

VLR- 6/16/99 NRHP- 8/23/99

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 Oak Forest

other names/site number _____ DHR File No. 042-0055

2. Location

street & number 7400 Rural Point Road not for publication N/A
city or town Mechanicsville vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Hanover code 085 Zip 23116

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 statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 6/30/99
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register removed from the National Register
 See continuation sheet other (explain): _____
 determined eligible for the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet. _____
 determined not eligible for the National Register Date of Action _____

Signature of Keeper

**U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**Oak Forest
Hanover County, Virginia**

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 1 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 1 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 2 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>Single Dwelling</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>Single Dwelling</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance ca. 1828 - 1935

Significant Dates ca. 1828

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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

X State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 40

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 18	287000	415300	2 18	287800	415100
3 18	287900	414300	4 18	288800	414200

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Oak Forest
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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: Anne Cross and Ashley M. Neville

Organization _____ Date 12/23/98

street & number: 11311 Cedar Lane Road telephone 804-644-0656

city or town Glen Allen state VA zip code 23059

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 Robert L. Branner, Jr. and Katherine T. Branner

street & number 7400 Rural Point Road telephone 804-746-3838

city or town Mechanicsville state VA zip code 23116

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 Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Summary Description

Oak Forest, built about 1828, stands at the intersection of two historic roads in a copse of oak trees surrounded by open, cultivated fields. Its prominent location has made it a landmark in this area of Hanover County. Oak Forest, a Federal-style I-house, is a two-story, five-bay, frame dwelling with brick exterior-end chimneys and pent closets. Its somewhat plain exterior belies a well appointed interior with decoration on the mantels not frequently found in architecturally conservative Hanover County. Oak Forest has a high degree of integrity and retains both its original interior and exterior finishes. The only additions are a one-story rear ell and the front porch, both of which date to the first quarter of the twentieth century, and the more recent enclosure of the rear porch. The only early outbuilding that survives is a mid- to late-nineteenth century smokehouse which stands behind the house. A small, modern, frame tool shed is also located in the rear yard as well as an in-ground swimming pool. Both the house and smokehouse are contributing buildings. The tool shed is a non-contributing building and the swimming pool is a non-contributing structure.

Architectural Analysis

Oak Forest is prominently situated at the intersection of two historic roads, Rural Point Road and Georgetown Road, in the central part of Hanover County about five miles south of Hanover Courthouse. Open, cultivated fields surround the house which is shaded by oak trees. A mid- to late-nineteenth century smokehouse stands in the rear yard along with a modern frame tool shed and a swimming pool. Oak Forest encompasses forty acres of land; half is cultivated and half is in forest. It is one of several historic homes that are located in the vicinity. Other homes include Hickory Well, built just prior to or just after the Civil War, which stands across Rural Point Road from Oak Forest; Rural Plains, the mid-eighteenth century home of the Shelton family; and Totomoi, a ca. 1795 dwelling. Two Pollard family homes, Buckeye, one of the earliest extant frame dwellings in the county, and Williamsville, a Federal-style dwelling built about 1802, are located about four miles northeast of Oak Forest.

The house is a two-story, five-bay, frame dwelling sheathed with beaded weatherboards with a gable roof of standing-seam metal. Both the low brick foundation and the two exterior-end chimneys are laid in Flemish bond. Two pent closets flank the chimney on the east end of the house and there is one pent closet on the west end. Each of the pent closets has a four-pane window. The house

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windows are nine-over-nine double-hung sash on the first floor and six-over-nine on the second floor. Louvered shutters flank the facade windows. The entry features a double-leaf door with raised paneling topped by a four-pane transom. A late nineteenth-century photograph of the house shows that the front porch was missing at that time. The present one was built about 1903. It is a one-story, three-bay porch with chamfered posts that support the gable roof. The porch has a simple board railing. Also added about 1903, is the one story rear ell that houses the kitchen. A shed-roof rear porch has recently been enclosed.

The single-pile, central-passage plan house features an interior with Federal-style detailing more decorative than is found in most houses of this period in architecturally conservative Hanover County. The open-well, two-flight stair in the central passage has a plain, square, pegged newel, molded handrail, and balusters, rectangular in section, two per stair tread. The wall below the stairs features raised paneling. The square pegged newel is typical of many dwellings of this period in Hanover, however, the paneled wall is unusually nice. Decorative mantels are found in each of the two first floor rooms that are roughly the same in dimension. The parlor mantel has fluted pilasters and a five-part frieze with a band of fretwork with beading. An almost circular patera occupies the central frieze element with vertical ovals at each end. The mantel cornice features both punchwork and beading. The dining room mantel follows the same form with fluted pilasters and five-part frieze with fluting on the projecting frieze elements. The second floor mantels are simpler with plain pilasters and molded cornice. Chair rail, architrave trim for the windows and doors, and six-raised-panel doors are found throughout the house. All the floors in the house are pine and are original.

Oak Forest is one of the best examples of a frame, single-pile, central-passage plan dwellings, or I-house, with Federal-style detailing in Hanover County. The I-house plan was the predominant plan for dwellings built in Hanover County prior to the Civil War and the plan continued to be used by local builders into the twentieth century but on a smaller and less decorative scale. A total of sixty-six houses with this plan were identified by the 1990 architectural survey of Hanover County. The majority of these dwellings have few stylistic details, making Oak Forest all the more important in the architectural stock of the county.¹ Most Federal-style dwellings in Hanover feature plain mantels with decoration limited to fluting on the pilasters and few have chair rails throughout the house. The use of more elaborate motifs in this house indicates a degree of sophistication by the builder not generally found in conservative Hanover County. The house also has an exceptionally high degree of integrity for both the exterior and interior. The major interior change has been the insertion of a bathroom on the second floor of the center passage.

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The only outbuilding to survive is a one-story, one-bay frame smokehouse with plain weatherboard siding and a gable roof of standing-seam metal. The framing of the smokehouse features mortise and tenon joinery. Oak Forest would have required numerous other domestic dependencies such as a kitchen and possibly a dairy and slave quarters in addition to barns and other agricultural buildings. The potential exists at Oak Forest to recover data concerning these resources through archaeology. In addition to the contributing outbuilding, a small, frame, one-bay tool shed stands in the yard behind the smokehouse. A swimming pool is also located behind the house and is flanked on two sides by large boxwoods.

Statement of Significance

Oak Forest is architecturally significant as one of the best examples of a Federal-style, single-pile, central-passage plan dwelling or I-house in Hanover County. It is eligible under Criterion C as a property of local significance that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period. Specifically, Oak Forest exemplifies the Federal style in a house plan that was a favorite of many prosperous landowners in this region. While there are a number of I-houses in Hanover County, Oak Forest stands as one of the best representatives of the Federal style in a frame I-house. Although fairly plain on the exterior, the level of interior finish at Oak Forest is more decorative than most houses of this type in the county. Most I-houses in the county are relatively plain with little stylistic detailing. Oak Forest features fine Federal-style detailing on the mantels in the two major rooms while the rooms of lesser importance have plain mantels more typical of Hanover houses. Few changes have been made to the house and it retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Its prominent location at the crossroads of two historic roads in the county have made it an important visual landmark in the area.

Historical Background

Oak Forest was built about 1828 by Samuel and Catharine Pollard Overton.² This was a period of tremendous growth in Hanover County. The vast majority of the county's surviving domestic pre-Civil War architecture dates from the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Examples of substantial houses built in eastern Hanover County during this period include Selwyn, Avondale, Eastern View, White Plains, Laurel Meadow, Oak Knoll, the brick section of Old Church Tavern,

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and Dundee. Hanover County residents had recovered economically from the economic crisis that followed the War of 1812 and turned their attention towards investing in their own property. By the 1840s and 1850s, the building boom in Hanover slowed significantly with very few major residences built between those decades and the outbreak of the Civil War when most building ceased.³

A 1990 countywide architectural survey that documented over 400 buildings in the county demonstrated the conservative nature of architecture in Hanover. The use of traditional forms and details continued in Hanover well past the periods in which they were introduced and most dwellings evidenced few stylistic details.⁴ Of those that did, decorative features were kept to a minimum and usually limited to the interior. During the first decades of the nineteenth century in Hanover, interior decoration was generally limited to simple fluting on the mantel pilasters. For example, the Federal-style section of Selwyn has very plain mantels without patera or other decorative features. The Oak Knoll and Dundee mantels are typical of the period in Hanover with simple fluting on the pilasters. Stair brackets were frequently plain and a square newel, as found in Oak Forest, was also typical of Hanover houses of this period.

When Oak Forest was built about 1828, its nearest neighbor would have been the Tinsley plantation of Totomoi. Totomoi was built about 1795 and its level of ornamentation indicates that it was (and still is) one of the more important plantation houses in the county. About three miles to the east stands Rural Plains, a mid-eighteenth century brick dwelling which was the home of the Shelton family and survives today as the oldest brick house in the county. It would later receive an interior remodeling in the Greek Revival style, one of a handful of manifestations of that style in the county. Two Pollard family homes are located about four miles to the east near Haw's Shop. Buckeye, Catharine Overton's childhood home, was built by William Pollard in the mid-eighteenth century. It is a one-and-a-half story dwelling and is one of the best surviving examples of a Colonial-period frame house in Hanover. However, when Catherine's uncle built his house, Williamsville, about 1802, he employed fashionable Federal style detailing in his house. Thus the Federal style would have been intimately familiar to Catherine Overton well before it appeared in her house at Oak Forest.

Samuel Overton, the builder of Oak Forest, was born in 1800 and was the son of James Overton and the grandson of Colonel Samuel Overton and his wife Elizabeth. Colonel Overton commanded a company of volunteers raised in Hanover County in August 1775 in response to the defeat and death

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of the British General Edward Braddock. His company was the first to be raised in the colonies in the French and Indian War.⁵ The Overton family had received a land grant in 1681 for land in what was then New Kent County. That part of New Kent eventually became St. Martin's Parish in western Hanover and Louisa counties. During the eighteenth century, the Overton name was associated with property in western Hanover County, notably Oakland which later became the home of the Page family.

Samuel Overton of Oak Forest first appeared in Hanover County records in 1823 when he is listed in St. Paul's Parish (eastern Hanover) as owning a horse. In the 1820s, several Hanover folks took him to court for payment of debts, probably in anticipation of his inheritance.⁶ He also was involved in election irregularities in 1825 when he claimed he owned land so he could vote. The land may have belonged to the candidate instead.⁷ Overton's later prosperity was due, at least in part, to the largess of his uncle.

Samuel Overton inherited his wealth from his bachelor uncle, Samuel Overton, for whom he was possibly named. The uncle was one of Richmond's leading businessmen in the late eighteenth century and owned the Columbia Mills which later became the Haxall Mills. Much of Overton's wealth came from the annual rents of 2,000 bushels of corn a year from the mills.⁸ Overton, who lived most of his life in Hanover County, was living in Richmond in the 1790s but back in western Hanover by 1809 at his plantation Oakland.⁹ At his death in 1812, his principal heirs were two nephews; Samuel and William, sons of his brothers James and Richard, respectively. Samuel (the nephew) received 400 barrels of corn per year from the Columbia Mills.

The estate remained in the hands of the executors until 1825, the year before Samuel (the nephew) married Catherine Pollard and about three years before he built Oak Forest.¹⁰ The couple was given 172-1/4 acres of land on which they built their house by Catherine's father, Benjamin Pollard of Buckeye.¹¹ In 1820, Pollard had been charged with 193 3/4 acres of land (with no buildings) adjacent to the estate of Thomas Tinsley of Totomoi. The 1829 tax records show he transferred 172 1/4 acres to Samuel Overton and Overton as being charged \$1,507.18 for a new building that year on this land. The land was valued at \$1,875.¹²

Catherine Pollard's family was well known in Hanover County. Her grandfather, uncle, and brother, all named William Pollard, served as clerks of the court. Her father, Benjamin Pollard, inherited Buckeye and owned several tracts of land in the eastern and central part of Hanover including

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Buckeye and Cherry Grove. By 1853, Samuel and Catherine Overton had increased their Oak Forest holdings to 213 acres by purchasing the adjacent land of Henry Gentry. They sold the Gentry land in 1859 to Edward Shelton who is thought to have built Hickory Well which still stands across Rural Point Road from Oak Forest. The first use of the name Oak Forest appears in the 1860 land tax records.¹³

The Civil War came to Hanover's doorstep during the 1862 Peninsular Campaign and again in 1864 as Robert E. Lee and U.S. Grant faced off from the Wilderness to Petersburg. Due to its location on one of the major east/west roads through Hanover, troops undoubtedly passed by Oak Forest during both campaigns. It was also on the periphery of the Totopotomoy battlefield in 1864. Although no major encounters took place on Oak Forest land during the war, numerous Civil War artifacts have been found on its grounds over the years.

Samuel Overton died in 1867 and his trustee sold Oak Forest and 127 acres to James Garland Tinsley of nearby Totomoi. In 1873, Tinsley sold it to John Bell Bigger who held it for only two years before selling it to Mrs. Frances R. Vial. Mrs. Vial and her family lived here until 1907 when they sold the house and 114 acres to Sallie E. Mitterer. In 1914, the Mitterer sons inherited the property. They divided the land in 1935 and in 1956, A.J. Mitterer sold Oak Forest and forty acres to W.D. and Katherine T. Brumble.¹⁴ Today, Robert L. and Katherine T. Branner own Oak Forest.

End Notes

¹ Land and Community Associates [LCA], *Survey of Historic Resources, Hanover County, Virginia*, Prepared for Hanover County Planning Department, Hanover, Virginia, 1990, p. 17.

² Hanover County Land Tax Records [HCLT], 1829.

³ Land and Community Associates [LCA], *Survey of Historic Resources, Hanover County, Virginia, Phases I and II*, Prepared for Hanover County Planning Department, Hanover, Virginia, 1992.

⁴ LCA, p. 30.

⁵ George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), p. 166.

⁶ *Hanover Superior Court of Law and Chancery*, (Richmond: The Black Swan, 1987), p. 83.

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End Notes (Continued)

⁷ Benjamin Weisiger, III, *Burned County Data 1809-1848 As Found in the Contested Election Files*. (San Bernadino, Ca.: The Borgo Press, 1986), p. 12.

⁸ Mordecai, Samuel, *Richmond in By Gone Days*. (Richmond: Dietz Press,), p. 329.

⁹ Mutual Assurance Society, Policy No. 921, 1809. Microfilm, Reel 2, Vol.17, Library of Virginia.

¹¹ Hanover Will Book No. 5, Clerk's Office, Hanover County Circuit Court, Hanover, Va.

¹² HCLT, 1829.

¹³ HCLT, 1829

¹³ HCLT, 1860.

¹⁴ Hanover County Historical Society, *Old Homes of Hanover County*, (Hanover, Va.: Hanover County Historical Society, 1983), p. 36.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Bibliography

Anderson, W.P. *The Early Descendants of William Overton and Elizabeth Waters*. By the Author, 1938.

Hanover County Land Tax Records [HCLT]. Microfilm, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Hanover County Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1812. Microfilm, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Hanover County Will Books, Clerk's Office, Hanover County Circuit Court, Hanover, Virginia.

Hanover Superior Court of Law and Chancery. Richmond, Va.: The Black Swan, 1987.

Hanover County Historical Society. *Old Homes of Hanover County*, Hanover, Va.: Hanover County Historical Society, 1983.

Land and Community Associates. *Survey of Historic Resources, Hanover County, Virginia*. Prepared for Hanover County Planning Department, Hanover, Va. 1990.

Land and Community Associates. *Survey of Historic Resources, Hanover County, Virginia, Phases I and II*. Prepared for Hanover County Planning Department, Hanover, Va. 1992.

Mordecai, Samuel. *Virginia, Especially Richmond, in By Gone Days; With A Glance at the Present: Being the Reminences and Last Words of an Old Citizen*. 2nd edition. Richmond: West & Johnson, 1860.

Mutual Assurance Society. Insurance Policy No. 921, 1809. Microfilm, Reel 2, Vol. 17. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Pilcher, George William. *Samuel Davies*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971.

Weisiger, Benjamin, III. *Burned County Data, 1809-1848 as Found in the Virginia Contested Election Files*. San Bernadino, Ca.: The Borgo Press, 1986.

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UTM References (Continued)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
5 18	288800	414700	6 18	290000	414500
7 18	289000	409100	8 18	285800	410100

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses forty (40) acres and is all the land now associated with the house. The boundaries are the same as Hanover County GPIN 8717-52-1444 formerly tax parcel number No. 74-44 on the Hanover County GIS and tax parcel maps attached.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary for this nomination includes all of the land now associated with Oak Forest which totals forty (40) acres. This was part of the original 172 1/4 acres associated with Oak Forest since about 1828.

5559 III NW
(YELLOW TAVERN)

4174

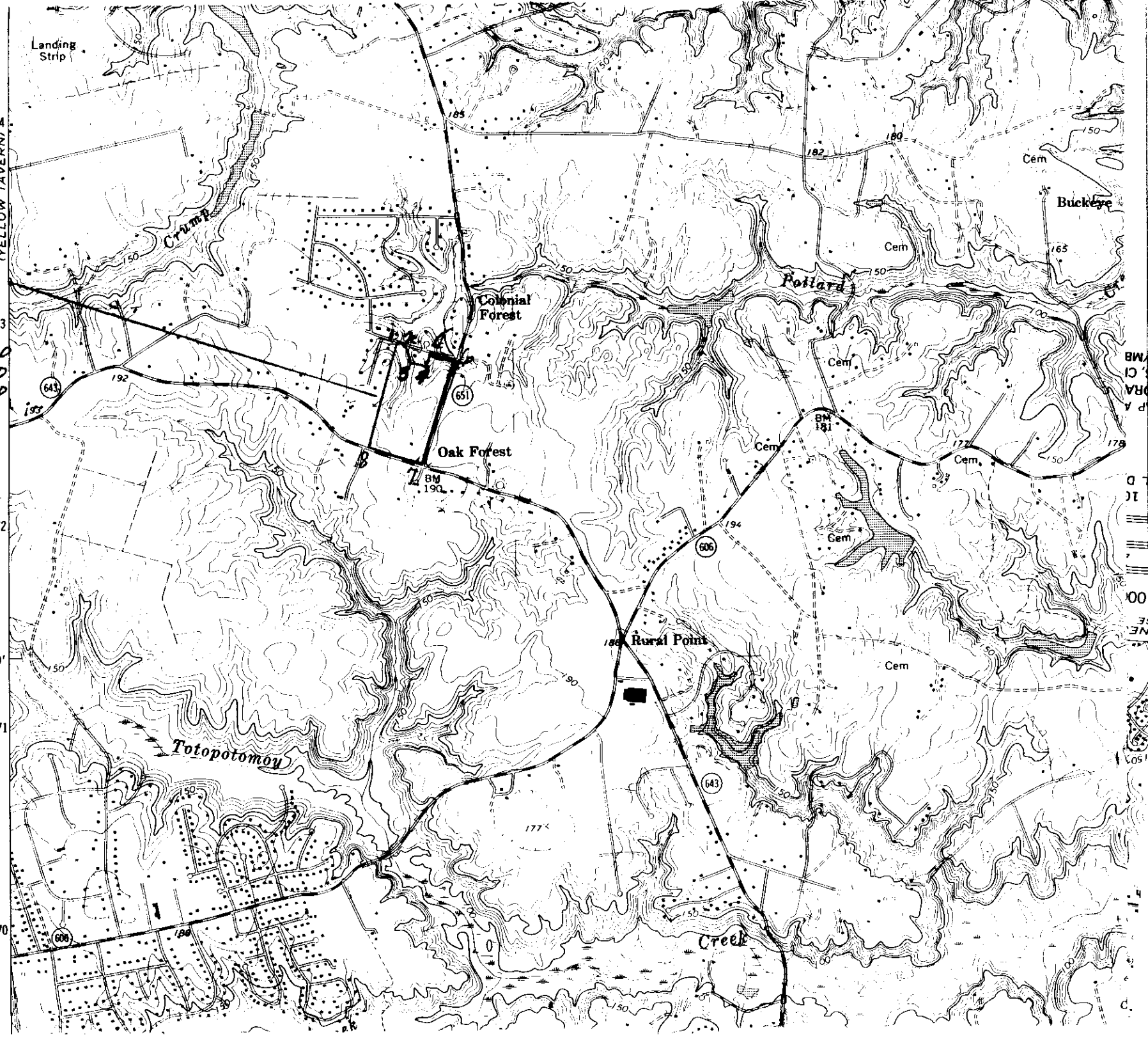
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OAK FOREST
HANOVER COUNTY
VIRGINIA
E. N
1 287000 415300
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3 287900 414300
4 288800 414200
5 288800 414700
6 290000 414500
7 289000 409100
8 285800 410100



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