

VLR- 6/16/99  
NRHP- 8/5/99

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Eltham Manor  
other names/site number VDHR File No. 044-5011

2. Location

street & number 405 Riverside Drive (SR 682) N/A not for publication  
city or town Bassett X vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Henry code 089 zip code 24055-4244

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 6/30/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
1	1	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
AGRICULTURE	animal facility
RECREATION	outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
AGRICULTURE	animal facility
RECREATION	outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Georgian Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
 walls brick  
 roof slate  
 other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**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.)

Property is:

- 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 fifty years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1936-1949

**Significant Dates**

1936

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Bassett, William McKinley

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Wallace, William Roy (architect of house)

Mason, Millard (barn builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approximately 200 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	592390	4066040	3	17	592860 4065740
2	17	592720	4065980	4	17	592400 4064940

X 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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>	date	<u>February 23, 1999</u>
organization	<u>Landmark Preservation Associates</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 464-5315</u>
street & number	<u>6 Houston St.</u>	zip code	<u>24450</u>
city or town	<u>Lexington</u> state <u>VA</u>		

**Additional Documentation**

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)

**Property Owner**

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

name	<u>Burgess H. III and Virginia Walker Hamlet</u>		
street & number	<u>405 Riverside Dr.</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 629-2121</u>
city or town	<u>Bassett</u> state <u>Virginia</u>	zip code	<u>24055-4244</u>

**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.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### Summary

Eltham Manor is located near the community of Bassett in the Blue Ridge foothills of northwest Henry County, Virginia. The 1936 Georgian Revival mansion stands on a prominence overlooking the Smith River, a branch of the Dan and Roanoke rivers. The Flemish-bond brick house has a graduated three-part form featuring a two-and-a-half-story five-bay central section with two-story wings projecting from the gable ends (house plans appear as an exhibit at the end of the report). The central section has a west-facing main approach front and a porticoed east-facing river front. Arcaded porches on the west elevations of the two-story wings extend into curved hyphens that link to a two-story garage and servant's quarters at the north end and a one-story open-air pavilion at the south end. All sections have gable roofs covered with Buckingham slate, and the central section roof has gabled dormers with beaded flush-board sides. The center-passage-plan interior has approximately 12,000 square feet of floor space with mantels, surrounds, and plaster ornament derived largely from the Georgian and Federal styles. The mansion's park-like setting encompasses approximately 200 acres and features a lake and barn from the 1930s as well as two noncontributing resources.

### Inventory

1. Eltham Manor. 1936. Contributing building.
2. Barn. Ca. 1936. Contributing building.
3. Lake. Ca. 1936. Contributing site.
4. Go-cart track. Ca. 1995. Noncontributing structure.
5. Tobacco barn ruin. Ca. 1900. Noncontributing site.

### House Exterior

The brick construction of Eltham Manor's five-bay central section features a molded watertable, a projecting band of seven courses between the first- and second-story windows, and gauged jack arches over the windows. The twelve-over-eight first-story windows have paneled shutters; the eight-over-eight second-story windows have louvered shutters; and the dormers have six-over-six windows. Cornices with modillion and dentil moldings crown the east and west elevations.

The east-facing river front is the grander of the two elevations. It features a Doric portico with smooth two-story columns, a flush-board-sheathed tympanum with a round window in a keystone surround, and horizontal and raking cornices that repeat the moldings of the main cornices. The portico shelters an entry in a surround of square Doric pilasters surmounted by a Palladian stair

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

**Description (continued)**

landing window with tracery in the form of interlaced lancet arches. The west-facing main approach front features a projecting central bay with a fanlight entry contained within a deep round-arched embrasure with a paneled inner surface. The embrasure is flanked by fluted Doric pilasters supporting a Federal-style entablature with a projecting cornice. The projecting central bay's pediment has typical cornice moldings and a circular tympanum window in a keystone surround. Each gable end of the central section has small segmental-arched windows, louvered vents, and paired chimney stacks with relatively plain corbeling.

The two-story wings that flank the central section are more plain in detail. They have cornices with simple moldings, plain window lintels, twelve-over-eight first-story windows, six-over-six second-story windows, and single gable-end chimneys. The arcaded porches across their west elevations have Flemish-bond pillars; round arches with "keystones" formed of single bricks; flush-board ceilings; rope-molding cornices on the interior; metal railings in the arches; and herringbone brick pavements.

As noted in the summary, the porches extend and curve forward to form hyphens. The south hyphen connects to a one-story pavilion for open-air entertaining described as an "overlook" in the original plans on account of its views of the lake to the south of the house. The pavilion's brick bond has a header-stretcher course every five stretcher courses. A north gable-end chimney has an oval marble plaque set into its face bearing the initial "B" and the date 1936. Flanking the chimney are twelve-over-eight windows; the other three sides have openings set with slender Doric columns. Inside are a fireplace with a rustic sandstone surround and a heavy molded wood shelf; white-painted exposed brick walls; beaded flush-board ceilings; and a marble floor.

The north hyphen connects to a two-story dependency with brick bonding like that of the overlook. Four garage bays under a pent roof open onto a brick-walled forecourt. A small shed-roofed extension on the north gable end contains a water-pressure tank for the well that supplies the house; next to it is a raised brick-bordered planting bed and a concrete watering trough bearing the initials "HT" and the date 1942. Other features include a false chimney; six-over-six windows with louvered shutters; a plain molded cornice; and segmental-arched gable vents. The first occupants of the dependency's two second-floor apartments were the cook and an "all-around man" who served as a butler, chauffeur, and yard man.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

Description (continued)

House Interior

Eltham Manor's east and west entries open into a wide center passage containing a two-run stair. As with most other rooms in the house, the passage has wood floors, plastered walls, and plastered ceilings with plaster cornices. The stair has a molded and ramped handrail supported by turned balusters and slender turned newel posts. The handrail and balusters descend to a spiraled termination at the bottom step. The paneled passage wainscot with its intricate chair-rail-height molding rises with the stair (similar wainscots appear in other rooms). Other features of the stair include scrolled tread brackets and a paneled spandrel. The doorways leading to the rooms and hallways off the center passage have eared surrounds topped by Federal entablatures with double sine-wave patterns in channeled friezes, flanking tablets with composition ornament in the form of vases with flowers, and cornices with fret moldings.

The principal room off the north side of the center passage is the dining room, which has a natural-finish Federal mantel with a three-part frieze, channeling in the frieze tablets and pilasters, a lozenge pattern in the center tablet, and a fireplace surround and hearth of gray marble. The mantel is set onto the face of a projection with paneled sides and overmantel, and the mantel ornament is repeated over the doorway to the center passage. In the center of the ceiling is an elliptical plaster medallion with radiating pleats and feather motifs. Another doorway leads through a large butler's pantry into a modernized kitchen. Next to the dining room is a breakfast room featuring a built-in corner cupboard with glass-fronted doors in a keystone surround with interlaced ogee-arched tracery in the glass panels.

A doorway on the south side of the center passage leads into a hallway flanked by a sitting room (originally intended as an office) and a walnut-paneled library. The library mantel is Georgian in inspiration with an architrave surround surmounted by an enriched frieze with a center tablet and shelf. In the overmantel is an eared panel with an astragal surround; a similar treatment defines the door to the hallway, which is capped by a broken pediment. A dentil cornice crowns the walls and the ceiling has a medallion similar to that in the dining room.

The aforementioned hallway continues to a living room that occupies the entire first floor of the south wing of the house. The room's focal point is a Georgian mantel and overmantel, the former with a hearth and fireplace surround of gray marble and an eared architrave surround with foliated consoles supporting a shelf with a fret bed molding; the latter with an eared panel crowned by a broken scrolled pediment with fret and cushion moldings, rosettes in the scroll ends, and a central keystone-like element. A cornice with complicated composition fretwork runs

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

**Description (continued)**

below the ceiling, which has molded plaster borders and a medallion similar to others in the house except for the addition of a guilloche border. The room has windows in eared embrasures with paneled sides and--as elsewhere in the house--radiators set into the walls and concealed behind metal and paneled wood grilles.

The center-passage stair rises past the Palladian landing window in its surround of fluted pilasters to a second-story passage that connects to bedrooms and hallways. The bedrooms typically have simple molded door and window trim and Federal- and Georgian-inspired mantels with such features as three-part friezes, eared architrave surrounds, composition ornament, and so forth. The bathrooms typically retain their original ceramic sinks and tubs, metal fixtures, and tile floors and lower wall linings. The sinks and tubs in the family bathrooms are in shades of yellow, pink, green, turquoise, and blue, and are color-coordinated with the tilework. The sinks and tubs in secondary bathrooms, such as those used by servants, are white. A door in an arched embrasure leads to the attic stair. The plainly finished attic was originally intended to contain a servant's bedroom and bath, a "curtain room" for curtain storage, and miscellaneous storage. The last function appears to have been the only or dominant function during the historic period.

A stair with turned balusters and chamfered newel posts descends under the center-passage stair to a barroom and a game room (now used as a family room) in the basement. The barroom has a flagstone floor, walls with unfinished molded wood paneling, and a bar with rustic wood crossbracing under the counter. The game room is detailed in the Tudor Revival style with false-half-timbered walls and quarrel-paned windows. The timbers have a dark-stained adzed finish and decorative wooden pegs at their joints. Brackets at the tops of the primary timbers visually support ceiling beams, and the wall surfaces between the primaries have smaller members--some whimsically curved like crucks--and rough plaster infilling. The windows have lead comes, bubbled glass either clear or tinted green and purple, and window wells for illumination. Other features of the room include stone pavers; a fireplace with a stone surround and wood shelf similar to those in the south pavilion, and also an iron crane and a wood storage niche with a segmental-arched iron door; and a number of cabinets under balustered grilles set into the walls. Also in the basement are the laundry room, furnace room, and storerooms, all characterized by four-panel doors, concrete floors, and exposed foundation and partition walls of poured-concrete and cinder-block construction.

**Landscape Features and Secondary Resources**

Eltham Manor is approached by a curving driveway that leads from Riverside Drive (SR 682)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

**Description (continued)**

past the lake to end in a turnaround at the home's west front. The grounds immediately adjoining the house have extensive boxwood plantings, an east yard bordered by rows of trees that frame the river view, hemlock screens, and native and specimen trees, several of which are older than the house. The boxwoods on the east side of the south pavilion are planted in a parterre-like fashion. A small brick building used as a garden shed in the 1980s formerly stood to the north of the house. Other landscape features of note include a group of large cedars in front of the north hyphen, and large magnolias flanking the entrance to the turnaround.

In a swale to the northwest of the house is a boxwood replacement garden and the site of a former vegetable garden. Beyond the swale stands the barn, a large gambrel-roofed frame building with a capacious hay mow above and space for plow horses (originally) and equipment on the ground level. The barn has weatherboard siding, shingle-pattern pressed-metal roofing, and a brick foundation. Projecting from the roof are hipped dormers with doors that could be used for ventilation or transferring hay to and from the mow, and, along the ridge, metal ventilators and a Colonial Revival cupola with arched louvered openings, a flared copper roof, and a copper weather vane in the form of a "B" pierced by an arrow. The eaves of the roof are flared and a small hay bonnet projects from the east end to shelter the end of a hay fork rail and a set of doors below. Other features of the barn include large sliding doors at the two ends, a shed-roofed wing along the north side, six-light casement windows and six-over-six double-hung sash windows, and a Dutch door on the south side. The unfinished interior contains horse stalls.

To the south and southwest of the house is the lake, created by an earthen dam at its east end. The lakeside closest to the house has a park-like character with loosely grouped pines; the far side has a natural wooded growth. Located on an unpaved lane to the west of the barn are a modern go-cart track with a banked earthen course, and a ruinous log building that was used as a tobacco barn before 1950. The log building, once one-story in height, has v-notched walls, a metal-sheathed gable roof, and gables sheathed with weatherboards attached with wire nails. Some cut nails may also have been used in the building's construction; a mix of wire and cut nails would suggest a date of construction around 1900. The lane continues westward up the spur of a hill that rises to 1,000 feet above sea level (Eltham Manor itself stands at an elevation of 840 feet). The hill and a lower-lying area to its east occupy the southern three-quarters of the nominated parcel, an area of immature native deciduous and evergreen woodland. A modern powerline beyond the hill forms the southwest boundary of the nominated parcel. The powerline is screened from view of the house by the hill.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number   7   Page   6**

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

---

**Description (continued)**

**Integrity Statement**

Eltham Manor possesses excellent integrity of setting and architectural fabric. Aside from unobtrusive systems upgrades and a kitchen remodeling, alterations to the interior of the house since its construction in 1936 are minor, and virtually nothing has been altered on the exterior. Likewise, the barn, lake, and landscaping of the estate are virtually unchanged or--in the case of the latter--have been maintained in the spirit of the original.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 7

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

---

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary**

Eltham Manor is a grand Georgian Revival residence built in 1936 near the town of Bassett in the Blue Ridge foothills of Henry County, Virginia. The home was designed by Winston-Salem, North Carolina architect William Roy Wallace for furniture company executive William McKinley Bassett, the son of pioneering Henry County furniture manufacturer John David Bassett Sr. W. M. Bassett headed Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc. from 1930 until his death in 1960. Under his guidance the corporation grew to become the world's largest producer of wood furniture, and W. M. Bassett rose to positions of leadership in Southern industrial circles. Commensurate with Bassett's prominence is his 12,000-square-foot home, set amid sweeping landscaped grounds overlooking the Smith River. With its porticoed river front, arcaded hyphens linking to dependencies, and lavish interior appointments, Eltham Manor represents a tour de force of Georgian Revival design.

**Justification of Criteria**

Eltham Manor is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an impressive example of Georgian Revival design. The property is also eligible under Criterion B in the area of industry for its association with W. M. Bassett, an important figure in Virginia's twentieth-century industrial history. The period of significance extends from the date of the home's construction in 1936 through 1949, embracing the middle years of Bassett's career. Eltham Manor is significant at the state level of significance.

**Acknowledgments**

A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report. Foremost among these are the owners of Eltham Manor, Burgess H. (Butch) Hamlet III and Virginia Walker Hamlet, who provided information on the history of the home and its occupants and insight into the property's architectural development. Also of assistance were Mary Elizabeth Bassett Morten, daughter of W. M. and Gladys Bassett; Sam Eanes, archivist at the Bassett Public Library; Robin Spencer of Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc.; Richard Barentine, Chief Executive Officer of the International Home Furnishings Marketing Association, Inc.; architectural historian Gary R. Grant; and staff members of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources including Anne Beckett, June Ellis, John Kern, and Marc Wagner.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

Statement of Significance (continued)

Historical Background

Henry County merchant and sawmiller John David Bassett Sr. and several relations founded the Bassett family furniture empire in 1902. The initial focus of the Bassett Furniture Company was to "produce competitive bedroom furniture to meet popular tastes." From modest beginnings the company expanded operations during the 1910s, increasing its capital stock from \$80,000 to \$300,000 in 1916 and again to \$500,000 in 1918. During its first decades the Bassett enterprise transformed Henry County's Smith River Valley "from a forest wilderness into a humming industrial center," in the words of industrial historians Dorothy Cleal and Hiram H. Herbert.<sup>1</sup>

William McKinley Bassett (1894-1960), John David's eldest son, grew up in the family business. At age ten W. M. (Bill) Bassett's first job was delivering materials to the furniture makers at their work tables and benches. According to Cleal and Herbert, Bassett "stepped on each rung of the training ladder" over the following years, demonstrating along the way a special aptitude for merchandising. In 1921 he was made vice-president of the first spin-off company, the J. D. Bassett Manufacturing Company. Cleal and Herbert have speculated that this company was created in part to "test the abilities" of the young Bill Bassett, who was elevated to the position of president of the new concern in 1923 and who in following years took on increased responsibility for his father's other businesses. The Bassett concerns expanded apace with the state's furniture industry during the 1920s. Furniture making ranked as Virginia's fourth most valuable industry in 1929 (after tobacco, paper and pulp, and rail car manufacturing), and production was second only to North Carolina among southern states.<sup>2</sup>

By 1930 a proliferation of Bassett family furniture plants had created harmful competition among the plants and divisions among the family members. J. D. Bassett Sr. convinced his sons Bill and J. D. Jr. to form an umbrella corporation, Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc., with J. D. Sr. as president, J. D. Jr. as vice-president, and W. M. as secretary-treasurer. A reorganization later in the year elevated Bill Bassett to president of the corporation, which he headed until his death

---

<sup>1</sup> "History of Bassett Furniture Industries;" Cleal and Herbert, *Foresight, Founders, and Fortitude*, 30 and 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> Cleal and Herbert, *Foresight, Founders, and Fortitude*, 44-46 and 48; Humbert, *Virginia, Economic and Civic*, 39-40 and 47.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

Statement of Significance (continued)

in 1960.<sup>3</sup>

Virginia's furniture industry experienced a sharp decline during the first years of the Great Depression. From a value of \$30 million in 1929, production dropped to \$15 million in 1932. Bassett Furniture was forced to stagger factory schedules in order to keep employees at work. Despite hard times the corporation was able to build a chair factory in 1931 and to acquire another plant in 1934. The furniture industry's prospects improved statewide in 1935 as New Deal recovery programs began to take effect, and Martinsville-area plants declared business "exceptionally good" at the end of the year. In May 1935 W. M. Bassett felt enough confidence in the future to purchase the 500-acre Davis tract east of Bassett and begin planning for the construction of a grand country estate.<sup>4</sup>

Bassett hired Winston-Salem, North Carolina architect William Roy Wallace to design his new home, which replaced a Davis family house that stood on the same site, a high terrace overlooking the Smith River. Construction drawings were completed in early 1936 and the house was ready for occupancy in the summer. Mary Elizabeth Bassett Morten, the daughter of W. M. and his wife Gladys Clark Bassett, recalls that a steam shovel was used to excavate for the foundation and the concrete was mixed on site. A Danville contractor was hired for the construction work--possibly the firm of Flora & Webber. The millwork was ordered from Richmond, and the plasterer and landscape architect hailed from Charlotte. Miss Elizabeth Thompson of Raleigh decorated the interiors, allowing her clients to choose from three schemes for each room. At about the same time the house was built local contractor Millard Mason erected the barn, and the lake to the south of the house was created to provide water for an irrigation system. W. M. Bassett named the estate Eltham Manor after an ancestral home in New Kent County.<sup>5</sup>

At the time he built his mansion, W. M. Bassett was a rising star in Southern furniture

---

<sup>3</sup> Cleal and Herbert, *Foresight, Founders, and Fortitude*, 50-51.

<sup>4</sup> Heinemann, *Depression and New Deal in Virginia*, 196; "History of Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc.;" Cleal and Herbert, *Foresight, Founders, and Fortitude*, 51-52; *Martinsville Morning Post*, December 16, 1935; and Henry County Deed Book 55, p. 527.

<sup>5</sup> Wallace construction drawings; Morten personal communication.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

Statement of Significance (continued)

manufacturing circles. In 1935 he was elected vice-president of the Southern Furniture Manufacturer's Association and he was re-elected in 1936. He would later serve as a founder and first co-president of a successor organization organized in 1955, the Furniture Factories Marketing Association of the South, Inc., which prospers today as the International Home Furnishings Marketing Association based in High Point, North Carolina. After his death in 1960, Bassett was eulogized by Virginia Governor J. Lindsay Almond as "one of the greatest industrial leaders of our time." An executive of the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association noted: "The industry has lost one of its most dynamic leaders . . . from the start he gave a relatively young industry an impetus that continues strong today." Gladys Bassett lived on at Eltham Manor until her death in the early 1980s. The property was conveyed to the Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc., which in turn sold it to the present owners, Burgess H. (Butch) Hamlet III and Virginia Walker Hamlet, in 1987.<sup>6</sup>

Architectural Analysis

Eltham Manor was designed by Winston-Salem, North Carolina architect William Roy Wallace (1889-1982). Wallace worked in the Philadelphia architectural office of Charles Barton Keen, who in the early 1920s undertook projects for the Reynolds family of Winston-Salem. Wallace accompanied Keen to Winston-Salem, moving permanently to the city in 1927. One of his larger early commissions in Virginia was the Addison Schoolfield House, built in 1931 for a member of the textile manufacturing Schoolfield family of Pittsylvania County. Located at 242 Hawthorne Drive in Forest Hills, a fashionable 1920s automobile suburb of Danville, the Schoolfield House shares many features with Eltham Manor, among them Georgian Revival brick construction, a two-and-a-half-story main section with a dormered gable roof and paired chimneys, and two-story gable-end wings. According to Wallace's son, architect William Wallace, the pedimented entry of the Schoolfield House was modeled on that of the ca. 1774 Hammond-Harwood House in Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>7</sup>

W. M. Bassett would likely have seen the Schoolfield House before contemplating the

---

<sup>6</sup> *Martinsville Morning Post*, October 30, 1936; *Roanoke Times*, July 18, 1960; *Martinsville Bulletin*, July 19, 1960; and Barentine and Hamlet personal communications.

<sup>7</sup> Wallace and Grant personal communications; Wells and Dalton, *Virginia Architects*, 236 and 461; and Davis, *Annapolis Houses*, 41-59.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.

---

Statement of Significance (continued)

construction of Eltham Manor; Danville and the Bassett area of Henry County lie less than forty miles apart. Or he may have learned of the house through acquaintance with the Schoolfield family, who like the Bassetts ranked among the leading industrialists of the state, or through familiarity with Winston-Salem, then as now an important urban center serving Virginia's southwest Piedmont. Beyond its general popularity during the period, the Georgian Revival style probably appealed to Bassett on a personal level. The style evoked the colonial Virginia roots of the Bassett family. It also contrasted with the Tudor Revival style used in the design of Stoneleigh, the home of state governor and furniture manufacturer Thomas B. Stanley and his wife Anne Pocahontas, W. M. Bassett's sister. Eltham Manor and Stoneleigh stand on opposite sides of the Smith River.<sup>8</sup>

The Hammond-Harwood House may have inspired aspects of Eltham Manor's design as well as the Schoolfield House. Eltham Manor's projecting west entry bay is similar to that of the Hammond-Harwood House, and both have pediments with modillions in the horizontal and raking cornices and circular features in the tympanum. Eltham Manor's living room and the Grand Dining Room of the Hammond-Harwood House share fireplaces with eared architrave surrounds, console-supported shelves, and eared overmantel panels topped by broken scrolled pediments. The Hammond-Harwood House also has dependencies linked to the main house block by hyphens, although such an arrangement is found at other colonial great houses. Eltham Manor's projecting belt course is seen in the Hammond-Harwood House and elsewhere in the Chesapeake. The functional pent roof over the garage doors at Eltham Manor may have been inspired by the colonial pent roofs of Wallace's native Pennsylvania or those in Old Salem. Whatever its specific sources, Eltham Manor resonates with the colonial and early national traditions that inspired Wallace and the other classicists of the era.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Morten personal communication; Loth, *Virginia Landmarks Register*, 204.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, *Annapolis Houses*, 41-59. Another notable aspect of Eltham Manor is the hierarchic treatment of the interior, as noted by architectural historian Virginia Walker Hamlet. For example, crown moldings are typical features in the family and entertaining spaces of the house but are lacking in the more utilitarian areas, and tinted sinks and tubs are found in family bathrooms but plain white ones appear in the bathrooms used by the servants.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 12

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Barentine, Richard (Chief Executive Officer, International Home Furnishings Marketing Association, Inc.). Personal communication with author. High Point, N.C., February 1999.

Bassett Public Library historical collections. Bassett, Va.

Cleal, Dorothy, and Hiram H. Herbert. *Foresight, Founders, and Fortitude: The Growth of Industry In Martinsville and Henry County, Virginia*. Bassett, Va.: The Bassett Printing Corp., 1970.

Davis, Deering. *Annapolis Houses, 1700-1775*. Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1947.

"Eltham Manor." Real estate brochure, ca. 1987.

*Fiftieth Annual Report, Department of Labor and Industry, State of Virginia*. Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1948.

Grant, Gary R. Personal communication with author. Danville, Va., January 1999.

Hamlet, Virginia Walker. Personal communication with author. Bassett, Va., 1998-99.

Heinemann, Ronald L. *Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

Henry County deed and will records. Henry County Courthouse, Martinsville, Va.

"A History of Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc." Brochure, 1993.

Humbert, R. Lee, ed. *Virginia, Economic and Civic*. Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1933.

International Home Furnishings Marketing Association, Inc. fact sheet, 1998.

Loth, Calder, ed. *The Virginia Landmarks Register*. Third edition. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1986.

*Martinsville Bulletin* (Martinsville, Va.).

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 13

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

---

**Major Bibliographical References (continued)**

*Martinsville Morning Post* (Martinsville, Va.).

Maurer, Christine, and Tara E. Sheets, editors. *Encyclopedia of Associations*. 34th edition. Detroit and London: Gale Research, 1999.

Morten, Mary Elizabeth Bassett. Personal communication with author. Bassett, Va., January and February 1999.

*The Roanoke Times* (Roanoke, Va.).

Wallace, William. Personal communication with author. Winston-Salem, N.C., January 1999.

Wallace, William Roy. Construction drawings for Eltham Manor. Private collection, Bassett, Va.

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary*. Richmond, Va.: New South Architectural Press, 1997.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 14

**Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., Va.**

---

**UTM References (continued)**

5. E591940 N4065040
6. E591470 N4065360
7. E591350 N4065760
8. E592160 N4065820

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel are portrayed on the USGS and 1:200-scale maps that accompany this nomination. Described verbally, the nominated parcel incorporates all of Henry County tax map 27.6 parcel 152A and the northern portion of parcel 152. Parcel 152 is bisected by a line that parallels the north side of a power line that crosses the parcel in a northwest-southeast direction. The UTM coordinates that approximate the intersection of this boundary line and the tax parcel boundary lines are E591490 N4065390 on the northwest end and E591960 N4065070 on the southeast end.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel include three historic resources associated with Eltham Manor--the house known as Eltham Manor, a barn, and a lake--and a portion of the property's setting of open parkland and wooded hillsides. The nomination boundaries coincide with the property's present boundaries except on the southwest side where the boundary follows a modern powerline.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Exhibit Page 16

Eltham Manor  
Henry, Va.

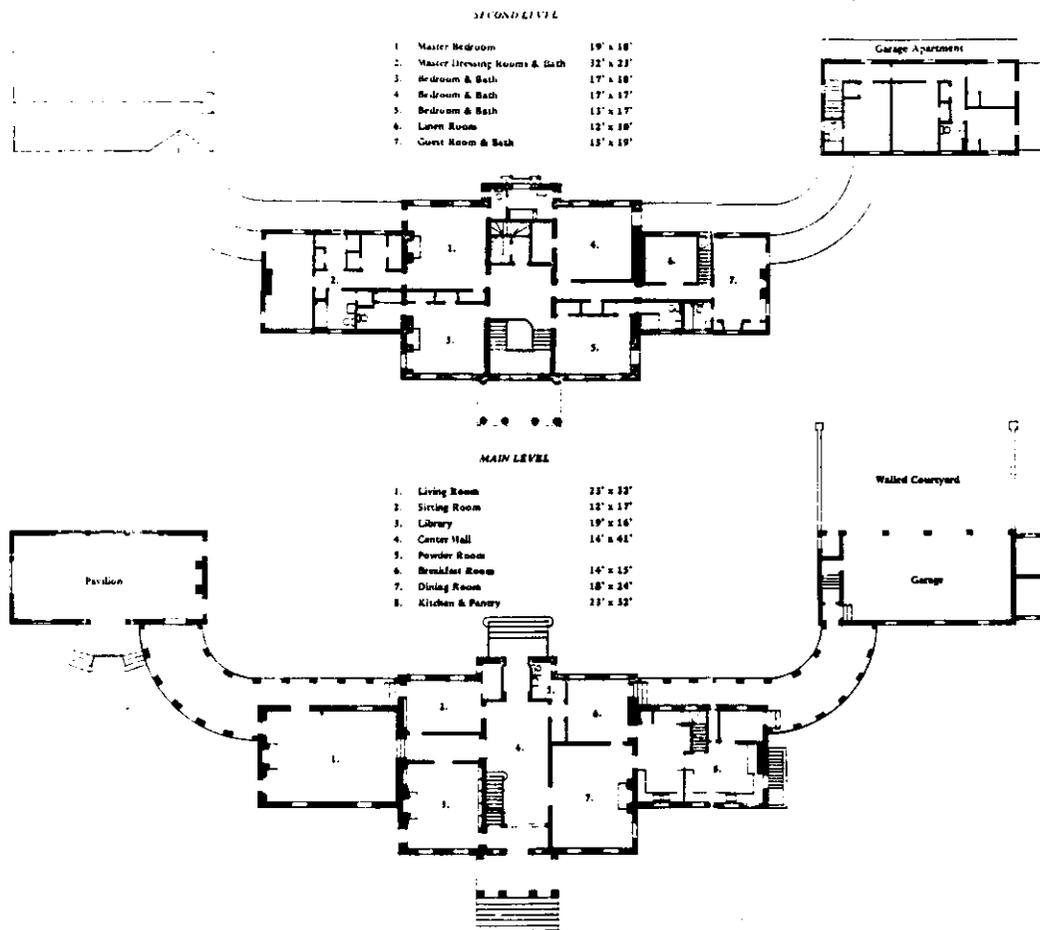


Exhibit A: First-floor and second-floor plans of Eltham Manor from 1987 real estate brochure (north is to the right; not to scale).

PHILPOTT RESERVOIR  
1957 1 SE RESERVOIR

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



COMMONWEALTH  
DIVISION OF MINES

FAIRY STONE STATE PARK 8 MI.  
BASSETT 1 MI. 57'30"

ROCKY MOUNT 18 MI. 5057  
OAK LEVEL 5 MI. (BAS)

Eltham Manor  
Henry Co., VA  
UTM references (zone 17):  
1. E592390 N4066040  
2. E592720 N4065980  
3. E592060 N4065740  
4. E592400 N4064940  
5. E591940 N4065040  
6. E591470 N4065360  
7. E591350 N4065760  
8. E592160 N4065820

