

VLR-7/7/70 NRHP-9/15/70

47-1b

Form 10-300  
(July 1967)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: James City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Powhatan

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Powhatan

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
.4 mi. W of Rt. 615, .8 mi. N of intersection with Rt. 5.

CITY OR TOWN:  
(Five Forks vic.)

STATE Virginia	CODE 45	COUNTY: James City	CODE 095
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both 	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No 
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment 	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum 	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific 	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>None</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments 

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Colony Realty Company

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Newport News

STATE: Virginia	CODE: 45
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Williamsburg

STATE: Virginia	CODE: 45
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1940  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE: D. C.	CODE: 08
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia	COUNTY: James City	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Powhatan is a classic two-story Virginia mansion of the Early Georgian period. The rectangular structure is five bays long by two bays deep, with centered doors on front and rear. Its brickwork exhibits the highest standards of Colonial craftsmanship. The walls are laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers above the bevelled water table with English bond below. Rubbed work appears at the corners, window and door jambs, and belt course, while gauged work appears in the splayed flat arches over the windows and doors. The basement windows are topped by gauged segmental arches. The two massive interior end T-shaped chimneys are finely executed but are relatively late examples of their form. The chimney caps are both corbelled and gauged.

Because the house was gutted by fire, none but the masonry members are original. Nearly all the evidences of the post-fire rebuilding were removed during a thorough renovation in 1948. As part of the renovation, the hipped roof was replaced following the lines of the original roof as indicated by scars in the chimneys. The roof is pierced by dormer windows which may or may not have been an original feature. The Early Georgian style sash, sills, architraves, and modillion cornice also date from the renovation. While nearly all the interior woodwork dates from 1948, the double pile plan with central hall survives. No early outbuildings or dependencies remain.

Powhatan stands in an informal yard amidst large shade trees. Surrounding the yard are croplands bordered in the distance by woods. The house is approached by an axial avenue, three-fourths of a mile in length.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Richard Taliaferro (1705-1779) settled in James City County before 1736, the year in which he was appointed a justice of the peace for that county. Because the James City County court records were destroyed during the Civil War, it is not known when Taliaferro obtained title to the Powhatan land, but he was living there by 1751 when he supervised the repairs to the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg.

Referred to as a "most skillful architect" by Thomas Lee in 1749, it is believed that Taliaferro designed both Powhatan, his country house, and his townhouse in Williamsburg that subsequently passed to his son-in-law George Wythe and is now known as the Wythe house. Powhatan passed out of the hands of the Taliaferro family in 1810. The house was gutted by fire during the Civil War and was later rebuilt within the walls. In 1948, it was sympathetically restored by the Stausson family.

Although frequently overlooked by scholars, Powhatan stands as a major example of American Early Georgian architecture. Stylistically, the house belongs to a collection of important Virginia plantation houses that includes Carter's Grove, Wilton, the Nelson House, Elsing Green, and Pembroke, all of which have been attributed to Taliaferro.

While verification of Taliaferro's architectural career remains to be more firmly established, the direct connection between him and Powhatan provides a significant clue to the authorship of one of America's most distinguished architectural groups.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## POWHATAN PLANTATION

The land called "Powhatan", an ancient plantation whose heritage dates to the early 17th century, is richly steeped in Virginia history. First patented in the 1600's by Richard and Benjamin Eggleston, who had come to Virginia in 1635, Powhatan Plantation derives its name from Powhatan Creek, to the west, which lay within the territory of the Powhatan Indian Confederation.

In the early days of the colony settlers were attracted to the lush green meadows and gently rolling fields that bordered Powhatan swamp. Due West, Governor William Berkeley built his personal residence at Green Spring. Nearby the Eggleston brothers and others took up land along the old cart path to James Cittae. A bridge spanned the lower reaches of the swamp and two mills were built nearby.

Although Richard and Benjamin Eggleston left behind few clues to their lives at Powhatan the documentary record reveals that Richard Eggleston took part in a raid against the Indians in the 1650's known as the campaign of Bloody Run. Benjamin Eggleston, for having "abused the Perogative & Authority of the Governor", was given 39 lashes upon his bare back in 1673, perhaps indicating that he had been hunting or otherwise trespassing on the Governor's Green Spring land.

Although Eggleston family descendants continued to live in James City County for several generations, by the second quarter of the 18th century, the Eggleston land at Powhatan had been conveyed to Richard Taliaferro through his marriage to an Eggleston granddaughter Elizabeth.

According to architectural historians, it was Richard Taliaferro, a master architect, who built the mansion house at Powhatan Plantation. He was described by the President of the Executive Council of the colony as "our most skillfull architect", and he was selected to make renovations to the Governor's Palace in 1749. Richard Taliaferro also held two important appointive offices in the colonial government, serving as Justice of the Peace in the 1730's and as Sheriff by 1741.

When Richard Taliaferro died of "gout in the head" in 1779 he bequeathed his land and mansion at Powhatan to his son Richard, Jr. To his daughter Elizabeth, who had married George Wythe, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, he gave the house he had built on Palace Street in Williamsburg, a structure now commonly known as the Wythe House. So great was George Wythe's affection for his wife's family that he asked his former pupil Thomas Jefferson, then envoy to France, to seek out the Taliaferro family coat of arms and prepare a copper bookplate for his brother-in-law, Richard Taliaferro, Jr.

During the years of Taliaferro ownership, Powhatan was a prosperous working plantation. Advertisements in the Virginia Gazette and early tax records indicate that fine horses and cattle and agricultural crops were raised at Powhatan Plantation.

Richard Taliaferro, Jr. and his wife, Rebecca Cocke of Surry County, continued Powhatan's tradition of prosperity. They lived at Powhatan while they reared their ten children and were residing there when Richard served as Colonel in the American Revolution.

After Colonel Richard Taliaferro's death, his widow, Rebecca, continued to run the plantation herself. After her death in 1810, Richard Hannon of Petersburg, who had married one of Rebecca's granddaughters, purchased Powhatan which consisted of 1075 acres. Although Hannon farmed the plantation for a few years, by 1819 he had sold it to Pleasant Akin of Petersburg, who in turn, conveyed it to Shadrack Alfriend of Amelia County, who appeared to have placed it in the hands of tenant farmers.

In 1827 Powhatan was bought by Dr. Thomas Martin, who again returned it to a viable working plantation. It was Thomas Martin's son, William, who owned Powhatan in 1862 when Union forces set the fire which gutted the interior of the mansion. A cannon ball embedded high in a chimney gives silent testimony to the visit of General McClelland's forces.

Today the Powhatan mansion stands overlooking the same broad fields viewed by the Eggleston's and the Taliaferro's. The old road to Williamsburg, now Route 615 (ironbound Road), maintains Powhatan's close link to Williamsburg, now only moments away.

Martha W. McCartney, Historian

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Millar, John Fitzhugh, The Architects of the American Colonies. Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1968.  
 Waterman, Thomas Tileston, The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776. New York: Bonanza Books, 1945.  
 Whiffen, Marcus, The Eighteenth-Century Houses of Williamsburg. Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1960.  
 Whiffen, Marcus, The Public Buildings of Williamsburg. Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1958.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	37 ° 16 ' 08 "	76 ° 46 ' 44 "				
NE	37 ° 16 ' 08 "	76 ° 45 ' 34 "				
SE	37 ° 15 ' 29 "	76 ° 45 ' 34 "				
SW	37 ° 15 ' 29 "	76 ° 46 ' 44 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **250 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission      DATE: April 21, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond      STATE: Virginia      CODE: 45

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman  
 Title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Powhatan

Latitude	Longitude
N 37° 16' 08"	76° 46' 44"
E 37° 16' 08"	76° 45' 34"
SE 37° 15' 29"	76° 45' 34"
SW 37° 15' 29"	76° 46' 44"

