



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Virginia	
COUNTY	
Lancaster	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

6. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
1957 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C. 11

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located at the end of a mile-long axial avenue, the Belle Isle residence is a two-story brick house with one-story wings. The three-bay middle and earliest portion of the house has walls laid in Flemish bond and features a beveled water table, a narrow belt course, and segmental window and door arches. The hipped roof is pierced by two tall interior end chimneys, and is surrounded at its base by the original modillion cornice. Although the wings were built some forty years after the center of the house, their architectural details match the earlier ones. Both fronts of the house were given one-story tuscan porticoes in the nineteenth century; however, the east one has been removed. On the interior the house has an irregular plan which has been altered in the wings. Except for the sash, all of the woodwork on the first floor dates from 1941, the original having been removed and installed in the Winterthur Museum at Wilmington, Delaware. On the second floor the simple dados, paneled chimney pieces, and window trim in the principal rooms are original.

On the east or land front of the house a forecourt has been created by the presence of two original one-story brick dependencies set perpendicularly to the facade of the house. Both dependencies feature clipped gable roofs. Stretched before the river front of the house are handsome gardens laid out on their original terraces. The head of a creek at the end of the gardens was once incorporated as a design element, but it has since silted up. Located elsewhere on the farm are an early overseer's house and a colonial style frame house designed by the late Thomas T. Waterman for the brother-in-law of the present owner of Belle Isle.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It is believed that the center or main portion of the Belle Isle residence was built prior to 1759 by William Bertrand, son of John Bertrand, a Huguenot who acquired the Belle Isle tract in 1692. In William Bertrand's will of 1759, the rooms mentioned conform to the plan of the center of the present house. Upon Bertrand's death, Belle Isle was inherited by his grandson Thomas Bertrand Griffin. The property was sold by the Griffin family in 1786 to Rawleigh William Downman. It is probable that Downman added the one-story wings to the house around 1790, and remodelled the parlor. The Downman family owned Belle Isle for several generations and made it a noted center of hospitality. In 1918, Belle Isle was acquired by the Somers family, who in 1922 stripped the first floor of the house of its fine paneled woodwork. The woodwork was later purchased by an installed in the Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. In 1940, Belle Isle was bought by the present owners, who commissioned the late Thomas T. Waterman to restore the house and design appropriate woodwork to replace that which had been removed. Beautifully restored and maintained, Belle Isle, with its residence, outbuildings, terraced gardens and axial avenue is an excellent example of a small but formal Tidewater plantation complex. The residence itself is a classic essay in Virginia Georgian architecture.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Christian, Frances Archer, and Susanne Williams Massie, eds. Homes and Gardens in Old Virginia. (Revised in 1962). Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1962.  
 Eubank, H. Ragland. Historic Northern Neck of Virginia. Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1934.  
 Letter from H. Lee Boatwright to Thomas T. Waterman, dated 1/29/47.  
 Waterman, Thomas Tileston. The Mansions of Virginia 1706-1776. New York: Bonanza Books, 1945.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES										
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	37°	47'	18"	76°	37'	10"									
NE	37°	47'	18"	76°	34'	44"									
SE	37°	46'	16"	76°	34'	44"									
SW	37°	46'	16"	76°	37'	10"									

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1,000 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE: January 20, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 Room 1116, Ninth Street Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman  
 Title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date 3/2/71

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

