

VLR-4/15/86 NRHP-11/15/88

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN - 5 1987 date entered

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

1. Name

historic WHEATLAND (DHL File No. 66-13)

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number VA State Route 624 N/A not for publication

city, town Callao X vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county Northumberland code 133

3. Classification

Table with 4 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use. Includes checkboxes for building(s), private, occupied, etc.

4. Owner of Property

name Dwight L. Taylor and Catherine P. Taylor

street & number P. O. Box 1008

city, town Callao N/A vicinity of state Virginia Zip Code 22435

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Northumberland County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Heathsville state Virginia Zip Code 22435

6. Representation in Existing Surveys (See Continuation Sheet # 0 )

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

date 1958 X federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D.C.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			N/A

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Formerly a farm of several hundred acres, Wheatland is presently a sixteen-acre parcel located off VA Route 624 in northwestern Northumberland County. The Federal-style main dwelling, together with its symmetrically disposed kitchen and office dependencies and two smaller outbuildings, was erected by an unknown builder ca. 1848-50. Measuring 94 feet in length, the main house at Wheatland is a three-part weatherboard frame structure consisting of a 2½-story main block flanked by symmetrical 1½-story wings. The house is distinguished by its fine detailing, its original front and rear two-tier Doric porticos, and its unusual floor plan featuring a T-plan passage giving independent access to all main-floor rooms. Largely unaltered, and having only one small rear addition, the house epitomizes several design characteristics found in better Virginia farmhouses of the period: rigid bilateral symmetry, a conservative neoclassical design vocabulary, and a floor plan affording maximum privacy and freedom of movement. The nomination contains eight contributing and two noncontributing buildings.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Wheatland stands on a flat tract of land surrounded by cultivated fields on Cherry Point Neck, a peninsula formed by two tributaries of the Potomac River: the Yeocomoco and Coan rivers. The Potomac River flows about a mile and a quarter to the north, and Wrights Cove, a branch of the Coan River, lies within sight of the house a few hundred yards to the east. The house stands in a four-acre yard planted with mature hardwoods. Three species of boxwood arranged in formal rows stand on both the land and river fronts, and a quarter-mile-long lane of pin oaks and sycamores leads in a straight line from the county road to the front door of the main house.

The dwelling is an impressive three-part structure consisting of a 2½-story, five-bay, 54 X 24 - foot main block flanked by slightly inset 1½-story, two-bay wings with raised lofts. All three sections are covered by gable roofs without dormers, and rest on brick foundations about three feet high. There is no basement--no doubt due to the low elevation (about 15 feet above sea level) and proximity to water. The house is heated by four interior end chimneys serving ten fireplaces. Nearly identical two-tier tetrastyle porticos stand at both the land (west) and river (east) fronts. That on the west front employs the Greek Doric and that on the east the Roman Doric order.

Judged from a distance, the exterior of Wheatland (excepting its porticos) seems rather plain, but a close inspection reveals detailing of considerable refinement. The American-bond brick foundations, for example, are equipped with vent holes forming diamond patterns: one diamond beneath every window on the longitudinal facades. Weatherboards are plain rather than beaded, but corner boards are bold, with a beaded central molding, and the rakeboards curve gracefully as they meet the cornice. A highly unusual feature, a rounded wooden watertable, carries around the entire house. The cornice is well articulated with multiple elliptical moldings, and on the main block is embellished with two bands of delicate rope moldings. Windows are large, but of standard form, with six-over-six-light sashes flanked by original louvered shutters. Window enframements are extremely simple, consisting of a roll molding and plain wooden sills. The gable roof is presently sheathed

# 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- c1935	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** ca. 1848-50      **Builder/Architect** UNKNOWN

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the Coan River in Northumberland County, the main house at Wheatland was built ca. 1848-50 to serve as the centerpiece of a 1300-acre plantation. One of the more sophisticated houses of its period on the Northern Neck, Wheatland was erected by an unknown builder for Dr. <sup>Wm.</sup> H. Harding, a young physician, planter and delegate to the General Assembly. Wheatland is notable for its intact group of four original, symmetrically arranged dependencies (a matching office and kitchen and two smaller matching yard buildings), and for its handsome landscaped setting, which includes an axial drive flanked by majestic oaks. The focal point of this composition is the large frame dwelling distinguished by its three-part composition and front and rear two-tier Doric porticos. Virtually unaltered, the house features refined Federal- and Greek Revival-style detailing, and an unusual T-shaped floor plan. The house is important to the study of vernacular architecture because of its eclectic mix of conservative and progressive stylistic elements, as well as its close relationship to at least two other notable Northumberland County farmhouses, both erected by Harding kinsmen and designed by the same builder.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The tract comprising Wheatland plantation was assembled by Dr. William H. Harding (1816-56) in the late 1840s. The main house and dependencies were constructed for him under the supervision of an unknown master builder between 1848 and 1850.<sup>1</sup> This building campaign is reflected in the 1850 Northumberland Land Tax Book's reassessment list, which shows the 300-acre Wheatland parcel at Cherry Point valued at \$6,000, including \$3,000 worth of new buildings.<sup>2</sup> A general reassessment in 1857, perhaps taken after additional farm buildings had been erected, brought the value of buildings on the property to \$5,000. This represented one of the largest assessments of any plantation complex in the county, perhaps second only to that of Dr. Harding's uncle William Harding of Heathsville, whose brick mansion, farm buildings and subsidiary dwellings on the 700-acre Springfield tract were valued at \$7,000 that same year.<sup>3</sup>

Born in 1816, William H. Harding was the son of Thomas Everett Harding (1795-1830) of Edge Hill, a major landowner in the county. Harding traced his lineage to the immigrant Thomas Harding, who settled on this same neck of land about 1650. By the early 19th century, the Harding family was perhaps the wealthiest and most influential in the county. Several impressive antebellum Harding family plantation houses still stand in Northumberland, including Springfield at Heathsville, Edge Hill near Wicomico Church, and several farmhouses in the Balls Neck area, including Cloverdale and Gascony.

William H. Harding attended the University of Virginia in 1836, but it is uncertain whether he obtained a degree there. Between 1837 and 1838 he studied in Philadelphia at

## 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation sheet # // )

Chenoweth, Ann. "Wheatland Farm, A Place of Distinction," Northern Neck Quarterly, (Summer 1977): pp. 30-33.

(NOTE: published by J.R.K. Corp., Irvington, Va.)

"Conway and Harding Families," 3 volumes of handwritten notebooks; genealogical Notes, accession number 27564, Archives Branch, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Va.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 12 acres

Quadrangle name Kinsale, VA and Lottsburg, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	3	6	7	3	5	0	4	2	0	6	7	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

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Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

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Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

1	8	3	6	6	9	3	0	4	2	0	6	8	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

1	8	3	6	7	2	4	0	4	2	0	6	7	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet 11

### 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 Division of Historic Landmarks Staff

organization Division of Historic Landmarks date February, 1986

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3143

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

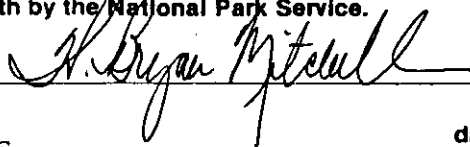
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
title Division of Historic Landmarks

date December 30, 1986

### For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

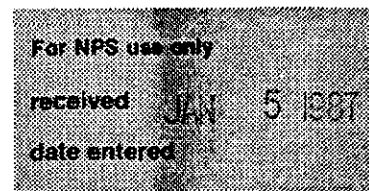
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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National Park Service**

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis (con't.)

with standing-seam metal, though originally it was covered with wooden shingles. The brick chimney stacks are remarkable in that they rise precisely at the ridge; this despite the fact the fireplaces they serve are positioned several feet off the building's longitudinal axis.

The simplicity of the exterior serves to set off the finely-proportioned two-tier single-bay porticos. With the exception of the railings and columns, these porches are identical. Each rests on brick foundations with arched openings on either side, and is approached by a set of five wooden steps without railings. The west, or land-front portico, has hollow columns shaped in the newly-fashionable Greek Revival style, while those on the east or river front (hollow on the first floor and solid wood above) follow the more traditional Roman Doric order popular in the Federal period. This difference in style illustrates both the eclecticism of antebellum Virginia builders and the ambivalence of their clients, who reached for the stylishly new with one hand while grasping the comfortably familiar with the other.

Railings on both tiers of the more traditional east portico are entirely of wood, forming a Roman lattice pattern of a type popularized two or three decades earlier. In contrast, those on the west portico, of wood and cast iron, are as up-to-date as any in Richmond or Baltimore. On both tiers, the delicate Rococco-inspired iron balusters are fitted into a broad wooden lower rail and a molded upper handrail. Both east and west porticos are equipped with built-in benches on either side of the door. Original to the house, these benches have supports with decorative scroll-sawn profiles.

The land-front portico at Wheatland displays an interesting amalgam of academic and nonacademic features. The shafts of the Doric columns are finely proportioned, and boast a hypotrachelium just below the capital. The bases, however, are of the Roman Doric order rather than the Greek, and those on the lower tier lack a plinth, while those on the upper tier rest on an unorthodox double set of square plinths. The entablature below the pediment is decorated with rudimentary triglyphs formed of applied rectangular blocks with four flutes each. This entablature, moreover, is not integrated with the house as a whole; it stops at the sides of the porch rather than continuing beneath the eaves of the main block. The portico is capped by a pedimented roof featuring a flush-board tympanum and cornices embellished by rope moldings.

The house is entered at both land and river fronts through double-leaf four-panel doors surmounted by an original transom of colored glass. The glass panels--clear, red and blue at the front, and clear, red and green at the rear--are divided by delicate metal tracery bars terminating in palmettes and rosettes. A wooden frieze below the transom carries a band of guilloche. The upper-story door at the front of the house is identical to those on the lower story, having a similar traceried transom. In contrast, a window rather than door is centered on the river portico at second-story level to admit light to the upstairs passage. Access to the porch here is through an eight-panel door located off center, to the south of the window.

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis (con't.)

A third exterior door opens at the rear of the south wing onto a simple stoop having a wooden railing of Italianate design. This entry, which provides independent access to the south wing and to the detached office dependency at the rear of the house, is sheltered by a hood supported by large curved, scroll-sawn brackets. Originally, a counterpart to this exterior doorway led from the east facade of the north wing, containing the dining room, to the detached kitchen.

The interior of the house is characterized by refined and understated detailing in the Greek and Federal styles. At least four different kinds of door casings are used in the house, both implying a hierarchy of room use, and lending visual variety to the rooms. The central passage and south parlor, the two most highly decorated rooms in the house, have heavily-molded raised-panel dados with pedestal caps. Door and window casings in these rooms have conventional symmetrical moldings with bullseye corner blocks. The turned corner blocks are unusual, however, in being deeply undercut, producing a sculptural effect.

In contrast, the other main-floor rooms lack a dado. (In the rear passage each window is accented by a paneled bib.) While the symmetrically-molded door trim in the two north rooms is identical to that in the passage, in the south wing it takes a different shape, having an indented stepped profile. In the upstairs passage, door and window casings match those in the downstairs passage, while openings in the bedchambers are finished with Federal-style architrave trim. A different, simpler form of architrave trim is used on the third story.

Hierarchy of room use is also reflected in the varying decoration of the mantels. While all the mantels on the main floor are of similar general form, having Doric colonettes supporting a frieze, end blocks and heavily-molded shelf, that in the south parlor is the most elaborate. This mantel has a central tablet and end blocks embellished with raised diamond-shaped panels. In contrast, each mantel in the two wings has a frieze decorated with a plain horizontal band of moldings, while that in the north parlor has a frieze articulated by plain panels.

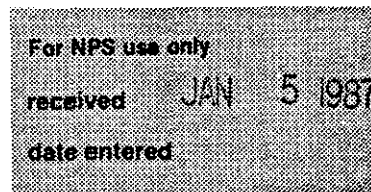
The stair passage and south parlor, the two most highly decorated rooms in the house, are embellished with plaster ceiling medallions. That in the passage is smaller and somewhat simpler, having a burst of broad-leaf and papyrus-stalk motifs enclosed within a ring of concentric moldings. That in the south parlor has a burst of alternating feather and palmette motifs surrounded by an outer ring of acanthus leaves. Closely similar to the ceiling medallions at Springfield, near Heathsville, they were probably modeled after plates in Asher Benjamin's Practice of Architecture (1833).

The main stair, which is contained wholly within the front passage and rises two stories, is one of the handsomest in the county. Of open string form with paneled spandrel and applied wave-form tread brackets, it curves at the second-floor landing. Here the railing

(See Continuation Sheet # 3 )

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis (con't.)

wraps around the open well, terminating against the north wall of the upstairs passage. A second stair continues to the third floor from the front of this passage, beside the door to the west portico. Although the stair breaks at second-floor level, detailing is the same throughout. The railing is supported by tapering circular-section balusters, two to a tread and painted white. The mahogany handrails, oval in section and varnished, are ramped and eased at each landing. Newel posts are identical throughout, taking the form of colonettes with bases extending below the stringer and terminating in turned knobs. At the base of the stair, the railing flares outward into a simple but elegant scroll.

A second stair ascends from the dining room in the north wing to the bedchamber above. "Hidden" in the three-foot chimney space between interior and exterior walls, it is closed off by a four-panel door in the dining room. This enclosed winder stair originally provided the only access to the chamber above, perhaps to ensure privacy. In the early 20th century, however, a separate passage was cut from the first-floor landing, obviating the need for the north stair.

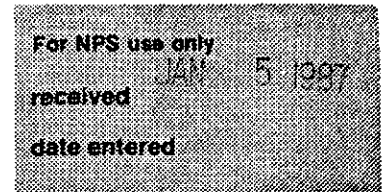
The interior of the house has suffered very few changes. It retains its original plaster walls and random-width heart-pine flooring. Originally the rooms, proportioned with 10½-foot-high ceilings, probably lacked cornices; the present wooden Colonial-style cornices date to the mid-20th century. Another recent embellishment is the false-panel dado in the dining room and along the main stair. This consists of a painted field of composition board to which are nailed molded strips loosely resembling the 19th-century paneling in the passage and south parlor.

The overall exterior form of the house, happily, remains nearly unchanged. The only addition is an unobtrusive late 19th- or early 20th-century kitchen wing. A one-story, two-room-plan frame structure containing the present kitchen, it leads off the dining room to the east.

Probably the most interesting aspect of Wheatland is its sophisticated floor plan. Its distinguishing feature is the T-plan passage, consisting of a 13½-foot-wide central stair hall connecting at the rear to a five-foot-wide cross passage running the length of the main block. Although a number of Virginia houses of the period--including Tallwood and Estouteville in Albemarle County and Oatlands in Loudoun County--have T-plan passages, those contain double sets of stairs in the cross of the T. Wheatland, in contrast, has an unobstructed 54-foot-long rear passage that serves solely to provide independent access to the wings. Unlike such houses as Tallwood, there are no direct connections between any of the rooms on the main floor; rather, all are approached from a passage. Clearly, Wheatland's original owner placed a premium on privacy. This conclusion is reinforced by the existence of the separate enclosed stair leading from the dining room to the bedchamber of the north wing. Originally there was no access to this room from any other upstairs room. In contrast, freedom of ingress and egress was provided by exterior doors in either wing. On the north side, a door led from the dining room to the detached kitchen, and on the south side from the library to the office dependency.

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis (con't.)

Another interesting, though minor feature of the plan is the presence of closets in all rooms. Since the house is equipped with interior end chimneys, the closets fit neatly in the space beside each chimney. The dining room closet, or pantry, is distinguished from others in the house by its built-in shelves and four-over-four-light exterior window.

Tripartite symmetry is another salient feature of the house and grounds at Wheatland. Disregarding the main stair, which rises at one side of the front passage, the floor plan is perfectly symmetrical, with the main passage its central element. The house is also symmetrical on the exterior, having matching wings and similarly proportioned front and rear porticos. This symmetry is carried to the yard as well, with its geometric net of brick walkways leading to identical dependencies, creating another three-part composition. The deliberate nature of this symmetry is perhaps best illustrated by the design of the chimneys in the main block, whose fireplace openings are centered in their respective rooms, but--because the rear passage makes the rooms off-center in relation to the unit as a whole--would not normally protrude at the ridge of the house. In order to create a symmetrical roof line, the mason jogged the upper stacks about three feet east so they would protrude at the center of the ridge. (One of these skewed chimney stacks is visible in the attic of the south wing.)

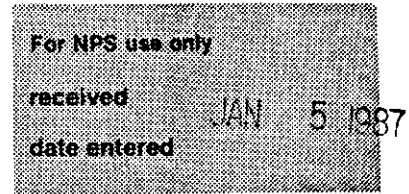
One of the most interesting features of Wheatland is the plan of the yard and the relation among the five original buildings: the main house and four symmetrically disposed dependencies. Forty feet from either end of the main house, and slightly to the rear, or east of it, stand two matching buildings, a kitchen and an office. These are one-story, three-bay frame structures with a gable roof and single interior end chimney. Both have one-room plans and measure approximately 20½ X 18½ feet. Although the interiors of both were remodeled in the 1940s, their exteriors remain basically unchanged. Halfway between each dependency and the main house, and set back about forty-nine feet east toward the river, stand identical yard buildings. Their original functions are not known, but they were probably used for storage. Both are single-bay frame structures measuring about 14½ X 12½ feet, and neither is equipped with a chimney.

A series of original, symmetrical brick walkways link these four dependencies with the main house. At the west or land front, a brick walkway extends parallel with the dwelling for a distance of about 195 feet. This walk terminates opposite the middle of either main dependency, where individual walks extend at right angles to the front doors, respectively, of the kitchen (to the north) and the office (to the south). An identical brick walkway links the three buildings on the east or river side of the house. In addition, separate walks lead off the main east axial walkway at a 45-degree angle toward either storage building. Part of this river-side walk was destroyed when the rear kitchen wing was added to the house in the late 19th or early 20th century, but the majority of it remains intact. Intersecting at right angles with this east axial walk is a wide walk leading from the portico toward the river. This walk, whose bricks were pulled up in the early part of this century, led an undetermined distance toward the river and was bordered by clipped boxwood shrubs. The counterpart to this walk on the land or west side of the house is a shorter walk (now of slate rather than brick) leading from the front portico to the circular turnaround where passengers alighted from horses or vehicles. This turnaround defines a plot of lawn about fifty feet in diameter with a group of large box bushes in



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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis (con't.)

the middle. From the main-floor level of the front portico, a clear view can be had across this circle and down the handsome tree-lined drive toward the public road a quarter-mile distant.

Besides the five original buildings described above, the nomination includes five additional ones located on the north side of the house in or near the barn lot. Contributing buildings include a late 19th- or early 20th-century frame barn, a one-story frame tenant or farm-manager's house, and an early 20th-century gable-roofed frame smokehouse. The two noncontributing buildings are a dilapidated 20th-century frame shed standing next to the smokehouse, and a 1½-story frame Colonial-style garage-cum-apartment probably built in the 1940s.

In summary, the main house at Wheatland is architecturally significant both because of its well articulated massing and floor plan, and because of its refined, if often unacademic, detailing. The domestic complex as a whole is important because it comprises a rare collection of symmetrically-arranged dependencies and exhibits a carefully planned geometric landscape design. Enhanced by its close parallels with Cloverdale plantation, Wheatland illustrates the interplay of conservative and progressive forces characterizing the domestic architecture of the Northern Neck in the late antebellum era.

J M O

INVENTORY

Contributing

Main Dwelling: ca. 1848-50; frame; brick foundations; symmetrical 3-part composition with 2½-story, 5-bay main block flanked by matching 1½-story, 2-bay wings; gable roofs; modified central-passage plan with rear cross-passage; small rear kitchen wing added late 19th/early 20th century.

Kitchen: ca. 1848-50; frame; masonry foundations; symmetrical 3-bay front; gable roof; one-room plan. North dependency to main house.

Office: ca. 1848-50; frame; masonry foundation; symmetrical 3-bay front; gable roof; one-room plan. South dependency to main house.

North Yard House: ca. 1848-50; frame; masonry foundations; 1-bay front; gable roof; one-room plan.

South Yard House: ca. 1848-50; frame; masonry foundations; 1-bay front; gable roof; one-room plan.

Barn: late 19th/early 20th century; frame; asymmetrical 3-bay front; gable roof; modern south addition.

Tenant house: ca. 1920-35; frame 3-bay front; gable roof; 2-room-plan main unit with central chimney; rear leanto.

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Smokehouse: early 20th century; frame; 1-bay front; gable roof; one-room plan.

Noncontributing

Garage: ca. 1940s; frame; 3-bay front; gable roof with 2 dormers per slope; original upstairs apartment.

Farm shed: ca. 1930-50 frame; 2-bay front; shed roof. Dilapidated.

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Division of Historic Landmarks  
1969, State  
Division of Historic Landmarks  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine, receiving the degree of Doctor of Medicine there in 1938. Presumably Harding returned soon afterwards to Northumberland to practice medicine. That same year he married Lavalia Coles, the neice of Col. Edward Coles of Northumberland County. Lavalia died in 1840, and in 1841<sup>5</sup> Harding married Ann Hamilton George (1820-1898), with whom he had five children, all sons.

Harding and his bride apparently lived at Edge Hill, which he had inherited from his father, until Wheatland was constructed. (According to one source, he built the present large 2½-story frame house at Edge Hill, but architectural evidence suggests it may have been built as late as the 1850s by a subsequent owner.) By 1850 William Harding had moved his family to the new house at Cherry Point. According to tradition, this farm was known as Level Green originally, but was renamed Wheatland after a bumper wheat crop filled the family's coffers.<sup>6</sup>

Harding occupied his new house for only five or six years. He died in Richmond in January 1856 while representing Northumberland as a delegate during a session of the state legislature.<sup>7</sup> Land tax books, personal property tax books and a plantation inventory taken in December 1857 show that Harding was one of the wealthiest men in the county. Clearly the large size and sophisticated finish of the Wheatland mansion was consonant with Harding's status as an entrepreneur, political leader and man of learning.

On his death at age forty, Harding owned 1360 acres, including the 292-acre Wheatland<sup>8</sup> tract. The 1857 inventory shows he owned eighty slaves valued at a total of \$41,725. Personal property, including livestock, farm implements and household and kitchen furnishings totaled \$3,975.

Furnishings in the main house in 1857 were valued at about \$730, a large sum for the period. Furniture in the "entry" (i.e. passage) and sitting rooms included "2 french sofas, \$25.00; 1 dozen chairs, \$20.00; 2 marble slabs, \$20.00; 2 large [looking] glasses, \$15.00; mantel ornaments, \$8.00; 2 spittoons, .75¢; 1 carpet and rug, \$25.00; [a] view of Baltimore, \$2.00; 2 window curtains, \$8.00; 1 settee, \$5.00; [and] 1 coat rack, \$2.50."<sup>9</sup> An item of special interest is the "library" (i.e., book collection) valued at \$50.00. Although the inventory does not list the contents of the house specifically by room, it is nonetheless clear that the appraisers began in the dining room, at the north end of the house, and worked their way south. Apparently the two rooms flanking the main passage both served exclusively as sitting rooms, since neither contained a bed. The large room occupying the south wing was evidently the library, being equipped with a center table, candlestand, two rocking chairs, two spittoons, a stove, a carpet and rug, and several mantel ornaments. It is logical that the library was located in this south end room, which had its own exterior access to the back yard, and which stood closest to the detached office.

Perhaps the most interesting document relating to Wheatland during the Harding tenure is a manuscript in Dr. Harding's handwriting comparing the cost of builder's fees and materials for "my house" (i.e., Wheatland) with that of Cloverdale, the home of his uncle John

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Hopkins Harding, which still stands in eastern Northumberland on a branch of the Chesapeake Bay. The document is not dated, but it must have been written ca. 1848-49 when the two houses were being constructed (almost certainly under the direction of the same master builder). The partially torn and missing pages of the manuscript list at least twenty-six items, together with the cost differential of each. These include "skylights," a "Fancy Cornice," "Corner boards," "Shelving in Closures," "8 Panel Doors," etc.<sup>10</sup>

This comparison helps confirm the close relationship between the two houses. According to the land tax books, Cloverdale was erected in 1848-49, and thus was probably begun about a year earlier than Wheatland. Some writers, erroneously supposing Cloverdale was built in 1835, have asserted that Wheatland was modeled after Cloverdale.<sup>11</sup> While it is true that Cloverdale was begun earlier than Wheatland, the two houses may in fact have been under construction at the same time, and similarities between the two may be the product of mutual influence.

Their exteriors are so similar that Wheatland and Cloverdale (aka Little Wheatland) could be mistaken for one another at quick glance. Both are frame, three-part houses with similar two-story Greek Doric front porticos. The only noticeable exterior difference between the two buildings is the raised attics of Wheatland's wings, and the different railings of the front porticos. Wheatland is three feet longer than Cloverdale, and includes a rear cross-passage, whereas Cloverdale has a standard central-passage-plan main block. The interior detailing of the two houses is in many cases identical.<sup>12</sup>

Architectural evidence suggests that the same unknown builder who worked at Wheatland and Cloverdale also remodeled and enlarged nearby Springfield around 1850. Erected in 1828-30 and located about six miles from Wheatland near the county seat of Heathsville, Springfield belonged to Captain William Harding, brother of Cloverdale's owner and uncle of William H. Harding of Wheatland. Improvements to Springfield included the addition of matching 1-story, brick wings to the 2½-story main block, and the erection or remodeling of the two-tier front portico in the same Greek Doric style as that employed at Wheatland and Cloverdale. In remodeling the interior of the original block, the builder gave Springfield a stair, plaster ceiling medallions and mantels closely similar to and in some cases identical to those at Wheatland.

The close relationships, both architectural and historical, among Cloverdale, Wheatland and Springfield enhances the importance of Wheatland as an example of the antebellum Virginia builder's art. Superior in some respects to both Cloverdale and Springfield, Wheatland could, with further research, figure as the centerpiece in a case study of the reciprocal relationship among Northumberland County plantation houses and between vernacular and academic architectural forms in the Northern Neck.

After William H. Harding's death in 1856, Wheatland passed to his widow Ann Hamilton George Harding, who lived there until her death in 1898. Two years later her son Edward Coles Harding acquired the estate, selling it in 1916 for \$15,000 to two New York City men, A. Rogers Lee and Abbott B. Rhett. The property, then comprising 533 acres, passed

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to other hands in 1931, and four years later was acquired by John Bacon Jeffress, also of New York City. It was probably Jeffress, who, during his eighteen-year tenure, made several minor alterations to the house, including the addition of bathrooms and the cutting of a direct passage from the main-stair landing to the upstairs bedroom in the north wing.

Between 1963 and 1972, Wheatland passed through the hands of three different owners. In 1979 the current residents, Mr. and Mrs. Dwight L. Taylor, formerly of Richmond, purchased the house together with sixteen acres. The Taylors, like most previous owners, have carefully maintained the house, making no significant alterations to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional oral and written accounts based on unknown sources state that the house was built in 1840 and the wings added in 1848. Both the documentary and architectural evidence disproves this assertion. The land tax books show that there were no substantial buildings on the property before William H. Harding assembled the several tracts to form Wheatland. Since he purchased the Wheatland tract in 1847 (NC Deed Book A, pp. 79-80) and since his son Edward Coles Harding stated that his father built the Wheatland dwelling house, it could not have been erected before 1848-49. This is proved by the 1850 NC Land Tax Book, which shows a jump in valuation for buildings from zero to \$3,000 on the 300-acre Wheatland parcel.

Architectural evidence in the attic of the south wing shows that the end walls of the main block abutting that wing were never finished off or clad with weatherboards; thus both main block and wings were clearly designed and built as a unit. Moreover, the brickwork and interior and exterior detailing of both wings and the main block match precisely. The single-building-campaign theory is further enhanced by the presence of the rear passage, which was clearly designed to provide access to the wings.

<sup>2</sup> The tract on which the house stands was originally a 300-acre parcel purchased by W. H. Harding from Cyrus Harding for \$5,000 in 1847. This tract adjoined a farm called Bogesses that Harding had recently purchased from William Harding of Springfield. NC Deed Book A, pp. 79-80). This original tract is more or less coterminous with the "widow's dower" tract of 254 acres delineated in the plat accompanying the 1857 partition of Harding's estate.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Waring writes that "William (Harding)...amassed probably the largest fortune for that day in the Northern Neck." Hardings of Northumberland County and Their Related Families (Wicomoco Church, VA, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> These and other Harding houses are describing in Waring (op. cit.). La Grange, another large antebellum Harding house on Balls Neck, stood until about ten years ago.

<sup>5</sup> Waring, pp. 31-40; 129. One son, William Hopkins Harding (1848-1884), established himself at Texas, a several-hundred acre tract just west of Wheatland and formerly owned by Dr. Harding. The large mid-19th-century frame house at Texas still stands.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Endnotes (con't.)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 132. Neither the name Level Green nor the name Wheatland appears in the 1847 deed to the property or in subsequent land tax books. The tax books refer to the house tract simply as "low [land] on Cherry Point." The first deed mentioning the name "Wheatland" is the 1916 conveyance from Edward Coles Harding to A. Rogers Lee and Abbott B. Rhett (NC Deed Book 9, p. 215).

<sup>7</sup>On January 14, 1856, ten days after Dr. Harding's death, the Northumberland County Court passed a resolution praising him as a "worthy and efficient member" of the court. This resolution, which was ordered to be printed in the Richmond Whig and the Richmond Enquirer, expressed the court's sympathies to his family, recognizing that it was "particularly painful to sicken and die away from his family and friends and wife..." (NC Order Book, 1852-61, pp. 211-212). On February 2 of that year, the General Assembly passed an act for defraying the cost of Harding's funeral (\$194.75) and the cost of conveying his remains to his residence in Northumberland. (Acts of Assembly. 1855-56, p. 284).

<sup>8</sup>NC Estate Book D, p. 260. Of the eighty negro slaves, 26 were men, 18 boys, 12 girls, 15 women and 9 young children. The 1856 NC Personal Property Tax Book credits Harding with 52 slaves over the age of 16, and 62 above the age of 12; their total assessed value was \$20,000.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>10</sup>"Harding of Cherry Point," MSS#3, Item #28, Ball Library and Museum, (Northumberland Co. Historical Society), Heathsville, VA. The actual cost of each item is not given, but rather the cost differential. For a photocopy of the original document, together with a typed transcription by J. O'Dell, see file no. 66-13, entitled "Wheatland," archives of Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks, Richmond, Va.

<sup>11</sup>Waring, p. 132, and David Jett, "A Shifting Symbol: Cloverdale and the Greek Revival Style in the Northern Neck of Virginia." The Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society, Vol. 22 (1985), p. 13. The 1850 NC Land Tax Book shows that the value of buildings on the 300-acre Cloverdale tract rose that year from zero to \$2,000. By 1858 buildings on the property were worth \$4,000.

<sup>12</sup>Jett, pp. 13-18; phone interview with David Jett, March 3, 1986, Hampton, Va.; letter to J. O'Dell from Jett, March 4, 1986, accompanied by thirty-eight color transparencies taken by Jett in March 1985.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (con't.)

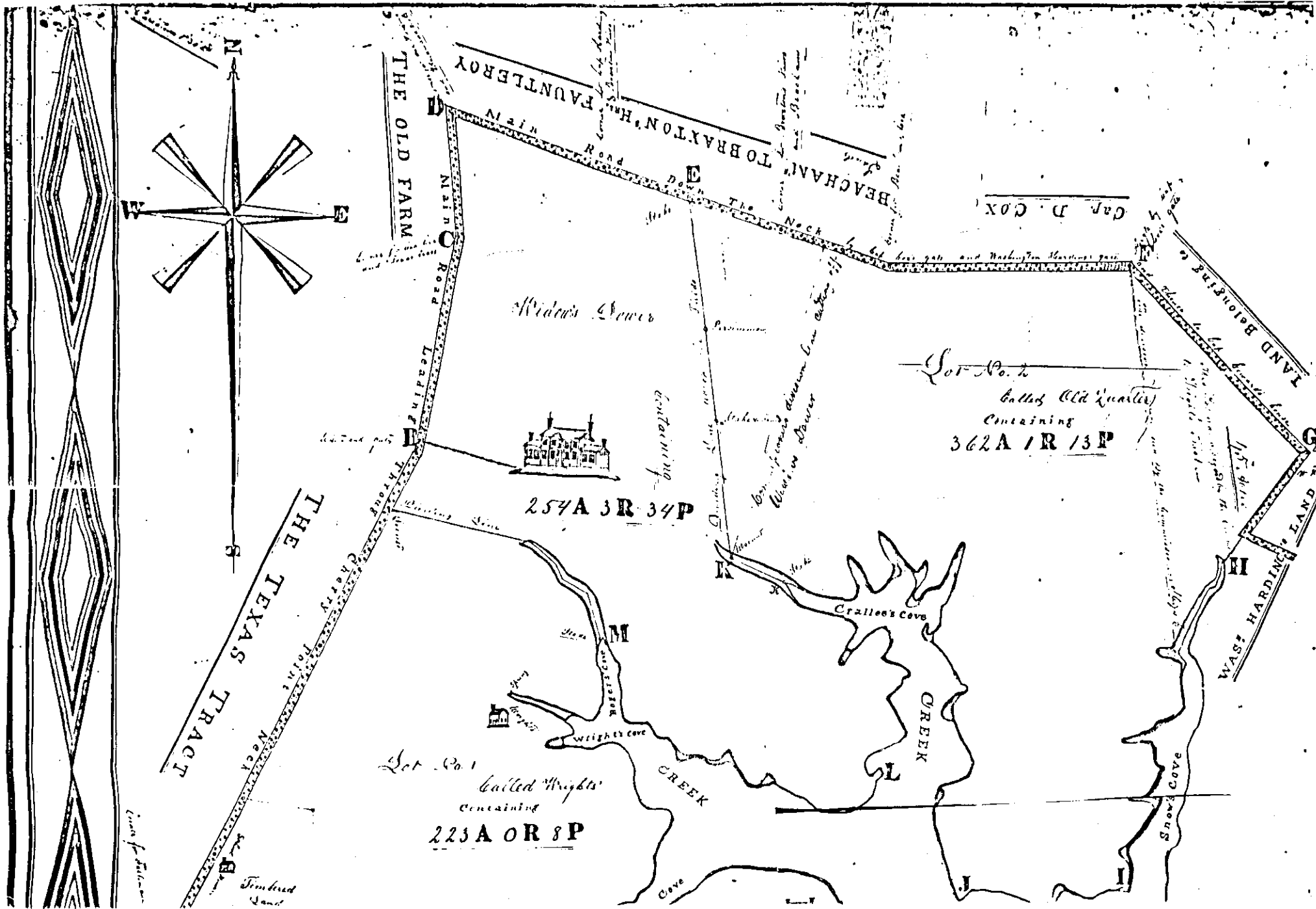
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- Northumberland County Deed Books, Estate Books, Land Tax Books, Order Books, Personal Property Tax Books, Plat Books, Will Books.
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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VBD: Beginning at a boundary pipe on the E side of Rt. 624 about 150' S of the center of the private drive leading to the house at Wheatland; thence running 300' NNE along the E side of Rt. 624 to another pipe; thence turning 90° and running in a straight line 1047' ESE to another pipe; thence turning 90° and running 120' NE along the edge of a field until reaching a rail fence; thence turning 90° and running 325' ESE to the border of the yard and a cultivated field; thence following the field line 540' SSW; thence turning 90° and running 350' WNW across the yard to the west field/yard line; thence turning 90° and running 120' NE; thence turning 90° and running 1000' WNW to the point of origin.

NOTE: This creates a T-shaped parcel, whittled down on the E from the entire 16.64-acre T-shaped parcel comprising the present Wheatland house tract. The total acreage in the nomination is about 12 acres.

JUSTIFICATION: The nominated property of 12 acres encompasses most of the remaining landscaped yard (with five original buildings), plus part of the north service yard and barn lot (with four contributing early 20th-century buildings). Also included is the important axial entry lane lined by tall hardwoods. The boundaries are coterminous with the present T-shaped 16.64-acre parcel except at the north and south ends of the cross of the T, which have been excluded from the nomination.



1857 plat of Wheatland. The present main house is represented in an elevation sketch at left center.



