

VLK-3/15/00 NRHP-8/2/00

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property Cedar Ridge

historic name Cedar Ridge

other names/site number #090-0042

2. Location

street & number 4861 Laurel Drive not for publication x  
city or town Disputanta vicinity x  
state Virginia code 079 county Surry code 181  
zip code 23842

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 6/29/2000  
Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
    See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
    See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper    Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)**

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property (Check only one box)**

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  2  </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>  4  </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  6  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

Name of related multiple property listing     N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)**

Colonial  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials (Enter categories from instructions)**

foundation brick  
roof synthetics  
walls wood; weatherboard  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)**

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

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- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance ca. 1750-1800  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 3 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	312260	4109100	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Meg Greene Malvasi

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 6 January 2000

street & number 13803 Sterlings Bridge Rd telephone 804-763-3595

city or town Midlothian state VA zip code 23112

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**Additional Documentation**

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**Submit the following items with the completed form:**

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.**
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**

**Photographs**

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.**

**Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**

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**Property Owner**

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**(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)**

**name** Mr. & Mrs. Donald E. Wells

**street & number** 4861 Laurel Drive **telephone** 804-834-3579

**city or town** Disputanta **state** VA **zip code** 23842

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).**

**Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.**

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**Architectural Description**

Situated approximately ½ mile from state highway 601 in the southwestern corner of Surry County is the property known as Cedar Ridge. All that remains of the historic farm's 1000+ acres are the original house built circa 1750 and three acres. The one-and-half-story colonial house faces the south, and is surrounded by soybean and corn fields to the north, south, and east. To the west of the property is a heavily wooded area with fields just beyond. The house and immediate yard is filled with a variety of deciduous trees and bushes, including cedar and walnut trees. A number of older outbuildings dot the property. These date from the mid- to-late eighteenth to the early- and late-twentieth centuries.

Cedar Ridge is an excellent example of mid-eighteenth century Virginia vernacular domestic architecture. Beginning as a simple one-room dwelling, the house eventually evolved into a two room, hall/parlor plan, with two upstairs rooms linked by a central rear staircase with the later addition of an enclosed breezeway connecting to a two-story rear kitchen and bedchamber addition. The footprint of the house resembles a modified "T" shape.

The one-and-a-half story house is a single-pile building, three bays wide, resting on a raised brick foundation laid in English bond. Located on the front facade foundation wall on either side of the entrance porch are wood-framed vents with metal bars. The pegged framework house is covered with weatherboard and has cornerboards; close examination of the weatherboards reveal clear evidence of hand-wrought nails. The gable-side roof has raking eaves, boxed rafters, and is covered with composition shingles. Piercing the roof on both the front and rear slope are two gabled clapboard dormers; the dormers' roofs, with their slight overhang, frame molded closed pediments. Located on either gable-side end of the house is an elaborate double-shouldered, "T-shaped" chimney with corbeled caps. The base of both chimneys is further distinguished by a stepped base. A brick bulkhead with wood double doors is located to the north of the east chimney. The bulkhead marks the entrance to the English cellar, whose floor is covered with square paving bricks; at the north end of the cellar is a wood door with a wood cased lock. To the north of the west chimney is a single-leaf wood two-paneled door with wood surround that leads to the interior living room. However, the steps leading to this door are no longer extant and, consequently, the door is unused.

At one time, a shed roof porch covered the entire front facade, supported by square posts. Now marking the central entrance to the front facade are a series of wood steps with a simple wood bannister and square newel posts. These lead to the gable-roofed front porch, which is a later addition; the gable-front end is covered with clapboard and the roof is composition shingle. Simple wood posts support the porch roof; a simple wood balustrade is found on either side of the entrance doors. An unusual feature of the house is the original side-by-side four-paneled wood, entrance doors with wood surrounds. Almost all of the windows found throughout Cedar Ridge are original: 9/9 double-hung sash on the first floor and 6/6 double-hung sash in the four dormers. All have wood surrounds.

Attaching the house to the two-story addition is a small, one-story frame and horizontal board covered breezeway, resting on a combination of stretcher bond and Flemish bond variant foundation. A central vent opening, similar to those found on the front foundation wall, is located on both the east and west side foundation walls. The breezeway is covered by a gable-side roof of composition shingle. A fixed French door serves as a window on the east side. Attached to the west side of the breezeway is a later, one-story, frame, shed roof bathroom addition, covered with

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horizontal wood boards and with a single double-hung sash 6/6 window.

A two-story addition, which was probably added not long after construction of the house, contains the kitchen and an upstairs room. Resting on a brick foundation laid in a Flemish bond variation, the frame addition is also covered with weatherboard and has cornerboards. The addition roof mirrors the roof of the original block with its raking eaves and boxed rafters; it is, however, covered with standing seam metal. Attached to the north gable end of the house is a brick double-shouldered chimney with a corbeled cap. The same type of stepped base located on the main house chimneys is also evidenced here. On either side of the chimney are identical vent openings seen elsewhere on the foundation. On the east side of the addition is a central wood six-paneled entrance door with a wood surround. Located directly above the doorway is a 6/9 double-hung sash window with wood surround. On the south wall of the addition there is a second-story, nine-light fixed window with wood surround. 9/9 double-hung sash windows with wood surrounds are located on the first floor of the north wall on either side of the chimney. The second floor windows, found directly above the first floor openings, consist of 6/9 double-hung sash windows with wood surrounds.

The interior of Cedar Ridge has remained for the most part remarkably pristine. As such, it gives a visitor a good sense of how the house and its rooms were used by the generations of families who lived there. The plan of the house was a common one for the period: one room on the main floor with a loft room above. An addition of an identical room adjoining the main block with another room upstairs completed the main block of the house, giving it a hall/parlor plan.

Much of the home's original material has been kept in good condition throughout the house. Still intact and in excellent condition are the wide pine floorboards. The original plaster walls are now covered with various patterned wallpapers, whose styles compliment the interior. Other examples of the interior ornamentation are the beaded molding wainscoting, which decorates the front two rooms, further unifying the home's appearance. At one time, the wainscoting was also found on the room entrance doors, but it has been removed. Entrance room doors are six-paneled wood doors with wood surrounds; many still have their original hardware, which consists of wrought-iron, H-L, or strap hinges. Almost all the doors have retained their original porcelain door knobs and in a few cases their small square lock boxes as well.

Yet each room at Cedar Ridge has its own character as evidenced by the home's six fireplaces, one for every room. The original "hall" room of the house, later used as a dining room and now as a downstairs study, boasts the largest fireplace, a good example of an early colonial hearth with a large, recessed paneled mantelpiece and a shallow shelf outlining an arched opening. The parlor (now main entrance and living room) fireplace is marked by a more stylized mantle more fully in keeping with the later Federal style. The mantelpiece, although not as large as the one in the hall room, consists of raised wood beaded moldings topped by a raised ogee and a beaded molded narrow shelf; directly underneath the shelf is a denticular cornice with pierced wood decoration. The entire mantelpiece surrounds a square hearth opening. To the north of the fireplace is a four-paneled wood door that once led to the west yard area.

A rear central staircase with a board and batten door marks the narrow stairway entrance to the upstairs story. On the east wall of the upstairs hallway is further evidence of the home's chronology as evidenced by the original clapboard siding that once marked the exterior west wall of the original house block. A narrow pine-floor landing leads to two bedrooms, the one on the eastside situated directly above the hall room, the one on the westside above the



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parlor.

The eastside bedroom entrance door consists of a two-paneled wood door with raised moldings; the original wrought iron looped latch and iron door knob are still intact. Like the downstairs, this room has wide pine floorboards with the north and south dormers providing light. A central fireplace located on the east wall has a simple beaded molding mantle with a larger central recessed panel, covering an arched hearth opening. The westside bedroom is identical to the one on the eastside with the exception of its mantelpiece, which covers a square hearth opening.

The breezeway also covered with wide pine flooring identical to that found in the rest of the house leads to the second-story addition where the kitchen and an upper bedroom chamber are located. It appears that based on the materials used in constructing the breezeway and the kitchen that these additions were made not long after the main house was built. Located on the west wall of the breezeway is an entrance door leading to a small bathroom addition put in by Mr. Wells, the current owner.

Like the original portion of the house, the kitchen has a number of unique features that testify to the original craftsmanship that distinguishes Cedar Ridge. Instead of the wide pine floorboards found throughout the rest of the house, narrower pine flooring had been laid. The kitchen also has beaded molded wood wainscoting with paneled woodwork below. The north wall is marked by the original central hearth with a brick arched opening surrounded a uniquely styled mantelpiece of molded wood topped by an elliptical concave shaped molding capped by another narrow ogee molding shelf. The original hearthstones are also in evidence here. On the west wall is a six-paneled raised molding entrance door that leads to the yard. Directly south of the entrance door is a staircase leading to the second floor. The stair rail provides another example of the craftsmanship found throughout the house; a carved balustrade with a molded rail connects to a square newel post topped with a carved newel cap that is similar in spirit to those done at Bacon's Castle during its first restoration by Elizabeth Allen. A four-paneled wood door closes off the upstairs from the kitchen area. Next to the staircase is a smaller four-paneled molded wood door that houses a pantry area; there is evidence of the ladder that was used to reach the cellar.

The slightly winding staircase leads directly to a small hall landing. A storage area closed off by a four-paneled molded wood door is located on the west wall. To the north of the hall landing is a room that was once probably another bedchamber but that which is now used as a study. It has a wood six-paneled molded entrance door. The room is laid with the same wide pine flooring, and a central fireplace is located on the north wall. The fireplace is smaller in size than those in the other two bedrooms. The mantle surrounding the square opening consists of two-recessed panels topped by a simple molded wood shelf. This fireplace has been boarded up and is the only fireplace that is currently unusable.

In general, the structure and layout of the original house have remained intact. Other than making the necessary adjustments for modern wiring and plumbing, the current owners have shown great sensitivity to the original design and have carried out repairs and restoration only to maintain the structure.

When Mr. Wells purchased Cedar Ridge in 1977, the property had stood empty for almost twenty-five years. During that time, the original exterior chimneys on the east and west sides of the main house had deteriorated to such a degree that they had to be rebuilt. The new chimneys are faithful to the originals. Mr. Wells also had to replace portions of the original siding on the east and west exterior walls, as well as in portions of the breezeway. Again, these repairs

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were carried out with a concern to preserve the integrity of the original structure. The fixed French door used as a window on the east wall replaced another entrance door that once led to a small shed roof porch. Another small shed roof porch, on which the former owner placed her flowers, was once attached to the east wall of the main house above the bulkhead area. This porch has also been removed. The original cedar shakes, which covered the roof, were so badly deteriorated at the time Mr. Wells bought the house, that he had to replace them with composition shingles. At some point, he hopes to recover the roof with cedar shakes to restore the original appearance of the house. The only other modern alteration is found in the simple wood deck and steps attached to the east wall of the kitchen where the original kitchen entrance is located.

There is one contributing and a number of non-contributing outbuildings at Cedar Ridge. Most are found in yard immediately adjacent to the main house and give testimony to the evolution of the property as a farm. The sole contributing resource, located in the southeast corner of the yard, is a one-story outbuilding that, according to the current owner and historical records, may once have served as slaves' quarters. The frame and clapboard covered building has a gable-side roof of v-crimp metal, raking eaves, boxed rafters, and rests on stone piers; the interior rafters and frame of the building are notched. The exterior cladding is a combination of the same cladding material as is found on the main house and a weatherboard that was added later. Portions of the building still have the original hand-wrought nails like those found at the main house, as well as more modern cut nails throughout. Based on this evidence, it appears that at least a portion of the building dates from approximately the same period as the main house.

The front facade is marked by two entrance doors, each leading into a small chamber. Both chambers have wide pine plank flooring. The northwest corner of the east room shows an opening that leads into a small loft area. The flooring of the loft is wood tongue and groove. Located at the west end of the loft is what appears to have been a small fire pit, approximately 18-20 inches square and approximately 8 inches deep. This pit contained ashes and sand. The interior east wall of the west room is covered with what appears to be the same cladding material as the main house. The doors consist of wood planks with crude wood surrounds. A small window opening is found in the west gable end of the building. To the north and east of the building is an open space with a grape arbor and other diverse plantings.

The location of the quarters raises some interesting questions about the pattern of daily life at Cedar Ridge. Given the unusually close proximity of the building to the main house, one can speculate about who lived there. The construction of the building, which shows a knowledge of then-current building techniques, makes it entirely possible that Avery had among his slaves a skilled artisan or two who could have built the structure and resided in it, or alternately, built the quarters for slaves who worked in the house.

To the northeast of this building is a one-story frame and horizontal board shed. The shed roof is made of V-notch metal with exposed rafter tails. The front facade is marked by three entrance openings; a smaller window-sized opening is located to the south of the entrances. To the west of this shed is a frame and weatherboard gas house with cornerboards. The gable-side roof is covered by V-notch metal, has raking eaves, exposed rafter tails, and rests on a poured concrete foundation. A central entrance wood plank door with wood surround is found on the west wall. To the north of the gas house is a one-story frame smokehouse resting on a concrete foundation. The gable-front roof is covered with cedar shakes and has overhanging raking eaves and boxed rafters. The south front facade has a central

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wood paneled entrance door with wood surround; directly above is a small, fixed four-light window, also with wood surround. On the east and west walls are paired 6/6 double-hung sash windows with wood surrounds. The smokehouse was once covered with weatherboard; it has since been replaced with vinyl siding that is the same shade of blue as the house. Beyond the immediate yard to the north is another yard area, delineated by a wall of trees and shrubs. Here at the north end of the property is another one-story, frame shed covered with plywood. The shed roof is V-notch metal; two front openings mark the front facade. To the west of the shed is a modern dog pen; to the south of the pen is a modern above-ground swimming pool.

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**Statement of Significance**

Situated approximately ½ mile from state highway 601 in the southwestern corner of Surry County is the property known as Cedar Ridge. All that remains of the historic farm's original 1000+ acres are the original house built circa 1750 and approximately three acres. Cedar Ridge is eligible for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in that the building is an excellent example of mid-eighteenth-century Virginia vernacular domestic architecture. The home, probably built by Surry resident Colonel Richard Avery sometime around 1750, began as a simple one room down-one room up building and eventually evolved into a two room, hall/parlor plan, its upstairs linked by a central rear staircase with later additions of an enclosed breezeway connecting to a two-story rear kitchen and bedchamber addition. Despite standing vacant and neglected for almost three decades, the house has since been rescued and maintained in a way that has kept the majority of the home's original features intact. Although no longer part of a working farm, the home and its environs have remained relatively untouched, protected as they are by the surrounding farmland. The significance of this property is not in who lived here, but rather in the structure itself and the contributions it makes to the architectural history of Virginia.

Surry County, Virginia, sometimes known as the "Cradle of the Republic," was named for the English county of Surrey, which lies on the south side of the Thames River near London. Situated on the James River southwest of Jamestown, seventeenth-century Surry County extended along the river for twenty miles. It was bounded to the northwest at Upper Chippokes Creek by Charles City County and to the southwest at Lawnes Creek by Isle of Wight County. At one time, Surry County extended southward to the North Carolina border, while the western boundary ran unchecked into the frontier wilderness. The Nottoway River formerly served as a boundary line between Surry and Charles City Counties.

For most of the seventeenth century, the settlement of Surry County extended only fifteen miles inland, halting at the Blackwater River. The principal tributaries of the James River, such as Gray's Creek and Lower Chippokes Creek, were short, extending back from the James only about five miles. Approximately three miles further inland, the land crested to a height of one hundred feet. On the other side of this watershed, the creeks and streams of Surry County flowed away from the James and toward the Blackwater River and Albemarle Sound. Geography thus impeded the expansion of Surry County. Despite these obstacles, Surry County attracted planters almost from the first.<sup>1</sup>

Early settlers to the region soon took to calling the area immediately south of the James River the "Surrey side," in remembrance of the English county back home. At some point they dropped the "e" from the name and the area became known as "Surry." This area, which became the home of Richard Avery, was initially inhabited by the Quiyoughcohanocks, who were allies of the Algonquian-Powhatan Chiefdom. The first English settlers, described as proceeding "leisurely" to the area of the future county, were guided there by Jamestown resident and leader, Captain

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin P. Kelly, "In dispers'd Country Plantations': Settlement Patterns in Seventeenth-Century Surry County, Virginia," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society and Politics*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979. pp. 183-84.

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John Smith. They arrived in the vicinity sometime during early May 1607. One of the members of the group, Captain George Percy, described the region as populated with "woods in fine paths, that had most pleasant springs which issued from the mountains. We went through the goodliest corn fields that were seen in any country."<sup>2</sup>

Within a year, the English had established a small settlement and fort approximately two miles from the mouth of Gray's Creek in present-day Surry County. Like Jamestown, the tiny community struggled to survive during its first years of existence. By 1625, the Virginia Company officially listed sixteen settlers holding land patents in the area of Surry. In 1634, the area became a part of James City County. As the county continued to grow in population, the establishment of new parishes became necessary. By 1652, Surry County formally made its first appearance in the court records of the colony.<sup>3</sup>

At the time Cedar Ridge was built, Surry County had been in existence for almost a century. The county had grown, but its western and southern portions were still considered the frontier. Nevertheless, Surry was home to a number of wealthy planters and landowners. Acres of the forest that George Percy had described almost a century and a half earlier were now planted in tobacco and corn.

The first mention of a Richard Avery comes in 1673 when his name appears on the "List of Tithables" for Surry County. Little is known of Avery. An examination of the early court records for Surry County indicates that he enjoyed a degree of prosperity that enabled him actively to engage in land speculation and other real estate ventures throughout Surry, Prince George, and Sussex Counties. He seems also to have enjoyed the regard, or at least the confidence, of his neighbors and the local courts, for he was often called upon to serve as a witness to wills and other legal transactions, to appraise the estates of those who died intestate, and even for a brief period to serve as a constable for the county.<sup>4</sup>

Richard Avery died in 1685. Although information is sparse, a second Richard Avery, commonly referred to as Colonel Richard Avery, appears in the county records beginning in 1741. Colonel Avery was possibly a grandson or great-grandson of the original Richard Avery. Like the first Richard Avery, Colonel Avery also marked himself as a fairly distinguished member of the Surry community, serving as witness for numerous legal transactions and, more important, as a soldier during the Revolutionary War, in which he earned the rank of Colonel. He also appears to have married well, taking as his wife a daughter of the locally prominent Rose family. It is this second Richard Avery who would build and own Cedar Ridge. Again, like his namesake, the second Richard Avery also engaged in diverse land transactions. Among them was one that took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1741, when Richard Avery applied for and was granted a land patent for seventy-five acres on the "south side of the Nottoway River."<sup>5</sup> Nearly six years later, on

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<sup>2</sup> John Boddie, *Colonial Surry*, Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, 1948, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Surry County Virginia Court Records Book III, Book IV, Book V.*

<sup>5</sup> *Land Office Patents and Grants. Book No. 20. p. 218.*

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March 5, 1747, Avery applied for and was granted another patent, this time for 790 acres located "on the South side of the Nottoway River[,] Beginning and extending in the Indian Branch." At this time, he also received an additional 135 acres near the north side of the Meherin River.<sup>6</sup> Together, this 1000-acre parcel comprised the farm that later became known as Cedar Ridge.

One complication that arises from the use of land patents to determine the date of settlement is that the seating of the land may predate the patent by several years. This practice was common into the eighteenth century among planters who wished to delay payment of the patenting fees for as long as possible. There is no evidence that such a delay occurred with regard to Cedar Ridge, but it remains a possibility. A second problem with land patents is that they were often held for the purpose of speculation rather than settlement. The second land grant that Colonel Avery received, that of March 5, 1747, was large, almost double the average size of the typical grant a century earlier. Yet, although Colonel Avery clearly engaged in extensive land speculation, his subsequent actions indicate that he acquired these three contiguous tracts for the purpose of establishing a homestead and a plantation.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Avery acquired this land just as tobacco prices began to rise after more than a century of steady decline. Troubled by the falling price of tobacco, the poor quality of soil, and the problems of transportation relative to other areas in the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck, Surry County had actually lost population during the 1650s and 1660s. Ironically, it was the complete collapse of the tobacco economy in 1680 that prompted the renewed interest in and growth of Surry County. While the formerly affluent tidewater counties retrenched, frontier counties such as Henrico, Charles City, and Surry grew during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The chief lure, of course, was the availability of inexpensive land.<sup>8</sup> This development was fortunate for Avery. It enabled him not only to build a house and establish a farm, but to acquire the slave labor needed to maintain both. Records indicate that Avery was a middling slaveholder, owning approximately a dozen slaves.

Notwithstanding the sustained growth of Surry County, by the middle of the eighteenth century the area in which Avery chose to build his home was still the frontier. Long before 1750, the wealthiest planters and merchants had acquired the finest tracts of land in the tidewater. What land remained was prohibitively expensive, and thus out of reach even for men of middling income. Those who sought land, but who lacked the opportunity or the means to acquire holdings in the Tidewater, had little choice but to look to the frontier as an alternative. According to Allan

<sup>6</sup> Land Office Patents and Grants, Book No. 26, p 266.

<sup>7</sup> Kelly, "In dispers'd Country Plantations," p. 185; Michael L. Nicholls, "Origins of the Virginia Southside, 1703-1753: A Social and Economic Study, Ph.D. diss., The College of William and Mary, 1972, pp. 75-79.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, "In disner'd Countrv Plantations," nn. 193-97.

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Kulikoff, "the rate of frontier settlement rose during the 1720s and 1730s."<sup>9</sup> Once the tidewater became thickly seated with farms and plantations, colonists aspiring to the ownership of land began to settle the parts of the piedmont closest to existing settlements and navigable waterways. Despite this trend in migration, the location of Cedar Ridge easily qualified it as a frontier residence, for even as late as the 1740s few families had reached southside Virginia. The area was far from other white settlements and its major streams were either too shallow for navigation or emptied into North Carolina rivers, making the transportation of tobacco and other crops to market difficult and costly.

Although appearing in early deed books under the name "Spring Grove," Cedar Ridge was so-called because the home was built from cedar trees cut in the nearby woods. Cedar Ridge remained in the Avery family for almost a century after its construction. In 1850, a John Avery sold the property to David Tatum. By this time, the size of the estate had shrunk to 685 acres and included the main house and a few outbuildings. During the course of the nineteenth century, the size would again increase to slightly more than 1,000 acres and pass through the ownership of two other families, the Harrisons and the Carters. In 1904, the Carter family sold Cedar Ridge to the Clary family, who held the property until 1973. The Clarys then sold the house along with 327 acres to the Ashby family. Four years later, in 1977, the Ashby family sold approximately three acres, including the house and outbuildings, to the current owner of Cedar Ridge, Donald E. Wells.<sup>10</sup>

If, in accordance with the terms of the original patent, Colonel Avery erected a dwelling of some sort on his property, it seems reasonably accurate to fix the date of construction at sometime around 1750. Based on the style of construction and the materials used, it also seems fairly certain that additions were made to the structure no later than 1800. The result was the creation of a house that is in many ways typical of the vernacular domestic architecture that prevailed in the Virginia piedmont during the second half of the eighteenth century. Although once representative of the homes found throughout Surry County, Cedar Ridge stands today as one of only a handful of eighteenth-century vernacular farm houses remaining in the area. As such, it serves as one of the few extant physical reminders of that important era in Virginia history. For these reasons, the fifty years between the construction of the home circa 1750 and the major additions to it circa 1800 mark the period of significance for Cedar Ridge.

Despite its secure position as a model of vernacular architecture, several important details set the house apart. In contrast to many of the humbler residences found in this region, often irregular in design and construction, Cedar Ridge is marked by a "disciplined regularity" much more in keeping with high-style architecture.<sup>11</sup> The side-by-side front doors, for example, which might have served as separate entrances for relatives sharing a dwelling, were perhaps in this

<sup>9</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> *Surry County Deed Books* 13, pp. 243-244, 14, pp. 440-441, 16, pp. 441-442, 20, pp. 191-192, 23, pp. 373-374, 29, pp. 225-226, 33, p. 373, 35, pp. 314-315, 77, pp. 295-297, 83, p. 142.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

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case more an expression of the "need for symmetrical, repetitious forms" to create an overall sense of balance throughout the front facade.<sup>12</sup> Even more revealing, however, is the structure of the house itself. The footprint of Cedar Ridge is a modified "T" plan, which Southern builders and homeowners favored as much for the circulation of air it facilitated as for the feeling of spaciousness it provided in a relatively small house.<sup>13</sup> Even with the various additions to the original block, Cedar Ridge has maintained its architectural balance and harmony for more than two centuries.

At the same time, it is clear that Colonel Avery gave careful thought to the interior ornamentation of Cedar Ridge. The plain, almost austere, exterior conceals Avery's attention to interior decoration. The four distinctive fireplace surrounds and mantles demonstrate his awareness of the prevailing, and changing, tastes and fashions in interior design. The massive paneled surround in the original cell of the house, for instance, calls to mind Georgian styles, while the surrounds in the remaining three rooms are more in the spirit of the later Federal period. The carved bannisters and the molded balustrade cap, similar to those found at Bacon's Castle, also suggest more than a passing interest on Avery's part in fashionable interior decoration.

Yet, Cedar Ridge is unmistakably an example of vernacular architecture, and therein lies its principal significance. Like all vernacular forms, Cedar Ridge manifests a combination of what architectural historian Dell Upton has labeled "folk" and "academic" elements. As such, the architectural design of Cedar Ridge falls into no specific stylistic category, but displays, and attempts to integrate (more successfully than not in this case), the features of several at once.<sup>14</sup> Despite the professionalization of architecture that was taking place in eighteenth-century England, and the availability of inexpensive style and pattern books that enabled the widespread dissemination of architects' ideas, local intentions and conditions continued to exert a powerful, and frequently a determining, influence on architectural norms. Even with Colonel Avery's efforts to incorporate elements of high-style, or academic, architecture, which was also traditionally English, into the design of Cedar Ridge, the house remains a variation on the most common vernacular theme found in Virginia homes: the "hall and parlor" design. This type of dwelling had long since become the classic Virginia homestead. It consisted of a two-room house, composed of a hall and an adjacent parlor, with a sleeping loft above, a relatively steep roof, and an outside chimney on one or both sides, frequently with stepped brick edges.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975, p. 182.

<sup>13</sup> Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia, in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986, p. 317.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression*. New York: Icon Editions, 1993. n. 53: Upton. "Vernacular Domestic



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In *The Transformation of Virginia*, Rhys Isaac described such dwellings:

The humbler 'Virginia house' was a one- or one-and-a-half-story frame dwelling with two rooms on the ground floor and a chimney on the gable at one or both ends. It was covered with unpainted riven clapboards, made by splitting four-foot lengths of the oak timber that was so plentiful in the country.<sup>16</sup>

In many respects, Cedar Ridge represents almost precisely what Isaac called the "Common Planters' Place." It is a one-and-a-half-story frame structure with one or two rooms on each floor. Durand de Dauphine, a French visitor to the country, observed the prevalence of such dwellings even earlier when he wrote in 1687 that:

Whatever their rank, & I know not why, they build only two rooms with some closets on the ground floor, & two rooms in the attic above, but they build several like this, according to their means.<sup>17</sup>

With the construction of Cedar Ridge, Colonel Avery, to the extent that his means permitted, emulated not only the tidewater planter but the English country gentleman. As was the case with many of his contemporaries, however, he faced special problems in doing so. In absorbing from eighteenth-century English and, for that matter, continental academic architecture a taste for regularity and order, Colonel Avery attempted to address local circumstances. The design of Cedar Ridge was plausibly his effort to create the sense of a more settled and permanent existence in the midst not only of a frontier environment but in response to social, political, and economic tensions of longstanding that continued to trouble Virginia well into the eighteenth century.

Today Cedar Ridge remains a single family residence. The current owners, aware of the home's historical and architectural significance, have done little to alter Colonel Avery's original design, save for the addition of electricity, modern plumbing, and a new roof. It is their hope that the current roof will be replaced in the near future by one made of cedar shakes more fully in keeping with the original. A fine example of an eighteenth-century vernacular farmhouse, Cedar Ridge is a valued landmark in Surry County. Because it is one of the few remaining houses of this type in the area, Cedar Ridge belongs on the National Register.

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Architecture," p. 316.

<sup>16</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," pp. 316-317.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The legal description of Cedar Ridge, located in Surry County, Virginia as found in Deed Book 83, page 140 is as follows:

ALL that certain piece, parcel, or tract of land, with the improvements thereon and appurtenances thereto belonging, situate and being in Guilford Magisterial District, Surry County, Virginia, and further described as follows:

BEGINNING at a round cement marker on the northwest corner of the land hereby conveyed and being on the edge of the right-of-way from State Highway No. 601; thence in an easterly direction 521 feet, more or less, to another round cement marker, a corner; thence in a southerly direction 251 feet, more or less, to a square cement marker, a corner; thence in a westerly direction passing by a round cement marker 521 feet, more or less to a round cement marker on a right-of-way, a corner; thence in a northerly direction along the said right-of-way for a distance of 251 feet more or less, to the cement marker, the point of beginning and containing 3 acres, more or less.

TOGETHER with a right-of-way fifty(50) feet in width along the entire western side of the 3 acres herein conveyed which is an existing right-of-way and runs into the right-of-way along the property owned by Elsie Clary, formerly owned by W. T. Clary, to State Highway No. 601, all of which right-of-way is a means of ingress and egress to and from the 3 acre tract of land to the said State Highway No. 601.

**Boundary Justification**

These are the original boundaries as deeded to Donald E. Wells, March 16, 1977 and includes the building historically associated with the property.

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COMMONWEALTH  
DIVISION OF MINES

