

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Wilton, built in 1763 by William Churchill, is a story-and-a-half, T-shaped brick house, five bays long on the front, with a four-bay ell of equal length on the rear. Built of brick laid in Flemish bond above the beveled water table and in English bond below it, the corners, window jambs, chimney corners, and gauged jack arches of the house are constructed of rubbed brick. Nine-over-nine sash, recently replaced, light the first-floor windows, and 6/6 sash are used in the gabled dormers. The front portion of the house is covered with a gambrel roof and the rear with a hip-on-hip roof. Box cornices embellish the eaves. Interior end chimneys crown the main block, while a single square interior chimney of massive proportions serves the ell.

The plan of Wilton consists of two equal-sized rooms with a narrow central passage in the front block. This passage leads to a broad stair passage at the south end of the ell, with two equal-sized rooms behind it.

The most elaborate room is the west room of the main block. The fully paneled walls are treated with a single raised panel above and one below the symmetrical chair rail. A dentil cornice is carried around the room and is broken out over the chimney breast, which consists of fluted Roman Doric pilasters on high bases flanking a nine-panel overmantel and a later board shelf partly obscuring the original panels. The surround is plastered and whitewashed but otherwise undecorated, and the segmental-headed firebox has had its opening reduced and a flat lintel installed. A single large panel over each of the flanking closets visually sets off the more subtle overmantel arrangement. The passage is decorated with a molded wood cornice; an early 19th-century, double-beaded nailboard; and a symmetrical chair rail like that in the west parlor.

In the east room, a symmetrical chair rail is employed once again. In addition, the windows are treated with raised-panel shutters and bib panels, a raised panel over the head, and interior shutters. The molded wood cornice which encircles the room is broken around the heads of the windows. The mantel consists of an unsupported shelf above an architrave surround with a central fluted keystone. Here again a straight lintel has been used to fill in the original segmental head.

A round arch leads from the front passage to the stair passage. The open-string stair has a square newel with a molded cap, a molded walnut banister, three urn-and-column balusters to a tread, sawn brackets, and a raised-panel spandrel. Like some other contemporary houses of similar elaboration, the stair has three winders rather than a landing at the first turn. The soffits of the landing and of the upper flight are also decorated with raised panels. A symmetrical chair rail completes the embellishment of this room.

The south room of the ell has raised-panel window treatment like the east front room, but most of the other decoration was installed in the 20th century. It is unlikely that this room ever had much decoration or that the plain kitchen behind it ever had any. On the second floor are several very elaborate Federal mantels installed in the 20th century.

Although Wilton is thought to have undergone considerable evolution, it is evident from the brickwork that it was all built at once. Several changes are evident in the fabric. In the gables of the gambrel-roofed section are the outlines of a gable roof, yet there is no evidence of earlier roof framing in the attic. The east passage partition was moved 3½ feet west, but there is no structural evidence of an earlier stair in the floor boards or in the second-floor framing. It seems likely, therefore, that William Churchill took over construction of the house after the death of his father and changed the plans of the house, narrowing the passage and placing the stairs in the ell, which he probably made
(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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1763

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wilton, a story-and-a-half brick building, was erected in 1763 by William Churchill, whose initials with the construction date are inscribed on the rear wall. Distinguished for its unusual size, well-crafted brickwork, and elaborate interior decoration, Wilton stands as one of the finest and least-altered of the late-Colonial plantation houses of Tidewater Virginia. The Churchills were prominent in Middlesex County politics and were ancestors of Winston Churchill.

The first William Churchill (c. 1650-1711) emigrated from England in 1674 and purchased land including the present Wilton tract from Richard Perrott's estate in 1688. This property spanned the Middle Peninsula from the Rappahannock to the Piankatank, with the original Churchill residence being built on the Rappahannock River side. Churchill's property descended to his son Armistead (1705-1763), a county Justice of the Peace, a vestryman of Christ Church Parish, and a Colonel in the Virginia Militia.

Shortly before Armistead's death, according to tradition, the original plantation house, Bushy Park, burned, and the family's residence was moved to the Piankatank River side of the property. Wilton was erected by Armistead's son, William Churchill, who signed and dated the house, in the year of his father's death. The builder, like his father, was a local justice, militia colonel and vestryman, and in addition served in the powerful position of Clerk of the County Court from 1772 until his death in 1799.

The tradition that Wilton was built in several stages and finished in 1763 is disproven by the architectural evidence. The brickwork at Wilton is of a piece; there are no breaks anywhere in the exterior walls. One interior partition was moved, and the outlines of a gable roof show on the gambrel-shaped ends of the front block. Internal investigation shows, moreover, no evidence of stairs in the front passage and no evidence of earlier roof framing in the attic. It is therefore likely that William Churchill altered his plans during the construction of Wilton, making the ell larger than planned and inserting the stairs in it. There was then no need for a wide stair passage in the front, and the east passage wall was moved to create two equal-sized front rooms. At the same time the gable was altered to the more commodious and newly fashionable gambrel shape.

Upon William Churchill's death, Wilton was inherited by his son Thomas. During the son's brief tenure, the house was insured by the Mutual Assurance Society, whose documents confirm Wilton's existence at that time in its present configuration.

Wilton passed out of family hands in 1829, when the builder's granddaughter Elizabeth Edmonia Churchill Berkeley sold the 650-acre plantation to James Jones for \$3250. After a succession of other sales, the present owner's father acquired Wilton earlier in this century. It is presently undergoing some renovation.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

arper's Magazine. 57 (1878): 169.
 ddlesex County Deed Books 12, 16, 26, I.
 ddlesex County Will Books A, E, Z.
 tual Assurance Society Policies R2 V15 #599, R5 V43 #1938.
 ucek, Archie. "Wilton." Manuscript on file at Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, n.d.
 (Mimeographed).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Wilton, Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 8 | 3, 7, 4 | 2, 1, 0 | 4, 1 | 5, 4 | 3, 6, 0

B | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | |

D | | | | |

E | | | | |

F | | | | |

G | | | | |

H | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point approximately 1000' W of Wilton Creek on the W side of State Route 3; thence extending S along said route approximately 750'; thence extending 450' W; thence extending 750' N; thence extending 500' E to point of origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

October 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

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

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE Oct 17 1978

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Wilton, Middlesex County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6,7

PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1972, 1973, 1978 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

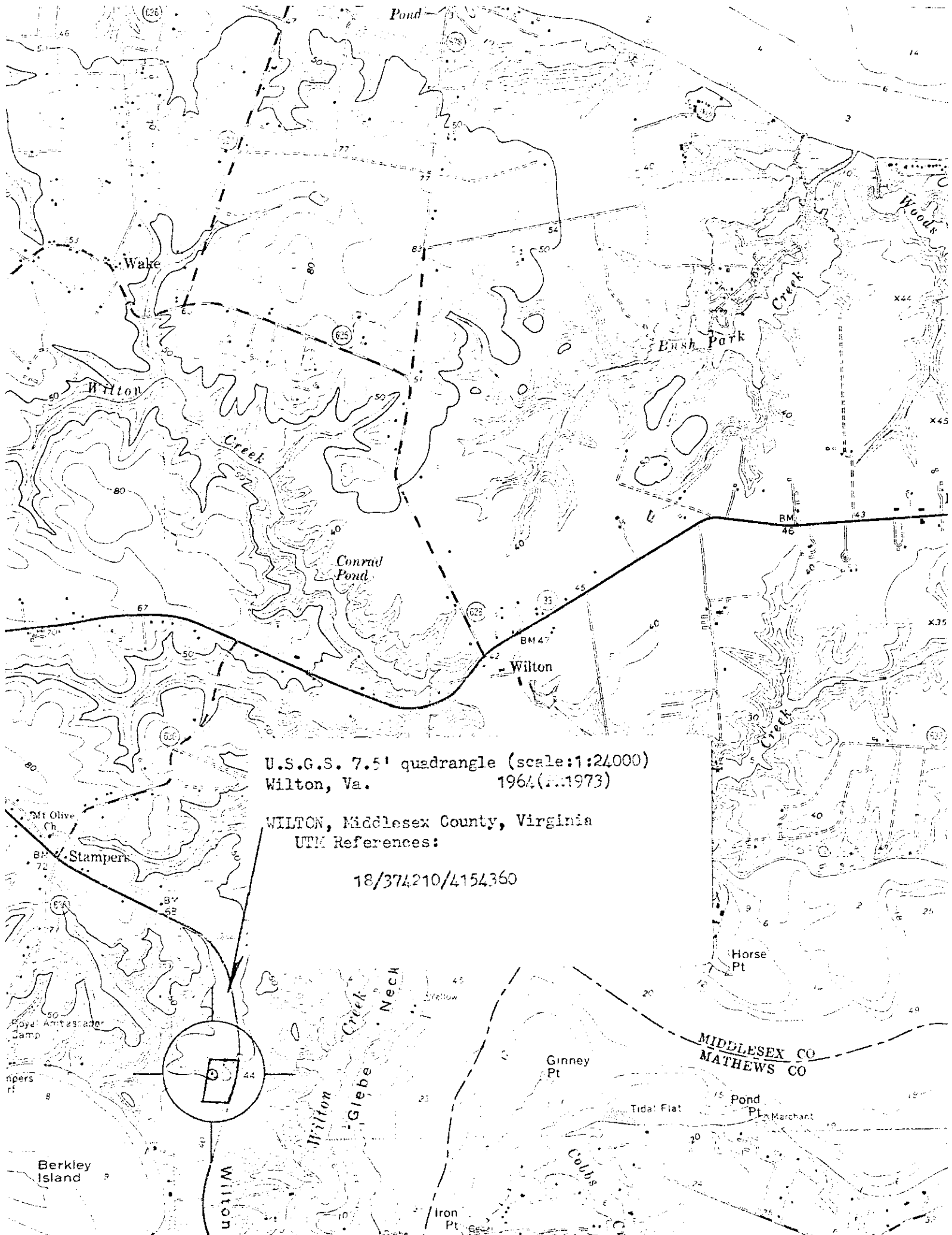
7. DESCRIPTION

longer than was originally intended, and changing the gable roof to the more useful, newly fashionable gambrel shape. He then signed the house on a recessed brick near the top of the north wall of the ell: "E--/WC 1763."

East of the house is an early pyramidal-roofed frame smokehouse in dilapidated condition, and a mid-19th-century, board-and-batten kitchen stands due north of the smokehouse. West of the house is a weatherboarded log building recently moved to the south.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The register bounds have been drawn to include the open area immediately surrounding the house, including the old road bed and a cemetery several hundred feet southwest of the dwelling.



U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)
Wilton, Va. 1964 (R.1973)

WILTON, Middlesex County, Virginia
UTM References:

18/374210/4154360

