

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Bechelbronn
other names/site number DHR File Number 055-0063

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2. Location

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street & number 1223 Rubermont Road not for publication N/A
city or town Victoria vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Lunenburg code 111 zip code 23974

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register Signature of the Keeper _____
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register Date of Action _____
____ other (explain): _____

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8. Statement of Significance

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1840-1930

Significant Dates 1840, 1851, ca. 1900

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: The Library of Virginia, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 363.73 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17 750294E	4106814N	2	17 750972E	4106721N	3	17 751138E	4106819N	4	17 751055E	4107024N

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Bryan L. Townes, Architectural Historian
organization Commonwealth Architects date January 7, 2008
street & number 101 Shockoe Slip, Third Floor telephone (804) 648-5040 x 1102
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Claud Family Land Trust LLC
street & number 629 Cross Ridge Lane telephone (804) 433-1803
city or town Manakin state VA zip code 23103

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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Bechelbronn
Lunenburg County, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description:

The house known as Bechelbronn commands a dramatic hilltop setting in rural Lunenburg County. The house occupies the crest of a broad hill and overlooks the surrounding landscape. The 364 acres that form the Bechelbronn property today remain as part of the property's original 387 acres. The rambling brick house presents its primary elevation to the south, and is predominantly formed of two distinct sections. A two-story portion, with a three-bay entrance façade, forms the main western section of the house. The first floor of the western section has characteristics of the late Federal style. A two-story brick wing, most likely added in 1851, adjoins the western section and extends to the north. This two-story wing utilizes components of the Greek Revival style, and is placed on a daylight basement. Similar to the east wing, the second floor of the western section makes references to the Greek Revival style as an attempt to unify the two portions of the house. Gable roofs cap both portions of the house, and a screened porch wraps around two sides of the east wing. A single-bay, gable-roofed entrance porch shelters the door on the main western section of the building. A small shed-roofed extension is located on the north side of the east wing, and four tall chimneys rise above the house's composite roofline. Red paint conceals the brickwork on the east, west, and south elevations, but the north elevation has remained unpainted. The setting of Bechelbronn retains its historic character, with pastures, agricultural fields, and woodlands adjoining the house's yards on all sides. Expansive views of the surrounding landscape are visible from all of the house's primary rooms. The Perry family cemetery is situated immediately to the west of the house, and a small shed-roofed equipment shelter, dating from the second half of the 20th century, stands to the northwest.

Detailed Description:

Bechelbronn has achieved its current configuration through a series of evolutionary phases. The original portion of the house consists of the first level of the main western portion. This section of the house is characterized by Flemish Bond brickwork on the main west elevation, and three-course Common Bond on the east, west, and north elevations. The unpainted north elevation retains distinct evidence of penciled mortar joints, and remnants of the penciling are evident on the east, west, and south elevations of the western portion where the red paint has worn away. The brick bond changes to a 5-course Common Bond at the dividing point between the first and second floors of the west portion, and the visible mortar joints at the second-floor level show no evidence of penciling. This is consistent with the interior trim, doors, and hardware which suggest that the main west portion of the house was raised to a full two stories near the turn of the 20th century. The east wing of the house is constructed of brick laid in 5-course Common Bond, and the bond is uniform on all elevations and at all levels. Three exterior brick chimneys are placed on the western portion of the house, one on the west wall and two on the east. A single interior chimney rises from the brick gable of the east wing's north elevation. The exterior chimneys are characterized by stepped shoulders and simple corbelled caps. An additional interior chimney, added during the late 19th century renovation, rises above the western portion's west gable. This chimney is smaller than the others and serves a single second-floor stove opening.

Gable roofs set at right angles to each other cap the two main portions of the house. Both roofs are characterized by a relatively low pitch. The gable on the western portion is set with its ridge running in the east-west direction and is given distinction by the addition of a secondary cross gable above the central second-floor west window. The fascia boards in the secondary gable are cut with a curve, and convey a suggestion of a Gothic arch. The gable roof that caps the east wing is set with the ridge running in the north-south direction. The gables are complimented with gable returns. The south-facing gable of the east wing was altered when the west portion of the house was raised to two full stories, which necessitated the extension of the west half of the south gable to fill the resulting valley between the slope of the east roof and the new east brick gable of the adjacent portion. In its original configuration, the form of the east wing with its front-facing gable would have been typical of the Greek

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The small brick extension on the northern side of the east wing is a single story in height and is sheltered under a shed roof. The brick walls of the extension are not toothed into the north wall of the east wing, indicating its addition at a later date.

Double-hung wood sash windows are present on all elevations of the house and reflect the various periods of expansion and renovation of the house. Mid-nineteenth century, late-nineteenth century, and mid-twentieth century window sash are present and hold both old glass panes and new panes. The original first-floor level of the western portion of the house is distinguished through the use of exceedingly wide window openings. Although the double-hung wood sash have been replaced with modern mid-twentieth century sash, the exterior moulded wood frames and wood sills appear original and show no indications of alterations or enlargements. The window sash of the first floor are set in a twelve-over-eight light configuration. The second level of the western portion and both first and second floors of the east wing are characterized by double-hung, six-over-six wood sash windows. These windows appear to date from the mid-nineteenth century through the turn of the 20th century. The window sashes are pegged, and several panes of old glass are evident. The windows at the basement level of the east wing are modern six-over-six wood sash. Evidence of patched mortises in the exterior window trim indicates the one-time presence of exterior shutters.

Two main entrances are positioned on the south-facing elevation of Bechelbronn. The entrance in the western portion is situated under a one-story gable-roofed porch, supported by two unfluted Doric columns. Two half-columns are positioned at the point where the porch joins the house. The columns and the half-columns are constructed of wood. The main door at this porch is a single-leaf, six-panel wood door. Modern steps and a modern brick floor anchor the porch. The porch's metal-clad roof and beaded board ceiling suggest that the porch roof structure may date to the turn of the 20th century. The second north entrance provides access to the main level stairhall in the east wing. The double-leaf wood doors are flanked by sidelights and are topped by a full-width transom. The double doors are set with two heavily moulded panels in each leaf, and are secured at the interior by a cast-iron rim lock. These double doors are sheltered beneath an expansive "L" shaped screened porch that wraps around the north and east sides of the east wing. Set at a level just below the level of the main floor, the porch is supported by tall brick piers and is floored with painted wood boards. The ceiling joists and roof rafters of the porch are exposed, and several of the framing members show marks of plaster and lath, indicating their re-use from a previous porch or from another structure. A short flight of wood steps provides access to the north side of the porch, and a second set of wood steps at the western side provides access to the porch's main level at this end; a continuation of the steps in brick provides access to the basement level below.

Three additional doors provide access to the house from the exterior. A single-leaf, six-panel wood door is located at the north elevation of the western portion of the house. The door is approached by a modern set of wood steps and a wood stoop. A series of repaired joist pockets in the north wall above the door and in the adjacent west wall of the east wing indicates that a more substantial, covered porch stood at this location previously. A similar single-leaf, six-panel wood door provides access to the western portion's southeast room. A third single-leaf door is located on the east elevation of the east wing, and leads from the screened porch into the east wing's main floor stairhall.

The interior of Bechelbronn is divided between three distinct levels. The basement level of the house is positioned under the east wing and is characterized by brick floors and exposed brick walls. A modern brick fireplace is situated in the northernmost room of the basement. The north room joins with a small vestibule and full bathroom at the southern end of the space to form the complete basement level. The overhead joists are exposed and display circular saw marks. A low door in the west wall of the north basement room provides access to the crawl space areas under the original western portion of the house. The crawl space is divided into four

distinct areas, separated by the brick walls that form the dividing partition walls of the first-floor rooms. The northeast space is characterized by brick walls and the exposed first-floor joists, all of which have been painted.

The underside of

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the first floor's flooring has been painted as well. The floor of the crawl space is composed of modern gravel. The brick walls and wood joists in the remaining three areas of the crawl space are unpainted. The wood joists in all spaces run uniformly in the north-south direction and range in size between 8" x 4" and 9" x 3 3/4". The joists are generally spaced at 22" on center. The overhead joists in the western portion do not bear any distinctly visible saw marks, nor do they show evidence of being hand-hewn.

The main level of the house is distinguished through its separation into two distinct areas. The two areas consist of the original portion of the house, occupying the western portion, and the later east wing, occupying the eastern portion. Both sections of the house are uniform in their use of wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and paneled wood doors. Wood burning fireplaces with wood mantles and brick hearths anchor the rooms, and two staircases provide access to the upper floor.

The western portion of the first floor is divided into four rooms of various sizes. The southwest room stands as the entrance hall for the original portion of the house. A wood stair climbs east to the second floor, partially protruding into the adjacent room to the east at its landing, where it turns to the north. This portion of the stair is enclosed and is given distinction through the use of a small, fixed-sash four-light window on the landing that looks into the southeast room. The lower portion of the stair railing, with rectangular balusters and a simple handrail, appears to date to the 1920's or 1930's. The wood window trim, door trim, and baseboards at the first floor of the western section of the house have been replaced and may date to the turn of the 20th century. Wide pine board floors are laid in the east-west direction. The ceiling height of the first-floor rooms in the western portion of the house is a consistent 11'-10".

Immediately to the north of the entrance hall is the northwest room, the largest room on the first floor. The room is highlighted by a tall wood Federal-style mantelpiece, with reeded detailing and fluted pilasters. Large windows open to the north and to the west, and a modern chair rail is placed around the perimeter of the room. The two eastern rooms of the western portion are equal in size and similar in layout. Fireplaces in both rooms are located on the east walls and utilize matching wood mantles. The mantles are simpler than the mantle in the northeast room, and feature plain panels and simple pilasters. A patch in the wood floor is evident at the door between the entrance hall and the southeast room; a similar patch is present at the adjacent door that provides access to the closet under the stairs. The two areas of patched flooring indicate that the door openings in these locations are not original.

A short flight of stairs leads up from the northeastern room to the main level stairhall in the east wing. A stair climbs the north wall of the hall to a landing, then turns to the south as it reaches the upper floor. The hall and the adjacent north room of the east wing are the only rooms at the main level of the east wing. The wood stair is characterized by a large square newel post that tapers at the top and is capped by a domed circle of wood. The simple tapering balusters are beveled at the corners. Two doors provide access to the exterior from the stairhall: a set of double doors, flanked by two-light sidelights and a four-light transom, open on the south wall and a single-leaf door is placed on the east wall. Adjacent to the east wing's stairhall is a large single room, occupying the remainder of the east wing's first floor. The room is characterized by a fireplace on the north wall which is flanked by closets, and a modern closet enclosure has been constructed on the west wall. The wood fireplace mantle is detailed by simple pilasters that are chamfered at the edges. The main floor rooms of the east wing have a 9'-2" ceiling height.

The second floor rooms of Bechelbronn are similar to the main floor spaces in the consistent use of wood floors, paneled wood doors, and plaster walls and ceilings. The ceiling heights in the various rooms range between 7'-10" and 8'-0" due to irregularities and variations in the structure. Several rooms are augmented with closets, and a modern bathroom has been installed. The second floor of the western portion of the house is accessed by the stair that rises from the first floor southwest stairhall. The second level is divided by a hallway that runs in the north-

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south direction. Small wood patches are present in a north-south line at the stairwall, in a line corresponding to the masonry partition wall below. The patches appear to indicate where vertical supports for an interior board wall were located when the western portion was its original one and a half stories in height. The vertical supports would have been anchored at the top to the sloped roof rafters, and horizontal boards would have been used to create the partition wall. The flooring in the hall and in the flanking rooms is laid in the east-west direction, and does not appear to have ever been stained or varnished. The stairwell in the western portion of the house is bound by a painted wood balustrade. The banisters and railing of the stairwell appear to have minimal layers of paint.

Of the four rooms on the second floor of the western portion of the house, only the northeast room contains a fireplace. The remaining rooms were fitted with wood or coal burning stoves when the house was raised to two full stories. The use of fuel-burning stoves is evidenced by the placement of stovepipe covers on the walls of the rooms. The southeast room bears a diagonal seam on its east wall, which corresponds with the slope of the house's original roofline. Below the seam, the wall is solid masonry with a plaster coating; above, the wall is frame with an exterior brick veneer. Doors on the second level of the western portion are wood four-panel units with cast-iron rim locks.

The second level of the east wing is divided into three rooms. A hallway is positioned at the top of the east wing's stairs and provides access through a door opening to the western portion of the house. A small modern bathroom has been installed in the southwest corner of the hall, and a door in the hall's north wall opens to a large room which occupies the remainder of the east wing's second floor. The stairwell is bordered by a wood balustrade composed of painted balusters and a stained and varnished handrail. The balusters are tapered with beveled edges. The large room to the north of the stairhall contains a fireplace on the north wall. The wood mantle matches the form and detail of the mantle in the room below. Two windows light the space, one on the east wall and one on the west, and two closets flank the fireplace chimneybreast. The closets are closed by wood doors with four panels each, and the room is finished with a tall molded baseboard and wood crown molding. The varnished wood floors in the stairhall and in the main room are pine, and are laid in the north-south direction.

The landscape surrounding Bechelbronn consists of gently sloping lawns with several substantial shade trees. Ornamental plantings are few, and consist mainly of various foundation plantings around the house. The small Perry family cemetery is located down a slight slope on the western side of the house. A central stone marker bears the name "Perry" at the top and names of Doctor William Hartwell Perry (1807-1870), Ann Coleman Neblett Perry (1813-1848), Judge William Hartwell Perry (1836-1915), Hettie Eliza Scott Perry (1850-1889), Rebecca Marshall Perry (1858-1936), and Edward Darrell Perry (1876-1912). Small granite corner blocks, decorated with an incised "P", were once placed at the each of the four corners, defining the cemetery. The plot has been greatly disturbed, and the blocks are in disarray. Due to the disturbance of the site, it is difficult to determine the exact number and location of the burial sites contained in the cemetery.

A small shed-roofed equipment shelter is located to the northwest of the house. The shelter is constructed of wood and appears to date to the latter half of the 20th century. Typically, a plantation house such as Bechelbronn would have been flanked by numerous dependencies. A photograph that records the house in the 1970's indicates several now-vanished support structures that once stood to the north of the main house. Archaeological

remains of these and other outbuildings may exist.

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**Bechelbronn
Lunenburg County, Virginia**

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Statement of Significance

Bechelbronn is significant under Criterion C at the local level in the area of Architecture. Its Period of Significance encompasses 1840-1930, and includes the construction of the house, its major additions in 1851 and ca. 1900, and the construction of various elements such as the western stair ca. 1920. The house stands as a result of the complicated evolution and the architectural trends that have characterized and influenced the house through the past one hundred and sixty-eight years. Positioned at the crest of a broad hill, overlooking 364 acres of the property's original 387 acres, the brick house appears to have been constructed by William H. Perry in 1840. The structure has grown from a simple four-room, one-and-a-half-story structure to a complex two-story building over a partial daylight basement. A comparative rarity in a county where most antebellum structures were constructed of frame, the sturdy brick house embodies at least three distinct periods of construction and holds evidence of additional renovations and remodeling programs. The house gains architectural distinction through the use of both the Federal and Greek Revival styles, with details and elements that reflect simple vernacular trends. The complicated evolution of Bechelbronn reflects the pre-war and later post-Reconstruction prosperity of plantations and farms in rural Lunenburg County. The expansive landscape of fields, meadows, and woodlands surrounding the house and bordering the Nottoway River remains agricultural and retains the historic rural character typical of Lunenburg County. The Perry family cemetery lies adjacent to the fields, down the slope on the west side of the house.

Historical Background

The county now known as Lunenburg is situated in the southern central portion of Virginia, an area known as the "Southside", and was created in 1746. The name of the county was derived from the title of Baron of Brunswick-Lunenburg, which was one of the titles held by King George II of England. The area was slowly but steadily settled by both English settlers, moving from the eastern portions of the state, and by other nationalities, including Scotch-Irish, Swiss, Germans, and French Huguenots. Most of the land in Lunenburg was held in comparatively small tracts, in contrast with the vast plantations of Tidewater Virginia. As noted in the survey completed by Kimberly Chen and Associates, most of the properties in early Lunenburg involved less than 600 acres. Tobacco was the primary money crop in the county. For most of the period before the Civil War, the county was characterized by poor roads which tended to keep the area rural in nature. By 1840, Chen notes that more than half of the county's approximately 11,000 population were slaves, illustrating the importance of agriculture in Lunenburg¹. The Richmond and Danville Railroad travelled through the county, helping to offset the lack of good roads and encouraging the development of several small villages.

The economy of Lunenburg County was devastated by the Civil War, not as a result of physical damage, but by the loss of slaves as the dominant agricultural labor force. Chen notes that the local tobacco crop was one-quarter in 1870 what it was in 1860. By 1900, however, Chen notes that the production of tobacco was back to and exceeded the levels attained in the pre-1860 period. The early twentieth century saw the establishment of more communities and the construction of more railroads. Tobacco production increased, as did livestock production. Chen indicates that the census in 1920 recorded a total of 2,108 farms in Lunenburg County².

Bechelbronn reflects the prosperity, development, and growth that also characterize the surrounding county. Based on the county's Land Tax records, it appears that the house was constructed in 1840 by William Hartwell Perry, a physician as well as a planter. Although tradition speculates that the house was constructed around 1835 by his father, John Perry, there is no "Perry" indicated in the Lunenburg Land Tax books prior to 1839, and no John Perry has been located in the county census. Local tradition holds that the house was constructed nearby, and then later moved to its present site. The Land Tax records do appear to record some fluctuation in the value of the buildings on the property, but the total value of the estate remains consistent, suggesting that the

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was non-extant for a period. The difficulties inherent in moving a substantial building with solid brick exterior and interior walls would tend to disprove the tradition that the house was relocated. There is also no physical evidence in the house's structure or details to suggest this event.

The first entry for William H. Perry is listed in the Land Tax Book for 1839, where the property is noted as 387 acres on the Nottoway River. The total value of buildings on the property at this time is noted to be \$100.00. The 1840 entry notes that the value of the buildings on the 387-acre tract has increased to \$1,000.00. An additional 378 acres on the Nottoway River has been added to the property by 1840, but is valued separately.

The name of the property, "Bechelbronn", is traditionally held to be German for "brown nut", a reference to the chestnut trees that were said to grow on the property. The origin of the name has not been substantiated thus far, however. While "bronn" could be seen to be a corruption of the German "braun" for brown, "bechel" seems to be most closely related to "buschel", which in German means "clusters" or "bunch", perhaps a reference to the clusters of nuts revealed in the spiny husks of the chestnut tree. Interestingly, "Bechel Bronn" is also the name of a small village in Alsace, in the eastern part of France along the border with Germany. The name of the village may suggest some as-yet undetermined reference or connection.

The original portion of the brick house consisted of the three-bay, one-and-a-half-story western portion. The solid masonry construction of the house, together with the refinement of the Flemish-bond brickwork of the front elevation and the exceedingly high ceilings of its four rooms, convey a sense of style without undue ornamentation. The building's penciled mortar joints add to the sense of refinement and care of construction. The four-room plan of the main floor may have been established through the need for Dr. Perry to have a separate area of the house in which to see patients. The existing stair that rises from the hall in the western portion is a later construction. However, it is likely that the original stair ascended to the second floor in this hall along the north wall, as does the present stair, but was set at a much steeper angle. There are no scars, patches, or marks evident in the old flooring that would place the stair in any other location on the first floor. A distinct patch in the wood flooring at the door between the hall and the southeast room appears to indicate that this room was not accessible from the hall originally – or that the door was placed at the far southern end of the wall (if this was the case, then the former opening was infilled with masonry). The placement of an original exterior door at both the southeast and northeast rooms may indicate that one of these rooms was used by Dr. Perry for patients, allowing for the separation of the family quarters from the public spaces. Patches in the wood floor of the second level indicate where a board wall partition stood that divided the sloped ceiling spaces.

The 1851 Land Tax records indicate that the value of the buildings on the 387-acre tract was increased to \$1,500.00. In 1852, the county's Personal Property Tax records indicate that Dr. William H. Perry possessed 10 slaves, 6 horses/mules, 90 heads of livestock (cattle, sheep, and/or hogs), one pleasure carriage valued at \$350.00, one buggy valued at \$75.00, and household and kitchen furniture with a total value of \$440.00.

The distinct but simple Greek Revival detailing of the east wing suggests a construction date of the 1850's. The \$500.00 increase in the assessment of the buildings in 1851 may reflect the addition of the brick east wing. The east wing's original configuration, set on a high raised basement and rising to two full stories, put it prominently above the older one-and-a-half-story section of the house. The new wing, with its narrow gabled end facing toward the south and reading as a pedimented addition to the main house, is highlighted by a set of double doors centered on the south elevation. The double doors, detailed with heavily molded wood panels, are flanked by simple two-light sidelights and the full composition is topped by a plain four-light transom. The east wing's wood stair is anchored by a tapered wood newel post, a simple suggestion of the period's more elaborate tapered

octagonal newel posts. The mantles of the east wing's fireplaces consist of wood pilasters supporting a triangular cutout, which is reminiscent of a pediment.

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Dr. William H. Perry died in 1870 and is buried in the family cemetery on the west side of the main house. His son, Judge William H. Perry, served in the First Company of the Richmond Howitzers in the Civil War. Judge Perry's first wife, Hettie Scott, died in 1889. He then married Rebecca Marshall, who died in 1936³. All are buried in the family cemetery, which is located on the west side of the house. A succession of owners followed throughout the twentieth century until the current owners purchased Bechelbronn.

Bechelbronn achieved its current form in the course of substantial renovations conducted around the turn of the 20th century, a time period which is suggested based on the details of various building elements installed in the renovation. The original one-and-a-half-story western portion of the house was raised to two full stories, and a new wood stair was installed. The existing western stair, however, is more characteristic of the 1920's than the turn of the 20th century. The gable roofline of the east wing was altered to join the new, taller gable roof on the western portion, and a single-bay front porch was installed; in contrast with the brick steps and floor visible today, the earlier form of the porch utilized brick piers and a wood floor. These elements are visible in a photograph from the 1970's. The same photograph indicates that the exterior of the house was not painted prior to the 1970's, and that before the south elevation of the western portion was painted, ghost marks of a full-length single-story porch were visible. Various interior first-floor doors were replaced (or new doors added to replace missing units) with wood four-panel doors, secured by cast-iron rim locks with porcelain knobs. The expansive "L" -shaped screened porch may have been added at this time, or it may be an accretion of construction that happened over a period of years. The brick piers, wood floor structure and wood rafters and ceiling joists appear to have some degree of age. The ceiling joists of the porch, being visible as there is no existing ceiling at the screened porch, show evidence of plaster and lath marks. The joists with plaster and lath marks are inconsistently placed, however, suggesting that the joists were salvaged from another location. Despite uncertainty concerning the current porch's date of construction, a porch was most likely created in this location as part of the original construction of the east wing. The south-facing double doors and the adjacent single east door would have required a porch or at the very least steps to reach them, as the main floor of the east wing is atop the raised basement, and therefore a significant distance above the surrounding grade.

The house is said to have been vacant for various periods in its history. The extensive refitting of the house around the turn of the 20th century appears to indicate that it had been allowed to deteriorate significantly, as interior trim, doors, and window sashes were extensively replaced in both the original western portion and in the east wing. Similarly, the fact that most of the window glass is modern, the obvious replacement of the front porch floor and steps, and the installation of new soffits and fascia at the gable roofs appears to illustrate that the house was subject to deterioration once again sometime after the middle part of the 20th century.

The complicated evolution of Bechelbronn reflects the pre-war and later post-Reconstruction prosperity of plantations and farms in rural Lunenburg County. The house, situated on the crest of a hill to catch the nearly constant breezes, illustrates the care in construction typical of the better houses of the period, and the regional interpretation of nationally-popular style forms and details. The large windows and carefully crafted mantles of the original western portion, the east wing's conspicuous Greek Revival gable ends, and the simply-detailed double doors and mantles of the east wing illustrate the pervasive influence of the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The details of the turn-of-the-20th century second-floor addition are compatible with both the early western portion and the later east wing, signaling not only the respect for the earlier portions of the house but the attempt to create a cohesive whole without the addition of extraneous and unnecessary ornamentation.

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Endnotes

¹ Chen, Kimberly M. and Associates, Inc. An Architectural Survey of Lunenburg County, Virginia. p. 9. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2005.

² Chen, Kimberly M. and Associates, Inc. An Architectural Survey of Lunenburg County, Virginia. p.13. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2005.

³ Arvin, Evelyn Ferguson. Antebellum Homes of Lunenburg. p. 30-33. Richmond, Virginia, 1970.

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National Park Service**

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Major Bibliographical References

Arvin, Evelyn Ferguson. Antebellum Homes of Lunenburg. Richmond, Virginia, 1970.

Chen, Kimberly M. and Associates, Inc. An Architectural Survey of Lunenburg County, Virginia. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2005.

Lunenburg County Census Records, 1840 and 1850. Copy located at The Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Lunenburg County Land Tax Records, 1839-1895. Copy located at The Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Lunenburg County Personal Property Tax Records 1851-1853. Copy located at The Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

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4105721N

Verbal Boundary Description

“...Bechelbronn...bounded as follows: on the north and east by the Nottoway River, on the South by the public road known as ‘Hungry Town Road’, and on the west by lands of the United States Gypsum Company and the lands of James Gallion...as set forth in deed dated August 17, 1917, and recorded in the Deed Book 62, page 17.”

The boundaries are also shown on the survey map done by the Virginia Division of Forestry.

Boundary Justification

The noted boundary encompasses 363.73 acres of the original 387 acres upon which the house was constructed in 1840. The boundary includes the main house and its surrounding landscape, a small family cemetery, agricultural fields, meadows, ponds, river frontage, and the wooded areas that have been historically associated with the main house and continue to comprise the Bechelbronn property today.

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Section Photographs Page 11

The following is consistent for all photographs:

Bechelbronn, Lunenburg County, #055-0063

Location of digital images: Archives, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

DATE: December 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: South elevation, view to the northwest

PHOTO: 1 of 8

DATE: October 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: Second floor room, east wing

PHOTO: 8 of 8

DATE: October 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: North elevation, view to the southwest

PHOTO: 2 of 8

DATE: December 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: Entrance door, east wing

PHOTO: 3 of 8

DATE: October 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: Stairhall, western portion

PHOTO: 4 of 8

DATE: December 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: Mantle, first floor northwest room

PHOTO: 5 of 8

DATE: October 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: First floor northeast room

PHOTO: 6 of 8

DATE: October 2007

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bryan Townes

VIEW OF: Stairhall, western portion

PHOTO: 7 of 8
