

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Set on a wooded lot in the flat Southampton County landscape, Beechwood is a rambling, two-story frame building constructed in several sections between the late 18th and the late 19th centuries. It presently consists of a two-story, three-bay main block with a small one-bay wing at the east end and a two-bay, one-cell wing at the west. Stretching back (south) from the west wing is a two-story, two-room ell. The main block, built in three sections during the fourth quarter of the 18th century, is covered with beaded weatherboards and has a modillion cornice and tapered beaded rakingboards embellishing its gable roof. The first-floor openings are glazed with 9/9 sash while 9/6 sash are used on the second floor. Appended to the front is a one-story pedimented porch with a dentil cornice and full entablature supported on Tuscan columns with exaggerated entasis. Original benches with double-cyma pedestals furnish this porch. Stretching along the rear of the main block is a mid-19th-century, one-story porch with chamfered posts.

The plan of Beechwood is relatively simple, but the house achieved its present form in several stages. The main block has a side-hall, double-pile room arrangement. This section began as a single, square, one-story cell--the main parlor. Built probably in the fourth quarter of the 18th century, it was soon enlarged by the addition of a rear lean-to, containing two small rooms and a stair in the west room. Although the stair and the partition between these two small rooms have been removed, the scars they left are still visible in the present rear (south) sitting room. Finally, the side passage was added and the whole raised to two stories early in the 19th century. At the same time, or soon afterward, a one-cell, two-story addition, the present dining room, was appended to the southwest corner of the main block, and the two-room rear wing was added to that in the late 19th century.

The interior decoration of Beechwood consists of austere but well-executed Federal mantels and wainscoting. In the front parlor is the most elegant of the house's mantels. It consists of slender reeded Roman Doric pilasters supporting a frieze containing entablature blocks with vertical, reeded paterae and a central tablet enriched with a large, horizontally aligned reeded elliptical patera. A boldly molded shelf broken out over the blocks and tablet completes this mantel. Recessed-panel wainscoting with a pedestal cap encircles the room.

The mantel in the sitting room behind the parlor is of a similar, but simpler, design; the central tablet is omitted and a band of reeding embellishes the base mold of the shelf. Recessed-panel wainscoting is also employed in this room. A two-panel, raised-panel door with HL hinges, located just to the left of the fireplace and leading into the late 19th-century chamber/closet wing, suggests that the wing may have replaced an earlier chimney closet.

Recessed-panel wainscoting, broken out under the windows, once again embellishes the passage and is carried up the open-string stair. The latter has sawn brackets, three rectangular balusters to a tread, a tapered square newel, and a molded ramped-and-eased baluster. The double exterior doors have three flush beaded panels each and early iron locks; they also retain early bars and staples.

The decoration in the dining room resembles but is even plainer than that in the main block. The mantel again employs reeded Roman Doric pilasters, but its entablature blocks are plain, and there is no additional decoration other than a rope molding along the base of the shelf.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES late 18th century
(original portion)

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Beechwood, a handsome frame house in rural Southampton County, was long associated with the Denson-Pretlow family, and in recent years it was home of former Virginia Governor Colgate W. Darden. Its side-hall plan, plain but elegant Federal woodwork, and handsome exterior make it a good example of one type of the spacious but unpretentious plantation houses favored by residents of southeastern Virginia early in the 19th century. At the same time, the frequently enlarged house incorporates within its structure several earlier, much smaller house forms characteristic of the same area in the immediate post-Revolutionary years.

The original portion of Beechwood, a one-room, one-story house, was erected in the fourth quarter of the 18th century by Jordan Denson (d. 1806). Dwellings of such small size were common among planters of late 18th-century Southside Virginia. A member of a family prominent in the Society of Friends (Quakers) in 17th- and 18th-century Virginia, Denson owned 197 acres of land in 1782, the year when property holdings were first recorded for land tax purposes. The present Beechwood tract may also include land acquired by the builder from his father Joseph Denson and other property purchased from Thomas Wills.

It seems likely that Denson added the lean-to which comprises the first-floor sitting room of the present house before his death, at which time, the property was divided among his three daughters (a son was disinherited and died shortly afterward), and the portion containing the house passed to Anne Denson and her husband Joshua Pretlow. Joshua and Anne Pretlow sold it in 1813 to another daughter of Jordan Denson, Jane Denson, and her husband Thomas Pretlow. It is likely that the further enlargement of the house to the present main block and dining-room wing occurred in the next five years, for in 1820, the first year in which building values were listed separately, Thomas Pretlow was charged with \$2397 worth of buildings on his 397-acre tract on Nottoway Swamp. The clerk appended the note "buildings added" to the valuation.

No major change in the assessment occurred through the remainder of the antebellum period, and Beechwood has remained in the hands of descendants of the builder. A recent owner of Beechwood was Colgate W. Darden. Mr. Darden served in the U. S. House of Representatives from Virginia and as Governor of the Commonwealth from 1942-1946. During his tenure he pursued his interest in improving both public education and higher education in Virginia in reaction to many years of neglect in that field in the state. He continued his identification as a leader in education, serving as president of the University of Virginia for twelve years.

Family tradition maintains that Beechwood was called Jericho until 1888, but the name does not appear in the documents.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Manuscript Information by Peggy S. Joyner in VHLC files.
 Nugent, Nell. Cavaliers and Pioneers v. 1. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1963.
 Southampton County Deed Books 4, 5, 6, 7, 14.
 Southampton County Land Tax Books 1782-1863.
 Southampton County Will Books 6, 13.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Vicksville, Va. QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>321320</u>	<u>4069120</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point 300' E of intersection of State Routes 643 & 646 and 700' SE of Darden Millpond; thence extending 500' E along State Route 646; thence extending S approximately 800'; thence extending 600' W and intersecting private drive; thence extending 700' N to point of origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

August 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

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 X

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

Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE SEP 10 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE Feb 1 1979

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Beechwood - Southampton County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6 & 7 PAGE 1

6). REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2). Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1967, 1977, 1978 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION

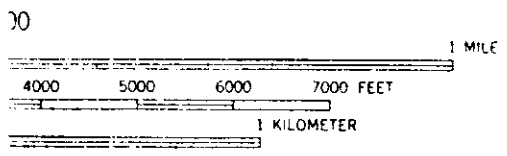
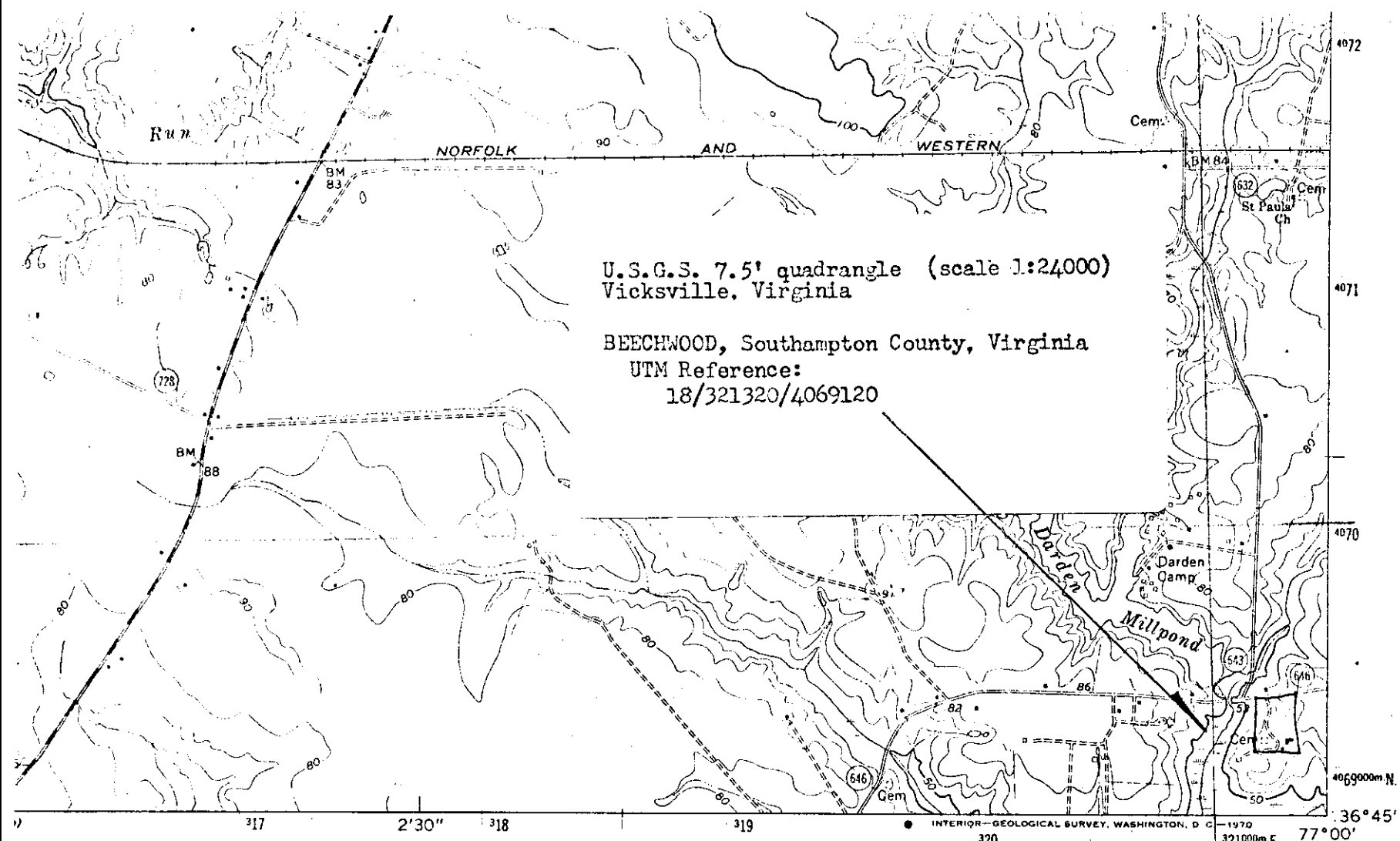
On the wall opposite the fireplace is a very plain open-string stair with three rectangular balusters to a tread; plain brackets; a square, capped newel; and a molded rail.

To the rear of the main block of the house survives a kitchen which is probably original to the house in its side-hall-plan form. A square one-story frame building covered with beaded weatherboards, it has a brick exterior and chimney, a brick floor, and an exposed whitewashed frame.

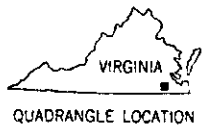
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The register boundaries are drawn to include the house and its immediate yard, as well as a nearby family cemetery, all of which comprise a portion of a large farm.

DU



MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FEDERAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
NATIONAL CENTER FOR GEOSCIENCE INFORMATION, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903
SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
○ State Route	

VICKSVILLE, VA.
N3645—W7700/7.5

1969

AMS 5557 I SE—SERIES V834

(FRANKLIN)
565711 NW