



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

The Morven Park estate consists of a large, complex country house in a magnificent setting at the base of the southern end of the Catoctin Mountain range. The view of the mansion with its spacious park and fields before it, and the mountain rising abruptly behind, forms one of the most romantic vistas in Virginia. In addition to the house and park the estate has a notable boxwood garden and a fine complex of farm buildings, both installed during the occupancy of Westmoreland Davis.

The mansion has had a complex development, evolving to its present form through a series of alterations and enlargements. The exact sequence of these changes has not been fully documented, thus the house's evolution is somewhat conjectural. The beginning of the existing structure is thought to date from around 1780 with a simple native fieldstone house now incorporated in the northwest corner of the north wing. Though made inconspicuous by its stuccoed exterior, this structure is discernible because its axis is slightly shifted in alignment from the rest of the building.

In 1808 the property was acquired by Judge Thomas Swann who around 1830 erected the two-story center portion of the present house, as well as two flanking two-story dependencies. These dependencies may have been attached to the center house by passages, giving the house a five-part Palladian scheme, but this is not certain. Little is known of the appearance of Judge Swann's house other than it was built of brick. The interiors of all three sections have been removed in later alterations.

Around 1850, Judge Swann's son, Thomas Swann, Jr., engaged the Baltimore architectural firm of E. G. Lind and William T. Murdock to provide design for an extensive remodeling of the house. A handsome perspective rendering of the proposed remodeling dated 1851 survives in the possession of Thomas Swann's descendant, Mrs. Charles Gillet of Baltimore. The rendering shows that the architects proposed to encase the existing structure in an elaborate Italian Villa style complex highlighted by four towers (the principal one to be some five stories high). Further embellishments included fancy wooden porches, long casement windows with elaborate hood moldings, and various groups of statuary on the roofs. An enlarged center section was shown to be fronted by a massive tetrastyle Greek Doric pedimented portico. There is some question as to whether this portico was part of the Lind and Murdock scheme or an addition made during the lifetime of Thomas Swann, Sr. In any case, the house was remodeled essentially as planned except that only the bases of three towers were built and the statuary was omitted. One of the smaller towers was completed but later removed.

Further additions to the house were made during the occupancy of Thomas Swann's daughter and her husband, Dr. Shirley Carter. These included some service rooms and a large octagonal-ended music room attached to the rear of the center section. The house was again enlarged following its acquisition by Westmoreland Davis in 1903, but the exact nature of Davis's changes has not been definitely established. He may have been responsible for increasing the connections between the wings and the center section to two full stories, as they are shown as only one-story high on the Lind and Murdock rendering. Davis also carried out much redecoration on the interior.

(see continuation sheet #2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**3. 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	Equestrian _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of Virginia's most impressive country seats, Morven Park was the home of Westmoreland Davis, governor of Virginia from 1918 to 1922. The estate's focal point is a sprawling Greek Revival mansion dramatically set against the base of the southern end of the Catoctin Mountain range. The house is significant for its evolutionary development; it grew from a small late-eighteenth-century fieldstone cottage to its present appearance through a series of alterations extending over a one hundred-year period reflecting the tastes and status of its various owners. With the house's extensive facade and massive Doric portico, the mountain as a backdrop, and the sweeping fields in the foreground, few scenes in the Commonwealth provide so romantic a picture of Southern grandeur.

The earliest part of the house dates from around 1780 and was purchased along with 262 acres in 1808 by Judge Thomas Swann from Wilson Cary Selden of Exeter plantation. Judge Swann enlarged the house considerably and increased the size of the estate to 1400 acres. In 1840 Morven Park was inherited by Judge Swann's son, Thomas Swann, Jr., of Baltimore. Distinguished in public affairs, Thomas Swann served as mayor of Baltimore, governor of Maryland, a United States congressman, as well as president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Following his acquisition of Morven Park he commissioned the Baltimore architectural firm of Lind and Murdock to remodel the house into a grandiose combination of Greek Revival and Italian Villa styles. Except for the omission of three Italianate towers and some minor details, the scheme was carried out generally as planned.

Thomas Swann, Jr. died in 1883. His daughter, Mary Mercer Carter, wife of C. Shirley Carter, was the last member of the Swann family to live at Morven Park. She sold the property in 1898 to Mary Theresa Rush Howell who in turn deeded it to Elizabeth H. Scott. In 1903 Westmoreland Davis, a former Richmond native, purchased Morven Park from E. B. White.

Giving up his New York law practice when he acquired Morven Park, Davis set about to become a Virginia planter and make Morven Park a lavish Edwardian estate. He became a breeder of prize livestock and was active in agricultural affairs, serving as president of the Virginia State Farmers' Association and president of the Southern Planter. Mrs. Davis concentrated her efforts at Morven Park on establishing the extensive formal gardens, some of the most notable in the state. Together the Davises set a standard for hospitality and living on a grand scale that had had few equals in twentieth-century Virginia.

(see Continuation Sheet #3)

**OR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Loudoun County Deeds and Wills, Loudoun County Clerk's Office, Leesburg, Va.

Genealogy supplied by Mrs. Charles (Swann) Gillet of Baltimore, Maryland, recorded in Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives.

Sale, Marian Marsh, "Morven Park," Commonwealth, November, 1969.

Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc. Annual Report, 1966.

**19. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			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
NW	39° 09' 05"	77° 35' 09"						
NE	39° 09' 05"	77° 32' 47"						
SE	39° 07' 36"	77° 32' 47"						
SW	39° 07' 36"	77° 35' 09"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1200 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE:  
November 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
221 Governor Street

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: Junius R. Fishburne, Jr.  
Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Exec. Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: NOV 19 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) #1

STATE	
Virginia	
COUNTY	
Loudoun	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

1972 State

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia (code: 51)

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet) #2

STATE	
Virginia	
COUNTY	
Loudoun	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Morven Park has recently been extensively renovated and now serves as a museum complex. The house has been restored to the appearance of Westmoreland Davis's ownership and contains many of the Davis furnishings.

CCL

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet) #3

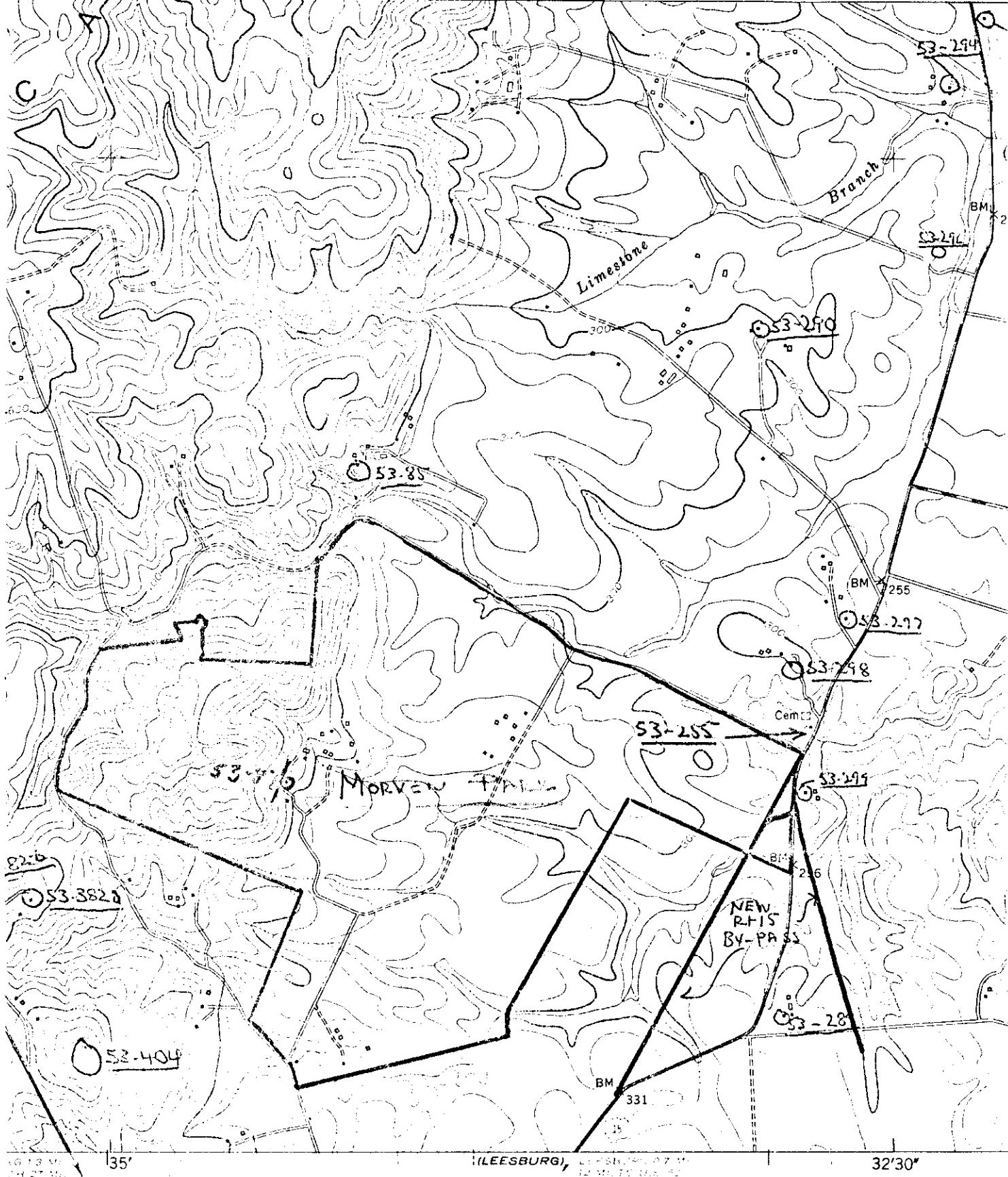
STATE	
Virginia	
COUNTY	
Loudoun	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

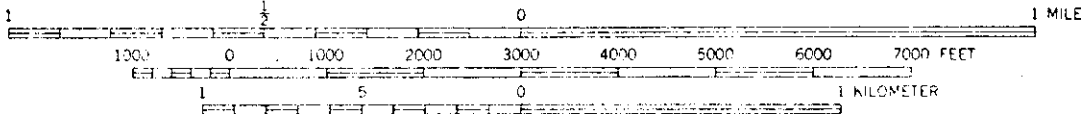
8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

In 1955 Mrs. Davis established the Westmoreland Davis Foundation, Incorporated to make Morven Park a cultural center. The house and gardens were renovated and opened to the public in 1967. The estate now has horticultural exhibits, nature trails, and an antique carriage collection, and is also the home of the Morven Park International Equestrian Institute.

CCL



SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

Water...  
2

QUAD



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
Waterford, Va.-Md. 1970

MORVEN PARK

	Latitude	Longitude
NW	39° 09' 05"	77° 35' 09"
NE	39° 09' 05"	77° 32' 47"
SE	39° 07' 36"	77° 32' 47"
SW	39° 07' 36"	77° 35' 09"

39° 09' 05"

39° 07' 36"