

VLR-10/15/85 NRHP-5/12/86

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 Hill DNL File 81-179

and or common Same

2. Location

street & number VA Route 608 N/A not for publication

city, town Mechanicsville X vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county Rockbridge code 678

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. and Mrs. Custis L. Coleman

street & number 5855 Bremo Road, Suite 502

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of state Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockbridge County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Lexington state Virginia 24450

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Va. Historic Landmarks Division Survey (81-179) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date August, 1978 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Division  
-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 N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

## SUMMARY

Locust Hill is a fine example of a typical Valley "I" house. Built in 1826, it is a three-bay, Flemish bond brick dwelling with a molded brick cornice and elegant Federal detailing on the exterior. The interior was damaged by fire in the 1850's and much of the woodwork was replaced with Greek Revival forms. Located off Route 608, east of Buena Vista, it is beautifully sited on 320 acres of rolling farmland. The house sits on a slight rise and is part of a complex that includes several 19th century farm outbuildings. The building and four structures all contribute to the historic character of the property.

## ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Locust Hill is an excellent example of elite housing built in Rockbridge County in the second quarter of the 19th century. The "I" house, with its single-pile, two-room, central-passage, double-story plan, was the most popular housing form of the 19th century in this area. Its appearance in brick, however, with the many refinements that Locust Hill exhibits, clearly indicates that this was intended as one of the grandest residences of the county.

The foundation is laid in coursed limestone ashlar, not the randomly coursed rubble typical of other brick I houses of the period. The house is bank-sited to expose part of the foundation on the southern, main facade. The attention to refined craftsmanship is evident not only in the ashlar foundation, but also in the Flemish-bond brick walls. Where other houses might typically use Flemish bond only on the main, public facades, Locust Hill's mason used Flemish bond throughout. It appears not only on the main block, but also on the rear, one-story ell and the one-story kitchen aligned behind it.

The quality of the brick work is also evident in the use of the molded brick cornice on both the south front and the north rear of the main block. The one-story kitchen also has the molded brick cornice on its northwest and southeast sides. The ell has a three course corbled brick cornice.

The fenestration of the house also exhibits elegantly refined Federal detailing. The three bay, south facade has unusually wide, tripartite mullioned windows. The Palladian proportions are similar to those at Glen Maury (103-4) another nearby classically-inspired house of the late 1820's. The tripartite divisions are carried even into the basement windows.

Both gable ends of the main block have delicately detailed fanlights in the attic story flanking the slightly extruded chimneys. This is an unusual feature for an attic window although it does appear at Glen Maury in 1829. Their presence is further evidence of the refinements exhibited at Locust Hill.

The attic fanlights are echoed in the doorways of the house as well. The main, south facade has a five-foot wide elliptical fanlight covering its paneled door and sidelights. Segmentally arched fanlights top a side entrance doorway on the north west facade as well as the southeast entrance to the ell.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

### 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1826, 1855

Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, Locust Hill is an excellent example of upper-middle-class housing traditions in the Valley of Virginia and in particular of Rockbridge County in the 1820's. Its three-bay, Flemish-bond "I" plan with its molded brick cornice represents the classic statement of elite housing in the area. What distinguishes Locust Hill is the quality of the construction details in its Federal-style exterior. The popular 1850's Greek Revival is represented in the rebuilt interior and in the front entrance porch. The presence of several log dependencies also represents a major Valley vernacular form. The house was prominent in its immediate community, as was its owner John Hamilton, who helped to found the nearby Wesley Chapel.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

In many ways, John Hamilton, the builder of Locust Hill, was an archetypal Rockbridge resident. His father had been born in Northern Ireland and came to this country in 1771. Like many Scotch-Irish, he landed in Philadelphia and then gradually moved west and southward into the Valley of Virginia. By 1776 he had married a woman from Hagerstown, Maryland, and had moved further into the Valley. By 1789, the year his son John was born, the elder Hamilton was farming, surveying and teaching in Botetourt County.

John Hamilton reversed this classic southern movement by going twenty miles northward to settle in Rockbridge County in 1813. Three years later, at the age of 27 he married Elizabeth McNutt and four years later, in 1820, he purchased 435 acres of land some eight miles southeast of Lexington. The land lay on the west side of one of the major north-south county routes. Today it is called Route 608 and has an abundance of substantial middle-class homes from the 19th century surviving along it.

In the mid-1820's John Hamilton built his plantation house "Locust Hill." Family tradition offers a date of 1825 or 1826. This is supported by the evidence of the County Land Books which record in 1827: "Valuation altered on act. of Buildings, \$1295 added." Previous building value on the property had been \$200, so clearly Hamilton built a substantial house. Over the years, he increased his land holdings and in his 1872 will, he referred to "my planta-

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

H. H. McCormick. Geneologies and Reminiscences. 1897.  
 L. McCormick Goodhart. Descendants of John Hamilton of Lexington, Virginia. 1933.  
 Diehl papers. Washington and Lee University Special Collections.  
Deed Books, Land Books, Personal Property Records Rockbridge County Court House.  
 (See Continuation Sheet #4)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 3 1/2  
 Quadrangle name Glasgow Quadrangle scale 1:2400<sup>0</sup>

### UTM References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>6410</u>	<u>880</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>0610</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing					Zone	Easting	Northing
C							D			
E							F			
G							H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point 6/10 of a mile northwest of Route 608 at the gate of a private driveway, including the log house at this point and proceeding eastward along a drive that curves northward behind the main (See Contin. Sheet #4)

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pamela H. Simpson, Professor of Art History  
 organization Washington and Lee University date September 1, 1985  
 street & number Washington Hall telephone (703) 463-8748  
 city or town Lexington state VA 24450

# 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  
 H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
 title Historic Landmarks Division date October 21, 1985

For NPS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

LOCUST HILL, Rockbridge County, VA

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1

7. DESCRIPTION

A Greek Revival porch of four Doric piers and pilasters joined by a diagonal lattice fret on the front and turned balusters on the sides forms the entrance to the main facade. There is a family tradition that the house was damaged by fire in 1855 and that John Hamilton, the original owner and builder, had the interiors redone. It is likely that this Greek Revival porch also dates from this period.

The interior of the basement was originally unfurnished, although there was a rough, board and batten door giving entrance on the southeast gable end and the fireplace on this end does have an open flue. The present owners have excavated, reinforced the deteriorating foundation walls and added a cement slab floor. They also replaced the old door with a modern, secure one and rebuilt the stairway in the northwest room. The joists are vertically sawn throughout.

The central hall on the main floor has an elegantly proportioned Federal style stairway. Its mahogany handrail continues in tight curves upward to the attic level. While the proportions and turnings are Federal, the stairends are undecorated, indicating that the stairs may have been altered in the 1850's remodeling.

The front entrance door has its original, large brass box lock but all the other doors have late 19th century locks.

The tradition that the interior burned in 1855 is supported by the evidence of the Greek Revival woodwork as well as charred attic rafters on the northwest end. In contrast to the exterior Federal style detailing, the interior is very simple. The northwest room has an Asher Benjamin type mantel consisting of architrave molded pilasters, corner blocks and architrave lintel. There is a simple chair railing, and door and window moldings also carry the three-sectioned architrave form.

The southeast room has no chair railing. Its mantel is also taken from Asher Benjamin and consists of free-standing, fluted Doric columns, linked by a running Greek key lintel. This mantel, however, was added in 1938 when Everette Fauber, a Lynchburg architect, was engaged by Colonel and Mrs. Samuel Millner, Jr. to remodel the house. Fauber also added bathrooms to the second floor southeast room; finished the ell attic into a closet and bath; converted the first floor of the ell to a kitchen and the kitchen building to a study. As a result, no original woodwork survives in either the ell or the kitchen building.

The second floor of the main block does have a simple Greek Revival mantel on the southeast and a later Victorian mantel on the northwest.

While the construction of Locust Hill is typical of Valley craftsmanship in most aspects, one unusual feature stands out. The gable roof is supported by common rafters framed into a ridge board. The ridge board is vertically

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

LOCUST HILL, Rockbridge County, VA

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 7

Page 2

7. DESCRIPTION

sawn and still carries bark on its outer face. It is highly unusual for any Valley roof to have a ridge board in the first half of the 19th century. They were not common until the latter part of the century and when they were used, the rafters were nailed to them. There is only one other extant example of a ridge board with framed rafters in Rockbridge County. It is Stone Cottage (117-33), an 1850 house in Lexington. The presence of charred rafters on the northwest end supports the family tradition of a fire. It may be that the entire roof dates from the 1850's rebuilding.

The house is presently undergoing repair, stabilization and modernization. Serious structural deterioration in the foundation necessitated underpinning and repair. A modern furnace and new plumbing and wiring have been added. The ell has been converted into a modern kitchen and its fireplace has been rebuilt. The original kitchen is now a guestroom and a bath has been created in its southeast corner. A connecting vestibule has been added to give interior access between the ell and the new guestroom.

A noteworthy feature of Locust Hill is the survival of several of the outbuildings. To the southeast of the house is a log dependency that various owners have called the "slave quarters." It is a story and a half, rectangular, "V" notched structure. Two entrance doors on the south are balanced by two windows on the north. The east wall originally had a brick chimney, and a door, which is not original, was cut into the west wall at some point. The building's interior is in poor condition. There is evidence that it was at one time divided into two rooms. The walls are white-washed and the attic rafters are log poles pegged together. The present owners have rethanked the exterior and repaired the roof covering.

To the north of the main house is a row of farm structures. The first is a double pen log corn crib. The notching for each 5' x 15' pen is "V" and the logs are hewn square. The present owners have added a new roof to the structure. Two, open, frame lean-tos connect the log structure to a frame shed. It probably dates from the late 19th century. Two more frame sheds line the driveway as it curves northward and there is the stone foundation of what was once a double pen log barn.

Locust Hill is a typical Valley upper-middle-class farmstead; yet it is distinguished by the quality of its construction details and elegant refinement of its exterior ornamental forms. Its Greek Revival interior offers expression of another popular local form. Its ell, brick kitchen and log dependencies present a clear picture of a working farm.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

LOCUST HILL, Rockbridge County, VA

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet #3

Item number 8

Page 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE

tion on which I now reside, consisting of 560 acres."

Hamilton was a well-to-do farmer. In the 1826 personal property records he is listed as having one white indentured servant, one slave under 16 and six slaves over 16 as well as five horses. He was also apparently an educated and cultured man. In his will he left his granddaughter his piano and at his estate sale, the largest item was his library consisting of some 24 "lots of books." The most valuable items in his estate were his McCormick reaper (\$30), his bay horse (\$40) and his three milk cows (\$45).

This picture of the well-read farmer is also amplified by his work in his local community. In 1832, inspired by the wave of Methodism that was sweeping the county, John Hamilton was "born again." Thereafter he became an active layman in the Methodist Episcopal Church and helped to organize the Wesley Chapel congregation. Hamilton was one of the Trustees for the Church in 1834 and was a major contributor toward its construction. He was active in the congregation throughout his life and helped to form the local Bible Society as well. It was as a representative of this group that Hamilton served as an honorary pallbearer at Stonewall Jackson's funeral.

Hamilton's daughter, Margaret Jane, married a Methodist minister, William Krebs in 1848. It was their son, Hamilton Krebs, who inherited Locust Hill in 1879. Krebs sold it in 1920 to Fred Carter who sold it in 1938 to Colonel and Mrs. Samuel Millner, Jr.

Colonel Millner had a long and distinguished career at the Virginia Military Institute. He had entered as a cadet in 1907. In 1911, after his graduation, he joined the faculty and served as a professor of French language and literature for over fifty years. Millner was the first cadet to be designated a "distinguished graduate" and he was the first to receive the Jackson Hope medal. Known as "snappy Sam," Millner took only two brief leaves of VMI. One was for service in World War I and one for graduate study at the University of Wisconsin.

In 1938 Millner and his wife bought Locust Hill which they renamed Locust Grove. They hired the Lynchburg architect, Everette Fauber to restore the house. In 1973 they gave their estate to the VMI Foundation with the provision that they could continue to reside at Locust Grove.

In 1974, the Foundation sold the farm to Custis L. Coleman and his wife. They took possession of the house in 1982 and have begun its extensive restoration and repair. This was necessary since, in their later years, ill health had prevented the Millners from taking adequate care of the house. Water and termite damage had undone much of what Fauber had restored. The Colemans have stabilized the structure and added modern plumbing and wiring.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

LOCUST HILL, Rockbridge County, VA

Continuation sheet #4

Item number 9, 10

Page 1, 1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lexington Gazette, August 7, 1872 (obituary)  
Will Book 20, pages 471, 536.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description and justification -

house and along a row of farm dependencies to the edge of the last frame building in their row then westward following a fence line to a juncture with a fence line running south and bordering a driveway in front of the house thence back to the original point at the gate entrance. <sup>JUSTIFICATION:</sup> The whole being approximately 3½ acres including the main house "Locust Hill", a log house to the south and a row of dependencies to the north. This designated section is a fragment of the 319 acres owned by Dr. Custis L. Coleman and is also a fragment of the 250 acre farm Hamilton Krebs inherited from his grandfather, the builder of "Locust Hill."

OF VIRGINIA  
L RESOURCES  
TE GEOLOGIST

GLASGOW QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 BUENA VISTA 15' QUADRANGLE

5159 IV  
(LEXINGTON)  
1:62 500

001 638

639

25'

641 1 740 000 FEET

79°22'30"

37°45'

