

VLR-6/17/87 NRHP-9/25/87

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See Instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic LOCUST GROVE

(VDHL #39-35)

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number State Route 641

N/A not for publication

city, town Amicus

X vicinity of

state Virginia

code 51

county Greene

code 079

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> In process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> perk
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			other:

4. Owner of Property

name Susan & George Overstreet

street & number Route 1, Box 121-A

city, town Stanardsville

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 22973

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Greene County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Stanardsville

state Virginia 22973

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks  
title Survey (File #39-35)

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1986

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records VDHL, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond

state Virginia 23219

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Locust Grove, sited on a rolling tract of Greene County farmland, is located at the end of State Route 641, approximately one mile from State Route 633. The two-story frame dwelling was constructed by Isaac Davis, Jr. ca.1798; his descendants added a two-story north wing (replaced during a 1983-1985 restoration effort) approximately 87 years later. Most of Locust Grove's original fabric and trim, interior and exterior, remain intact. Its four-room plan gives evidence of Davis' adherence to architectural ideas embraced by Virginians at the turn of the eighteenth century. Only a smokehouse stands from the original plantation outbuilding complex. The nominated acreage includes two contributing buildings, the dwelling and smokehouse.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Isaac Davis placed Locust Grove at the crest of a hill, orienting the facade of his house to the east and the rear elevation west toward the Blue Ridge Mountains. Architectural evidence and personal documents disclose that Davis may have built a house that anticipated a standard of living or way of life that he never achieved.

With the exception of the south elevation, the dwelling is sheathed with its original yellow pine beaded weatherboards and fastened with rosehead nails. The structure also is framed in yellow pine; the same material is used throughout the interior for doors, floors and ornamental features. Locust Grove rests on a rubblestone foundation. A partial cellar, found beneath the dining room and chamber, initially was entered from the north elevation, but now is reached via a stair in the kitchen wing. Rubblestone foundations underpin the three 18th-century exterior, gable-end chimneys. Both north elevation chimneys were rebuilt above the shoulders during the 1983-1985 restoration. Perhaps because it once was visible from the nearby road to Celt, the south chimney is laid in Flemish bond. Its glazed headers have worn, leaving only the darkened brick face. First-story windows have 9/9 double-hung sash; second-story openings have 9/6 double-hung sash. New sash in the gable ends replaced the small four-pane windows that once provided light to the attic.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates    ca.1798                      Builder/Architect    N/A

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built ca.1798 and enlarged approximately 87 years later, Locust Grove in Greene County, Virginia is distinguished by its early construction date, four-room plan, impressive dimensions and undisturbed condition. Its builder, Isaac Davis, Jr., was a substantial planter, land speculator and important local leader who served in the Virginia House of Delegates and filled various appointive county-level offices. Locust Grove demonstrates the manner in which vernacular builders, such as Davis, transformed available architectural options to suit individual needs. The dwelling and associated family papers further an understanding of early national period living standards, architectural practices and economic conditions in an area of Virginia that has been little documented.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Isaac Davis, Jr. (1754-1835) was born in Albemarle County and served with the county militia during the Revolutionary War. He acquired several tracts of Orange County (Greene County formed from Orange County in 1838) property during the 1780s, probably making the initial purchase at the time of his 1781 marriage to Elizabeth Kirtley. Davis moved his family from Albemarle County to Orange County in 1786 after tenants cleared and cultivated one of the tracts. Once settled, he continued to secure land in the county, including a 200 acre purchase in 1791 on the Swift Run River that may be the property upon which he constructed his house approximately seven years later.

Locust Grove was built in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where plantations were smaller and worked by fewer slaves than in other sections of Orange County. The county's agricultural center and most fertile fields lay east of Davis' homeplace. He cultivated a portion of his lands in tobacco, probably some in wheat, and leased other holdings to tenants.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Dickey, Julie. "Locust Grove," Greene County Magazine, 4 (April 1982-1983), pp. 31-32.

(See Continuation Sheets #5&#6)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Earlsville, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	7	7	2	2	1	0	0	4	2	3	5	5	1	6	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification** VBD: Beginning at a point on the S side of VA 641, approx. 300' from the end of said route and approx. 4500' SW of the intersection of VA 641 with VA 633; thence extending approx. 150' W along S side of VA 641; thence approx. 150' S; thence approx. 150' E; thence approx. 150' N to point of origin. **JUSTIFICATION:** The bounds have been (See Continuation Sheet #6)

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A code  county N/A code

state N/A code  county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marlene Elizabeth Heck, Architectural Historian

organization HARDY·HECK·MOORE, INC.

date April 1987

street & number P.O. Box 13392

telephone 512·459·4464

city or town Austin

state Texas 78711

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
title Division of Historic Landmarks

date August 11, 1987

**For NPS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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LOCUST GROVE, GREENE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Continuation sheet #1

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7. Description - Architectural Analysis

Approximately 50% of the glass panes are original. Shed-roofed porches at the east and west elevations are supported by chamfered posts. They shield the double entries and lend balance to the asymmetrical design of both four-bay elevations. Sections of each porch have been replaced or rebuilt, but conform to the original in placement and configuration. An unmolded cornice runs the length of the front and rear elevations, terminating in carved endboards. Standing-seam metal sheeting covers the structure's gable roof.

Locust Grove's four-room plan is the building's most interesting feature, providing revealing clues about the domestic routines and social needs of the Davis family. Isaac Davis eschewed the more typical Virginia house of the period, the I house, in favor of a four-room dwelling. Much of the first-floor was given over to the public domain, with a number of controls built into the plan to regulate spatial activity. Since the late 17th century Virginians had utilized passages to mediate circulation and direct movement; Davis substituted walls without openings and enclosed stairs.

No documents reveal the precise use of rooms at Locust Grove, but it is possible to infer function from size and spatial arrangement. Davis also conveyed the social importance of the various rooms from the degree of finish he specified. This hierarchy is exhibited not only among rooms, but between floors, as in the decision to mount the HL hinges beneath door moldings on the first floor, and leave them exposed on the second floor.

Based on scores of other Virginia dwellings, it is reasonable to suggest that the four first-story rooms were a hall, closet or storage for the hall, dining room and chamber. However, these names denote only their primary function, for the spaces routinely served multiple purposes.

The hall was the largest and most public room, used less for familial gatherings than for public occasions. Scale and handsome finish subtly indicate the hall's important social function. Its tall four-panel mantel is detailed by a dentil course and shallow molded shelf, and a raised-panel wainscot and molded cornice encircle the room. An enclosed quarter-turn stair

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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LOCUST GROVE, GREENE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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7. Description - Architectural Analysis

leads up from the hall to the chamber above. However, evidence suggests this room rarely was pressed into service.

Wear around the hall door is much less pronounced than that found around the doors in the dining room and chamber; and the door from the east elevation porch into the hall retains its original lock. Had this been the primary entry for any generation of the Davis family, the floor would show signs of repeated use and repair, and the lock would have broken and been replaced long ago. Treads of the enclosed quarter-turn stair leading up from the hall to the chamber above still are smooth and round, while those of the flight up from the first-floor chamber are worn and pitted. Davis may have envisioned the hall as Locust Grove's principal social space and set the room aside for fine entertaining, but it appears that it was little used. Domestic activity was centered in the two adjacent rooms.

The small room directly behind the hall likely was a closet, or service room for the hall. It was converted into a bath in the 1920s. A locked closet beneath the stair provided additional storage, perhaps for especially valuable items, and original beaded shelving remains. Davis intended to control access to this room for the lock on the exterior door operated only from the interior; one was admitted into the room.

By the mid 18th century Virginians had set aside a first-story room that served both public and private needs. Most commonly called the dining room, it usually adjoined the hall, as at Locust Grove. The room, into which guests and good friends assembled, also provided an intimate setting for family activities. For especially lavish or large events, it was paired with the hall to provide a circuit of entertaining spaces. While considerably smaller than the hall, the dining room is detailed identically. The wainscot and cornice of the two rooms match perfectly; the dining room mantel is smaller in scale, but designed exactly as the one in the hall. This degree of finish establishes the dining room as an important space; its scale reveals it was considered less important than the hall. The wearing pattern around the door from the east elevation porch into the dining room indicates that this was a heavily trafficked entry, and the room may have served as a passage of sorts.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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7. Description - Architectural Analysis

The most private first-floor room, the chamber, was positioned behind the dining room. The degree of finish is the same as found in the dining room, suggesting that it was the primary chamber. This possibility was rejected because of the size and attention to detail exhibited in the second-story hall chamber. Therefore, it seems most likely that the first-floor chamber and the two above were the domain of the Davis children. An enclosed stair leading up from the first-floor chamber links this suite of rooms; years of use by ten children could account for the worn treads. Nineteenth-century owners used the chamber as a dining room, installing a punkah that at one time hung above the table.

Davis wished to control access between floors and among chambers, and chose not to link the three second-story rooms; rather the hall chamber was separated from the other two by a wall. Because of its size (dimensions correspond to those of the hall directly below), location and detail, the hall chamber probably was the private quarters of Isaac and Elizabeth. Again, degree of finish amplifies spatial distinctions. The hall chamber is encircled by a molded chair rail and baseboard, a sharp contrast to the simple chair board that embellishes the remaining second-story chambers. A raised-panel mantel with a shallow shelf decorates the room's hearth opening. The northwest chamber has no fireplace; the mantel in the chamber above the dining room burned in a hearth fire. The hall chamber floor is finished-nailed and in fine condition, as opposed to the worn, face-nailed floors of the other two rooms. To provide ease of circulation and allow contemporary use of the structure, the present owners cut an opening through the dividing wall.

During the 1983-1985 restoration effort it was determined that the ca.1885 north wing was too deteriorated to salvage. The structure was poorly constructed and its second-story interior was never finished. Dimensions of the new 1-1/2-story kitchen wing approximate those of the 19th-century addition.

Locust Grove is surrounded by mature locust and maple trees. A pyramidal-roofed smokehouse standing just north of the kitchen wing is the single remaining dependency whose construction date is contemporaneous with that of the house. Its beaded weatherboards and hand-wrought nails and hardware remain from the ca.1798 building campaign. Surface depressions and scattered bricks indicate the remains of outbuildings and walkways that have not been tested archaeologically. The Davis family cemetery is located southwest of the dwelling, outside the bounds of the nominated acreage.

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**8. Significance - Historical Background**

Post-war demand for tobacco and wheat created a healthy local economy that lasted until 1812, and Locust Grove likely was constructed with the handsome agricultural profits Davis realized from his efforts. By 1817 he paid property taxes on more than 2000 acres of county lands.

While accumulating Orange County property, Davis followed the lead of his father by speculating on land in Kentucky, patenting in excess of 100,000 acres in Bourbon, Clarke, Fayette and Lincoln counties by 1803. From his correspondence, it appears Davis rarely inspected his holdings and depended on the services of Kentucky friends who oversaw land transactions, marketed the grain and tobacco grown by his tenants and protected his legal interests. There is no evidence that Davis intended these lands as anything other than an investment, for he continued to maintain his residence at the Orange County plantation.

The county's governmental center also lay to the east of Locust Grove, where James Madison and James Barbour wielded considerable political power. However, Davis was sufficiently known and respected that Orange County voters sent him to the Virginia House of Delegates for seventeen terms between 1789 and 1826. Davis was responsible for no landmark legislation, and it is likely that the Republican delegate was repeatedly returned to Richmond solely on the basis of personal sway. During an eight-year hiatus from the General Assembly that began in 1802, Davis was appointed a justice of the Orange County court and county sheriff.

When Davis and his wife settled into Locust Grove ca.1798 they had seven young children and would add three more before completing their family. Their fourth child, Thomas, was the only son to follow Isaac into public office. He lived at Locust Grove until his marriage in 1813. Thomas succeeded to his father's House of Delegates seat in 1827, and later moved to the state's Senate chamber. In 1838 he authored the petition that resulted in the creation of Greene County from the western lands of Orange County.

Davis' large family and high public profile required ample living and entertaining quarters, needs that were neatly accommodated by the plan of Locust Grove. In its remote and thinly populated

(See Continuation Sheet #5)



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8. Significance - Historical Background

setting, the house was distinguished by size and architectural finish. The small number of fine houses constructed within its bounds gives testimony of the few great fortunes made in Orange County; those that stand date primarily from the 19th century.

Most of Davis' neighbors confined all domestic routines to a single room, or perhaps two, and Locust Grove's two stories and wainscoted public rooms must have seemed palatial indeed. It appears, however, that in spite of his comfortable financial situation and large house, Davis lived simply. His will, probated after his death in 1835, enumerated the modest furnishings that filled the dwelling. Only a few luxury items, such as a mirror and silver spoons, were listed.

Isaac Davis divided the furnishings, his Kentucky lands and twenty-seven slaves among his children, and left Locust Grove to his son Elijah. In 1843 the house was sold to Elijah Davis' nephew, E. K. Durette, and passed through a succession of Durette descendants until it left the family's possession in 1969. Susan and George Overstreet, the present occupants, are the third owners since that date.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Dolan, Thomas. Locust Grove, Greene County Virginia.  
University of Virginia, School of Architecture, 1982.

Index to Enrolled Bills of the General Assembly of Virginia,  
1776-1910. Richmond, 1911.

Isaac Davis Papers. University of Virginia Library, Manuscripts  
Department.

Journal of the Virginia House of Delegates. 1786-1790,  
1811-1812, 1814, 1823-1824.

Leonard, Cynthia M., comp. The General Assembly of Virginia,  
July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978. Richmond: Virginia State  
Library, 1978.

(See Continuation Sheet #6)

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LOCUST GROVE, GREENE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Parrott, Woodie B. "A Biography of Captain Isaac Davis, Jr.,"  
Greene County Magazine, 4 (April 1982-1983), pp. 23-30.

Parrott, Woodie. "A Biography of Senator Thomas Davis," Greene  
County Magazine, 5 (April 1984-1985), pp. 28-39.

10. Geographical Data

drawn to include the house, smokehouse, and the as yet untested  
archaeological remains of outbuildings and walkways.

4236000m N.  
210 000 FEET  
(NORTH)

USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Earlsville, VA (scale:1:24000)  
1965 (1978)

LOCUST GROVE, Greene County, VA

UTM References: 17/722100/4235560

