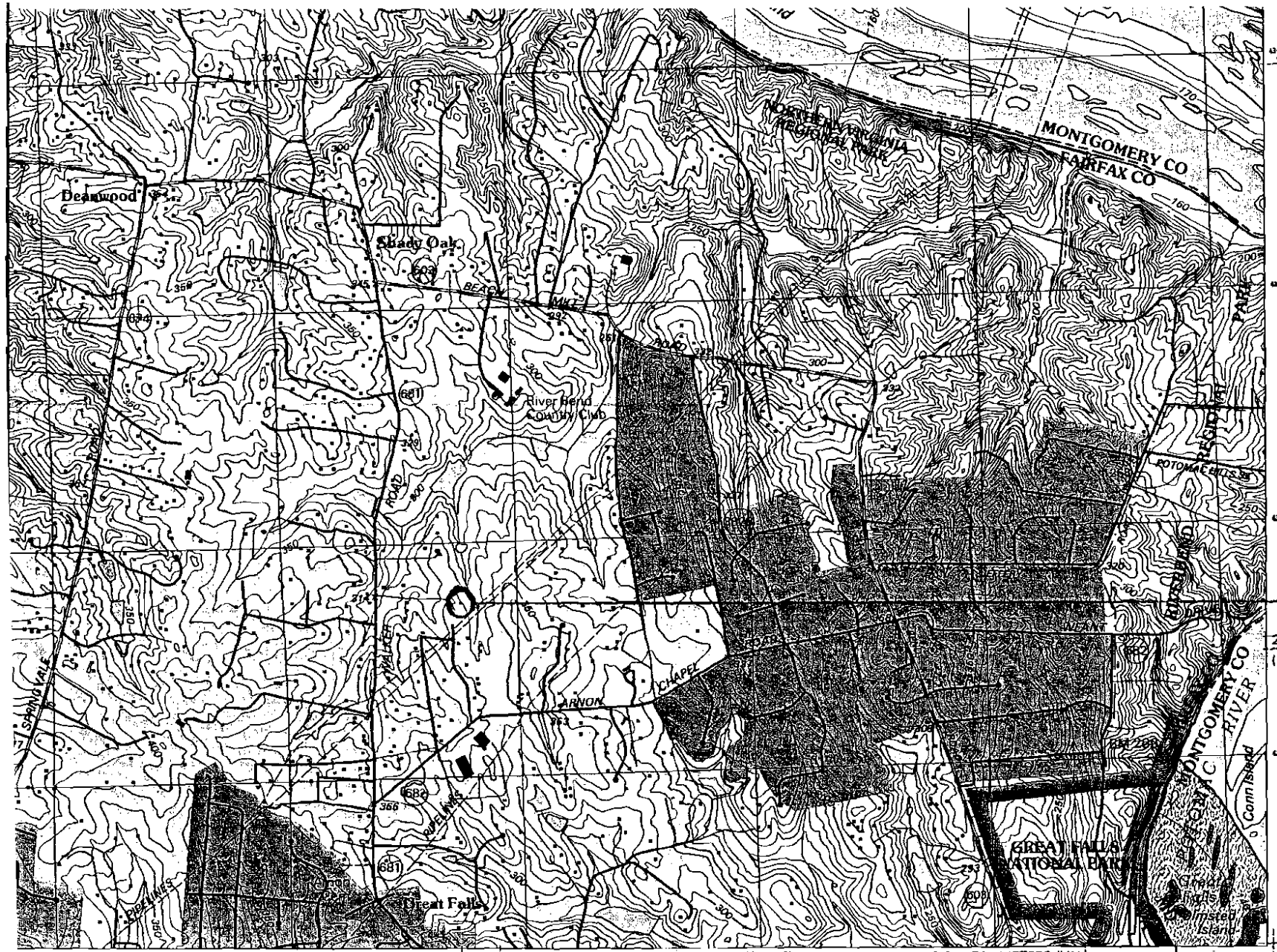
VIEW OF: Interior, west basement room, looking southwest.
NEG. NO: 22987:32A
PHOTO: 8 of 8

Historic Photographs

1. John Gunnell House, showing west rear porch and barn. Artistic license in perspective view and placement of outbuildings. Oil painting by Nancy E. Stevenson, 1950s.
2. Front façade circa 1900, looking north. Courtesy Barbara Smith.
3. Front façade circa 1940, looking north. Courtesy Barbara Smith.
4. 18th-century post-and-beam, hand-hewn barn located off Arnon Chapel Road burning after lightning strike in 1988. Structure still largely visible. Thought to be a Gunnell barn. Courtesy Lucy Masemer.

ENDNOTES

1. Fairfax County Personal Property Tax Records, 1853. Improvements. 'New House' written in margin.
2. Loudoun County Deed Book U: 259, 1791.
3. William Gunnell House, VDHR File no. 029-109.
4. Fairfax County Deed Book Z-2: 51-60, 1828.
5. Fairfax County Deed Book Z-2: 59, 1830.
6. Fairfax County Deed Book I-3: 365, 1844.[55]
7. Karen Washburn, "The Gunnell Family of Fairfax County," *Fairfax County Historical Society Yearbook,* v. 20, 1984-5, p 62.
8. Fairfax County Deed Book R-5: 40,1894.[7]
9. Fairfax County Deed Book V-6:166, 1901[8]
10. Fairfax County Deed Book P-10: 459, 1930.[9]
11. Fairfax County Deed Book 521: 7, 1946.[10]
12. *Official Record of the War of the Rebellion.*[11]
13. Fairfax County Will Book C-2,145, 241-43, 285-88.
14. "The Rambler Visits One of the Old Gunnell Homes Near Great Falls," *Washington Sunday Star*, v. 2, N. 145 (May 26, 1918).[12]



JOHN GUNNELL HOUSE
FAIRFAX COUNTY
UTMS
ZONE 18
301765/4320760

Seneca Quad

29-5525

INTERIOR - GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA - 1998

4 000

1000 2000

5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000

MARYLAND

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface .....

Secondary highway hard surface .....

Light-duty road, hard or improved surface .....

Unimproved road .....

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

VAL 10 FEET
CAL DATUM OF 1929

1 Poolesville

17081-8