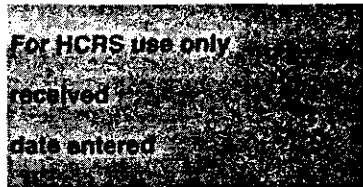


V.P. - 12-15-81
NRHP-10-29-82

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



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

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Upper Shirley

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Route 608

N/A not for publication

city, town Charles City

vicinity of

1st

congressional district (Paul S. Tribble, Jr.)

state Virginia

code 51

county Charles City

code 036

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Pollard Alsop, Jr.

street & number Upper Shirley

city, town Charles City

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 23030

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles City County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Charles City

state Virginia 23030

6. Representation in Existing Surveys (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey
title Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September 1958 federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington

state DC

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Upper Shirley occupies a gentle sloping site overlooking the James River and the Presquile National Wildlife Refuge on the opposite bank. The large plantation house at Upper Shirley was constructed in two phases. The 20' x 47' structure was built in 1868-70 by A.H. Marks & Brothers of Petersburg using materials from a large 18th-century building at Shirley and was enlarged to its present 42' x 47' configuration in 1890.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The stucco-covered brick house rises two stories above an English basement. A wide, plain frieze outlines the perimeter of the building below the deep, overhanging hipped roof covered in standing-seam metal and surmounted by tall interior chimneys. Fenestration throughout the house consists of 6/6 double-hung windows capped by keystones and flanked by louvred shutters. The main entrance is on the east elevation and consists of a door framed by sidelights and a three-light transom sheltered by a portico with stylized Doric columns. A railing with squared balusters defines the portico's outer edge and the stairs leading up to the entrance.

The treatment of the doorway is repeated on the west elevation, where it is protected by a two-level porch which stretches across the entire facade. Originally on the Warren House in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the porch was salvaged and rebuilt at Upper Shirley. Its Corinthian-type columns with carved dogwood blossoms on the first story are connected by a rail with turned balusters, while the second-story treatment consists of slender Ionic columns connected by a decorative wrought-iron rail.

The building's south side is distinguished by a single-story screened porch enclosing a secondary entrance. A single-story addition housing the kitchen and other service areas covers the north elevation.

The plan consists of a wide central hall with a narrower cross hall creating a room in each corner of the house. The two-run, open-well stair is located under the wide, arched opening of the north hall. Two square balusters per tread carry the molded rail which curves at the foot of the stairs to form a newel. The interior woodwork throughout the house dates to the 1958 renovation. Its installation was necessitated by the state of poor repair in which the house had fallen in the preceding years. Wainscoting with applied ornamentation wraps around the first-floor halls. A narrow cornice completes the hall decoration. Until the renovation, the west hall contained a late 19th-century bath and butler's pantry with the first indoor plumbing in Charles City County. The wainscoting was salvaged from an 18th-century house in Petersburg.

The cornice is continued around the remaining first-floor rooms. The dining room, located in the northwest corner, is finished with a molded chair rail and fireplace with a marble surround and Georgian-style molding. The other three rooms have fireplaces decorated with Federal-style mantels consisting of reeded pilasters below projecting endblocks and friezes with various applied ornamentation. The second-floor rooms continue the treatment of the first story.

(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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1868-70; 1876; 1890 **Builder/Architect** A.H. Marks and Brothers

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The gracious late 19th-century dwelling at Upper Shirley with its beautiful site overlooking the James River has been the seat of several leading families of the Commonwealth. Built by Hill Carter for his son William Fitzhugh Carter during Reconstruction, a period in which few Virginians could afford to erect substantial residences, the original portion of the dwelling was constructed by A.H. Marks and Brothers of Petersburg, using bricks from a large 18th-century building that formed part of the architectural complex at nearby Shirley, the seat of the James River branch of the Carter family. The original contract between the owner and builders provides important documentation for an extant 19th-century Virginia residence. In 1885 the ownership of Upper Shirley passed to Edmund Saunders, a leading Charles City County entrepreneur, whose family in 1890-91 enlarged the house to nearly twice its original size and made it one of the first homes in this rural county to feature the most modern turn-of-the-century conveniences. Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Pollard Alsop purchased the property in 1953, since which time they have undertaken a renovation of the house, including the addition of a north wing and a double-gallery porch on the river side.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Upper Shirley was originally part of the tract patented in the 17th century by Col. Edward Hill that became Shirley Hundred Plantation. This prominent plantation eventually descended to Hill Carter who, in ca. 1868-70 built the present house for his son, William Fitzhugh Carter. Upper Shirley lies up river and adjacent to Shirley proper, hence its name, "Upper" Shirley.

The bricks for the Upper Shirley house came from a large brick structure formerly believed to have been erected by Edward Hill, II ca. 1660 for his bride, Hannah Aston, but now regarded as a part of the 18th-century complex as indicated in recent archaeological excavations. This building stood close to the present 18th-century Shirley dwelling and appears in a mid-19th-century sketch drawn by Frederick Church. The excavations showed that the building was one of a pair. The building contract between Hill Carter and A.H. Marks and Brothers for Upper Shirley, one of the few such contracts extant for a 19th-century residence, called for "tear(ing) down the Old House, clean(ing) the bricks, and us(ing) them in this house." A notation dated 1847 on an 1820 map of Shirley indicates that Hill Carter by that time had set aside the tract of land for his son Fitzhugh on which he would build Upper Shirley for his son and new daughter-in-law, Betty Pannill of Baltimore. The house cost \$2,500, with improvements assessed in 1871 at \$1,200, indicating that the structure was completed by that date. It is believed that Fitzhugh Carter's cousin, Robert E. Lee, was among the first house guests at Upper Shirley. The building contract called for a house of 21 by 47 feet, two stories high

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #2)

Alsop, Mrs. Benjamin P. Jr. "Interesting Information Re Upper Shirley, Charles City, Va.," n.d., in VHLC archives.
 Church, Frederick. "Shirley" (a sketch ca. 1850) Virginia State Library, Richmond, Va.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 9 acres
 Quadrangle name Hopewell, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	18	300120	4135580	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes 9 acres comprised of the lawn surrounding the house and stretching west to the James River and the late 19th-century outbuildings scattered across the yard.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff
 organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date December 1981
 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 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
 title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date MAY 10 1982

For HCRS 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**

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

OMB NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 10/31/84

For NPS Use Only
received
date entered

UPPER SHIRLEY, CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VA
Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6, 7, 8

Page 1, 1, 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1981 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219 .

7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The kitchen, smokehouse, and icehouse are located on the outer edges of the yard.

The broad lawn is landscaped with flowering trees, shrubs, and shade trees. The present owners have terraced the lawn west of the house to create a sweeping vista of the river.

MPM

8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

with a basement, two porches, front and rear, and gable ends. Fitzhugh Carter made substantial improvements to the house ca. 1875-76, possibly adding at that time several of the dependencies. By 1881, however, Fitzhugh was advertising Upper Shirley for sale and within four years had sold the property to Edmund A. Saunders of Richmond.

According to Upper Shirley's present owners, Edmund A. Saunders had made a postwar fortune in dry goods and whiskey and purchased the house for his son Herbert Saunders and his son's bride, Rosalie Bell. Miss Bell was the daughter of the minister of Westover Church and lived at the Westover Glebe. Because tax records indicate that substantial additions were made to Upper Shirley ca. 1890-91, it can be assumed that it was then that the size of the house was doubled and the entrance moved from the south to the east side. The original center hall was carried over into the new plan, with the new center hall creating the present broad cross halls. The Saunderses continued to use the separate kitchen until 1942.

The house was sold by "Miss Rosalie," widow of Herbert Saunders in 1943. The house and grounds fell into great disrepair during the next decade, and it was not until its purchase in 1953 by Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Pollard Alsop that its rehabilitation was undertaken. Alterations included the removal of the recent kitchen from the basement, the addition of a north wing for a kitchen and utility rooms, and the addition of a double-gallery porch on the river side. This porch was salvaged from the soon-to-be-dismantled Warren House in Harrisonburg, also a late 19th-century dwelling. The columns, rails, and spindles are all hand carved.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

UPPER SHIRLEY, CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8, 9

Page 2, 1

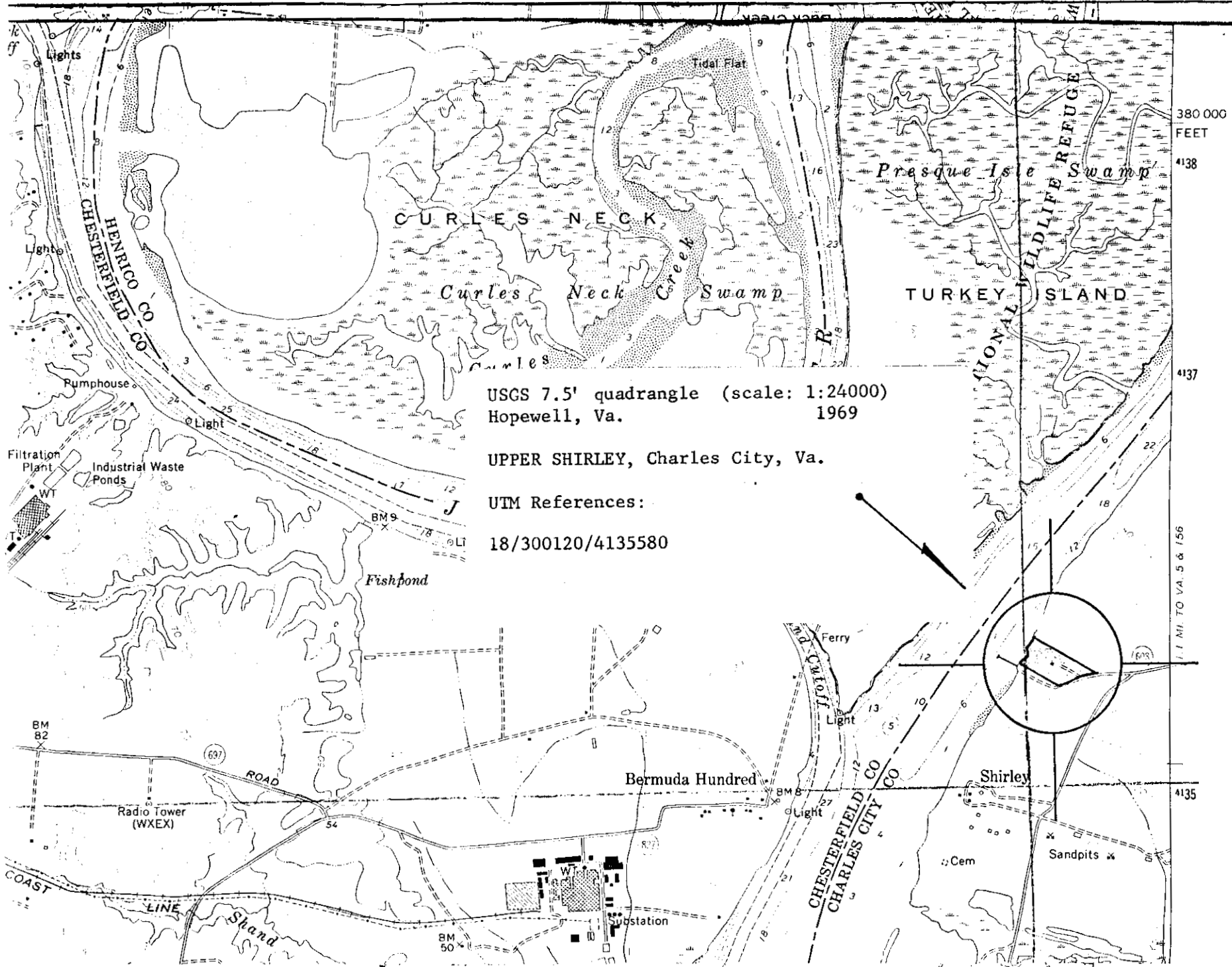
8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

Among the famous visitors to Upper Shirley was Mrs. Woodrow Wilson who at the age of 36 visited at Upper Shirley in 1956 and presented Mrs. Alsop with the iron grate in the front bedroom, which adorned her "S" Street house in Washington, DC. The noted actress Helen Hayes, a close friend of Mrs. Alsop's has frequently visited Upper Shirley. A photograph made of her for Josh Logan's production of "The Wisteria Tree," in which she starred, was a gift to Mrs. Alsop and hangs at Upper Shirley.

MIP

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Lynn, Catherine M. Shirley Plantation - A History. M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1976.
- Young, Joanne. Shirley Plantation, A Personal Adventure for Ten Generations. Charles City, Va.: Shirley Plantation, 1981.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale: 1:24000)
Hopewell, Va. 1969

UPPER SHIRLEY, Charles City, Va.

UTM References:
18/300120/4135580

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4137

1.1 MI. TO VA. 5 & 156

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