Belmead/Saint Emma's Industrial and Agricultural School

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: .4 mi NW of northwestern end of Rt. 663, .5 mi NW of intersection of Rt. 663 and Rt. 600. .2 mi NW of Deep Creek

CITY OR TOWN: Powhatan

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)
- District
- Site
- Object

OWNERSHIP (Check One)
- Public
- Private
- Both

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Industrial
- Military
- Religious

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- Public Acquisition
- In Process
- Being Considered

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Belmead/Saint Emma's Industrial and Agricultural School

CITY OR TOWN: Powhatan

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS ETC:
Powhatan County Court House

CITY OR TOWN: Powhatan

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #72-49
DATE OF SURVEY: 1969

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
Ninth Street Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 45
Belmead is a two-story, stuccoed brick residence with a gable roof and a three-story central cross gable. A square tower disguises the north end of the cross gable and uses corner piers, crenellations, belt courses, ground level Tudor arched openings, and diamond-paned casement windows on its upper two levels to create a medieval flavor. The south tower has a carriage entrance with Tudor arches and corner piers similar to the north tower but substitutes an oriel bay and a steep cross gable on the upper levels for variety. The roofline and facade of the building proper also use these features but add clusters of circular and polygonal shaped chimney stacks as well as stepped gable ends. The original basic form of the structure would have been almost symmetrical had it not been for a two-story wing on the west and a porch, now destroyed, on the east. The kitchen outbuilding on the west has been incorporated into an extensive two- and three-story addition built by the school.

The interior plan centers on a square hall with cross halls, running north-south and west. Access to most rooms is through tall double doors with Tudor arches and many rooms have coffered ceilings. Marble mantels repeat the Tudor arch again with compound piers and leaf clusters. The interior has been adapted for use by the school for the faculty, but the changes for the most part have been superficial and have not involved the destruction of original trim.

Belmead, together with Staunton Hill, represents the only complete expression of the Gothic Villa in Virginia. Evolved essentially as a Northern style, it was adapted by A. J. Davis into a less forbidding and more open design to make it acceptable for Southern living.
One of the few remaining Gothic-style residences in Virginia, Belmead was designed by the nationally significant Gothic Revival architect, Alexander Jackson Davis. The house was begun *circa* 1845 for Philip St. George Cocke and took several years to complete. According to Roger Hale Newton in *Town and Davis, Architects*, the design of Belmead "echoed the Paulding-Merritt-Gould manor on the Hudson, and also borrowed freely from Pugin's Examples (published 1838)." Having captured the essence of the Gothic Revival rural romanticism, Belmead followed the general trend toward eclecticism and away from the classicism of the white-pillared mansions. Its imposing Gothic grandeur recalls that of Staunton Hill, probably the only other example of a major Virginia plantation house in this style.

Philip St. George Cocke (1809-1861) was the third son of General John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo, Fluvanna County. After a brief military career, Cocke returned to Virginia and became a noted and progressive agronomist, serving as president of the Virginia Agricultural Society from 1853 to 1856. He also served on the board of the Virginia Military Institute, and contributed much to its support. During the War Between the States, he was commissioned as a Brigadier General in the Confederate Army and was in command of the military district along the south bank of the Potomac.

Belmead's architectural significance has long tended to overshadow its importance as a site associated with the education of southern Negroes. Some years after the War Between the States, Belmead was sold by the Cocke family and passed through several hands until it was bought in the 1890's by Colonel Edward de Vaux Morrell and his wife Louise (Drexel) Morrell of Philadelphia for $28,000. Mrs. Morrell was the half-sister of Mother Katherine Drexel, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1897 the Morrells conveyed Belmead to the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, naming the school St. Emma's Industrial and Agricultural Institute in honor of Mrs. Morrell's mother Emma Bouvier and her patron saint, Saint Emma. In 1942 Eli Lescot, President of Haiti, sent his son Max to be educated at Saint Emma's. Belmead still serves as the central portion of this Catholic military school for Negroes.
3. Goochland, Virginia, 71/2', quadrangle, 1:24000, 1943 (U.S.G.S.)
   Lakeside Village, Virginia, 15' quadrangle, 1:62500, 1960. (U.S.G.S.)
Belmead/Saint Emma’s Industrial and Agricultural School

Statement of Significance

Belmead, built for Philip St. George Cocke ca. 1845 on a secluded rural site in Powhatan County, Virginia, is the work of the nationally famous architect, Alexander Jackson Davis. This house and Staunton Hill in Charlotte County are the two most complete examples in Virginia of fully developed Gothic Revival Country houses. Belmead possesses all the necessary ingredients to be an outstanding example of the style. It has towers, battlements, oriel windows, cluster chimneys and a romantic hill top site. However, the whole is less than the sum of the parts. It gives a curiously unresolved, unfinished impression that suggests that those who actually built it were working in an unfamiliar style that they did not fully understand. Belmead presently serves as the administration building of a military preparatory school.
Belmead property description:

The property includes the principal school buildings and a large open field immediately to the east. It is bounded on the east by a private school road (about 1100 feet); in the south by a private school road (about 1800 feet); on the west by a private school road (about 1000 feet); and on the north by a wooden rail fence (about 900 feet) and a private school road (about 500 feet).
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE
STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE
STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

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

CITY OR TOWNSHIP:
Richmond

STATE: Virginia

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 [X] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name: Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
Title: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
Date: 10-7-69

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Date: NOV 12 1969

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register
Date: OCT 5 1969